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## **Final Report on Visegrad Scholarship**

### ***Nationalism Revisited***

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The increase of nationalism since the collapse of socialist regimes on the one hand raises questions about the underlying narratives of nation states and regional histories during the socialist period; on the other hand, it has brought real political consequences in the forms of populism and illiberalism. I argue that during state socialism nationalism rendered a traceable trajectory in informal and popular cultural exchanges and remained the most enduring narrative element of memory politics in Hungary. In recent years I have addressed this claim on several research platforms: the theoretical framework of the research is already developed. I am currently working on a book proposal based on my research project called *Nationalism Revisited – Conflicting ideologies in socialist and post-socialist Eastern European public discourses*. It has four major chapters: *Identity politics in socialist and post-socialist Eastern Europe*, *Nationalism under socialism*, *Transition in transition*, and *Populism, nation branding and popular media*.

As I highlighted it in my research plan, I applied to the Visegrad Scholarship and came to OSA with the purpose of building a historical leg for my research project, particularly in regards the status of nationalism under socialism, and the *contemporaneous* representations of the transition period, which also effect *contemporary* public discourses and media images of the systemic changes in the Eastern bloc. My time at OSA was rewarding beyond measure as the archive offered abundant material to prove my hypotheses that have only been suspected earlier. Public discourses on terms like social patriotism, informal and cultural nationalism, everyday nationalism and banal nationalistic symbolism played a crucial part and formed a traceable trajectory from the early 1960s to the transition period to which I refer as late socialism (or late Kádár-era).

## Preliminary hypotheses

The preliminary hypotheses of the research plan were the following:

1. Rather than positioning contemporary nationalistic-chauvinist attitudes as a response to socialist-era repression, I argue instead that nationalism played a key part in the collapse of socialism because it was *not excluded* from the socialist cultural milieu, remaining a prominent modality of cultural identity throughout the regime. Given the richness of material we find under the banner of socialist popular culture, this statement seems obvious. However, my processing of archival material at OSA proved that official Party and press documents also circulated pre-existent historical narratives and nationalist symbols in public discourses, resulting in the curious and oftentimes vague ideological construction of socialist patriotism.

2. Contemporary cultural and political nationalism in Eastern Europe boosts post-colonial exclusion practices towards Eastern immigrants in the West and the idea of white innocence in the East at the same time. This bidirectional social force sews together Cold War geopolitical order and neoliberal inequalities. Not only it intensifies cultural differences between the ideologies of multiculturalism and cultural nationalism but, accordingly, it is building up wider economic and political differences between the regions.

One of the most notable findings at OSA was that during late socialism questions of patriotism, nationalism and chauvinism were tied together with the contradiction between the transnational idea of socialist equality and local racism in Hungary (especially toward the Roma communities). Articles and essays on socialist patriotism and national traditions were often accompanied by non-representative surveys on attitudes towards the Roma, minorities of neighbouring socialist countries, or foreigners in general [e.g. Vilmos Faragó: 'Kicsi ország' (Small Country), *Élet és Irodalom*, January 7, 1967]. I want to explore this phenomena on a more nuanced level because it looks like my preliminary hypothesis struck on something pivotal about contemporary discourses of white innocence in Eastern Europe and their historical roots in socialist public spheres.

By investigating archival materials at OSA I can present several case studies that highlight the relationship between informal nationalism during socialism and contemporary political utilizations of white nationalism. My main focus was on the Hungarian Unit of Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute (HU OSA 300-40). I consulted transcripts of broadcast files (HU OSA 300-40-13 Transcripts of Broadcasts), that contains several programming events of Radio Free Europe's Hungarian broadcast, and Subject Files folders (HU OSA 300-40-1 Subject Files) that are combinations of Situation Reports (SR), press reports, press clippings and, occasionally, research papers as well. I also explored the *1989 Regime Change in Hungarian Television* audio-visual archive from the same perspective. They contain several hundreds of hours of audiovisual material, most of which I have yet to watch within the following months.

## Results based on OSA holdings

The findings of the processed archival material were the following:

### 1. HU OSA 300-40-1 Subject Files

The main goal of this project was mapping out various branches of media images, representations, historical documents and curated contents in order to create an inventory on how public channels thematized questions of nationalism and patriotism during socialism. This inventory helps to understand interconnections between official, popular and vernacular socialist discourses on nationalism as a prominent mode of cultural identity.

