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FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Institute of International Studies
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Bachelor's Thesis

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**The impact of the war in Ukraine on the
political discourse around the 1956 revolution
in Hungary**

Bachelor's Thesis

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Study programme: Area Studies

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on
29th of April, 2024

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References

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to explore the discourse around the 1956 revolution in contemporary Hungary, and how the war in neighboring Ukraine affected it. On the topic of 1956 discourse evolution, a substantial literature exists, however none reflect the ongoing Russian aggression. Memory and memory politics will provide a theoretical framework for the thesis, with the speeches of Viktor Orbán and other top-level officials, will provide the primary sources, which will be analyzed through the lenses of discursive analysis. The findings indicate, that the interpretation have changed, however it kept the key trait of foreign policy reflection. The difference, this thesis concludes, is that on top of the traditional critical rhetoric towards the EU and left-wing politicians/parties, a new emphasis on peace, specifically peace talks, especially between the US and the Russians, which in the new interpretation, was the goal of the revolution and which would have led to an Austria style neutrality. This narrative about peace talks is frequently used by the Russian side, as in reality this would entail territorial or other appeasements of Russia, hence its introduction in the revolutionary discourse can be viewed as the continuation of the pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian politics of Viktor Orbán, factors which this thesis considers to be the main catalysators of the change in interpretation.

Abstrakt

Tato práce zkoumá vývoj diskurzu a výkladu revoluce 1956 v současném Maďarsku, a jak ho ovlivnila válka v sousední Ukrajině. Na toto téma, tedy vývoj zmíněného diskurzu, už existuje mnoho publikací, ale žádná ho nezkoumá ve světle probíhající ruské agrese. Práce bude vycházet z teorií paměti a navazující politiky paměti, které budou aplikovány na maďarský případ, a za pomoci diskurzivní analýzy budou analyzovány projevy vládních představitelů, především Viktora Orbána, které slouží jako primární zdroje této práce. Závěrem práce je, že výklad revoluce 1956 se po ruské agresi na Ukrajinu změnil, i když si zachoval vlastnost reflektovat maďarskou zahraniční politiku. Rozdíl mezi výkladem v roce 2022 a těmi z předešlých let nachází práce v tom, že se k dlouholeté tradici kritiky Evropské Unie a levicových stran, přidal narativ o důležitosti míru a mírových rokování. Tento narativ o mírovém rokování hojně využívá ruská strana, jelikož v praxi by to znamenalo teritoriální či jiné ústupky Rusku, a proto její představení v diskurzu, lze vnímat jak pokračování Orbánovy proruské a protiukrajinské politiky.

Keywords

Viktor Orbán, Memory politics, Fidesz, 1956 revolution, Russia-Ukraine war

Klíčová slova

Viktor Orbán, politika paměti, Fidesz, Revoluce 1956, Rusko-ukrajinská válka

Název práce

Dopad války na Ukrajině na politický diskurz revoluce 1956 v Maďarsku

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Introduction

Ambarne is a settlement in the East of Ukraine, with only a few kilometers separating it from Russia. Population wise, it harbors around two hundred inhabitants, size wise it encloses on a square kilometer. These handful of houses fell in the very first days of the full-scale invasion. It remained in Russian hands until the fall of 2022, when during the famous Charkiv offensive Ukrainian forces extricated it.

The liberation of such a trivial settlement would be hardly worthy of attention, it not being for the extraordinary circumstances. It is true that the soldiers who entered the village were units of the Ukrainian army, however they were not ethnic Ukrainians; rather Hungarians, sons of Zakarpatija. This unusual formation was immortalized on the Facebook page of one of the unit's members, Sandor Fedir¹, with many interesting details to observe.

The picture itself is a portrait of three soldiers in uniform holding two flags, a standard blue and yellow Ukrainian, and in contrast with it, the Hungarian red, white and green, but with a spin in the form of a hole in the middle of it. This is no coincidence or poor fabric quality. This particular version of the Hungarian tricolor is the symbol of the 1956 Hungarian uprising. It is further amplified by the description of the post, which makes a bold comparison between the two events. What's more, it points out the symbolic collision between the dates, as Ambarne was liberated on the 23rd of October, exactly 66 years after the start of the Hungarian revolution.

There is a multitude of reasons why a seemingly such a niche topic as the influence of the war in Ukraine on the Hungarian discourse on the 1956 revolution is worthy of academic attention. Firstly, as observers noted, the 1956 revolution is one of the most stable pillars of the Orban regime in Hungary.² It is not only a pillar, but the revolution of 1956 has a glasslike nature. For once it is a clear window into the country, every year reflecting the political situation as will be seen later in this thesis. Not only it is a window, it is also a crystal ball, that when examined properly, can give glimpses into the future both domestic and foreign politics-wise of Hungary.

¹ Sandor Fedir, "A magyarok felszabadítottak egy ukrán falut az oroszok alól.", Facebook, 23 October 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/100003579045232/posts/pfbid0wxLLh3KnqcWBCw83jFuKTfLQxesY9Wi2JLzkTjdSkVMfZyEuuWs2BHEQki6UQu6dl/>.

² Magyar Yeti, "56 emléke elleni erőszak, ahogy Orbán Viktor újraírja a történelmet", YouTube, 22 October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmEqFnF7GxM&t=3s>.

There is reason to believe the war would have some impact on the revolution. After the war in Ukraine started, most CEE countries championed their own experiences with Russian aggression. In these cases, the emphasis was put on Russian brutality, and on the necessity of international support for the victim. Hungary shares this experience, but a similar sentiment never materialized due its long-term Russian stances. Such a crucial event as the revolution's commemoration cannot be ignored, and hence there is reason to believe that a change in interpretation would be necessary to pander to Viktor Orbán's Russian ally.

Based on the previous paragraphs it is eminent what importance the 1956 revolution holds for understanding Hungary. This is further reinforced with vast academic research from the last years, with the likes of Csipke³, Fazekas⁴ or Gyányi⁵, just to name a few. However, there is no academic work that would be concerned with the impact the war in Ukraine had. This thesis aims to fill this void in both Czech and international academic debate. With the help of two key speeches presented by the prime minister himself in October of 2022 it offers a comprehensive evaluation of the current standing of the discourse.

The main question it aims to answer is *what impact the war in Ukraine had on the discourse surrounding the 1956 revolution?* The research question works with two hypotheses. Firstly, *that the war in Ukraine caused a major shift in the interpretation of the revolution*, and secondly, *that this shift is the result of the warm relations with Russia, and of the tension between Hungary, and both its Western allies and Ukraine.*

Methodology

First and foremost, it is essential to define the terms this thesis will operate with, namely narrative and discourse, as their understanding is crucial to the premise presented. Discourse is understood as the dimension synthesized by actors who wish to contribute with their ideas or understandings. Narratives are understood as universal as anyone can contribute, however less egalitarian as not all hold the same influence. They are the

³ Csipke Zoltán, "The Changing Significance of the 1956 Revolution in Post-Communist Hungary", *Europe Asia Studies* 63, no. 1 (2011): 99-128, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2011.534307>.

⁴ Fazekas Zsuzsanna, "Küzdelem az igazi 1956-ért", *Valóság* 60, no. 11 (November 2017): 89-104, http://www.epa.hu/02900/02924/00059/pdf/EPA02924_valosag_2017_11_089104.pdf.

⁵ Gyáni Gábor, "Memory and Discourse on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.", *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 8 (2006): 1199–1208. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451314>.

opinions and different views on the same event, in this case the Hungarian uprising. These are submitted into the space of the discourse to earn their creators political or intellectual capital.

For the analyses of the speeches and the evaluation of the current discourse a combination of methods was chosen. Namely, Critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Historical discourse analysis (HDA). Historical discourse analysis will provide contextual information for the reader, with the Critical discourse analysis providing a gloss of the narrative presented by the prime minister, its meaning, motivation, as well as implications. These two methods are of particular help to escape the trap of seeing a possible change as an isolated phenomenon, which would be the case with content analysis. It would also be defective as Viktor Orbán is a formidable orator known for metaphors, references and other *dispositifs litteraires*.

Critical discourse analyses (CDA) is most commonly attributed to French philosopher Michelle Foucault, originally created as part of his archeological exploration. The goal of CDA as Schneider argues is the following:

„Critical discourse analyses (CDA) is oriented at mapping the relationship between language (texts) and social structures. (...) CDA highlights that it is necessary to view language as a part of society and linguistic phenomena as societal ones. It accentuates that language have social determination and social consequences. On this basis CDA aims to implement any text (written or oral) into a larger framework it exists within. It also searches for how they are reproduced, received, but also socially distributed”⁶

The second method this thesis will rely on is Historical discourse analyses (HDA). This can be viewed as one of the many branches under the umbrella of CDA. According to Reisigler⁷ there are three main approaches to DHA, out of which the second and third will be used. Namely they are the analyses of thematically or functionally linked discourse fragment to observe their relation over time and focusing on the interpretation presented by

⁶ Sona Schneiderová, *Analýza diskurzu a mediální text* (Prague: Karolinum, 2015), 36.

⁷ Martin Reisigl, *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (London: Routledge, 2018), 44-59.

actors such as politicians or historians, and how they speak of the past.

As was mentioned above, Michelle Foucault is considered to be the founding father of CDA, however during the years many other influential thinkers worked on furthering and perfecting his method. One of the most prominent, and relevant for this thesis, is the work of Norman Fairclough on the subject. As sociologist Martin Hájek notes:

„His approach focuses on following the changes in language and connects them with the changes in society and culture. The necessary prerequisite for such conduct, according to Fairclough, is the familiarization of linguistic methods with theories of political and social nature. (...) In its accord it is the ambition to connect Foucault’s understanding of discourse with linguistically oriented discursive analyses.”⁸

Fairclough not only focuses on the importance of linguistics, but also raises awareness of the importance of providing the reader with sufficient context. As he argues, every declamation was custom tailored for a certain audience, hence understanding the political and social *zeitgeist* in which it was born is of utmost importance.⁹ Furthermore, this thorough approach greatly reduces the risk of conducting a shallow analysis.

