

Consequences of the Soviet Red Army's Presence in Hungary

The fifth year of the Second World War began in Hungary with the Red Army appearing on its borders. The country became a seat of war from September 1944 to April, 1945. The Third Reich's army was desperately trying to stop the Red Army's advance towards the heart of the Empire, even by means of unreasonable destruction. It found an ally in the Hungarian Units, which were fighting because of the incompetence of war policy and often for the protection of the homeland.

After a half year of severe fighting the 2nd and the 3rd Ukrainian Front of the Red Army under the leadership of Marshal Malinovsky and Marshal Tolbukhin managed to drive out the corps of the Wehrmacht and the SS from the country. The puppet government, which was put to power by a putsch and a part of the Hungarian army that obeyed the orders of Ferenc Szálasi, the „*Leader of the Nation*” went with the withdrawing Germans.

Loss of Lives

By the end of the war Hungary was among the defeated. The armistice agreement about the unconditional surrender was signed on 20 January 1945, in Moscow. According to that the territory of Hungary was again reduced from 171.640 km² to 93 thousand km². More than 3 million Hungarians found themselves in foreign countries again, furthermore in a seriously revengeful atmosphere. Almost 800 thousand Hungarians got stuck totally outlawed in Czechoslovakia, which was reconstructed by the favour of the winners. The new Czechoslovak policy set the aim: the total resettlement of Hungarians. In Yugoslavia brutal revenge taking took place on half a million Hungarian. According to present-day data some 30 thousand people were killed. In Sub-Carpathia (Subcarpathian Rus) - which became a part of the Soviet Union - the translocation of 220 thousand Hungarians to the inner parts of the empire started. Serious incidents happened in Transylvania with the there living 2 million Hungarians.

Hungary, shrunk to its Trianon size again, had approximately 850.000 dead:

Military deaths: 160.000

Civilian war deaths: 100.000 people

Died in prisoners' camp, disappeared: 280.000

Died as a result of the deportation of Jews: 310.000

Prisoners of war formal dummy

The term „*prisoner of war*” gained double meaning after the Second World War. Soviet captivity on the one hand referred to soldiers who became

prisoners of war – from generals to privates -, on the other hand it also referred to the deported civilians. The latter group basically meant the assurance of workforce in the Soviet GUPVI and GULAG empire, which was not only a prison camp, but much rather an economic enterprise. The GUPVI was a camp-world of prisoners of war and internees. Those Hungarians who were convicted by Soviet authorities as a result of dummy procedures had to go to GULAG. The deported Hungarians primarily lived in the world of GUPVI. According to Soviet reports 8200 people were sent to GULAG in 1947. Probably this number grew by a few hundred between 1947 and 1949.¹

Besides the assurance of workforce the „*punitive*” intention should be considered as well. Humiliation full of hatred, collective punishment of the defeated. The Soviet leaders’ hostility towards Hungarians is a fact, though it may be difficult to understand in Hungary. This hostility towards Hungarians was of course reinforced from abroad too, primarily by the Czechoslovak President Beneš.

Beneš made the Soviet foreign minister, Molotov say: „*Hungarians have to be punished!*” (1943) „*The Hungarians’ attitude towards us is worse than that of the Romanians.*”² Stalin could identify with this point of view: Hungarians are „*even worse than the Germans, who use them as executioners.*”³

According to the Soviet Czechoslovak agreement signed on 18 December 1943: „*Hungary is accountable for the war... Hungary has to be occupied. ... The resettlement of the German and Hungarian population from Czechoslovakia is theoretically decided.*”

Beneš also gave Hungarian caricatures to Stalin: for example a drawing from August 1939 from the Social Democratic Party’s newspaper, *Népszava*. In this drawing Stalin makes a motion towards the Baltic States. Marx’s ghost makes an unapproving motion. Hereupon Stalin says: „*This is none of your business!*” Marx replies: „*We have nothing to do with each other whatsoever.*” According to Beneš Stalin would have said to that: „*The Hungarian question is a question of wagons!*”⁴

Beneš also gave Hungarian newspaper articles from 1944 to the English, which were written in the mood of hatred towards English bombings: „*Unforgiving hatred against terror attacks...*” „*England, be damned!*”, etc.

Captivity mainly sprang from the war defeat. Carrying off civilians, as a part of the eastern mentality was not unknown in Hungary. The Ottoman rule,

¹ Unfortunately some historians out of sheer political reasons, tend to accept the Soviet data as facts and as a result of that confuse the registered data of Hungarians who got to the Soviet Union with the number of the victims who were deported by the Soviet army. By reducing the number of the actual victims they try to emphasize the seriousness of other sins – like if there was any need - or possibility - to do that. They do it without having unquestionably data, relying on guess-work.

² The record of the Beneš-Stalin-Molotov negotiations (December, 1943) quoted in: Péter Gosztonyi: *Háború van, háború!* Népszava Kiadó, Budapest, 1989. 22.

³ See above. 32.

