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Transborder Democratic Movements in 1956

Although we are far from having explored the transborder movements in 1956, in possession of our recent knowledge, we can declare that their historical significance can be assessed at least from four aspects.

First of all they constitute part of 1956's history and so part of Hungarian history. Hungarian treatments so far approach the issue primarily from this aspect. They also constitute elements of the history of the neighbouring countries. There have already been published one Czech and one Romanian work of reference of this latter approach, based on Romanian and Czechoslovakian Secret Service and party history sources.¹ Owing to the 50th anniversary the Slovakian National Remembrance Institute (Ústav pamäti národa – UPN) started researches on the basis of this second aspect which hopefully will not be hindered by the tragic death of Ján Lángoš, the founding director of the institute, on the 6th June 2006 and government change in Slovakia a few days later.²

The third aspect of assessment derives from the first two: the democratic movements of the neighbouring countries in 1956 constitute parts of the history of democratic initiations against the Soviet dominance and the communist system between 1945 and 1989. Relevant literature concerning the modern history of the region, published since 1990 does not mention movements in neighbouring countries when covering events in Hungary; the reason could be that the history of these movements has not been treated elaborately enough until recently.³ It is true that soon after the revolution a brief study was published in a few copies overseas which approached Romanian and Slovakian movements especially from this aspect.⁴

¹ Lungu Corneiu, Retegan Mihai (ed.) 1956 explozia. Perceptii române, iugoslave i sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Ungaria i Polonia. Bucuresti 1996.; Kaplan, Karel: ...

² The research is lead by the director of the archives of the institute László Bukovszky who could not publish his first findings in our volume because of the too early state of the research.

³ Review of the Transylvanian and Subcarpathian events has already been published but it is a study far from being exhaustive. Székelyhídi, Ágoston (ed.): Budapest, MVSZ, 1996.; Dupka, György, Horváth, Sándor (ed.): '56 Kárpátalján [1956 in Subcarpathia]. Ungvár, Budapest, 1993. Precious source material can be found in the Oral History Archive of the 1956 Institute of Budapest concerning the Transylvanian events. These publications and sources are available exclusively in Hungarian while the above mentioned Romanian and Czech source publication have not been issued in any world language. Life-interviews of the Slovakian events in 1956 are made for Bibliotheca Hungarica (later: BH) which presently works as part of Fórum Intézet (Forum Institute) in Somorja and for the 50th anniversary it will summarise research findings concerning Slovakian events expectedly at a conference, in a volume of papers and a thematic edition of the periodical Fórum.

⁴ Brogyányi, Coloman: Hungary's fight for freedom and the Hungarian minorities. = Hungarians in Czechoslovakia, New York 1959. Statements of the study are founded on uncertain information sources but the latest researches certify many events which are mentioned in it.

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Last but not least the fourth, seldom mentioned aspect is the impact of trans-border movements on Hungarian national policy and minority policies of the neighbouring countries. This aspect is not less important for our national history than the previous three since Hungarians have been living for 87 years divided by Trianon borders therefore our history is strongly dependent on the national policy of Hungary and minority policies of the neighbouring countries. My own doctoral dissertation published in 2003, deals with the events from this aspect.⁵

It is commonly thought that communist regimes do not attach great significance to minority issues or if they do then as an attempt to assimilate minorities living on the territory of certain states. There are, however, some facts which have made this aspect, not completely ill founded, seem relative. The communist coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948 went hand in hand with the end of the open persecution of minorities; and in the darkest era of the Cold War in 1951-52 such resolutions were passed on wide-ranging bilingualism (though never carried out) for the regions of Hungarian settlements which could be envied even by recent generations of Upland Hungarians.⁶ The Autonomous Hungarian Province (AHP) was established in Szeklerland in Romania in the same period; but not to mention Hungarian examples only: minority journals were founded for the Germans living in Poland, who were prosecuted after World War II, and also for the Poles living in the Soviet Union.

Internal affairs as well as minorities policies of the countries of the region – except for Yugoslavia – followed the Soviet guidance after the establishment of the communist power monopoly.⁷ These (and many more data) indicate that the Soviet Union had taken the national and ethnic relations of the South-Eastern-European region serious because of geostrategic reasons. It cannot be explained by anything else than dominance of the Soviet interests, that after the death of Stalin the Hungarian diplomacy of the fifties was seriously interested in the situation of Hungarian minorities only in just one neighbouring country -

⁵ Szesztay, Ádám: Nemzetiségi kérdés a Kárpát-medencében 1956-1962 [The question of nationality in the Carpathian Basin 1956-1962]. MTA Kisebbségkutató Intézet. Gondolat Kiadói Kor, Budapest, 2003.