Thesis structure and literature review

This thesis operates within the frame of the 1956 revolution and the year 2022, when the war in Ukraine and the suspected shift in the discourse went down. Territory-wise its primary focus is Hungary, however, as there are different actors such as Russia, Ukraine or the EU, their roles will also be scrutinized. Its method is the already discussed CDA and HDA primarily rooted in the works of Foucault¹⁰ and Fairclough.¹¹

The first section will lay down the theoretical foundation on which the work will be built

⁸ Martin Hájek, *Čtenář a stroj: vybrané metody sociálněvědní analýzy textů* (Prague: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), 2014), 122.

⁹ Jan Beneš, “Biopolitika a COVID-19“ (bachelor thesis, Charles University, 2021), 22.

¹⁰Michelle Foucault, *The Archeology of knowledge and the discourse on language* (New York: Pantheon books, 1972).

¹¹Norman Fairclough, *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language* (London: Routledge, 2010).

later on. It will consist of handpicked terms and frameworks in regards mainly to memory and memory politics. The primary framework is provided by Kubik and Bernhard who extensively studied memory politics and their place in political systems.¹² The main terms worth exploring consists of memory, memory politics, the role of forgetting within it, and identity building. For the purposes of this thesis, a brief overview of the ones relevant for contemporary Hungary will be sufficient based on Emler's study.¹³ May and Maissen focused on the role of politics through history, and they dedicated an entire chapter to the case study of Hungary, where as they hypothesize, memory politics is a core value of the Orban regime.¹⁴ The Irish historian Michael Toomey also examined Hungary and memory politics, with his main focus being Viktor Orban's *Zeitenwende*, turning from liberalism towards what we see today. Within this period of the illiberal democracy the prime minister started his grand plan to “reinterpret” the history of the 20th century, the topic of interest of Grinchenko and Narvslelius.¹⁵

The first chapter, namely the discourse surrounding the revolution will follow. This chapter will be divided into four parts chronologically. First, the communist era and then the three decades since. The communist era will be examined with the help of Reynolds, who compared it with the Prague Spring of 1968,¹⁶ and others, such as Horváth, who focused on the revolutions image until 1989.¹⁷ For the mapping since the turn towards democracy, the extensive works on the topic of Fazekas, Csipke and Miklóssy, will be utilized.¹⁸

The history of the discourse will be succeeded by the main part of the thesis, the analyses

¹² Jan Kubik and Michael Bernhard (eds), 'A Theory of the Politics of Memory', in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard, and Jan Kubik (New York: Oxford Academic, 2014), 7-34.

¹³ David Emler, “Politika, Historie, Pamět: Politické využívání minulosti ve Francii od 90. let 20. století“ (dissertation thesis, Charles University, 2014) 60-87.

¹⁴Niels F. May and Thomas Maissen, *National History and New Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century: A Global Comparison* (Milton: Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

¹⁵Gelinada Grinchenko and Eleonora Narvselius, *Traitors, Collaborators and Deserters in Contemporary European Politics of Memory: Formulas of Betrayal* (Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2017).

¹⁶David A.J. Reynolds, *Revisiting History in Communist Europe: Constructing Counter Revolution in 1956 and 1968* (London: Anthem Press, 2020).

¹⁷ Horváth Csaba, “Az 1956-os forradalom képe a hivatalos politikai és történelem felfogásban (1957-1989)“, *JURA* 13, no. 2 (2007): 68, https://jura.ajk.pte.hu/JURA_2007_2.pdf.

¹⁸ Katalin Miklóssy, “Memory and leverage“. In *Conservatism and Memory Politics in Russia and Eastern Europe*, ed. Katalin Miklóssy a Markku Kangaspuro (London: Routledge, 2021), 110-129.

Csipke, Zoltán, “The Changing Significance of the 1956 Revolution in Post-Communist Hungary“ *Europe-Asia Studies* 63, no. 1 (2011): 99-128, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2011.534307>.

Fazekas, Zsuzsanna, “Küzdelem az igazi 1956ért“. *Valóság* 60, no. 11 (November 2017): 89-104, http://www.epa.hu/02900/02924/00059/pdf/EPA02924_valosag_2017_11_089104.pdf.

of key factors that led to the shift in the discourse surrounding the revolution. For this both domestic and international elements will be examined. The first part will focus on the international influences. The relations with Russia will be studied with the help of investigative journalists, whom focused on this phenomenon.¹⁹ The relations with Ukraine will be detailed based on a mix of media articles and academic papers.²⁰

Posterior to the international dimension, domestic ones, mainly the influence of Viktor Orbán, who is arguably the single most important trendsetter and interpreted in the country today. His account is best demonstrated in the two key speeches from October 2022.²¹ These will be completed with opinions and critiques of historians Krisztián Ungváry²² and János Rainer.²³ Both had been vocal about the war, as well as the revolution and its correlation, making their accounts the more valuable for this thesis.

¹⁹ Pethő András and Szabó András, “Orbán játszómája Feltárul a Putyinnal kiépített kapcsolat titkos története”, *444.hu*, 11 March 2018, <https://444.hu/2018/03/11/orban-jatszomaja-feltarul-a-putyinnal-kiepitet-tkapcsolat-titkos-tortenete>.

„Orosz befolyás Magyarországon“, directed by ács Dániel (Film, 2018)

²⁰ Jakub Mareš, “Maďarská menšina na Ukrajině a její role ve vztazích Ukrajiny a Maďarska po roce 1991“ (bachelor thesis, Charles University, 2016).

²¹ Viktor Orbán, interview by Zsolt Törőcsik, Jó reggelt, Magyarország!, Kossuth Rádió, 14 October 2022. Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the opening ceremony of the Mindszentyneum“, *abouthungary.hu*, 24. October 2022, <https://abouthungary.hu/speechesand-remarks/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-mindszentyneum>.

²² Magyar Yeti, “56 emléke elleni erőszak, ahogy Orbán Viktor újraírja a történelmet“, YouTube, 22 October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmEqFnF7GxM&t=3s>.

²³ Windisch Judit, “Rainer M. János 56ról és az ukrán háborúról: Az is hasonló, hogy ki mellett áll az erkölcsi igazság”, *Hvg.hu*, 3 March 2022, https://hvg.hu/360/20220303_Rainer_M_Janos_orsz_ukran_haboru_1956.

1.Theoretical Background

1.1 Memory, memory politics and the 1956 revolution

This thesis is theoretically rooted in the concepts of memory and its aggressive, political form, memory politics. The main ones being, Marcus Halbwachs, known mainly for his concept of collective memory, sites of memory, crowned by Pierre Nora, or the role forgetting has on shaping memory, curated by Paul Ricour.²⁴ No less important is the dichotomy of cold and hot memory of Charles Meier, who categorizes memory based on the frequency of commemoration and scrutiny.²⁵

Each of these concepts helps understanding a different aspect of the Hungarian revolution's case. As will be demonstrated later on, the nation itself was deeply divided and polarized, especially in the 1990s while searching for a new identity. The three decades of actively enforced amnesia prevented the preservation of memory or factuality. This lack can be viewed as the main catalysator of it becoming a cold memory, or rather a colder one. The revolution itself never fully disappeared from people's minds, however the lack of commemoration or discussion, made it especially vulnerable to manipulation. Sites of memory such as plaques, statues, movies or songs have become parts of political campaign serving political interest, with little respect for factuality.

Memory politics itself is a widely debated and one of the primary battlefields for liberal democracy today. Many would be autocrats are trying to find justification for their policies, Hungary's Viktor Orban being a pioneer of the genre. A definition of memory politics is required to properly study it. Many are circulating today, but a very concentrated and accurate one was provided by Alon Confino; memory politics is who wants whom to remember how and what and why.²⁶

French-Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov also offers an extensive view into this world. His main focus became the means by which memory is abused (*Les Abus de la mémoire*), the different ways it happens. He differentiates between static and more flexible

²⁴ David Emler, "Politika, Historie, Pamět: Politické využívání minulosti ve Francii od 90. let 20. století." (dissertation thesis, Charles University, 2014) 60-87.

²⁵ Charles S. Meier, "Hot Memory/Cold Memory: the Political Half Life of Fascism and Communism", *PS*, 21 September 2001, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/hot-memory-cold-memory--the-political-half-life-of-fascism-and-communism>.

²⁶ Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method." *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1393. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2171069>.

means of taking a lesson from the past.²⁷

The most comprehensive model when it comes to memory politics can be attributed to the duo of Bernhard and Kubík. They differentiate between systems based on political actors and their aggressivity in a combination with the consensus or lack of present in the system. They are graded as uni or -multipolar, pillared or fragmented.²⁸ Anna Selény concludes Hungary is a heavily fragmented case, with Viktor Orbán posing as a classical mnemonical warrior, one of the archetypes of the authors.²⁹

1.2 From the revolution to longing for an identity

In contemporary Hungary memory is manifested mostly in memory politics, with factuality being heavily sidelined. This is mostly the making of the last three Orbán governments, however the roots go deeper in time than that. A key component for memory politics is having an actual memory of the event, whether on an individual or a group level. In the case of the revolution of 1956 this is the basis of why it is so vulnerable against memory politics from all sides of the political spectrum.