⁴ Dezső Sulyok: *Magyar Tragédia. A Magyar Október 23.* Mozgalom kiadása, 1996. 399.

which affected one third of the country, modified the ethnic conditions of the historical Hungary, since it mainly occupied the territories where Hungarians lived. However in the 20th century it was pretty astonishing that a foreign army does not only rob and destroy but also carries off a part of the able bodied population. After the world war some 600-650 thousand Hungarian citizens were held captive in the Soviet Union. 200 thousand out of the whole were civilians who never played a military role, and many of them were women.

– *A war is a war.* – commented Mátyás Rákosi, the leader of the Hungarian communists in 1946, some Hungarian Stalinists still say this nowadays.

The deportation of civilians took on a character of ethnic cleansing in some places. This was so mainly in those Hungarian territories which became part of the Soviet Union. According to present-day data from Sub-Carpathia (which is not part of post-Trianon Hungary) at least 20.000 but rather 40.000 people were carried off to the inner parts of the empire. What made this possible was order 0036 of the 4th Ukrainian Front (12 November 1944) which contained the capturing of military-aged Hungarian and German population, their seizure and their deportation to prison camps.⁵

Already on 16 December 1944, the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security passed a resolution on the deportation of the German population in countries which were occupied or to-be-occupied or „to-be –liberated” (Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia). The task was set to the NKVD, and L. Beria was made responsible. The order applied to men aged from 17 to 44 and to women from 18 to 30 also!⁶

In Hungary the 2nd and the 3rd Ukrainian front was in operation. Within the framework of the „liberation” a Provisional National Government came to existence on 22 December 1944. On the same day, without the knowledge of the newly formed Provisional National Government by order number 0060 the capturing of Hungarian citizens began. It wasn't just Germans that they have taken. It is important to note that we cannot differentiate –on a collective basis – between citizens of German and of Hungarian nationality. There were specified contingents – according to the want of workforce – and they took the people no matter whether they were Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, Jews, democrats, Nazis, Volksbund⁷ members, antifascists, etc. Those who have committed many offences did not wait for the coming of the Red Army; the „innocents” however were unsuspecting. As a result of this order, approximately 65.000 people were taken for „just a little work” – to hard labour. The Hungarian authorities asked the Soviet authorities for the

⁵ See: György Dupka; Korszun Alekszej: A „Malenkij robot” within the documents. Intermix Kiadó, Ungvár-Budapest, 1997.

⁶ See: György Dupka; Korszun Alekszej: A „Malenkij robot” within the documents. Intermix Kiadó, Ungvár-Budapest, 1997. 33

⁷ Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn. The National Association of Germans in Hungary which was in operation in Hungary on the basis of national socialist doctrines and aims.

release of some 45.000 people, but in vain. Those who were luckier could return after one or two weeks, but 40.000 people had to stay in the Soviet Union for years.

The appearance of the Red Army – besides the measureless destruction and robbery – also reminded of the man-hunt of the Ottoman years. Barely a few months after the deportations by the Nazis – when almost half a million people from post-Trianon Hungary were carried off to camps and sent off to the inner parts of the Third Reich - in theory as „*manpower*” – another deportation was taking place too. Reception camps were created. 10 out of them held even more than 20.000 people captive: Baja, Debrecen, Gödöllő, Jászberény, Székesfehérvár, Vác, Kecskemét, Cegléd, Szeged, Gyula. Eighty reception camps were formed. These were guarded by Soviet soldiers exclusively. People were driven into cattle wagons and the „*cargo*” departed to the empire. The Hungarian force of arms also participated in the operation - like in the rounding up of the Jews.⁸

Only the *number* of the prisoners had to be given account of; if someone was beaten to death, was shot during an attempt to escape or committed suicide, etc. – the deficiency in the number of captives was filled. According to Soviet data 541.530 Hungarian Citizens were in Soviet captivity in October 1945. In addition to them, we should also consider those who hitherto passed away (already from 1942/43 a mass of Hungarian soldiers fell into captivity), those who died as a result of inhuman treatment, transportation, epidemics, etc. in 1944/45 and those Hungarians who were carried off to Soviet camps after October 1945.

Hungarian captives were dispersed to 2000 camps. 44 camps in Azerbaijan, 158 in the Baltic States, 131 in Belorussia, 53 in the territory of the Kola Peninsula, 65 in Georgia, 39 in Kazakhstan, 15 in Moldavia 119 in North Russia, 53 in the area of Leningrad, 627 in Central Russia, 276 at the Urals and 64 camps in Siberia had Hungarian prisoners.⁹

According to Soviet data 51 Hungarian citizens' death was registered in their labour camps. These data do not even roughly show the actual number of people who died in labour camps or during the way there. The number of the returned does not exceed 380.000!

The Central Archives of the Hungarian Military Institute and Museum tries to keep a record of the fate of the prisoners of war and deported civilians. So far 65.170 data sheets are available in connection with the civilian and soldier prisoners of war who passed away in the Soviet Union. In addition to that there is the documentation of that 40.670 Hungarians who were buried in the territory of the late Soviet Union. We can add the data of the 28.000 Hungarian soldiers who fell during the „*eastern operations*”, and the files of

⁸ Tamás Stark: Magyarok a szovjet kényszállásokban. Kortárs, February 2002.

