Sociocultural Change in Hungary
A Politico-Anthropological Approach

Ferenc Bódi and Ralitsa Savova

Abstract
Although Hungary joined the European Union in 2004, it seems that it has not yet been able to catch up with its Western European neighbors socioeconomically. The reasons for this are numerous, including the fact that this former historical region (Kingdom of Hungary), today the sovereign state of Hungary, has a specific sociocultural image and attitude formed by various historical events. And the nature of these events can explain why Hungary’s economic development and overarching political narrative differ so markedly from Western Europe. The aim of this article is to present the unique location of Hungary in the context of Central and Eastern Europe, and to address such factors as urbanization and industrialization, migration, population, politics, economic development, and social values crisis. We argue that these factors, including the European status quo that emerged after 1945, have influenced the existing sociopolitical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural differences between Hungary and Western European EU states.

Keywords: Central and Eastern Europe, economic development, Hungary, paternalism, political attitude, sociocultural impact, sovereignty

Hungary is located in the Carpathian Basin, where a chain of mountains surrounding the basin marks its northern and eastern borders. St. Stephen (1000–1038), the founder of the Kingdom of Hungary¹ (Hung. Magyar Királyság), accepted the Western Christian idea of the state and considered the multilingualism and coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups as a great advantage.² The state could be found in Europe’s absolute and relative center. The relative center of Europe can be found in the northeastern part of the Hungarian Plain between Debrecen and Nyíregyháza (Rónai 1993). As for the absolute center of the European continent (that is, if we were to draw diagonals between the four outermost points of the continent), it can be found on the territory of historic Hungary. This unique geographical point is located in the Eastern Carpathian Mountains in the village of Delovoe (Ukr. Ділове, Rus. Деловое, Hung. Terebesfejérpatak). A granite obelisk erected in 1887 by the Hungarian Geographical Society marks the place as a geographical rarity.³ An inscription in Russian⁴ on an iron plate placed in Soviet times confirms that this is the center of Europe.
This geographical center is at the same time at the junction of different European development zones. According to the French historian Georges Duby (1981), the Eastern European region is located on one of the eastern borders of European culture, and the historical expansion of Europe can be traced by looking at the expansion of Gothic cathedrals. The eminent historian also claims that Western European Christianity, which created modern states and societies, was born in this historical and cultural field.

In essence, the American political scientist, political adviser, and academic Samuel P. Huntington (1996) used Duby's delimitation and demarcation of Europe when answering the two following questions: Where is the eastern border of Europe? and Where is the border that separates Western Christians from the Muslim and Orthodox East? The basis for this historic line can be found in the period between the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the fifth century and the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. The border had been there for at least 500 years. It starts from the north along the territory that today separates Finland from Russia and Russia from the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). It crosses the western territories of (the contemporary) Republic of Belarus and Ukraine, separating the Roman and Greek-Catholic western parts from the Orthodox East. It goes across those areas of Romania where Catholic and Calvinist and Unitarian part of Transylvania is situated with its Hungarian inhabitants, and it goes through the former Yugoslavia and cuts that area at that spot where Slovenia and Croatia border the other ex-republics. In the Balkans, this border, of course, coincides with the historical border between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire (Huntington 1996). It is clear that the historical and geographical borders outlined by Duby and Huntington, and the events and polities that are associated with them, attest to the centrality and importance of the territory on which we find the present-day Hungarian state.

Urbanization and Industrialization in Hungary: A Different Model

The European continent is a mosaic of societies and states in which the long aftermath of the feudal era forms the basis of the history of its “depeasantization.” In the early twentieth century, almost 50 percent of society in Hungary belonged to the peasantry (Kovách 2001). Unfortunately, the modern age has not been able to integrate peasant society into the urban and industrial milieu (Kövér 1982). During the early period of industrialization and urbanization in the second half of the nineteenth century in the Kingdom of Hungary, modernization was associated with the import of human resources: a large part of the industrial labor force consisted not of the local rural population but of labor migrants from distant and more developed countries such as Austria, Germany, and Bohemia (Kövér 1982).