I have identified tags and keywords that may contain material relevant to the subject. I looked at press coverage of not communist-related national holidays and memorial days (15<sup>th</sup> of March, 20<sup>th</sup> August, 6<sup>th</sup> October) and examined how the perception of each national holiday shifted in the early and late socialist period. I also mapped out tentative mentions of the 1956 anti-Soviet uprising, acknowledged during socialism as a fascist counter-revolution. The appearance of the revolution is even more important than official national holidays because, along with historical revision and antisemitism, it was considered the biggest political and cultural taboo of the system.

However, the keyword 'patriotism' proved to be the most useful, as I found not one but two very important debates running almost all throughout the late socialist period, specifically on the contrast between (interwar and pre-20<sup>th</sup> century) nationalism and (socialist) patriotism. Because of the formative characteristics of nationalist traditions in Eastern Europe, after the de-Stalinization period and the oppressed 1956 uprising, it was important for the political leadership to reach some kind of consensus with the people in the approval and utilization of national symbols and national narratives. This is indicated not only by the wide-range popularity of historical themes popular in socialist television culture and arthouse movies, but also by the model of socialist patriotism that was constructed in other realms of public and media spaces, scientific discourses and everyday politics from the 1960s. However, there was no agreement on the content of socialist patriotism among leading (Marxist) intellectuals, party leadership and other creative actors of the era. This clearly exposes the ideological chaos that surrounded the notion of socialist patriotism.

One of the most famous intellectual debates of the socialist period was the 'historian's debate', in which important scholars of the period engaged in a lively discussion about the origins of the national idea and the quality of socialist national consciousness. It started with Erik Molnár's essay 'A nemzeti kérdés' [The National Question] published in 1960 in a journal called 'Magyar Tudomány' [Hungarian Science], and continued well into the 1970s. What is even more important to highlight, however, is that a general public debate on national identity and socialist patriotism has coincided with the historian's dispute, sometimes even tangled into it. The potentialities and limitations of existing conceptual frames of 'nationhood' and 'national pride' have collided with the everyday experience and top-down controlled idea

of socialist patriotism. Vilmos Faragó's article 'Kicsi ország' [Small Country, *Élet és Irodalom*, January 7, 1967.] was one of the first catalysts. It received numerous responses and ultimately resulted in a public discussion that lasted for more than 15 years. The debate not only saw a conflict between Marxist and non-Marxist conceptions of the nation and of historical knowledge, but also the extent to which artworks, books and media contents needed to speak about collective responsibility and collective memory. It is significant to say, reading through the articles and essays of the time, that the public discourse on socialist patriotism and cultural taboos still defines the contour of cultural amnesia in Hungary today.

## 2.HU OSA 300-40-13 Transcripts of Broadcasts

The processing of the transcripts of the Hungarian-language broadcasts confirmed my previous assumptions. Narrative elements of the programs have been built on pre-existing forms of cultural and political nationalism and they promoted an anti-socialist ideology that was not only anti-Soviet but stood aligned with the early-20<sup>th</sup> century concept of Central-Europe. The historical perspective highlights the features of cultural nationalism and the political ideology of the nation state.

I read the transcripts of Tibor Hanák's 'Nytott szemmel' [With Eyes Open], which was a 10 minutes long contemplative commentary (glossary) on various political and cultural topics and Tamás Bogyay's 'Kalendárium' [Calendar], a daily commemorating program with global or national historical-cultural interest. Without getting lost in the details, I found two important problems in these documents. One of the striking phenomena is the emergence of the 18th century 'kuruc' tradition. Spinning images of a national past that has no unambiguous continuity with the present was a common strategy to avoid censorship. It appeared in other realms of public spheres: one of the most popular socialist television shows was 1964 series 'A Tenkes kapitánya' [The Captain of Tenkes], which took place during the 18th century 'kuruc' uprising.