⁹ See above.

those 42.000 Hungarian soldiers and hard-labourers who died in the territory of Historical Hungary.

The data are from the Center for Preservation of Historico- Documentary Collections (former Special Archives) in Moscow. This institution also collects documents about the actions of GUPVI. The 3.800.000 documents in connection to this contain statistical documentation of prisoners of war, and internees. The data bank was given to Hungary in 1992 and in 1998 – this is where the data of the 50.000 Hungarians who died in Soviet captivity come from. The second – more precise – database contains the data of 58.749 dead people.

According to the data of GUPVI until January 1950 – including those who were liberated directly on the front lines – 451.30 Hungarian prisoners of war got free from captivity. But if we take into account those who „got free” on the front lines then these data cannot refer to the 541.530 Hungarian citizens held captive on 31 October, 1945.¹⁰

Material losses

The presence of the Red Army in Hungary has caused immeasurable and irrecoverable losses. It was calculated that 40% of the national wealth has perished. This of course is the result of the destruction caused by the armed forces of the Third Reich and the Red army combined, to which the Hungarian Nazis (Arrow Cross members) also assisted.

But what does this number mean? For example that out of the existing 8373 bridges in 1938 only 6963 remained by 1945. The losses include all the bridges across the Tisza and the Danube! (28 marvellous crossings, including all the bridges of Budapest...) 7.5% of the buildings were damaged, but in Budapest it was 75%.

The following randomly taken data show the losses of the railway system:

71% of the double-railed lines

26% of the single track lines

23% of the branch lines

37% of the station branch lines

45% of the rail barriers

31% of the railway building was ruined.

43% of the locomotives were missing, 60% were damaged. 37% of the passenger-carriages were missing, 82% were damaged. 79% of the goods carriages were missing, 43% were damaged.

¹⁰ About the Hungarian prisoners-of-war see: the works of Miklós Kun, Tamás Stark and Ildikó Farkas. Tamás Stark: Hungarian Prisoners in the Soviet Union. (1941-1955), In: Bulletin du Comité international d'histoire de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale. Montreal, 1995, p. 202-213; Tamás Stark: Genocide or genocide? The Case of the Hungarian Prisoners in the Soviet Union. In: Human Rights Review, 2000, April-June, Vol. 1, Num. 3. 109-120; Tamás Stark: Magyarok szovjet kényszermunkatáborokban. In: Kortárs, 2002/2-3., 69-82.

In 1944 there were 24 thousand automobiles and 13 thousand motor-cycles in Hungary. By 1945 only 1.500 automobiles and 2.000 motorcycles remained. In 1947 there were only 9000 cars on the Hungarian roads. In 1936 there were 90 steamships; in 1946 there were only 7! 80% of the telegraph- and telephone system was damaged, only 5-10% could still be used.

The data of the manufacturing industry were also devastating. Out of 4.000 factories 3600 were damaged! 75% of the machines, 40% of other kinds of technical machinery and 30% of factory buildings were injured.

The index of coal-mining has also dropped dramatically. In 1943, 10.000 quintals of coal was excavated every month, in May 1945, however, it was only 250 quintals, and in December still only 4.000 quintals. In 1943, 1.200 thousand tonnes of bauxite was excavated, making Hungary the world leader in bauxite-mining. By 1945 the mining of bauxite was stopped completely! In 1946/47 still only 100 thousand tonnes were excavated. Agriculture also suffered serious damages: 15% of the agricultural buildings were damaged and 63% of the livestock perished. The table shows the original number of different kinds of animals in 1938 and their number in 1945.

	1938	1945
cattle	1.882 thousand	1.070 thousand
horse	813 thousand	325 thousand
pig	3.100 thousand	1.000 thousand
sheep	1.600 thousand	340 thousand

About the losses in: Újjáépítő magyarok. Az országépítés két esztendeje. Kossuth Vállalat, 1947.

War destruction was made worse – and sometimes unbearable – by the behaviour of the occupying Soviet army. Robbery, looting – and often unreasonable destruction – multiplied the losses. Violence, - rape – also resulted in dreadful consequences, biologically and ethically as well.

Occupation

The war losses were aggravated by the consequences of the occupation. The Allies (US, United Kingdom, Soviet Union) who were at war with Hungary decided that the duties of the occupation will be bestowed upon the Red Army. On 27 October, 1944 the execution was trusted to the military council of the 2nd Ukrainian Front by the Soviet Union's Committee for State Security. After the end of the military actions the occupation was lead by the Soviet Central Army Group, whose headquarters was in Baden bei Wien in Austria.