⁶ Cp. Andras, Károly: Magyar kisebbség, szlovák többség. A csehszlovákiai magyarok 1956 előtt és után, valamint rövid kitérőtés Kárpátaljára [Hungarian minority, Slovak majority, Hungarians in Czechoslovakia before 1956 and after with a short conclusion about Subcarpathia]. In: 30 év. 1956-1986. Bern, EPMSZ (EPHU), 1987.; Arató, Endre: A csehszlovákiai magyarok történelmének áttekintése és mai helyzete [The history and present situation of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia] Budapest, Művelődési Minisztérium, 1969.

⁷ Cp. Georg Brunner: Die osteuropäischen Staaten im Ost-West Konflikt. In: Südosteuropa 1984/6 ; Zbigniew Brzezinski: Ideology and power in Soviet Politics. New York, Greenwood Press, 1962. with related parts; Király, Béla: A magyar hadsereg szovjet ellenőrzés alatt [The Hungarian armed forces under Soviet control]. In: Romsics, Ignác ed.: Magyarország és a nagyhatalmak a XX században. Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 1995.

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Yugoslavia⁸ - which had such a tense relationship with the Soviet Union that even war was considered. It is of great significance both in the history of the region and of certain minorities what kind of conclusions were the socialist countries and by that the Soviet Union driven to by the minority policy aspects of the Hungarian revolution.

Reaction of the Hungarian minorities of course belongs to these reflections, the introduction of which will not be dealt with in this study because of thematic limits.⁹ Another major sphere was the occurrence of the transborder Hungarians' issue during the revolution in Hungary, as well as their reaction to the events in Hungary. There are several references in the published literature of this topic, according to which Hungarian revolution facilitated the emergence of the freedom of thought, which necessarily brought up the problem of borders and of the transborder Hungarians.¹⁰ There are opposing statements according to which "the revolutionists took great care not to let the issue of territory occur"¹¹ therefore they avoided putting the minority problem on their agenda.¹²

The minority issue actually occurred for the first time about one and the half month before the revolution broke out when then central daily of the Hungarian Workers' Party, Szabad Nép (Free People) published an article containing critical elements about the situation of Hungarians in Transylvania.¹³ Beside giving a lengthy list of the results of Romanian nationality policy: establishing of the Hungarian University at Kolozsvár and the Autonomous Province in Szeklerland¹⁴, it indicated that the dismissal of Hungarian National Association in 1953 was disadvantageous for Hungarians living outside AHP and gave vent to the thought that Romanian nationalism would result in "bourgeois nationalist"

⁸ We can gather information about this from the documents of the Hungarian Embassy to Belgrade between 1950 and 55 kept in the Hungarian National Archives.

⁹ This issue is dealt with in my study *Nemzetiségi törekvések az 1956-os forradalomban* (National Moves in the Revolution of 1956) in *Regió* 1994/2. vol.

¹⁰ Ie. Ludanyi, András: Programozott amnézia és kellemetlen ébredés. A magyar kisebbségek a nemzetközi politikában 1945-1989 [Programmed amnesia and unpleasant awakening. Hungarian minorities in international politics 1945-1989]. In: Romsics, Ignác (ed.): *Magyarország és a nagyhatalmak a XX. században*. Budapest, Teleki László Alapítvány, 1995. 252.; Robert R. King: *Minorities under Communism*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1973. 79

¹¹ Révai, István: A nemzetiségi kérdés éve: 1968 [1968: The year of the question of nationality]. In: *Katolikus Szemle* 1969. 206.

¹² Kende, Péter: A párizsi toronyból [From the tower in Paris]. Budapest, Cserépfalvi, 1991. 174.

¹³ Pándi, Pál: Közös dolgainkról [On our mutual issues]. In: *Szabad Nép* 9th September 1956.