The 1956 revolution was preceded by 30 years of complete silence. As Gábor Gányi writes, „the memory of the 1956 revolution was fundamentally formed primarily by the following terror, in combination with the presence of the red army. These factors are behind the forced amnesia hoped for by János Kádár, but also the inevitable failure of this attempt.”³⁰ After the end Kádár era, the country was forced to reflect on the past and find a new identity.³¹ In Hungary it was further complicated by the relatively high level of economic comfort that made many nostalgic and less critical of the regime. In sharp contrast with the nostalgia some called for a completely new way. This is for example illustrated by the campaign of the opposition democratic forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum, MDF) who choose the “great spring cleaning” (Tavaszi Nagytakarítás) as their slogan.³²

²⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, “Zneužívání paměti” in *Politika paměti: antologie francouzských společenských věd*, ed. Francoise Mayer (Prague: CEFRES, 1998), 101-108.

²⁸ Kubik, Jan, and Michael Bernhard (eds), A Theory of the Politics of Memory', in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard, and Jan Kubik (New York, 2014; Oxford Academic, 2014), 7-34.

²⁹ Anna Selény, “Revolutionary Road: 1956 and the fracturing of Hungarian historical memory“ in *Twenty Years After Communism*, ed. Michael Bernhard, and Jan Kubik (New York: Oxford Academic, 2014), 37-59.

³⁰ Gyáni Gábor, “Memory and Discourse on the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.”, *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 8 (2006): 1200. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20451314>.

³¹ Ibid., 1199.

³² Balog Gábor, “Országos Tavaszi Nagytakarítást”, [30éveszabados.hu](http://www.30eveszabados.hu), 10 August 2021, <https://www.30eveszabados.hu/orszagos-tavaszi-nagytakaritast>.

In the 1990s the ideal environment for memory politics was already well under cultivation. The end of the cold war was supposed to be the beginning of a new era of western like prosperity. Reality was however very different. Instead of the fantasized German cars, American jeans and Japanese electronics only economic uncertainty and exhaustive political bickering arrived. This left a bitter aftertaste in many ordinary citizens mouths. The nostalgia after the age of goulash communism with this newfound disenchantment led to terms like the West or liberal democracy gaining a negative charge.

An explanation can be found in Francis Fukuyama's essay on the end of history. Postmodern liberal democracy is known for cultural mixing, progressive values and canonized past. This can be achieved when the promised wellbeing of the people is delivered. In the case of it not happening, like in many of the former Moscow satellites, a different process starts. Ambitious political actors start to play on people's frustration, essentially becoming mnemonic warriors. Memory politics in this sense is the main line of defense against the end of history.³³ In extreme cases this can even lead to the creation of Cults of Tradition, which in Umberto Eco's view, is the centering of the reconstruction of a non-existent lost paradise in state policy.³⁴

1.3 Viktor Orbán and the raiders of the Past

Prime minister Orbán is more than familiar with the potential frustration among the people holds. Afterall, he himself is the product of the plebiscite of the regime change. As a little-known law student he gained fame in 1989, at the reburial of Imre Nagy, mostly for his fiery speech and silver tongue. Viktor Orbán wasn't unique just by using memory as a tool, as nearly all politically interested did. This plurality led to almost a pseudo market competition, where fractions became companies, historical interpretations became products being offered to the voters as the customer base. As András Keszei writes, the past became a commodity, that gained new relevance as the source of personal and also collective identity.³⁵

The first serious opportunity to mobilize the masses arose for Fidesz in 1998, its first time leading a government. At that time there was no illiberal memory politics per se, however

³³ Paul Connerton, *How Modernity Forgets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism", *The New York Review*, 22 June 1995, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/>.

³⁵ Keszei, András. "Memory and the Contemporary Relevance of the Past.", *The Hungarian Historical Review* 6, No. 4 (2017): 805-6. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26374407>.

they started dipping their toes in the waters of history perversion. There was a respectable amount of competing narratives at the time, making Hungary a unique case.³⁶ Fidesz chose the ideological camp of a national revolution, emphasizing the role of the people revolting. By the end of the millennium they would completely privatize this narrative and the narrative would become intertwined with Fidesz's identity.

Simultaneously the question of memory sites was poking up its head. Old monuments were to be torn down, while new ones to be erected to replace them, eventually replacing their history as well. As Gergő Szücs noted, paradoxically the idols and heroes of the past were removed and condemned, while the condemned and removed of the past, became the new heroes and idols.³⁷

There were however less subtle hints of the direction Fidesz wanted to take the past. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the fall of communism, foreign dignitaries, including German chancellor Kohl, were invited to the country. This wouldn't be surprising, not being for the request to pass on having a speech, a reason attendance was declined in most cases. This ultimately led to the whole event being dominated by Fidesz and their allies. The second major focal point of the four years was the construction of the infamous House of Terror museum, a controversial case study of early Orbánian memory politics, dissected in the next chapter.

After the first taste of power eight years in the opposition followed for Fidesz. This time was spent no less proactively using every mean, including memory politics to gain ground. During this time memory became one of the few arenas where they could be equal to the government, and its considerable larger resources and influence. In 2006 they managed to mobilize with the help of 1956 revolution on its anniversary against the then leftist Gyurcsány Ferenc government, this becoming one of their great myths of fighting against evil, known under the name peace march (*békemenet*). The roots of today's "the light of Fidesz fighting against all sorts of darkness and malice" can be found here. Another grave split from the past was the militance of the whole escapade. With becoming true memory salesman, or memory entrepreneurs known by theorists³⁸, they profiled themselves not only

³⁶ Melinda Harlov-Csörtán, "Betrayal of Memory in Hungarian Public Memorials of the Twentieth Century" in *Traitors, Collaborators and Deserters in Contemporary European Politics of Memory: Formulas of Betrayal*, ed. Gelina Grinchenko and Eleonora Narvselius, (Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 337-360.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 344.

³⁸ Autry, Robyn, *Desegregating the Past: The Public Life of Memory in the United States and South Africa* (New York Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2011), 100.

as the force for good, but as the sole keeper and protector of the truth. This automatically classified any anti-Fidesz force as a *persona non grata*.

After the arguably fall of the Hungarian left a new challenge arose for Fidesz's domination in both the fields of politics and memory. The newly formed alt-right party Jobbik would go on to form the next government, Unlike the previous ideological opposite of the leftist socialist Party, that was easy to whip through the black and white lenses, Jobbik presented similar values, policies and worldviews. To face this challenge Fidesz choose a more aggressive rhetoric which was within its option as an established party, while the political novice Jobbik could not. This was demonstrated in the research of Ákos Hollányi, who noticed a similarity of the mnemonic fields the two parties operated on, however a considerable boldness to go into the past on the side of Fidesz, while Jobbik preferred to stay in the present or recent past.³⁹

The first two decades of the third Hungarian republic memory politics-wise was overwhelmingly a domestic matter. This was aggressively overruled by the Eastern Opening policy of the 2010s where it became a tool of foreign policy. As Eric Langenbacher writes, the at home interpretations of history will inevitable have an influence on foreign relations.⁴⁰ After gaining a constitutional majority in the parliament there was little to stop Fidesz from overwriting entire sections of history, and to use it for its geopolitical interests, with the 1956 revolution being a staple of this effort.

y Press, 2017), 27-65.

³⁹ Ákos Hollányi, "Memory politics and European integration on the Hungarian Right: a comparative analysis of the rhetoric of Viktor Orbán and Gábor Vona" (master's thesis, Charles University, 2023), 42.

⁴⁰Langenbacher, Eric and Yossi Shain, *Power and the Past: Collective Memory and International Relations* (Washington D.C.:Georgetown University Press, 2010), 13-50.

2. The revolutionary discourse throughout the years

2.1 The post-revolution period until the fall of communism (1956-1988)

After the stormy events of November 1956, the new general secretary János Kádár had the herculean task of restoring stability. With the help of the Red Army he evaporated the armed insurgence, but pacifying the populace would require finesse rather than brute force. His first task was to come up with an official account of the event. For this purpose, he created a narrative popular among communist dictators, namely the presence of non-existent fascist elements supported from abroad. Shortly after on the states authority so called “white books “, named after the counter Bolshevik forces, were born. In 1957 a four-volume study, meant as the canonized version of the events under the name *counterrevolutionary forces surrounding the October events in Hungary (Ellenforadalmi erők a magyar októberi eseményekben)* was published. According to historian Csaba Horváth, every volume focused on a different aspect, such as the role of Mátyás Rákosi, who became a scapegoat, the victims of the alleged white terror, the role of foreign powers, or a philosophical polemic about coalition governments.⁴¹ This narrative wasn't exclusively for domestic audiences; Herbert Aptheker, an American historian, and communist sympathizer, published an English version under the name *the Truth about Hungary*. The success of monopolizing the foreign discourse is however questionable at best. Media outlets such as the BBC or Radio Free Europe regularly reported propaganda free accounts and stories of the revolution accessible to Hungarian listeners.⁴²

The complete centralization of the discourse wasn't the only solution Kádár came up with. Beginning in 1957 he introduced quasi market reforms aimed at increasing the living standard in the country, in the hopes of it increasing societal amnesia and loyalty. This period often referred to as goulash communism, sealed a deal of quid pro quo between the people and the communist government, which Kádár referred to as who isn't against us, is with us.⁴³ As Beth Green argues, In Hungary these reforms were a product of necessity,

⁴¹ Horváth Csaba, “Az 1956os forradalom képe a hivatalos politikai és történelem felfogásban (1957-1989)“, *JURA* 13, No. 2 (2007): 68, https://jura.ajk.pte.hu/JURA_2007_2.pdf.

⁴² Danyi Gábor, “Phantom Voices from the Past: Memory of the 1956 Revolution and Hungarian Audiences of Radio Free Europe.” *The Hungarian Historical Review* 5, No. 4 (2016): 790–813. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44390815>.