Soviet military garrison commands were in operation in the county seats, cities and larger villages. The Soviet Kommandatura was covering the whole territory of the country. The Red Army took possession of warehouses, factories and of important public institutions. Besides the Red Army's looting units, Soviet security institutions were also in operation. Camp commands came into existence. In the summer-autumn period of 1945 some one and a half million Soviet soldiers stayed in Hungary.¹¹

¹¹ Péter Sipos: A szovjetek és Magyarország. História, 1995. vol. 2

The establishment of the so called Allied Control Commission meant the military and political regulation of the occupation.¹² The commission was set up according to the Armistice Agreement and basically had full power. The Armistice was not signed by the delegation sent to Moscow by Miklós Horthy in September 1944 but by the delegation of the Provisional National Government set up by the end of December 1944.

Though the composition of the government - which was authorised by the Provisional National Assembly (created on 21 December) - was decided in Moscow, the existence of the National Assembly and the government meant that the Allies accepted Hungary as a state. At the end of 1944 this was a significant achievement. They could have divided Hungary into „*occupation zones*” or they could have destroyed its status as a state. The content of the Soviet diplomat I. M. Maysky’s memorandum was not public at that time. So Hungary could remain an independent state, however, according to the very influential diplomat „*The creation of a powerful Hungary does not serve the interests of the Soviet Union... Hungary has to be internationally isolated, at least for the first few years after the war.*”¹³ The idea that Hungary should be incorporated into the Soviet Union as a member also came up. In Czechoslovak diplomacy this appeared as a possibility and maybe as a fear. A Czech opinion from 1947: „*It’s not obvious that they (the Hungarians – K. Sz.) will be incorporated into the Soviet Union. Hungary’s seeming-independence is the interest of the Soviet Union too, because this way it can keep up its economic connections with the West. In its military matters and foreign policy Hungary will be as independent as it was during the Habsburg rule.*”¹⁴

From the summer of 1945 the occupation has gradually become the „*co-operation*” of the Soviet military authorities, the Allied Control Commission and the Hungarian authorities. Not forgetting, however, that during the armistice: „*fights were at a hold, but there was still a state of war.*”¹⁵

The nature of the „*co-operation*” can be seen in the following extract: „*The Government of Hungary and its organs shall fulfill all instructions of the Allied Control Commission arising out of the armistice agreement.*”¹⁶ The Allied Control Commission was completely under Soviet control and command. Its head, Marshal Voroshilov and later Lieutenant-General Sviridov also used their full power if it was the political, economic, military, etc. interest of the Soviet Union.

¹² See: Margit Földesi: A szövetséges ellenőrző bizottság Magyarországon 1945-1947 (The Allied Control Commission in Hungary 1945-1947) IKVA, 1995.

¹³ Külpolitika. 1996 vol. 3-4.

¹⁴ The archives of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archiv Ministerstva Zahraničních Věcí (MZV) T0-0 1945-1959. box 9.

¹⁵ Cessat enim pugna, bellum autem manet.

¹⁶ You may find the text of the armistice together with the annex of the agreement in: Margit Földesi: A megszállók szabadsága (The Freedom of the Occupiers) Kairosz, 2002. The quoted part is annex F to article 18. 365.

Strangers

After the World War no one questioned that what happened was an occupation, although the occupying forces almost always called themselves „*liberators*” and they made others to call them that as well. Especially publicly, in the press, was it forbidden to call the Red Army anything but a liberator. Voroshilov, however, could keep away from equivocation: „*Hungary is under control...*” – he said on 10 October 1945.¹⁷ On other occasions he stated: „*Since at present there are Soviet occupying troops in Hungary (the Soviet High Command – K. Sz) they still claim supplies for their maintenance.*”¹⁸

The nature of the occupation is well expressed in texts and documents in Russian. Hungary is „*otvovannaya*” (conquered) and „*pod kontrollem*” (under control - rule) On medals: „*za vzyatiye*” (for the occupation – seizure) Material goods were: „*vzjatu kak trofey*” (taken as war booties). In the documents we may encounter with significant words, like „*konclager*” – „*gotovithsya tri konclagerya*” (three concentration camps are being built), or „*csisztka*” – „*provodithsya tsistka gosudarstvennogo apparata*” (the cleansing of the state apparatus is being prepared).¹⁹ The occupying Soviet troops were above all strangers: the author Sándor Márai, who was near Budapest during the siege writes: „*What were they like? ... Strangers; a different world, a different kind, our shared memories are few.*” István Bibó, who also tried himself in politics, described the situation as follows: „*This army was above all a foreign army. Some dreaded it, some were waiting for it, some grew to like it and some were disappointed in it; however there was an expectation by both its opponents and supporters, something that it failed to fulfil: it was not an ideological army, and it did not march into Hungary as into a country which it considered its own member state.*”²⁰ This was the cause of its brutal behaviour and hostility towards the defeated. The country could have suffered this, but in the end this army became the token of the ideological, social and political reframing.

The troops of the Soviet army – crushing the hopes of more generations – stayed until July 1991. They had stations in 104 locations in Hungary. The number of men in the occupying troops was in average between 40.000 and 70.000. They used 288 military objects.²¹

¹⁷ A Magyarországi Szövetséges Ellenőrző Bizottság Jegyzőkönyvei 1945-1947. Ed: István Feitl. Napvilág Kiadó, 2003. 88.