In the core countries, the transformation of rural life into an urban way of life was faster than in the semiperipheral parts of the European continent. In the highly
industrialized and urbanized core societies, their cities absorbed the population of the provinces and directed the surplus to their overseas colonies. Examples of this process were the expansion of the British Empire, the colonizing activities of the Netherlands (Indonesia, South Africa), Portugal (Africa and America), Spain (America and the Philippines), and the subsequent emigration of the French and Italian masses to Africa and America (Bacci 2012). Although the Kingdom of Hungary did not see the classical industrialization and urbanization processes that developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in other parts of Europe, it was a multinational state whose society had a pluralistic religious character. And this feudal society, after the Enlightenment, did see the arrival of a new, progressive generation, whose political elite led this multinational state to the modern age. The arrival of fresh ideas and the activeness of the new elite created the conditions for a civil revolution and for the advent of a new political system in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Population Vacuum and Migration Policy in the Early Eighteenth Century

Looking at the history of emigration and immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is necessary to go back to the early eighteenth century, when the lands of the crown of St. Stephen (the Hungarian sacred crown)—the lands of historical Hungary (present-day Hungary, Transylvania, Vojvodina, and Banat)—were liberated from Ottoman rule. In the eighteenth century, a special “population density belt” appeared along the Tisza River from its sources to the lower part of the Danube. The rate of population growth in this area was similar to that of the American colonies (Kövér 1982). The eighteenth century in Hungarian historiography is highly controversial as an epoch, which makes it difficult to determine the country’s population after 150 years of war. According to some estimates, the total population of the country was 4 million, but according to other estimates it was about 2.5 million (Kosár 1991). One estimate certainly seems consistent, namely, that Europe’s population increased by about 60 percent between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. During the same period, the population of the Kingdom of Hungary did not change. According to the historian Imre Wellmann (1989), perhaps the population may have declined by 40 percent as a result of the violent genocidal wars waged and brutal terror committed by the Ottoman and the Mongol imperial armies mainly in the Great Plain and Transylvania. The plague of 1708 claimed the lives of 300,000 people, according to one estimate, though another puts the number as high as 1.5 million. At the same time (early eighteenth century) the population of France was 18 million, the number of inhabitants in England may have been about 5 million, 1.6 million people lived in the American colonies, the population of Sweden was 1.4 million, and the Russian population was 13 million (Wellmann 1989). Population growth in the Kingdom of Hungary lagged far behind population growth in Northern Europe, which had already
sent its significant surplus population to various overseas colonies, mainly in North America. During the liberation wars and independence movements, it was sometimes impossible to find even a single settlement in an area as large as half a county. During the new peace period, however, the main goal was to settle people in the semi-desert and wetland areas in the interior of the country, mainly on the plains. The interest of the state dictated that the territories that could be permanently protected should be fortified. They had to be safe and they had to be able to support the army. The recruiting population was to be settled in parts of the country that had recently been liberated by the Turks. During this century, significant population movements began, on the one hand in historical Hungary and on the other hand from territories outside the Carpathian Basin. The monarchy deliberately pursued an immigration policy that prohibited emigration and encouraged immigration. Although emigration was banned, small groups left the Carpathian Basin in the eighteenth century, and this was mainly for political reasons.

This very intense immigration process helped create a pluralistic society in the eighteenth century, which had different sociocultural characteristics compared to the countries of Western and Eastern Europe. The multinational and multireligious pluralistic atmosphere in Hungary that supported immigration affected the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe, and lent itself to a progressive atmosphere in the country in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in which the Church as an institution supported the development of society. Thus, secularization as a process in the Kingdom of Hungary differed from that in Western European countries and their societies.

Unlike in Western Europe, in Central and Eastern Europe—and especially in the Kingdom of Hungary—the principle of one religion being represented in one area (cuius regio, eius religio) did not apply. The presence of two or more churches representing different religions (Calvinist, Catholic, and Lutheran) in the main square of various cities of the kingdom was not an exception but commonplace. Often, these same churches wound up founding their own schools, which competed with each other to recruit students and to have their students achieve superior results. An eclectic and high-quality education system was created without a common basic primary education and a strong university system, as was the case in Western Europe. In the Hungarian Kingdom, the principle of cuius regio, eius religio could not prevail, because massive immigration led to the formation of a multireligious society, as mentioned above. The kingdom was politically tolerant, and it badly needed both laborers and soldiers in order to keep the Ottomans at bay. It was not uncommon, for example, for a Catholic landlord to support a Calvinist college or to build an Orthodox church for his land’s residents.
Progress or Sovereignty in Hungary in the Twentieth Century?