⁴³ Simon István, “Aki nincs ellenünk, az velünk van“ Hungarian National Archive, 22 May 2015, https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/ol/hirek/aki_nincs_ellenunk_az_velunk_van.

rather than goodwill after the 1956 revolution, and the ever-despised presence of the hated Red Army in the country.⁴⁴

As Hannah Arendt writes, in 1957 there was still a public commemoration of the revolution, but in ten years-time there would be none.⁴⁵ As goulash communism would progress, as Gábor Danyi noted, apathy would overtake the land.⁴⁶ The combination of the brute force of the Red Army, and the finessing of the people with economic prosperity would achieve its goal. For the next 30 years the story of November '56 would be covered in a veil of silence.

2.2 Democratic ambitions and the quest for something new (1989-1998)

After the peaceful years of the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s presented the Hungarian central committee with new challenges that would eventually lead to its downfall. With the economic shockwaves felt through the Eastern bloc, one of the pillars of the goulash communism deal started to crumble. The situation further deteriorated after Kádár's death, and the growing power struggle inside the party. Through all these problems, the classical narrative about the revolution of 1956, seemed to be stable, but for reinforcing it a new docuseries named *Living history (Velünk élő történelem)* was contracted.⁴⁷

This effort would be eventually in vain; the 1988 party congress would already be dominated by the reformist wing. The climax of the reforms, and a fatal sign of the regime's impotence, would come in 1989, during the reburial of Imre Nagy attended by a quarter million citizens in Budapest.⁴⁸ During the event the committee for historical justice (Történelmi Igazságtételi Bizottság) would be founded, and speeches by former revolutionaries and current critics would take place. The only exception from these two exclusive categories was a young, unknown law student, named Viktor Orbán, who's speech sociologist Miklós Sükösd dubbed the "most important of the transition towards democracy".⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Beth Greene, "Selling Market Socialism: Hungary in the 1960s." *Slavic Review* 73, No. 1 (2014): 113. <https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.73.1.0108>.

⁴⁵ Hannah Arendt, "Totalitarian Imperialism: Reflections on the Hungarian Revolution." *The Journal of Politics* 20, No. 1 (1958): 5–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2127387>.

⁴⁶ Danyi Gábor, "Phantom Voices from the Past: Memory of the 1956 Revolution and Hungarian Audiences of Radio Free Europe." *The Hungarian Historical Review* 5, No. 4 (2016): 790, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44390815>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 792-94.

⁴⁸ Péterfi Gábor, "Nagy Imre és társainak újratemetése", *Rubicon.hu*, 16 June 1989, <https://rubicon.hu/cikkek/nagy-imre-es-tarsainak-ujratemetese>.

⁴⁹ Miklós Sükösd, "Orbán áldozatai", *Médiakutató* 23, No. 34 (2022): 62. https://www.mediakutato.hu/cikk/2022_03_osz_tel/05_orban_aldozatai.pdf.

Through all the hopes and dreams connected to freedom, a core problem, namely the fragmentation in regards the revolution, was already visible. Every speaker presented a different account of the events. Viktor Orbán spoke about the democracy and communism being dichotomies, Miklós Vásárhelyi, chairman of the justice committee, praised Nagy as a modern cut democrat, and Imre Mécs, a former death row sentencee, spoke about the streets and the ordinary mundane revolting.⁵⁰ The topic of the revolution would only be highlighted after the de facto regime change; it would go as far as to be included in the new constitution.

Questions such as who were the revolutionaries, or what was their goal would present a chimera for the years to come, starting in the 1990s. Every party, and every fraction would come up with its own narratives and heroes to present. The zeitgeist was accurately summarized by president József Antal, who said that the revolution of 1956 was more of a myth rather than reality.⁵¹

The central question was the role of Imre Nagy. The harsh contrast between him being hailed by the left as modernizer and democrat, and ostracized by the right as the role of the people and the anticommunist struggle were to be highlighted. Nagy being praised by the then leftist Horn government, made his person the topic of discussion.

The lack of engagement by the government and the militant campaign of Fidesz would start to push out the leftist narrative out of the discourse. As historian János Rainer noted, the inability of the socialist to distance from its communist predecessor and Kádár was utilized against them by Viktor Orbán.⁵² The bet on Imre Nagy would cause their downfall as they, against the public antipathy put him in the center of the 40th anniversary commemoration erecting a statue in his honor. Consequences quickly followed as the socialist were the only ones to vote for a memorial act they put forward in the parliament. After that debacle, the *coup de grâce* came by the revelation that Gyula Horn, party patriarch and prime minister, was a member of the people's militia who fought against the revolution.

⁵⁰Fazekas Zsuzsanna, "Küzdelem az igazi 1956ért". *Valóság* 60, No. 11 (November 2017): 91, http://www.epa.hu/02900/02924/00059/pdf/EPA02924_valosag_2017_11_089104.pdf.

⁵¹Kerényi György, "Már nem is érdekes az egész", Rainer M. János történész Nagy Imre és a Fidesz viszonyáról", *Szabad Európa*, 16 June 2023, <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/mar-nem-is-erdekes-az-egesz-rainer-m-janos-tortenesz-nagy-imre-es-a-fidesz-viszonyarol/32459556.html>.

⁵² Ibid..

2.3 One nation two camps (1998-2010)

After the chaos and initial competition of the 1990s only two narratives made it to the new millennia- the bourgeoisie revolution of Fidesz, and the reform through revolution championed by the socialist forces. The revolution was one of the great stepping stones for Fidesz, who in 1998 formed the government. Access to state resources and influence only governmental forces had enabled to elevate their memory politics strategy to new heights. Some spectators consider today's aggressive memory politics and history centralization to be rooted in this period.⁵³

The crown jewel of this effort is undisputedly the house of terror (Terror háza) in the capital. The three-story building located under Andrásy st. 60 was chosen deliberately; During the second world war it was used by the arrow crosses (nyilaskeresztes párt), the Hungarian Nazi party, and after the war it served as the HQ of the communist secret police. The importance of the project is also reflected by the astronomical budget of 3.5 billion Hungarian forints, and the fact that it was opened personally by Viktor Orbán on the 24th of February, 2002. The museum sparked controversy from the day its doors opened. Historian Krisztián Ungváry wrote an in-depth analysis of it, mainly scrutinizing the rich palette of manipulative elements in it.⁵⁴

In 2002 Fortuna turned her back on Fidesz, and the party spent the next 8 years in the opposition. This period can be described as less influential, however just as loud and aggressive as ever before. During the eight years there would be two instances in particular, (un)ironically both connected to the revolution of 1956. Viktor Orbán would utilize all he learned before to complete his transformation into a true *homo politicus*.

The first instance came shortly after the election loss in 2004. Then prime minister Péter Medgyessy was revealed as a secret service agent in the revolutionary days. The exposé in Hungarian nation (Magyar Nemzet), among other factors, led to the loss of his coalition partner's support, and to the fall of his government.⁵⁵ Later the socialist party nominated Ferenc Gyurcsány as his successor, the second and more valuable scalp.

In 2006 a different kind of exposé was published. The damning recording captured prime

⁵³ Andrea Pető, "The Illiberal Memory Politics in Hungary", *Journal of Genocide Research* 24, No. 2 (2022): 245, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/14623528.2021.1968150?needAccess=true>.

⁵⁴ Ungváry Krisztián, "A káosz háza", *Magyar Narancs*, 7 March 2002, https://magyarnarancs.hu/konyv/a_kaosz_haza59381.

⁵⁵ Dezső András and Szabolcs Dull, "Éppen tíz éve bukott meg Medgyessy Péter", *Index*, 25 August 2014, https://index.hu/belfold/2014/08/25/eppen_tiz_eve_bukott_meg_medgyessy_peter/.

minister Gyurcsány admitting to multiple counts of corruption, coverups, and misleading the public for years. The whole affair was summarized with the since legendary quote from the tape, „we fucked up (...), not a little, but a lot...”.⁵⁶ That year the commemoration of 1956 turned into a call to arms event. Viktor Orbán organized an alternative commemoration meeting at Astoria in the capitol to compete with the official government one. Bolstered by the atmosphere of the 50th anniversary he drew parallels between the present and the past, his disenchanted listeners and the revolutionaries, and open communists and the “corrupted post-communists”, as he referred to the socialist. The crowd incited by his words would later clash with law enforcement, becoming one of the worst riots in the country’s latest history.

2.4 Vae Victis (2010- 2021)

In 2010 old-new prime minister Viktor Orbán began his second term. Ideas of peace after the chaotic previous years of economic hardship and political scandals didn’t last long. Soon after taking office he announced the Eastern opening policy, which was meant to radically reshape geopolitical stances of the country. According to the government economic diversification was necessary after the 2008 crisis, and as it turned out, it would have a significant impact on foreign relations as well. The long standing idea of „oil coming from the East, but freedom comes from the West”,⁵⁷ turned in 2010 into „sailing under a Western flag with Eastern winds”.⁵⁸

After the revamping of relations, cheap Russian gas, which allowed the government to cut energy costs for citizens, started to show its true cost. On multiple instances both domestically and on international matters, stances would change to accommodate Russian interest. The 1956 revolution being a particularly sensitive topic in bilateral relations would also be affected. In 2014 Viktor Orbán was publicly praising Russia, and in 2015 Russian president Putin during his visit would pay his respect at the memorial of fallen Russian soldiers. The memorial itself is also worthy of attention; it was newly reconstructed with Russian rubles. The whole event was seen as a gesture towards Russia, as they copied Russian rhetoric and the memorial itself also praised soldiers who died in

⁵⁶Index, “Gyurcsány: Ezt nagyon elkürtük”, *Index*, September 17th 2006, <https://index.hu/belfold/gyfosz060917/>.