¹⁸ See above. 57.

¹⁹ The archives of the Russian Federation's Ministry of Foreign Affairs – IDD-MID-F 432/44.

²⁰ István Bibó: A megszállás válsága. <http://mek.niif.hu/02000/02043/html/167.html>

²¹ Tamás Csapody: Gyalogsági akták Magyarországon. Country-report for Landmine Monitor 2000. <http://bocs.hu/lbc/lm-csap.htm>

Periods

The Soviet presence – occupation can be divided into periods.

1. Period of hostilities (September 1944 – April 1945). This period can be characterized by the destruction of enemy forces, unlimited looting, robbery, aggression, rape, taking prisoners and carrying off civilians as workforce to the empire.

2. Occupation of the defeated state according to the armistice agreement (20 January, 1945 – 15 September 1947) This period can be characterized by extortion („*war compensation*”)²² and by enforcing the economic and political interests of the occupiers. In parallel with the Allied Control Commission the Red Army also carried out political-propaganda jobs. The second Ukrainian Front, and later the Central Army group had a Political Group Directorate and within that, a subdivision for Hungarian domestic politics. Only in January 1945, 1.900.000 agitational material was issued by this organ.

During this period an attempt for democracy was repressed by violence, putsch, and cheating. This could only happen with the help and active contribution of the Red Army.

Since a change had taken place in the world as well as in Hungary, it was hardly surprising that the Soviet troops – according to the 22. article of the Peace Treaty – even after it had come in to force on 15 September, stayed in Hungary.

3. The beginning of the third period can be dated from the notorious resolution of the Information Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties in September 1947, or from the Hungarian-Soviet Treaty of friendship, co-operation and mutual assistance signed on 18 February, 1948. This is the period of building the empire: incorporating Hungary into the outer ring of the Soviet Empire. The period of establishing Stalinism in Hungary. The Soviet presence was an assurance and an essential condition of the Hungarian Stalinism, the Rákosi regime.²³

Within this period another one can be separated, and that is the short period after the signing of the Warsaw Pact (May 1955). Since according to the Austrian State Treaty, which was signed the same month, the occupying forces no longer had the right to stay here. The Revolution of 1956, the second attempt for democracy after the world war falls to the end of this era. The brutal intervention of the Soviet occupying troops shows that the empire does not suffer the desertion of its provinces’.

²² See: Margit Földesi: *A megszállók szabadsága (The Freedom of the Occupiers)* Kairosz, 2009.

²³ The regime, which was named after Mátyás Rákosi who was the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party, later, the leader of the Hungarian Working People’s party and finally the „*leader of the entire Hungarian nation*”, lasted from 1948 to 1956.

4. The fourth period lasted from 27 May 1957 until a point in the eighties that cannot be precisely given. The Soviet military presence set in a 1957 agreement made sure the restoration of the single-party state and the preservation of the Kádár-regime. János Kádár's response to Khrushchev's dubiously honest statement that they might pull out the Soviet troops was typical: „*It would be better that way Comrade Khrushchev, let the soldiers stay with us.*”²⁴

5. Finally another shorter period should be mentioned at the end of the story too, between 1989 and 1991, when the political effect of the Soviet military presence weakened and this made it possible to liquidate the single party state and to create a democratic state founded on the rule of law. Probably it still takes decades to have the possibility of documenting the relations between the circumstances of the Soviet occupation and the system change.

Advisors

Even after the peace treaty came into force in September 1947, the dominant feature of the Soviet military presence was occupation. From 1948 to 1989 advisors and chief advisors were working in some of the institutions and ministries. The „*advisors*” claimed for themselves the right of controlling and sanctioning. They took part in the reshaping of the army, of the judicial organs and of the organs of internal affairs in a Stalinist way and they also assisted in the „*modernization*” of the economy. Only few information is available about the „*advisors*”, but here is a list of those who directly participated in the control of the Hungarian army: 1948- 49: I. M. Prokofev, Major-General; 1949-53: V. R. Boiko, Lieutenant-General; 1953-56: M. F. Tykhonov, Lieutenant-General; 1957-61: N. D. Zakhvataev, Colonel-General; A. F. Safronov, Colonel- General; 1965-72: I. V. Tutarinov, Colonel-General; 1972-76: V. R. Andriushchenko, Colonel-General; 1976-81: J. A. Naumenko, Colonel-General; 1981-86: N. K. Silvsenko, Colonel-General; 1986-89: Kivda, field marshal.