¹⁴ The issues of transborder Hungarians was not taboo in the Hungarian publicity in the early fifties but "good news or nothing" could be published concerning minority policy of neighbouring countries. The same applied to school-books in secondary schools from which reference to transborder Hungarians disappeared completely only after the revolution. The issue is dealt with in detail in my study: *Minority question in the school-books of the socialist Hungary*. In: Nastasă Lucian ed: *Studii istorice Româna-Ungare*. Iasi, Fundatia Xenopol, 1999.

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phenomena among Transylvanian Hungarians. The publication of the article caused a minor diplomatic friction between Bucharest and Budapest.¹⁵ Among other things the reason of its publication could be that from the summer of 1956 travelling between socialist countries became relatively easier.¹⁶ Thus considerable part of the Hungarian public could receive first hand information about the situation of the Transylvanian and Upland Hungarians from travellers who had been there and from those who came to visit the mother country.

There were many Transylvanian and Upland Hungarians staying in Hungary during the revolution.¹⁷ Notwithstanding there is information about only two such moves during the revolution in the course of which the issue of borders and Hungarian minorities were raised. On 22nd October 1956 student council assembly of Miskolc University the participants were shouting "Return everything! (Mindent vissza!)"¹⁸ beside other rallying but these were put in their place by the organisers.¹⁹ Later it was the Miskolc revolutionary radio that called for the alliance with the neighbouring people in Hungarian and in the majority languages of the neighbouring countries. On the 29th October, in its public summons the Revolutionary Committee of County Veszprém included the demand that Hungary should pay more attention to the fate of transborder Hungarians. The authors of the document proposed the establishing of a federation of Middle European states as the solution of minority issues.²⁰

These Hungarian events cannot be considered marginal but they are definitely not of determining significance considering the course of the revolution. If

¹⁵ Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archives, later: HNA) XIX-J-1-j. Román TŰK (Romanian Classified Document Handler, later: CDH), 9. d. 5/c 007591/1956.

¹⁶ The mutual abolishment (announced by government decree 3525/III.8.56.) of the need for tourist visa Hungarian-Romanian border became the most easy to go through in the Soviet block. The need for visa remained towards Czechoslovakia but both passport and visa could be received far easier than before. It is typical of the traffic that according to the report of the Hungarian Consulate General to Pozsony (HNA – XIX-J-1-j. Csehszlovák TŰK (Czechoslovakian CDH) 14. d. 4/j 00277/1957. 13) at the time of the burst of the revolution 2000 Hungarian citizens were staying in Slovakia.

¹⁷ There were men of well known persons among them too like Kós, Károly. Cp. Beszélgetés Kós Karollyal a megújuló Budapestről [Talks with Károly Kós on renewed Budapest]. In: *Élet és Irodalom*, 12th December 1958.; Tófalvi, Zoltán: Kezdeményezések és szervezkedések Erdélyben (Romániában)[Initiatives and organizations in Transylvania (Romania)] In: Szekelyhidi Ágoston ed.: *Magyar '56*. Budapest, MVSZ, 1996 186. mentions the Transylvanians László Salamon and László Varga by the name. He emphasizes their presence from the aspect that Transylvanian Hungarians could receive direct information about the revolution's events. It is also reasonable to count on reverse effects as well.

¹⁸ Means: all territories should be returned that were taken from Hungary – this was the slogan of the revisionist Hungarian policy between the two world wars.

¹⁹ Ungvári, Krisztián: A miskolci egyetemi diákkparlament története [The history of the students' parliament in Miskolc] *Múltunk* 1992/2-3. 132.

²⁰ Veszprém Megyei Népközség 30th October 1956.; Robert M. King op. cit. p. 78.

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there had been similar cases sporadically their significance could not possibly have been considerable otherwise they would be well-known. So the claim, that the issue of transborder Hungarians was not on the agenda during the revolution, has to be corrected. It is true though, there were surprisingly few such instances considering that it was hardly a decade after the Paris Peace Treaties, which revised the Vienna decisions and were one of the most neuralgic points of the Hungarian society.