⁵⁷ 24.hu admin, “Orbán: az olaj keletről jön, de a szabadság nyugatról”, *24.hu*, 30 March 2007, https://24.hu/belfold/2007/03/30/orban_olaj_keletről_jon/.

⁵⁸ Magyar Péter, “Orbán: Keleti szél fúj”, *Index*, 5 November 2010, https://index.hu/belfold/2010/11/05/orban_keleti_szel_fuj/.

1956.⁵⁹ A year later the Russian state owned channel Rossija 1 would air a segment dedicated to the revolution of 1956, blaming foreign elements such as the CIA, and called the revolutionaries Nazi sympathizers.⁶⁰ The Hungarian governments expressed its outrage, however according to the Russian ambassador, it was more of a storm in a teacup, calling it a friendly chat with minister Péter Szíjjártó.⁶¹

The year 2016, the 50th anniversary of the revolution, was supposed to be grandiose. The speech of the prime minister in front of the masses only presenting the tip of the iceberg. Gábor Tallai, the organizer of the event, described their aim as there should be no citizen who would be not reached by the story of the revolution.⁶² The “year of freedom”, as it was marketed, was to be midwived by not only the government, but also private companies, institutions, and even festivals- Sziget, arguably the biggest in the country receiving a whopping 300 million forints for this purpose.⁶³

This baroque scene was to accommodate the great message delivered by Viktor Orbán. During the traditional speech of the prime minister on the anniversary of the revolution he offered a very different picture than the years before. For some time thanks to the Eastern opening and the illiberal democracy he created, relations with the EU were steadily cooling down. In 2016 he openly expressed hostility towards Brussel, drawing parallels between Brussel and 1956 Moscow, calling for a fight against sovietization under the “New Moscow”.⁶⁴

Not only did the enemy of the people shift, but actors did as well. Imre Nagy, the always splinter in the side of the socialists, disappeared completely. Cynics would say that not only Imre Nagy but the Hungarian left did as well, so there was no reason for his immortality anymore. Pragmatists on the other hand would argue that he didn't fit in the hostile narrative against Brussel. Historian János Rainer offers the explanation that the revolution needed to be de-personified in order to free it from the boundary of time, and

⁵⁹ 9 Ivan D, “Ellenforradalmi emlékművet adnak át Putyin kedvéért”, *Index*, 16 January 2015, <https://www.bumm.sk/kulfold/2015/02/16/putyinkedveert1956megellenforradalomislehet>.

⁶⁰ Mandiner, “Az orosz köztévé szerint a CIA szervezte az 1956os forradalmat”, *Mandiner*, 25 October 2016, <https://mandiner.hu/belfold/2016/10/azoroszkozteveszerintaciaszervezteaz1956osforradalmat>.

⁶¹ Hvg.hu, “Beszélgetni hívták csak be a budapesti követüket az oroszok szerint”, *hvg.hu* 26 October 2016, https://hvg.hu/itthon/20161026_orosz_kovet_56.

⁶² Mandiner, “A Sziget Kft. is részt vesz az 1956os megemlékezésen”, *Mandiner*, 27 May 2016, <https://mandiner.hu/kultura/2016/05/aszigetkftisresztveszaz1956osmegemlekezésben>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Lily Bayer, “Viktor Orbán's revision of the 1956 revolution”, *Politico*, 23 October 2016, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktororbansrevisionofthe1956revolution/>.

bring it from the past to the present.⁶⁵ Furthermore in his view this explains the never-ending smear campaign against Nagy's person.

In the following years, with the round anniversary behind the yearly commemorations went back to the regular size and budget. From the year of Freedom, it was demoted to a mere day of freedom. Content wise it became a repetitive mix of emphasizing sovereignty and the struggle against foreign saboteurs. Historian János Rainer characterizes these years as of mutual little interest from both the people and the government.⁶⁶ Then in the wee hours of a late February day in 2022, the residents of Kiev would be woken up by air raid sirens.

⁶⁵ Kerényi György, "Már nem is érdekes az egész „Rainer M. János történész Nagy Imre és a Fidesz viszonyáról“, *Szabad Európa*, 16 June 2023, <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/marnemiserdekesazegeszrainer-mjanostortenesznagyimreesafideszviszonyarol/32459556.htm>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

3. The war in Ukraine and the Hungarian revolution of 1956

3.1 Geopolitical background

3.1.1 Hungary-Russia relations

Today the undisputed face of European Russophile politics is Viktor Orbán. As tempting as exclusive responsibility of his seems, the roots of Hungarian russophilia go deeper. The shy, but focused, rapprochement with Russia began thanks to the prior prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány. Socialist parties across the world have a long tradition of close ties to Russia, and the Hungarian MSZP was no exception.

This was no coincidence. Hungarian foreign policy for a long time consisted of European integration, relations with its direct neighbors and the support of the Hungarian minorities living there.⁶⁷ After the completion of one with the EU ascension in 2004, a new policy was to replenish the trio. Global opening, the newest in the policy family, was to replace the already achieved European integration. This would by no means limit the ambition to deepen relations within the Euro-Atlantic structures, but Russia subtly started to be conjugated.⁶⁸

This was the foundation of the second Orbán government's foreign policy, which gained a legal framework in 2011. In the official Eastern opening policy, as it would be called, the previous 5 key regions were replaced by Russia and China.⁶⁹ This move was marketed as a diversification after the 2008 financial crisis decimated the West.

The policy was officially inspired by economic interests of the country, however as it turned out, there was a great deal of personal interest present as well. Direkt36, an investigative journal, mapped the whole process from the beginning.⁷⁰ Businessmen Zsolt Nyerges and Lajos Simicska were persuaded by the Russian FSB around 2009 during a visit to the Russian capital. They then persuaded György Matolcsy, the minister of finance, to lobby Russian interest with Viktor Orbán.

⁶⁷ Ferenc Gazdag, *Magyar külpolitika a 20. században* (Budapest: Zrínyi Kiadó, 2004), 199.

⁶⁸ Végh, Zsuzsanna. "Hungary's 'Eastern Opening' Policy toward Russia: Ties That Bind?", *International Issues & Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 24, no. 1–2 (2015): 50. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26591857>.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁰ András Szabó and András Pethő, "Orbán játszámája Feltárul a Putyinnal kiépített kapcsolat titkos története", *Direkt 36*, 11 March 2018, <https://444.hu/2018/03/11/orban-jatszama-feltarul-a-putyinnal-kiemelt-kapcsolatitkos-tortene>.

As was explained Viktor Orbán wasn't the father of the idea, however he quickly realized it's potential. Russian sympathy helped him oust his enemies, like Simicska during the energy war between the state and his oil giant MOL. It also helped him gain political capital with cutting energy prices for citizens thanks to the cheap Russian gas imports.

The courtship with Russia didn't solely affect domestic politics, but foreign relations as well. On one hand, Viktor Orbán presented Hungary as a reliable ally of the West, convincing U.S. ambassador Foley of his commitment.⁷¹ On the other, he was adapting stances and policies that would inevitably lead to conflict with them. According to Direkt36, by 2013 the relations with the West became inconsolable.⁷²

Viktor Orbán's Erdoganesque politics of playing on both sides would cost Western taxpayers enormous sums through the years. However expensive it was, essentially it was a victimless crime with no real security risk to the bloc. This state lasted until 2014, when Russia unleashed its proxy war in Eastern Ukraine and annexed Crimea. In this situation a line can be drawn between friendly, but problematic relations, and ally ship baptized by fire. While western countries started to rethink their ties to Russia, Hungary continued on the path paved since 2010. Anti-Brussel rhetoric became part of the Orbánian repertoire oftentimes criticizing the sanction it imposed on Russia. As Végh Zsuzsanna writes, Hungary started to look away from where the sun sets, and focus on where it raises.⁷³ This stance, as will be presented later, can be considered the foreshadow of how the Orbán regime will react, when the Russians would launch their full-scale invasion eight years later.

3.1.2 Hungary-Ukraine relations

Despite the two countries being neighbors, their relationship is among the worst, mainly due to Hungarian stance on the ongoing war. It wasn't however always the case. To fully grasp the shift in the 1956 revolution's interpretation it is necessary to examine these

⁷¹ Szalai Bálint, „Ne figyeljenek arra, amit a megválasztásomért mondok“ Amikor a Fidesz majdnem lecsérélte Orbánt“, *Szabad Európa*, 10 November 2022, <https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/orban-ne-azt--figeljetek-foleyfidesz/31637358.html>.

⁷² András Szabó and András Pethő, „Orbán játszomája Feltáru a Putyinnal kiépített kapcsolat titkos története“, *Direkt 36*, 11 March 2018, <https://444.hu/2018/03/11/orban-jatszomaja-feltarul-a-putyinnal-kepített-kapcsolattitkos-tortenete>.

⁷³ Végh, Zsuzsanna. „Hungary: The EU's Troublemaker.“ Edited by Josef Janning. *KEEPING EUROPEANS TOGETHER: ASSESSING THE STATE OF EU COHESION*. European Council on Foreign Relations, 2016. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep21671.17>.

relations as well. The worsening of the relations is theorized to be the other side of the coin, as it is as much a anti Ukrainian-Western narrative, as it is a pro-Russian one.

The official relations between the two countries dates back to the late 1980s, with the first official visit of Jurij Olenenko in 1989, a year later to be reciprocated by Arpád Göncz to Kyiv.⁷⁴ Documents establishing diplomatic relations would be signed in 1991, ratified by the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine in 1992, and by the *Országgház* 3 years later in 1995.⁷⁵ During the negotiations, both parties agreed to a joint commission on the issue of the Hungarian minority living in Ukraine, one of the main chimeras ever since.