After a successful nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Hungary entered a rather difficult twentieth century. The loss of World War I, the collapse of the Hungarian Kingdom and Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and the two unfortunate revolutions (one in 1918 and one in 1919) led to a sociopolitical and socioeconomic catastrophe. There are several possible reasons for this. On the one hand, progressive efforts (such as in the nineteenth century) came to this area from the outside through a specific immigration process. On the other hand, efforts to achieve progress had not always taken into account local specificities such as national and local values, sociocultural environment, or the natural environment. Progress was not the result of internal development, but of a kind of modernization resulting from external coercion. And this was especially characteristic of the socialist era in the countries of the communist bloc after World War II. When the pursuit of independence and the concept of sovereignty came together to form a progressive movement, it was often destroyed by the external forces of a superpower. This happened in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Hungary: in the 1848 Revolution and 1849 Freedom War and in the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. In terms of such examples, Hungary was no exception to the rule in Central and Eastern Europe, because some countries had similar historical experiences, one of them being Poland.

Historical Causes of Sociocultural Impacts in Hungary

**Interrupted Progress and Development**

The current political processes in Hungary must be seen in the context of what happened there before that country joined the European Union. Hungary was not a sovereign and developed country. It had a society that was socialized into a dictatorship, and it inherited a huge state debt: it was essentially on the brink of financial collapse after the fall of communism. According to Ralph Dahrendorf (1988), a political regime change requires three factors: a new legal system, a new economic system, and a new social value system. The legal system can be changed in as little as six months; that is what Napoleon did and that is what the Spanish democracy did after Francisco Franco’s death in 1975. Changing the economic system is a more complex issue, and this takes at least six to seven years, and in essence this transformation was successfully achieved in Hungary in the 1990s. As for the system of values, we hypothesize that the following factors and events in the past are responsible for determining the shape of Hungarian society, and that their effects are evident to this day.
A Multiethnic Milieu that Disappeared (Factor 1)

A radical population exchange took place after World War II in Poland, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic republics, and Hungary. The ethnic resettlement of Poles was agreed upon by the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union during conferences in Tehran and Yalta. As a result, it became one of the largest of several postwar expulsions in Central and Eastern Europe, displacing a total of about 20 million people between 1945 and 1946 (Weber 2004). Ethnic deportation was a long process in the Baltic republics between 1945 and 1990. For the purposes of achieving ethnic homogeneity, several minorities were deported from Eastern Europe (Germans, Italians, Hungarian Jews). This radical population exchange changed the map of ethnicities and nationalities, and destroyed several organic structures of local societies in transit countries. In Hungary, this population exchange was very radical, affecting more than half a million Hungarian Jews and over two hundred thousand Germans who were Hungarian citizens. This loss of population affected the whole of civil society, which collapsed in Hungary after 1944 and 1947, as local communities disappeared and social strata were significantly depleted.

Radical Depeasantization in Hungary: Interrupted Political Progress (Factor 2)

Before World War II, in the societies of Central and Eastern Europe, almost every second person belonged to a rural society, including in Hungary (Kovách 2001). As a result of war, rural society was virtually destroyed, and ever so slowly almost eliminated; it was absorbed by the rest of society, that is, the larger towns and the cities. As an alternative, a progressive movement called the Third Way emerged in Hungary, dealing with the societal problems of the country's villages and their populations. After World War I, there was a left-wing movement known as March Front⁸ in Hungary, which was highly heterogeneous and polarized. As a political tendency, the representatives of this rural movement followed the direction of the Third Way because they did not accept either capitalism or communism, but rather the modernization that socialism offered. However, their members agreed that rural society must change; they just did not agree that such changes were to be extreme. The focus of the movement's political vision was the idea of a “Garden Hungary,” which was not a utopia or an empty theory about societal relationships, because it was inspired by real life and was based on special agrarian cooperation. In addition to land reform, this movement emphasized cultural and educational programs that had hitherto been excluded from or never even a part of the higher education system. This rural movement, which was destroyed by the communist regime, had two main objectives—namely, to achieve better living conditions for rural society, including land reform and education reform, and to create a new middle class with the means to educate gifted young people in rural areas (People's College, Agrarian Academy).⁹ These goals did not receive the approval of either the left-wing or the right-wing Hungarian political elite.