The situation was quite different among the Hungarian population of neighbouring countries, where tense attention was paid to the events in the mother country in late autumn and winter of 1956. Based on my researches finished in 1998 and some additional data collected at a later period, I have attempted to count all the manifestations having taken place in the neighbouring countries – with the exception of Austria. I have taken into consideration all the events which had some kind of a positive link to the Hungarian revolution (as a sympathy manifestation or followed its suit), or at least partially opposed the official unfavouring assessment of the Hungarian situation by the state and party organisations. I have listed 93 such manifestations between autumn 1956 and summer 1958. The selection was not made according to significance – thus I have included the Temesvár student-riot which ended in gun-fight in streets and the Aaron blessing of the Calvinistic priest in Eszék, which he said with arms wide open towards Hungary. (Nine of these belong to the category which cannot be identified as an expression of sympathy towards Hungarian revolution but can be observed as turning against the official point of view.) It is evident that the list does not include all the democratic movements of the period and most likely it does not include all the known events either – since I had no opportunity to carry out more detailed studies. (See the appendix for the events that are included in the list.)

It can almost be taken for granted that the actual number of the various manifestations exceeds this figure although there are some events among the 93 which have only one recording therefore cannot be taken as fully proved. It is thus definitely not a full list of the transborder events of 1956. It was prepared to provide an overview of the order and character of the movements.

Research of the “transborder 56” is made difficult since the reliable sources has been preserved only in the case of those events where the participants were prosecuted. Certain secret service and public attitude reports of the state party could also have recorded further events. There were also movements, like the attempt of Pozsony University students to escape to Hungary which authorities did not learn about, thus no valuable evidence has remained about them. In some cases we would leave an event unmentioned that had actually happened but cannot be proved without doubt, it would be a mistake to assess an

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events as one which had taken place in fact. When preparing my thesis I considered it reasonable, both professionally and morally, to note all events I have learned about and have left any (even hazy) impression and try to balance between events which certainly or "allegedly" took place depending on the proving force of the source of reference.

The geographical division of the 93 events is as follows:

- 35 Romanian events have been taken into consideration. Three of these (the Bucharest student movement²¹, the reputed mass demonstration of Bucharest railwaymen²² and the commemoration of the Jászvásár University students of voivode István Nagy²³) were definitely and unmistakably Romanian moves and the Jászvásár movement, though it followed the Hungarian pattern, was focused on Romanian national aims. Hungarians, Romanians and people of other nationalities took part in four movements: the Temesvár events²⁴, in the preparation of the declaration of the Kolozsvár College of Fine Art²⁵ and the Aladár Szoboszlay plot²⁶. The rest of the manifestations can be linked primarily to Transylvanian Hungarians.

- Czechoslovakia is represented in the statistics with 47 events. Hungarians living in Slovakia had nothing to do with one of these events, with the speech of Ondrej Klokoč²⁷ in which he condemned the Hungarian revolution but demanded wider Slovakian autonomy and focused on expressively Slovakian national aims. It is also most likely that the student movements in Nyitra and Kassa were also of

²¹ Beke, György: Elmaradt kezűfogás... 1956 Bukarestben [Handshake that failed to happen... in Bukarest in 1956]. In: Erdélyi Magyarország 1993/10-12.; Radu Duduica a contemporary Romanian university student also told me about his experience in person.

²² Mentioned by Gál, Mária: Az erdélyi ötvenhat háttéréről és következményeiről [The background and consequences of 1956 in Transylvania]. In: Korunk 1996/10.

²³ Personal information from Alexandru Zub – leader of the movement who was later sentenced to imprisonment –, and Aurel Baghiu: 1956-os diákmozgalmak és azok következményei Romániában [Student movements and their consequences in Romania]. In: Békés, Csaba ed.: Az 1956-os forradalom helye a kommunista rendszer összeomlásában. Budapest, 56-os Intézet, 1993. 102.

²⁴ Baghiu, Aurel op. cit. pp. 98-101, Tófalvi, Zoltán: Kezdeményezések és szervezkedések Erdélyben (Romániában) [initatives and organizings in Transylvania (Romania)]. In: Székelyhöz. Agoston ed.: Magyar 56. Budapest, MVSZ, 1996.

²⁵ Tófalvi, Zoltán op. cit. pp. 187-190.; Interview with Gyula Dávid (OHA) 58.

²⁶ Tófalvi, Zoltán op. cit. pp. 207-211.; Tófalvi, Zoltán: Negyven éve végezték ki a tizenkét erdélyi ötvenhatost [It is 40 years that the 12 Transylvanian 56-s were executed]. In: Napj Magyarországon 7th November 1998.; Interview with Károly Lőrincz Sándor (OHA) 587.; Interview with Péter Orbán (OHA) 635

²⁷ This is reported by the Hungarian Consulate General in Pozsony on 18th January 1957. HNA XIX-J-1-j Czechoslovakian CDH 14.d. 4fj 00277/1957. 11.