The team of advisors consisting of 8 members arrived to the Ministry of Defence on 1 October 1948. The drafts formulated in the ministry could only be forwarded after preliminary talks and approval.²⁵ The Soviet „*advisors*” invaded the fields of Hungarian industry, agriculture and culture. Their propositions caused serious damages to Hungarian economy, for example the „*Stakhanovite movement*” (high-speed cutting), the „*Nazarov movement*” (financial responsibility for machines), the „*Koralbelnikov-movement*” (metal waste saving), the „*Duvanov movement*” (brick burning procedure), the „*Kuzniecov movement*” (tool saving), the „*Kulikov movement*” (high-speed

²⁴ See: Levente Sipos: Miért ragaszkodott Kádár a szovjet csapatokhoz? Ring, 1990. VII.4.

²⁵ Imre Okváth: Bástya a béke frontján. Magyar haderő és katonapolitika 1945-1956. Aquila Kiadó, 1998. 51.

walling). Enormous damages were caused in agriculture by forcing cultures which were not compatible with the conditions. And then came the „Lisenko method...”

A political change

The soviet military - political presence and direct command system became the most important support of the antidemocratic and dictatorial ambitions between 1947 and 1956. This couldn't be any other way, since the occupying Soviet Union ruled by Stalin was itself antidemocratic and dictatorial.

It is not accidental that almost all versions of the „12 points” of the 1956 revolution listed the demand „Soviet soldiers should go home!” as first. Or more explicitly: „Death to the Soviet occupiers!”

As a result of the occupation – as we have already seen – between 1944 and 1947 a mass of Hungarian citizens – including civilians and women - had been carried off to the inner part of the empire. Besides the need of manpower, this process was loaded with political ambitions as well. The occupiers came with lists – similarly to the Third Reich's security organs a year before. This is how they carried off István Bethlen, ex-Prime Minister, who was a significant figure during the period between the two world wars. With this step they have determined both symbolically and actually the limits of the formerly anti-Nazi Hungarian political élite. Béla Kovács, a Member of Parliament and the Secretary-General of the Independent Smallholders' Party - which was the biggest party in parliament – was also carried off in February 1947 on a political basis. The fact that the leader of a civic-democratic party was taken to GULAG meant a real turning-point in the history of Hungary after the Second World War. The liquidation of the political parties and the establishment of the Stalinist-socialist regime have started.

The occupiers managed to carry through their political interests. According to Stalin: „*This war defers from past wars; if someone occupies territories, he forces his own social system on these territories.*”²⁶ This process has been going on from the very first days of the occupation. The „influence” of the Red army on commissioning leaders of the police- and of the economy or on electing mayors and members of national committees was crucial.

Later, the Allied Control Commission interfered in questions like when could the Provisional National Assembly be in session. In the spring and the summer of 1945 it prohibited the convocation of the parliament. So the most important decisions – for example the land reform – were carried out by orders and resolutions.

The Soviet head of the Allied Control Commission even specified what the composition of the 1945 government would be. Due to the favourable

²⁶ M. Gyilas: *Találkozások Sztálinnal*. Magvető Kiadó, 105.

international and internal political circumstances, an almost entirely free election could be held in Hungary on 4 November 1945, where the Independent Smallholders' Party with a civic – democratic – national – Christian programme could gain a strong 57 % majority. The Hungarian Communist Party, however, remained under 17%! In spite of that, a coalition government was formed, and within that the majority of the key positions were taken by the communists and their allies (social democrats, Peasant Party members). The reason: the direct intervention of Voroshilov, and the fear from the occupiers. Szakszervezet érdekképviselő

The occupiers even had a say in what bills could be discussed by the National Assembly. They simply prohibited the Advocacy Law which would have encouraged the self-organization of the peasantry, by referring to „*corporative elements*”.

The Soviet Army played a very significant role in the decisive political change too. In the spring and summer of 1947 – before the occupation would come to an end legally, with the liquidation of the most powerful civic parties, with the overthrow of the Smallholders' Prime Minister, Ferenc Nagy by a coup and with the cheatings of the notorious „*blue-ticket elections*” – they managed to ruin the attempt for democracy.²⁷ The opening event of this was the carrying off of Béla Kovács the Smallholders' party's leader. The Red Army took it upon itself to carry this out. The politician going home under the protection of his congressional immunity was dragged away from his own house. He was convicted to 9 years in GULAG for his anti-Communist behaviour. As a result of this, fear and lethargy prevailed upon Hungary. It was only a question of time until „*damning testimonies*” started to surface from the torture-chambers of the infamous political police, the State Security Department (ÁVO) against the Prime Minister, Ferenc Nagy. He, however, did not wait for the arrest, but emigrated, and so did the cream of Hungarian political life: Dezső Sulyok, the leader of the Freedom Party; Zoltán Pfeiffer, the chairman of the Independence Party; Károly Peyer, the representative of a European type social democracy; and later István Barankovics an advocate of Christian democracy and many others. The Communist Party would not have been able to carry out the most outrageous election fraud in Hungarian history without the presence of the Soviet military forces. On 31 August 1947, after the exclusion of 600.000 people from the vote, 200.000 fraudulent votes were cast for them on the day of the election. Afterwards, since the results were still not satisfactory for the left-wing, they have annulled 670.000 votes casted for the opposition... After this there was no obstacle to the Stalinisation - Sovietisation of Hungary. In December 1948 the last person who dared to oppose, Cardinal József Mindszenty, the Archbishop of Esztergom, the head of the Hungarian

²⁷ See: Margit Földesi - Károly Szerencsés: *A megbélyegzés hatalma. (The power of denunciation)* Kairosz Kiadó, 2002.