Neighbourly relations continued for the next decade as well under socialist rule. Hungary was both on a state level, and through international formats like the V4, a vocal supporter alongside Poland, of Ukraine's European integration.⁷⁶

After the landslide victory of Fidesz in 2010, it came to a breaking point. The newly elected government started focusing on issues such as the Hungarian minorities abroad, which would cause friction. The same year Viktor Orbán presented his plan for simplified naturalization. Hundreds of thousands of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine became eligible for Hungarian citizenship, essentially creating a new voter base for Viktor Orbán, and the threat of the podnestria like situation for Ukraine.

Minority rights became a hot topic again after the annexation of Crimea. Kyiv as a reaction, started an awkward campaign of Ukrainization. Mostly it was to counter Russian separatism in the East, but indirectly also effecting other minorities, Hungarians included. The new laws were intended to support Ukrainian national identity, however measures such as the minority language restrictions in schools, had the opposite effect. Since its introduction and signing in 2019, it faced widespread criticism from Budapest, and significantly marked relations between the two countries. It is important to note that this issue wasn't only a government stance in Hungary. Viewers critical to the Orbán government also expressed concerns over this measure,⁷⁷ sowing the seeds of antipathy throughout Hungarian society.

⁷⁴ Jakub Mareš, "Maďarská menšina na Ukrajině a její role ve vztazích Ukrajiny a Maďarska po roce 1991" (bachelor thesis, Charles University, 2016), 29.

⁷⁵ Ibid.,30.

⁷⁶ Povilas Zielys, "Relations between Visegrad States and Ukraine: a 'Two Speed' Central Europe.", *Unisco discussion papers* 19 (2009): 41, <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/767/76711407003.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Sarkadi Zsolt, "Az ukrán oktatási törvény kárpátjai magyarok egész generációit hülyítene el", *444.hu*, 21 November 2017, <https://444.hu/2017/11/21/az-ukran-oktatasi-torveny-karpataljai-magyarok-egesz-generacioit-hulyitene-el>.

Since the full-scale invasion in 2022, Hungarian Ukrainophobia and Russophilia had influenced every stance of the country. In the beginning the Orbán government rejected military equipment to be provided or transported through the country, tried to redirect war refugees to other countries, and is actively sabotaging sanctions or aid on the EU level. Through all these concrete steps they nevertheless claim to be a reliable ally, and any member of Fidesz can recite all the things they did for their war-torn neighbor. Most of these claims being either inflated or misleading.⁷⁸

3.2 The revolution of 1956 in the times of war

On the 1st of January, 2022, there was no reason to believe the commemoration of the revolution of 1956 would be much different from previous years. If asked, most commentators would expect the classic recipe of Brussel is the boogeyman, as many anti-Fidesz minded Hungarians satirically refer to it, and Fidesz the last bastion against “New Moscow’s colonialism”, as government sympathizer Hungarians satirically refer to it. And then on the 24th of February the West woke up to a new world, where war on the old continent was a possibility again, and the new world order the relic of the past.

3.2.1 First wind of change-Viktor Orbán on Good morning, Hungary! 14th of October 2022

A shift in the interpretation of the revolution didn’t happen spontaneously, rather there were early signs of something brewing. One of the major teasers was the prime minister’s appearance on the 14th of October on the radio show Good Morning, Hungary! (Jó reggelt, Magyarország!).⁷⁹ This program belongs to the primary communication channels of his, as it is hosted on the national radio Kossuth, providing a safe space for his demagoguery with no confrontations. Immediately the first question, was addressed to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Viktor Orbán, in the three minutes he dedicated to it, offered a whole a new interpretation of the revolution.

In the beginning he expressed a complete shift in the aim of the revolution. As before it

⁷⁸24.hu, “Itt a lista arról, hogy a magyar kormány mivel segítette Ukrajnát“, *24.hu*, 8 February 2023, <https://24.hu/belfold/2023/02/08/orosz-ukran-haboru-magyar-segely-szallitmany-egeszsegugyi-eszkozok-ujhelyi-istvan/>.

⁷⁹Viktor Orbán, interviewed by Zsolt Törőcsik, *Jó reggelt, Magyarország!*, Kossuth Rádió, 14 October 2022.

was always a struggle AGAINST something or someone, now it was supposedly a struggle FOR something. The fight for sovereignty and ousting the aggressor, were replaced with aiming for peace and achieving neutrality. To support this theory, he paraphrased the revolutionaries of '56, who in his view, realized the futility of fighting a superior enemy.

To achieve this supposed neutrality in 1956, he emphasizes the role of the West, to hold these imaginary peace talks. In the context of the cold war the “West”, mostly meant the US, as the military and economic king player, and there is reason to believe he was suggesting the US today as well. For once the aid provided by Washington is by far the greatest in volume, and secondly, he used the historic example of Austria, which's neutrality was midwifed by the Soviet Union and the United States.

3.2.2 The main commemoration speech of Viktor Orbán- 23rd of November 2022, Zalaegerszeg

Like every year since the regime change the main platform for the commemoration of the revolution of 1956 is the presentation of the current government on the 23rd of October, traditionally held in the capitol. In 2022, even these elemental attributes would be changed.

Firstly, the commemoration's location was altered. From Budapest it was moved to the regions, namely the city of Zalaegerszeg. The official reason was that the commemoration would be tied to the opening of Fidesz's newest *lieux de memoire*, the Mindszentyneum. This move is however suspected to be a reaction to the protest that was planned against the government in the capitol.⁸⁰ Also, unlike the capitol, that can be safely described as the last Bastion of the opposition based on the election results, Zalaegerszeg, provided a safe environment, similar to that of radio Kossuth. Not only did the venue change, the accessibility followed similar suite. From a traditionally open event, this year only a small number of handpicked supporters would be invited with no media presence at all.

Content wise, Viktor Orbán's speech would be highly unorthodox as well. The first part of the unconventionally short speech (only lasting less than half an hour), was dedicated to the location and the attendees. He began by highlighting the virtue of those present, and the condemnation of those not. Worthy of attention is also the name he used for the city- *vármegye (county)*. This name, only recently made the official one, has been the subject of

⁸⁰ Hvg, “Egy utcai harcos a négy fal között: miben lesz más Orbán Viktor október 23i beszéde?“, *Hvg.hu*, 22 October 2022, https://hvg.hu/itthon/20221022_Október_23_utcai_harcos_Orban_beszed.

scrutiny for its historical roots, and association with revisionist and nationalist groups.

The core of the speech in many ways was a copy of the previous one from *Good morning Hungary!* The prime minister emphasized the role of peace and peace talks. The October armed struggle, in his view, was a mere tool to pressure Moscow into entering the peace talks. Furthermore, he believes that even after all the bloodshed, a peaceful transition to Austrian-like neutrality was possible.⁸¹

3.2.3 Reactions to the new interpretation

After both the radio speech and the actual anniversary event, there was a limited, but present polemic around it. One of the main actors in it was the media 444.hu, one of the few independent ones, traditionally critical towards the Orbán government. Their satirical programme named Magyar Yeti, dedicated an entire episode to the prime minister's history lesson.⁸²In the 19-minute episode they mapped the evolution and significance of the revolution of 1956, arriving at the conclusion, that the war had a major impact on one of the otherwise most stable pillars of the regime.

Krisztián Ungváry, who's quote about the new interpretation being an abuse against the revolution is the title, shares a similar view. Above being one of the handful of historians left in the country to occasionally factcheck the government, he is also a vocal commentator of the revolution. In the year 2022 he published multiple articles about the new interpretation. In the one after the radio interview, he bluntly calls Viktor Orbán's interpretation nihilistic and false.⁸³

The factuality of the new interpretation wasn't the only topic that gaining traction. Much of the discourse was dominated by the similarity between the two events. Factuality was mostly a domestic topic while the parallels interested foreign observers. One such example is the article of Jan Adamec, published by the Czech historical institute *paměť národa*.⁸⁴In

⁸¹ „Speech by Prime Minister Viktor Orbán at the opening ceremony of the Mindszentyneum“, *abouthungary.hu*, 24 October 2022, <https://abouthungary.hu/speeches-and-remarks/speech-by-prime-minister-viktor-orban-at-the-opening-ceremony-of-the-mindszentyneum>.

⁸² Magyar Yeti, “56 emléke elleni erőszak, ahogy Orbán Viktor újraírja a történelmet“, YouTube, 22 October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmEqFnF7GxM&t=3s>.

⁸³ Krisztián Ungváry, „Orbán Viktor nihilista szövege 1956ról“, *444.hu*, 14 October 2022, <https://444.hu/2022/10/14/ungvary-krisztian-orban-viktor-nihilista-szovege-1956rol>.

⁸⁴ Jan Adamec, „Toto není naše válka“, *zní z Maďarska. V roce 1956 se Rusům postavili. Proč?*, *paměťnároda.cz*, 11 April 2022, <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs/magazin/specialy/toto-neni-nase-valka-zni-z-madarska-v-roce-1956-se-rusum-postavili-proc>.

it, the historian explores the revolution, its significance through the years, and the current situation. His answer to the question of current hostility towards Ukraine, is answered by the tradition of pro-Russian policies of the Orbán government.