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Slovakian character²⁹, the history of which is hardly known. The interview of Viktor Egri and Ladislav Mõaeko with Péter Veres in *Kulturny Zivot* – which was pulped before distribution could be started - can be considered as a Hungarian-Slovakian common event.²⁹ The rest of the events enlisted and were taken into consideration are primarily linked to Hungarians³⁰ although several individual Slovakian moves also took place according to the so far incomplete research of UPN.³¹ It can be misleading that statistically far more events can be listed in the Upland than in Transylvania. The primary reason is that numerous local organisations of Csemadok (Cultural Union of Hungarian Workers in Czechoslovakia) resisted to except a statement condemning the revolution (19 cases of which I have found traces in archives³²) which almost doubles the events numerically. Unlike Transylvania where we have accounts of political programmes or plot-like organisations there were no such manifestations in the Upland.

● 7 events were added to the list of the movements and manifestations in Subcarpathia. Allegedly Ukrainian students were also sentenced at the University of Ungvár because of expressing sympathy towards the revolution (there is only one reference to this event and that is an oral one³³); the rest of the events were fully Hungarian by character.

● We can mention four events in Yugoslavia. In case of three of these (the protest against the execution of Imre Nagy in Kula and Zombor³⁴ which supported the official point and the Újvidék movement³⁵ which was reportedly an opposing manifestation) we cannot ascertain whether Hungarians and/or Serbs took part.

²⁹ Exploration of it is in process as part of the research programme of the Slovakian National Remembrance Institute. At the time there were not many Hungarians studying at Nyitra. Teacher training was moved there only in 1960.

³⁰ This is reported by the Hungarian Consulate General in Pozsony on 20th March 1957. HNA XIX-J-1-j Czechoslovakian CDH 14 d. 4/j 001845/1957.

³¹ Although I did not take into consideration those reported demonstrations in Érsekújvár, Léva, Losonc, Kassa and Nagykapos about which the Vienna correspondent of London Times reported but no other source referred to. In case these actually took place – which is well imaginable because two localities about which the London Times was informed has been proved – then there might have been such among them in which Slovaks took part either fully or partially.

³² The initial sympathy towards the revolution on behalf of the Slovaks is referred to in the report of the Hungarian Consulate General in Pozsony on 18th January 1957. HNA XIX-J-1-j Czechoslovakian CDH 14 d. 4/j 00277/1957 and the report of the Hungarian Embassy to Prague on 22nd November 1956 HNA XIX-J-1-j Czechoslovakian CDH 14 d. 4/j 007792/1956.

³³ Report for the presidential meeting of Csemadok on 22nd February 1957 BH Csem. Arch. E-III. d. E-57-3.; Minutes. Recorded in the presidential meeting of Csemadok on 11th January 1957 BH Csem. Arch. E-III. d. E-57-1.5.; and folder called "Évzáró közgyűlések – 1957".

³⁴ Impact of the 1956 revolution on the neighbouring countries. Contribution of György Dupka Duna TV 25th October 1998. 22.50.

³⁵ Report of the Hungarian Embassy to Belgrade on 1st July 1958 HNA XIX-J-4 documents of the Embassy to Belgrade 27.d. pp. 385-386.

³⁶ Revay. István: A jugoszláviai magyarság helyzete [The situation of Hungarians in Yugoslavia]. In: *Katolikus Szemle* 1958. 77.

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When reviewing the events in Romania and Czechoslovakia they have been divided into groups by their character too. Some were related to the special local interests and incidents of the given settlement. (For example remedies for the incidents to which people were exposed in the course of establishing farmers' co-operatives, or the removal of symbols of despotism. The majority of the Slovakian movements were of this kind according to oral information of Slovakian researchers. Having been unfamiliar with these so far I could not include or take them into consideration in the list.) Others intended to help Hungarian freedom fighters in a more practical way for instance by trying to cross the border to take part in the fights. The majority of events represent symbolic solidarity: wearing mourning-band after the Soviet intervention in Hungary or singing the Hungarian National Anthem at masses and public worships. Resistance against the initiatives of Romanian and Czechoslovakian powers – i.e. signing declarations of loyalty – is also represented in the statistics in significant numbers. I indicated the markedly Romanian and Slovakian manifestations and forms of non-conformist behaviour experienced among officials separately.