The other noteworthy finding is related to the Show of the week / Play of the week transcripts (HU OSA 300-40-13:4/1-5). All plays that were featured in this weekly serial programming had either nationalistic or anti-socialist characteristics. Several plays were written in the revisionist-nationalist atmosphere of the interwar period, including radio adaptations of prominent Hungarian plays such as *Liliom* by Ferenc Molnár, or held national significance like József Katona's 'Bánk bán' [The Viceroy], a famous literary work that promotes 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural nationalism. The plays were edited by Aladár Kovách, Gábor Bikich and Otto Indig. In February 1974 Editors László Feketekuty and László Illés broadcast the Hungarian version of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's 'A Gulág-szigetcsoport' [The Gulag Archipelago], at the same time as the first unofficial Hungarian edition that was published 1974 in Munich. The program also included Hungarian-born British author Arthur Koestler's 1940 anti-totalitarian manifesto, 'Sötétség délben' [Darkness at noon]. The first official Hungarian editions of both works were published in 1989.

## **Appendix: Archival units consulted**

HU OSA 300-40 Hungarian Unit

HU OSA 300-40-1 Subject Files

HU OSA 300-40-1:10/1-6

Állami ünnepek (1981-1991)

Állami ünnepek: SR [Situation Report] (1957-1991)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1954-1967)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1968-1974)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1975-1984)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1985-1986)

HU OSA 300-40-1:11/1-6

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1987-1988)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1989)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1989)

Állami ünnepek: Március 15. (1990-1993)

Állami ünnepek: Április 4. (1987-1990)

Állami ünnepek: Május 1. (1969-1971)

HU OSA 300-40-1:12/1-4

Állami ünnepek: Május 1. (1972-1977)

Állami ünnepek: Május 1. (1978-1986)

Állami ünnepek: (1987-1992)

Állami ünnepek : Augusztus 20. (1949-1961)

HU OSA 300-40-1:13/1-4

Állami ünnepek: Augusztus 20. (1962-1967)

Állami ünnepek: Augusztus 20. (1968-1976)

Állami ünnepek: Augusztus 20. (1977-1988)

Állami ünnepek: Augusztus 20. (1989-1994)

HU OSA 300-40-1:14/1-2

Állami ünnepek: Október 6. (1951-1989)

Állami ünnepek: Október 23. (1989-1993)

HU OSA 300-40-1:133/1-5

Belpolitika: Szocialista demokrácia

HU OSA 300-40-1:134/1-4

Belpolitika: Szocialista demokrácia

OSA 300-40-1:301/3-5

Értelmiség (1948 – 1958)

Értelmiség (1959-1963)

Értelmiség (1964-1967)

OSA 300-40-1:302/1-4.

Értelmiség (1968-1971)

Értelmiség (1972-1974)

Értelmiség (1975-1976)

Értelmiség (1977-1978)

OSA 300-40-1:303/1-6

Értelmiség (1979-1980)

Értelmiség (1979-1988)

Értelmiség (1981-1981)

Értelmiség (1982-1983)

Értelmiség (1984)

Értelmiség (1985)

OSA 300-40-1:304/1-4

Értelmiség (1986)

Értelmiség (1987)

Értelmiség (1988)

Értelmiség (1989)

HU OSA 300-40-1:451/8

Hazafiság (1957-1966)

HU OSA 300-40-1:452/1-5

Hazafiság (1967-1967)

Hazafiság (1968-1969)

Hazafiság (1970-1971)

Hazafiság (1972-1973)

Hazafiság (1974-1975)

HU OSA 300-40-1:453/1-5

Hazafiság (1976-1980)

Hazafiság (1981-1983)

Hazafiság (1984)

Hazafiság (1985)

Hazafiság (1986)

HU OSA 300-40-1:454/1-2

Hazafiság (1987-1990)

Hazafiság: SR [Situation Report] (1967-1981)

HU OSA 300-40-13 Transcripts of Broadcasts

HU OSA 300-40-13:1/1-6 Bogyay Tamás: Kalendárium

300-40-13:2-3 Hanák Tibor: Nyitott szemmel

HU OSA 300-40-13:4/1-5 Show of the week, Play of the week

HU OSA 300-40-13:3/3

Feketekuty László-Illés László: A Gulag-szigetcsoport

Monitoring of the Hungarian Television, 1989

‘Híradó’ [News, First, Second, Third Edition’

‘Napzárta’ [Day End News]

HU OSA 305-0-7\_040

HU OSA 305-0-7\_041

HU OSA 305-0-7\_044

HU OSA 305-0-7\_046

HU OSA 305-0-7\_048

HU OSA 305-0-7\_050

HU OSA 305-0-7\_053

HU OSA 305-0-7\_055