In Hungary the topic of polemics was largely discussed through the year, influenced little by the presentation of the new interpretation in October. Already after the war broke out in March of 2022, historians were asked about it. The arguably most renowned historian of the '56 revolution, János Rainer, was questioned about it as well. He identified key similarities, but called for caution in making grandiose overlaps.⁸⁵ The main resemblance, in his view, is the moral high ground and determination of the Ukrainian people to choose their own geopolitical belonging. Against is the different geopolitical situation (lack of bipolarity), the absence of research and evidence, the role of China, and the ever-present eye of the world's citizens over the battlefield.⁸⁶

4. Analyses and findings

4.1 Location and accessibility

As was mentioned in the previous part, the location and accessibility were among the major changes made. In the previous years, any and every commemoration event's power was calculated based on attendance. This was for the pragmatical reason of mobilization, which creates opportunities to acquire media coverage. Oftentimes these events foreshadowed election results, as mobilization of citizens is directly tied to a party's power, hence they functioned as an impromptu popularity poll. A classic example of this is the riots of '06, that began at the commemoration of the revolution at Astoria, and seen the end of socialist reign in the next elections.

Aside from the accessibility, the location also historically played a crucial role. Most commemoration events with the ambition to mobilize were held in the capitol, the center of power and the place mostly intertwined with the revolution. Parties oftentimes competed for the "prime" locations such as the Corvin cinema. Holding an event in the capitol had the highest chance of achieving media coverage, as most are based in the capitol, but also

⁸⁵Windisch Judit, "Rainer M. János 56ról és az ukrán háborúról: Az is hasonló, hogy ki mellett áll az erkölcsi igazság", *Hvg.hu*, 3 March 2022, https://hvg.hu/360/20220303_Rainer_M_Janos_orsz_ukran_haboru_1956.

⁸⁶Bihari Dániel, "Nem áll meg a párhuzam 56 és Ukrajna között", *24.hu*, 3 March 2022, <https://24.hu/tudomany/2022/03/10/orsz-ukran-haboru-1956-parhuzam/>.

people traveling to see a particular event from different corners of the country, sent a powerful message.

In 2022, both of these traditions would be overruled by utilitarianism. Both speeches would be held in highly sanitized environments, like the radio Kossuth or in front of the Mindszentyneum, with attendees being combed beforehand. For this multiple explanation can be found. Firstly, it can be the result of the low enthusiasm towards the event. In February Viktor Orbán secured a fifth government and a third constitutional majority. Any need to compete or any extra effort, as was in the previous years, in the opposition or as a political newcomer in the 1990s, is hence unnecessary. This theory is further supported by the unusually short speech on the anniversary, and the mere 3 minutes dedicated to it in the Radio.

Against this conclusion argues the message presented. What Viktor Orbán presented can be characterized as a politically heavily charged one, highlighting one of the frequent Russian narratives of peace. At the time, the Charkov offensive was underway, a major loss for Russia in the war. The sporadic calls for peace, the referendums of the 4 occupied Ukrainian counties to join Russia, were part of the damage control effort of the Kremlin. In this atmosphere, while with limited powers, an EU and NATO member started copying Russian newspeak. By this perspective, Viktor Orbán gave a platform for the Russians, and as such, all the venue change and the restricted access, can be attributed to amplifying it with no distortions of criticism or polemic.

4.2 The United States

The role of the U.S. that Viktor Orbán presented is arguably the greatest change. In the years before, as shown in the previous chapter, Brussel and the EU was crowned as the arch evil threatening the country. This can be attributed to the position of the U.S. as the essential and main source of military aid for Ukraine, and likely the partner with the biggest influence on both Ukraine and other partners.

The United States holds a peculiar position in Hungarian society. Viktor Orbán's ties to American conservatives, specially Donald Trump, made it mostly absent from government smear campaigns, unlike the EU, that was closer to the Hungarian voter, and with which most citizens had direct experience. Other than the prime ministers' personal ties, a historical grudge is also present in Hungarian society. One of the great myths of '56

revolution is the betrayal of the noble Hungarian freedom fighter by Washington. There is historical evidence about the activity of the CIA, that was inciting the uprising, and of president Eisenhower “trading” the revolution for the Suez Canal in 1956.⁸⁷ This was however interestingly not brought up by the prime minister, nor by anyone else after.

Introducing the US required a change of tropes as well. The “us against them” of the previous years, was recalibrated for the peace narrative, making it only a “we fighting for”. With Brussel, a highly aggressive almost a call to arms, intonation can be observed. The narrative of 2022, broke with this tradition as well. Viktor Orbán’s message can be viewed more as a plea directed at the United States, tying it back to the influence the country holds.

The new narrative wasn’t only a plea for the United States. Like all pleas, it has to have a certain amount of humility, possibly flattery to increase the chances of success. In this case the mild tone, highlighting the role and importance of the US, bears signs of this. Besides the U.S., the idea of Americans sitting down with the Soviets, or today Russians, is a great pandering to the Kremlin as well, arguably even of strategic importance. During the commemoration the war in Ukraine was taking a turn. Already in March it was clear that the 3-day victory was nothing more than a delusion. By September some were calling out the Russian bluff, with the success of the Charkov offensive. In the October days however, unlike today, even Russia was talking about peace. The idea of a cold war style conference or any deal between Washington and Moscow, implies that the two are equal as they were during those days. This is most likely a coordinated effort to increase Moscow’s negotiation position, as in reality, Russia was being humiliated in front of the world for the stagnating war effort.

4.3 Peace

As stated in the previous paragraph the whole narrative of the revolution’s interpretation changed into the fight for something, namely peace. Peace is a highly relevant and interesting topic today. Every major societal issue has arguably two and a half sides. One side is the staunch supporters, activists, oftentimes referred to as the “liberals”. On the other side there are the skeptics, sellouts, covert collaborators, oftentimes represented by right-wing parties. And then there is the half side. This group is known for liquidity, presenting

⁸⁷Peter G. Boyle, “The Hungarian Revolution and the Suez Crisis.” *History* 90, no. 4 (300) (2005): 550–65. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24428113>.

itself as moderates, almost apolitical, while their stance covertly benefits a concrete side.

During the covid-19 pandemic it was the pro and -antivax groups, and then the freedom of choice as the alternative. In the case of police brutality, it was the black and- blue lives matter, and the all lives matter in the center, just to name a few examples. And in the case of the war in Ukraine, its team Ukraine or team Russia, and then team peace. This phenomenon is most simply explained by the lyrics of Slovakian rapper Majk Spirit, “blue against yellow, the answer is green”. Or explained academically, it’s a kind of pseudo-objectivity by not taking a stance, essentially downplaying the seriousness of a particular issue as Jay Rosen calls it, the view from nowhere.

What is the goal of taking such a stance? Polarization has a heavy toll on the voter’s psyche. Presenting an alternative, that has the hint of morality for the sympathizer, but also panders to the skeptic’s concerns, may lure away people from both camps or convince the undecided. In the case of the war in Ukraine it is arguably what won Fidesz the election of 2022, with their slogan peace and security, pandering to the fear of the war of the skeptics and comforting the desire of the supporters of people stopping dying.

Nearly all of this inbetweener catchphrases share the same important trait. They are neutral enough to be accepted as mainstream. In the case of a war, this narrative creates the such essential grey in an otherwise black and white situation. Even Viktor Orbán with his bombastic rhetoric, showing open support for Russia in an ongoing war, could be fatal from the point of view of euroatlantic partners- something nor he or Russia wishes for. Viktor Orbán’s current value is in being essentially a Russian trojan horse, that is toxic, but not necessary to cut off. Furthermore, adopting a problematic, but on the edge of the mainstream, allows other covertly pro-Russian populist within the bloc to follow lead without facing legal repercussions. Examples can be seen all across the West starting with Slovakian prime minister Fico, the German Afd or ex-president Donald Trump.

Above the theory of “peace” and the half side, it is also important to focus on what peace would realistically mean in the war in Ukraine, as it is the ultimate goal of spreading this narrative. In the previous part it was stated that peace talks held between the United States and Russia, would mainly benefit Russia. In the time of the commemoration, new territorial gains of Russia were unlikely, and many were expecting Ukraine to reclaim the already lost ones. A demand often presented by Russia was the recognition of the 4 counties in Ukraine as Russian territory, even though Russia didn’t have full control of

any. A peace agreement, presented through the 1956 revolution by Viktor Orbán, would entail the loss of the remains of the counties by Ukraine without a single bullet, something they would never agree too.

Interestingly in both the cases of the revolution of 1956 and the hypothetical peace talks in Ukraine, Viktor Orbán marginalized the role of the victim, or the other fighting side. In the case of the 1956 revolution he mentions the Hungarian guerillas, but the emphasis is on the role of the US and the Soviet Union, the revolutionaries assuming a mostly passive role. If translated to the situation in Ukraine, he completely sidelines Kyiv in a potential peace. This is most likely due to the strong opposition from Ukraine, and knowing well, that only Washington had leverage over Ukraine to force them to sign an unbeneficial peace treaty. Belittling the role of Ukraine in the conflict is nothing new, the prime minister signaled his stance before when he talked about president Zelenskij dying, comparing him to Imre Nagy in an interview.⁸⁸

4.4 The Discourse

Assessing the effect, the new interpretation had on the discourse is an ungrateful task, as the full extent will most likely be visible only from the future. The previous chapter was interested in both the new narrative, but also the reactions. These can be categorized most simply in the categories of foreign and domestic, and inside the bubbles into political and civil.

Let's start with the domestic discourse. In the chapter on the discourse's evolution, it was shown that the discourse was to a large extent nationalized by Fidesz, with little opposition to their narratives. This is one of the few aspects that did not change, but was actually further reinforced. The 1956 revolution's commemoration was historically, as presented prior, an opportunity for the political David, to have a chance against the Goliath of the ruling parties. In the year 2022, there was no opposition party challenging the hegemony of Fidesz in the discourse. This can be attributed to many things, such as the devastating election that year, the lack of a Hungarian "Navalnij", who'd have the charisma to unite and inspire, as well as many logistical and legal limitations. The only thing that can be viewed as somewhat of reaction was the protest happening in the capitol, which however had a very different them than the '56 revolution. Furthermore, this protest, did not present

⁸⁸ Molnár Szabina, "Orbán Viktor: A mi Zelenszkijünket kivégezték", *Index*, October 14 2022, <https://index.hu/belfold/2022/10/14/orban-viktor-miniszterelnok/>.

any narrative of the revolution to challenge Fidesz's making it a walkover win for Viktor Orbán.