Catholic Church was arrested and convicted in a show trial to life imprisonment.

The obedient executor of this process was the Hungarian Communist Party, lead by Mátyás Rákosi. The position of the party was strengthened by all legal and illegal means by the occupying Soviet army.

Mátyás Rákosi on 29 April 1947 put to words the importance of the Soviet army's presence: „After a time the Allied Control Commission is going to leave Hungary, and then – I'm afraid – our democracy will hang in the air.”²⁸ His comrade, József Révai also declared: „The Soviet Union by means of the Red Army stayed as an occupying power until the ratification of the peace treaty...this had a certain significance in the development of Hungarian domestic politics.”

Economy and jurisdiction

The Soviet Union enforced its economic interests too. Until July – November 1945 factories were under the „handling” of the Red Army. (Twelve remained under it even after that) The factories were either dismantled and conveyed to the empire (e.g. Tungsram) or they were producing for the Red Army. The occupiers got hold of vast properties by the dispossession of German (Austrian) property. Entirely Soviet or Soviet-Hungarian enterprises played a decisive role in many of the key sectors.

At the same time they forced such an economic agreement on Hungary (27 August 1945) that threw the country on the mercy of the big Eastern power. By 1946, the Soviet Union has insured its dominance of foreign trade – both exportation and importation – at an extent that exceeded all previous measures.²⁹

A significant, but up to now hardly researchable part of the occupation is the operation of jurisdiction in Hungary. Between 1944 and 1947 both the Soviet Public Prosecutor's Office and the military tribunal was in operation in the occupied country. By the military tribunal of the two Ukrainian Fronts and later by that of the Soviet Central Army Group a mass of Hungarian citizens were sentenced to death or to hard labour for shorter or longer periods on the basis of the 58. section of the Russian criminal code (Ukrainian Codex). For example, Father Szaléz Kiss and his followers were convicted in September 1946. Through the Soviet occupation the „advisors” helped conveying the notorious show trials to Hungary. Lieutenant-General Belkin was responsible for this.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the rehabilitation of the slandered and the dead had begun. This is carried out by the Russian Federation's Ministry of Justice on the basis of the „Rehabilitation of the victims of political oppression” Act passed on 18 October 1991.

²⁸ Moszkvának jelentjük. Ed: Miklós Kun-Lajos Izsák. Századvég Kiadó, 1994. 199.

²⁹ 45% of Hungarian exportation was directed towards the Soviet Union, 49% of Hungarian importation came from the Soviet Union.

Reasons of the occupation

Examining the long-lasting Soviet military presence – the occupation we have to ask the question: Why did it happen?

1. Obviously, first and foremost it has to be mentioned that Hungary has militarily participated in the war against the Soviet Union (the Allies). The responsibility of the political élite of the Horthy-era – both for entering the war and for not getting out of it – has to be taken into consideration.

2. Hungary (together with the Third Reich) has suffered a defeat in this war. As a result of this, the Soviet Union occupied it and forced it to unconditional surrender, and as Stalin said: forced its own social system on it too.

3. Soviets' requirement for safety, and in close connection with that, the intention of empire building could be named as a reason for the occupation.

4. While examining the reasons of the occupation, the Soviet economic wants cannot be neglected – with regards to the enormous destruction and loss of people that the Soviet Union had to suffer in the Second World War.

„Liberation”? or „occupation”?

The Red Army's presence in Hungary between 1944 and 1947 was an occupation legally too. This position sprang from the war defeat and answered international law. But unfortunately – as we have seen – the Stalinist rule used the occupation to liquidate the Hungarian democracy-attempt and establish the autocracy of the Hungarian Communist Party. Since the occupation and the establishment of the communist party-state were in close connection with each other, it is logical that after the victory of the Communist Party, the action of the Red Army was called „*liberating*”. Moreover: since the democratic political forces saw it clearly that a democracy-attempt can only be successful if they co-operate with the Soviet Union, the forces of the civic, national, peasant democracy themselves strongly emphasised the „*liberation*” quality of the changes too. Paradoxically calling it „*liberation*” was the result of the occupation.

What does „*liberation*” mean? „*A community, a territory, a place is freed from under a long-lasting political, social etc. oppression, occupation.*”

Was Hungary occupied and oppressed from 19 March 1944 on? Yes, it was; it was occupied by the Third Reich, Nazi Germany. It was made even worse by the „*rule of the Arrow Cross*” (from 16 October 1944), which was the lowest point in Hungarian history. The Red Army has indeed delivered Hungary from occupation and its horrible consequences. But did the country become free after all? By means of the new occupation surely did not.