Two aspects could be of extreme importance corresponding to the political stability of Soviet interests in the region – and for the later Hungarian national policy and minority policies of the neighbouring countries. One is that the language competence of Hungarian minority and emotional ties to the mother country worked as an intermediating agent towards the majority society. The other one is that although vast majority of the events were spontaneous expressions of emotions a few movements requiring considerable organising work also took place (especially in Romania). Both in Romania and in Slovakia there were manifestations on the part of the officials of minorities and their press³⁶ which differed or sometimes even opposed the assessments of the situation of the Romanian and Czechoslovakian party leadership³⁷. Although I counted nine of this kind it is also relative because I did not take into account such phenomena which cannot be qualified as separate events but are of moral significance and not even to a minor extent at that. Examples of these are: Ernő Gál prorector in Kolozsvár or Iván Janda deputy principal of a secondary school in Pozsony who made efforts to protect their students, who were involved in organisations, from the revenge of the power by making use of their good connections.

³⁶ I wrote about this in detail in my study: A határon túli magyar sajtó a forradalom alatt és után [The transborder press during and after the revolution] In: Kisebbségkutatás 1998/3., and Magyar Figyelő 1998/10. For critical remarks concerning the study see Gagyi Balla, István: Néhány észrevétel és megjegyzés... [Some remarks and reflections] In: Magyar Figyelő 1999/6.

³⁷ I used the expression "ethnic party society" in my similar dissertation on the basis of Csaba Vass' candidate thesis which had been accepted in 1994 but when discussing my dissertation in 2005 it caused a debate which included emotional elements as well.

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Relatively serious measures of retaliation followed the movements with exception in Yugoslavia. Measures of the sentences cannot be compared to the Hungarian ones, because of the different character of the events on the one hand, and because the number and the rate of capital punishments were far lower on the other. The institution of forced labour camps were still in effect in Romania and in the Soviet Union at the end of the fifties like in Recsk in Hungary where the political convicts mostly ended up and were practically buried alive.

It is also to be noted that the most serious of all measures taken in the neighbouring countries fell on participants of the Szoboszlay plot with 10 death sentences;³⁸ though other events like a student riot in Temesvár involved more people and their programme was based on more realistic grounds than that of Szoboszlay. Szoboszlay had started the organisation before the outburst of the Hungarian revolution while most movements emerged after the Hungarian revolution. Since delivery of the verdict took place in May 1958, a few days before the end of the Imre Nagy trial, Romania most possibly organised a demonstrative procedure linked to the Hungarian events obeying a Soviet scenario.³⁹

I suppose Szoboszlay and his companions might have been chosen, because in the other cases there was no significant link between the initiations coming from the society and the sphere of the top officials. Aladár Szoboszlay himself, considering his past as a priest of peace, linked these two spheres. The organisation reached the Romanian Army and relatives of the highest ranked party cadreman of Hungarian nationality, János Fazekas, were also involved. Although it is suspected that the contact person between them and the army betrayed the plot it is also true that none of those with top official links was sentenced to death. The merciless revenge still warned the reigning class that retaliation for cooperating with democratic movements could go as far as it had in Hungary.

The noteworthy minority political aspect of the trials and sentences against Hungarians in 1956 cases was the fact that the Hungarian national Pál Macskásy was the prominent judge and the juries also included Hungarian individuals.⁴⁰ The Romanian power had Hungarians to sentence Hungarians. This is explained in various ways by oral historical memories and studies. As I see it the power was inspired to apply Hungarian judges in these trials to prove that retaliation derived not because participants of the plot were Hungarian but because of their being dis-

³⁸ See the Szoboszlay case and the sentences in *ie. Tófalvi, Zoltán op. cit. pp. 207-211*. The author declares the event to be exaggerated by the investigation authorities. Actually establishing a network of several hundred people in the system of terror in the fifties is a remarkable organisation performance even though it failed.

³⁹ According to the interview with Balázs Orbán (OHA) questions were kept being asked concerning the Hungarian relations.

⁴⁰ See Tófalvi, Zoltán *op. cit.* 211.