As for the role of civil society in the discourse, the situation is not much better either. Fidesz in the previous years systematically purged any rogue elements, may it be NGOs, Academia, the media or average people. Today, there are only a handful critical voices of the Viktor Orbán left. All these voices, named in the section about the reaction, shared a similar approach. While they were all critical of Viktor Orbán's interpretation of history, they, like the political sphere, presented no counter narrative. In the case of the media it is understandable, as they are presenters rather than contenders. In the case of historians, such as Ungváry or Rainer, the situation is more complicated. A narrative presented by historians would have the weight of expertise on the topic and can reach more people by being essentially apolitical. It could also potentially help reclaim the academic voice. Today, the voices of "expertise on history" are the likes of Zsolt Bayer, a historian turned Fidesz propagandist. The absence of a narrative other than emphasizing the false and inaccurate nature of Viktor Orbán's interpretation, abandons even this segment of the discourse to be dominated by the government, in this case its "historians".

When it comes to the foreign dimension of the discourse it underwent arguably the greatest change. Content wise the hostility didn't change, just for the sake of the delivery it was toned down. There were still no elements hinting at any benevolence, it was more of a lack of criticism. The great change comes in the importance this interpretation and what it signals. It is unpopular to say that NATO or the EU would at war with Russian, and arguably factually incorrect as there are no Iskanders targeting Berlin at the moment. If we accept the premise of the West having a great security interest in Ukraine prevailing, signals such as the Orbánian peace narrative, can cause turmoil in the bloc based on unanimous consensus.

In previous years propaganda against Brussel was an unpleasant thing, but as limited as a rash is on the human body. Signaling the willingness to sabotage effort to provide military aid and covertly deliver messages of the enemy, upgrades a rash to a slow but potentially fatal tumor. Interestingly, as in the cases before, there was no narrative or challenge presented from abroad by governments. Even the United States, that was explicitly mentioned remained cold and uninterested in picking up the glove. The reactions from abroad can be summarized as the standard diplomatic newspeak of remembering the date,

with a bitter undertone.

One of the few reactions was the article by the Czech historical institute paměť národa from the previous chapter, which tried to put forward somewhat of a different account of the revolution, but was mainly focused on the factuality, or lack of, like the other reactions. Nearly the only counternarrative presented was from the Hungarian soldiers from Ambarne, but even they abstained from further interpretations or larger parallels.

Conclusion

The ambition of the presented thesis was the exploration of the possible changes in the discourse surrounding the Hungarian revolution of 1956 after the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. As primary sources, two key speeches by prime minister Viktor Orbán were chosen, namely the interpretation he presented on the 14th of October 2022 in the radio show Good morning Hungary (Jó reggelt, Magyarország!), and the speech he prepared for the official commemoration on the 23rd of October, the anniversary of the revolution itself. Other than the orally presented narratives, the circumstances surrounding these two key dates such as the change in location and accessibility were also scrutinized for further context. For a more complex picture and to maintain a critical perspective, reactions and comments by top Hungarian historians Krisztián Ungváry and János M. Rainer, the historian considered the greatest expert on the 1956 revolution, were also included. The aforementioned sources are then supplied by a rich and broad literature of secondary sources to frame it with context about the realities of Hungarian politics necessary for the understanding of the subject of research.

The theoretical part include a brief, but important dive into the concept such as the general theory of memory of Marcus Halbwachs, lieux de memoire of Pierre Nora and others in regards to memory or the lack of. Further theoretical concepts such as revisionism caused by contemporary shortcomings, identity building through nationalism, hot versus cold memory, all applicable to the case study of Hungary were presented. Methodology wise this thesis operated with the discursive analysis by Foucault and Fairclough, as it is the best suited for analyzing abstracts sources such as speeches or publicist reactions.

The main part of presenting the analysis was preceded by an exploration of the significance of the 1956 revolutions memory for the 3rd Hungarian republic. By following its development through the last tree decades as well as during the silent years under communist rule, it is clear that it is indeed one of the most formative historical events for Hungarians, and as such holds a special potential for politicians across the spectrum. In the communist years it was largely suppressed, but by the 1980s it again resurfaced as a central symbol of the growing resistance movement that peaked with the reburial ceremony of Imre Nagy, and the fall of the regime. In the 1990s it became drastically polarized copying the lines of the political situation. In the 2000s the memory of the 1956 protest against

corrupt power was used as a tool of mobilization by Fidesz against the then socialist government. Since 2010 and the effort of Fidesz to nationalize Hungary it became the center spectacle of the memory of politics which peaked in 60th anniversary commemoration in 2016. The typical trait of the discourse of the last decade was the change of the traditional political enemy of conservative Fidesz, the Hungarian left, to the European Union that the revolution was ought to mobilize people against.

The analysis of the primary sources indicates a significant deviation from previous years content wise. As historian János Rainer claimed, the revolution was falling into oblivion, however, as this thesis concludes, it gained new momentum in the light of the war in Ukraine. This change in the narrative can be summarized as the replacement of aggressive fight against an external actor as the core known from previous years, with a seemingly pro peace, defeatists narrative about the revolutionaries not wanting independence and a western style of existence, but an Austrian type of neutrality, with the emphasis on the role of mediation between the US and the Soviet Union. This thesis considers this change a sign of alliance and continuation of the pro-Russian politics and anti-Ukrainian/European politics explored in the chapter of the Orbán government foreign relations. Further evidence found for the support of this claim is the obvious inspiration of this narrative in the Russian informational space and propaganda that had a similar take on how to end the war in Ukraine.

Závěr

Ambicí předkládané bakalářské práce bylo prozkoumat možné změny v diskurzu kolem maďarské revoluce z roku 1956 po zahájení totální invaze Ruské federace na Ukrajinu. Jako primární zdroje byly vybrány dva klíčové projevy premiéra Viktora Orbána, a to výklad, který přednesl 14. října 2022 v rozhlasovém pořadu Dobré ráno Maďarsko (Jó reggelt, Magyarország!), a projev, který si připravil pro oficiální vzpomínkovou akci 23. října, v den výročí samotné revoluce. Kromě projevů byly pro další kontext zkoumány také okolnosti těchto dvou klíčových dat, jako je změna místa a dostupnost. Pro komplexnější obraz a zachování kritického pohledu byly zařazeny i reakce a komentáře předních maďarských historiků Krisztiána Ungváryho a Jánose M. Rainera, historika považovaného za největšího znalce revoluce z roku 1956. Výše uvedené prameny jsou pak doplněny bohatou a rozsáhlou literaturou sekundárních pramenů, které ji zasazují do kontextu o

reáliích maďarské politiky, který je nezbytný pro pochopení předmětu výzkumu.

Teoretická část zahrnuje krátký, ale důležitý ponor do konceptu, jako je obecná teorie paměti Marcuse Halbwachse, lieux de memoire Pierra Nory a další, pokud jde o paměť nebo její ztráta. Byly představeny i další teoretické koncepty, jako je revizionismus způsobený soudobými problémy, budování identity prostřednictvím nacionalismu, horká versus studená paměť, vše aplikovatelné na případovou studii Maďarska. Metodologicky tato práce pracovala s diskurzivní analýzou Foucaulta a Fairclougha, která byla shledána nejvhodnější pro analýzu abstraktních zdrojů, jako jsou projevy nebo publicistické reakce.

Hlavní části, tedy prezentace analýzy, předcházelo zkoumání významu paměti revolucí roku 1956 pro 3. Maďarskou republiku. Sledujeme-li jeho vývoj v posledních desetiletích i v tichých letech pod komunistickou vládou, je zřejmé, že se skutečně jedná o jednu z nejvíce formativních historických událostí Maďarů a jako taková má zvláštní potenciál pro politiky napříč spektrem. V komunistických letech byl z velké části potlačen, ale v 80. letech se znovu vynořil jako ústřední symbol rostoucího hnutí odporu, které vyvrcholilo obřadem opětovného pohřbu Imreho Nagye a pádem režimu. V devadesátých letech se drasticky polarizovala a kopírovala linie politické scény. Po roce 2000 byla vzpomínka na protest proti zkorumpované moci z roku 1956 použita Fideszem jako nástroj mobilizace proti tehdejší socialistické vládě. Od roku 2010 a snahy Fideszu o znárodnění Maďarska se stal ústředním spektáklem paměti politiky, který vyvrcholil v roce 2016 při oslavách 60. výročí. Typickým rysem diskursu posledního desetiletí byla změna tradice.

Z analýzy primárních pramenů vyplývá výrazný odklon od předchozích ročníků obsahově. Jak tvrdil historik János Rainer, revoluce upadla v zapomnění, ale jak tato práce uzavírá, ve světle války na Ukrajině nabrala nový impuls. Tuto změnu narativu lze shrnout jako nahrazení agresivního boje proti vnějšímu aktérovi jako jádra známého z předchozích let zdánlivě promírovým, defétistickým narativem o revolucionářích, kteří nechtějí nezávislost a západní styl existence, ale rakouský typ neutrality, s důrazem na roli prostředníka mezi USA a Sovětským svazem. Tato práce považuje tuto změnu za známku spojení a pokračování proruské politiky a protiukrajinské/evropské politiky, kterou se zabývá kapitola zahraniční vztahy.

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