Was it liberation from the horrors of war, when the weapons fell silent? Iván Hindy writes about the besieged Budapest: „*Big crowds are in a state that even*

if they not regarding the Russians as liberators, but they are awaiting the Russian occupation at least with resignation."³⁰ The Red Army's victory ended the horrors of the war, so people indeed could come out of their cellars with a false feeling of freedom, but soon they had to face the brutal behaviour of the occupiers. („*Malenki robot*", rape, robbery, etc.) A great price was paid for the liberation indeed: freedom!

It was also deceiving that between 1945 and 1947 since Moscow was engaged with even more important issues than swaying the destiny of Central Europe, it seemed that there is a chance for freedom, democracy and independence. Everybody was talking about it, especially the occupiers. The Hungarian nation wanted to take this opportunity: it voted for a civic-national democracy. „*Liberation*" and hope clashed all the more disappointingly with the consequences of the occupation. Many murmured the lines of Attila József: „*You were hoping; so was I. We knew that it was in vain, as knows the one who tries to wake the dead.*"

It was also deceiving that the majority of Hungarian society turned away from the unreasonably rigid terms of the past decades much „*relieved*"; turned away from the „*gentry Hungary*", the Hungary of „*his Graces*" and „*his Honours*" and from the Hungary of haughty large-estates and plutocracy. „*Citizen*" Sándor Márai beholding the ruins of his house writes: „*What am I sorry for losing in Buda? From my house? Nothing. This way of life was fit for destruction; everything that happened was a fulfilment of a certain law.*"³¹ This feeling of liberation was fed by the propaganda of the occupiers and by the numerous positive measures taken at the time of the democracy-attempt: land distribution, free elections, demolishing the rigid social barriers, peasants and workers setting out to get into the field administration and higher education.

This kind of „*liberation*" was prevented by the occupation. The political system, forced upon Hungary by the occupiers, turned land distribution into kolkhoz formation, and free election to a single-list popular front voting. With regards to free education they still „*filled the universities with the barefooted, grandchildren of György Dózsa, but they tried to train them to be servants.*"³²

Lately in Hungary the expression „*deliverance*" is also used in piteous political traps. (It was first used by Sándor Márai right after the war.) Being delivered means „*becoming totally free*", the community is liberated from an unpleasant, troublesome relationship with someone. The expression can be used in a sense that Hungary was delivered from the Nazi occupation, from the Arrow Cross, from the war, but it cannot be used without making known the fact of the occupation and its consequences. But of course, only in case we regard the here depicted consequences of the Soviet occupation – the

³⁰ A nagy válságtól a rendszerváltásig. Ed: András Sipos - Péter Donáth. BFL.ELTE. Budapest, 2000, 237.

³¹ Sándor Márai: Budai séta. Budapest, vol. 1, num. 3.

³² See: Erzsébet Galgóczi: Vidravas (a novel).

establishment of the Stalin type party-state – „*an unpleasant, troublesome relationship*”.

Nowadays it is a popular ambition in Hungary to examine the question of occupation – liberation – deliverance on the level of social groups, and individuals. It has its grounds, but only after clarifying historical facts. The examination of feelings or the situation of individuals or groups instead of these facts cannot be satisfactory.

The strongest argument: Jews were liberated from the phantom of destruction. That is true, but Jews were victims of the occupation and the system established in consequence just the same way as anyone else. In May 1945 it was written in a desperate letter: „*Even now there are approximately 600 Jewish former forced-labourers in prisoners' camp in Cegléd.*”³³ In 1947 Mátyás Rákosi writes about 1500 „*Jewish fascists*”. Show trials and unlawfulness concerned Jews as well as others.

The peasantry? That in the years of collectivisation with the kulak-list, with the obligation of handing over a fixed quota to state organs and with „*under the counter*” slaughtering of animals, almost became an enemy? That became the greatest base of the 1956 revolution against the system that used its name to assure its legitimacy? The civic-national democrats?, who welcomed the Red Army, since at the time of the German occupation they had to go underground and fight against Szálasi in the anti-fascist resistance? Their share was bitter emigration, prison, and the GULAG. The social democrats?, Who served the Communist Party – with a few respectable exceptions? They found themselves in prison or in emigration after the victory. And the communists themselves? The life of most of them was ruined by the party-state just like that of their defeated opponents. The communist Pál Demény became the victim of the system just like Gábor Péter who was the leader of the terror for a time, or like for example János Kádár.

The fate of individuals is an important part of a nation's, a state's history. However, the history of the years and decades after the Second World War has a moral based on facts, which can be applied to the entire nation and state. The Soviet occupation and the political-economic system established in consequence caused enormous damages to Hungary. The apocalyptic ending of the world war created an opportunity for a moral, political and intellectual renewal in Hungary too. And the need for this renewal was there in the Hungarian nation. The presence of the Soviet Army, however, between 1945 and 1947, and in 1956 prevented the fulfilment of this process. This was the most severe of its consequences.

³³ Left wing politicians' – for example Anna Kéthly's – letter. 5 May, 1945. – *História*, 1995/2.