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loyal to the communist system independently of their nationality. Most likely the declarations of loyalty were published for the same purpose in the name of Transylvanian and Slovakian Hungarians both in Romania and Slovakia, after having forced Hungarian work brigades or student communities or intellectual societies to sign a document centrally composed.⁴¹ Following the first declarations of loyalty the government issued a declaration that Slovakian and Transylvanian Hungarians unanimously opposed the revolution. Gheorghiu Dej, the Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party was the first to make such an announcement in his speech at Marosvásárhely on the 16th December 1956.⁴² In Slovakia Gyula Lőrincz, the Secretary General of Csemadok was the highest level official to refer to the aid given to the Soviets by Hungarians of Slovakia in his speech at Komárom on 1st May 1957, after several media analyses published in the local press in Czechoslovakia.⁴³

Declarations of loyalty to the power can be considered to be total lies compared to the statistics of manifestations of solidarity with the revolution. By forcing the signatures of declarations of loyalty the party leadership could establish a virtual situation as if the transborder Hungarians would have supported the repression of the revolution, the Soviet occupation of the mother country and the establishment of the Kádár-regime. Since the virtual reality, created by violence, was considered to be real, Hungarian minorities were relieved from the charge of "collective responsibility" – at least in 1956 and at the beginning of 1957. This might have been of great importance in the mid-fifties since ten years earlier, after World War II collective impeachment of minorities was applied as the official state-policy in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia but partially in Romania as well. Though during the period of the Hungarian revolution Hungarians were relieved from the charge of collective guilt, the impeachment of Hungarians as a community was not totally excluded but merely declared causeless owing to the acceptance of the virtual reality created by the power.

This official assessment was supported by the fact that transborder Hungarian party-cadremen – mostly from the Uplands – were employed in Hungary in the propaganda supporting the Soviet intervention.⁴⁴ Transborder Hungarian institutions were also abused: numerous copies of the Új Szó from Pozsony were dropped over the

⁴¹ I dealt with the issue of loyalty declarations in detail earlier in my study: Adalék a magyar kisebbségi kérdés történetéhez 1956. november – 1958. November [Contributions to the history of the Hungarian minority question November 1956 – November 1958]. In: Póloskei, Ferenc, Stenler, Gyula (ed.): Múltból a jövőbe. ELTE BTK, Budapest, 1997. See Nemzetiségi kérdés a Kárpát-medencében op. cit. ch. II. too.

⁴² Published in Balázs, Lajos (ed.): A szocializmus védelmében [In defence of socialism]. Marosvásárhely 1957.

⁴³ Kedves elvtársak. polgártársak... [Dear comrades, fellow citizens.] BH Csem Arch. materials to be edited.

⁴⁴ Balassa, Zoltán: Az 1956-os forradalom és szabadságharc évfordulóján [On the anniversary of the 1956 revolution]. I-III. Szabad Újság 23rd and 30th October and 4th November 1996.

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border as Soviet propaganda material in the days of the revolution. One of the most well-known declarations of loyalty was the "public letter"⁴⁵ of Transylvanian writers in which Hungarian writers were invited to take the side of the Kádár-government.

While in Romania, Czechoslovakia and in the Soviet Union, those who were sympathising openly with the revolution were punished (although the extent of cruelty varied from country to country), it cannot be claimed that the power reacted by generating an overall anti-Hungarian hysteria against the revolution. It even divided Hungarians virtually into groups of "good" and "bad" Hungarians by the forced declarations of loyalty and pretended as if the Transylvanian and Upland Hungarian minorities would have belonged to the "good" (i.e. Soviet-friendly) side.

According to our recent knowledge we can just guess the exact motives of this policy. Judging from Slovakian and Romanian movements it can be well assumed, that the power feared the failure of generated anti-Hungarian hysteria or that it can turn to its opposite. Primary principle for the leaders of the Soviet Union - and in the socialist countries neighbouring Hungary - was to block the further spread of the freedom movement immediately after the revolution, so minority policy aspects were subordinated to this.

This policy lasted only as long as Hungary had to be feared as a potential danger source. Hungarian declarations of loyalty made at the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957 did not hinder the disadvantageous reorganisation of the system of minority political institutions in Romania and in Czechoslovakia at the end of the fifties. AHP was abolished in Romania in 1959 –already references were made to the 1956 role of the students as an argument⁴⁶ - and so was the independent Hungarian University at Kolozsvár. All but two of the districts with Hungarian majority were abolished in Czechoslovakia in 1960.⁴⁷ Since plenty of minority institutions were abolished all around the socialist block (i.e. German in Poland⁴⁸, Sorbian in Eastern-Germany, Turkish in Bulgaria, Slovakian, Romanian and Yugoslavian in Hungary⁴⁹ etc.) it would be an exaggeration to suppose that the destruction of the institution system would have been a revenge on the Hungarians for 1956. It was not the revenge of a simi-

⁴⁵ Hungarian publication of the declaration of loyalty: Népszabadság (Budapest) 4th January 1957.

⁴⁶ Bodor, András: A Bolyai Tudományegyetem 1945-1959 [The Bolyai University]. In: Faragó, József – Incze, Miklós – Katona Szabó, István (ed.): „Az erdélyi magyar felsőoktatás évszázadai [The centuries of the Hungarian higher education in Transylvania]” festschrift of the exhibition and conference. Budapest, 1996. 295-296. Half a year before the process of dissolution started a student assembly was organised at the university on the second anniversary of the revolution. Students who sympathised openly with the revolution were given an opportunity to show public self-criticism but because of the speech of a student Lajos Vastag the assembly ended in scandal.

⁴⁷ I have written about the reform of the institution system in detail in *Nemzetiségi kérdés a Kárpát medencében...* [The question of nationality in the Carpathian Basin] op. cit. ch. III.3.

⁴⁸ The German journal in Poland the *Arbeiterstimme* was stopped overnight in 1959.

⁴⁹ Minority language secondary schools were reformed into bilingual and language teaching schools from 1958 in Bulgaria and from 1960 in GDR and in Hungary. This is dealt with in detail in my study *Az 1960-as nemzetiségi iskolareform* [The minorities school reform of 1960]. In: Ostvát, Anna - Szarka, László (ed.): *Anyanyelv, oktatás, közösségi nyelvhasználat*. Budapest, 2003.

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larly suppressed majority nation or on behalf of the communist power although sometimes local events of 1956 were used as an excuse sporadically but it was most likely the execution of a Moscow order of ideological character.

On the contrary; the statistics of democratic movements reveal that both Romania and Slovakia had its own history of 1956. In both cases the Hungarian minority's standing up for the mother country fighting for her freedom had played the primary role but Romanian and Slovakian reactions also constituted a significant component. In a way events of '56 in Ukraine could also be mentioned but – according to our recent knowledge - these were exclusively related to the Hungarian minority. 1956 should be considered as an extremely important event in the history of Romania: partly because beside Hungary and Poland it was at Temesvár where the most impressive student movement took place, stamped out by the powers using arms, and partly because the '56 movements meant the widest activity against Soviet dominance and for a democratic system before 1989.⁵⁰ From the more general aspect of the history of the region the "transborder '56" reveals that the movement for freedom - to a certain extent thanks to the Hungarian minorities - involved all countries of the Middle European region although the mainstream of the events was in Hungary and Poland.

In Hungary nothing was known about the transborder movements during the revolution thus manifestations of Hungarian minorities could not have possibly influenced the mainstream of events. Still they constitute part of the '56 drama since they were related to the events in Hungary. They indicated that transborder Hungarians experienced the events in Hungary as their own in 1956 too and they felt that it is not only their right but their obligation to make a stand in connection with the events taking place.

The moral significance of the transborder events is increased that it was barely ten years earlier – in the course of the execution of the Beneš-decrees in Czechoslovakia and the ethnic cleansing of Tito in Yugoslavia –where numerous people were taken to forced labour or even killed just because of being Hungarian. A decade or so after the incidents, officially still not condemned, symbolic solidarity with the mother country was extremely hazardous. Therefore we can take transborder movements of 1956 as the best example for solidarity between Hungarians separated from one another in the 87 years since the Trianon treaty. Even so because those Hungarians, who confessed to the Hungarian revolution, faced extreme danger without the hope that their personal fate possibly improve.

⁵⁰ In an unfortunately unrecorded conversation between me and Jan Langoš, he expressed similar views on '56 in Slovakia. Langoš drew a parallel between the significance of 1956 and 1968 in the case of Slovakia. He pointed out the difference that while reform initiation of the party elite lead to events of historical significance in 1968 Slovakian and Hungarian people spontaneously made a stand for historical events in 1956.