Apart from the domestic political situation, the geopolitical environment was also not conducive to pursuing the Third Way. Representatives of the popular move-
ment believed that Hungary was a neutral country among the various countries of the global power in Eastern Europe, and this idea permeated the entire rural movement. In 1939, the leader of the March Front established the National Peasant Party. This party was not radical, but served as a mediator between the right and left political space in Hungary between 1945 and 1949. Eventually, in 1949, the National Peasant Party recognized the communist ideology as its own, as a result of which it assumed a political role in the communist dictatorship. Several dominant leaders in this party had chosen to emigrate abroad, while others had an apolitical attitude. During the 1956 Uprising, the National Peasant Party was revived as Sándor Petőfi’s party, but its fate was again sealed by the Soviet occupation (Bódi-Savova 2018). Thus, there was no chance of establishing an independent political and economic system in Hungary. After World War II, Hungary had no way of forming a new political regime; instead, it had to adopt a new political path—that of communism in the Soviet bloc.

**Value System in Crisis (Factor 3)**

After 1945, in Hungary, the communist leaders who came to power ruled the country according to their own ideology of violence. Contrary to the formation of modern welfare states in postwar Western societies, in the small countries of the eastern region conquered by the Soviet Union no attempt was made to alleviate the complex problems of social injustice and inequality through legal and economic measures. Characteristic of the centralized redistribution of wealth was the shortage of goods and services (Kornai 1980). Buying deficient items through bribery was a specific sociocultural ritual of the era. The entire social value system was built on a double moral standard, where everyone knew that the other knew something was amiss, but no one behaved as if they were aware of it (Hankiss 1990).

**The Sociocultural Impact of Paternalism**

The most important medium in this sociocultural reality was political power or influence, and at the end of the hierarchal chains sat patrons of small groups that were known as oligopolistic networks (Bódi 2012). The biggest such network was known as “The Party,” representing the state itself as a Hegelian absolute, an abstract objectification, although it was very much a flesh-and-blood player when it came to executing transactions. According to János Kornai, the main organizing principle and paradigm of the socialist system was paternalism (Kornai and Weibull 1983). The above-mentioned factors led to the advent of a distorted value system. Socialism damaged the system of societal norms of the new generations, while intimidating with terror the generations socialized in the earlier epoch. This period lasted 45 years—between 1945 and 1990. It alienated from politics the majority of those living in the socialist bloc, which was reflected in the relatively low turnout in the first free elections after 1990 in Hungary (Bódi and Bódi 2012).
According to Dahrendorf’s (1990) main argument, dictatorships cannot be easily eliminated from society, and desire for or obedience to authoritarianism are values that, once normalized, cannot be easily changed. This is mainly because a damaged society has several attributes that it cannot lose in a short period of time and therefore needs a change of generation, or perhaps a change of two generations, before seeing a pervasive attitudinal change. A social anomie was developed in the years of transition after 1990, which only increased the social deficit, as it were, that was created by the social norms of previous generations. On the one hand, there was no chance of returning to the system of norms of the presocialist epoch. High unemployment and inflation, the further impoverishment of the backward strata of society, and the transfer of previous party-state privileges to the new capitalism only increased its level of corruption and alienation from power and the state. On the other hand, the emerging new capitalism and new democracy could not present a new system of values, as the economic and political elite could not become an example for the majority of society (Bódi et al. 2017).
Poverty or the fear of poverty, as well as the prevailing hopelessness, led people to propose political solutions that called into question the results of the 1990 regime change. After the turn of the millennium, voters’ attention was turned toward political forces that openly opposed the political achievements and institutions of the new democracy (e.g., civil society, local authorities, free press, and minority rights). To curb this trend, the new capitalist class developed in Hungary stood behind the political forces that managed to push the new nationalist and radical parties, as well as the successor parties of the previous era, out of the political arena. This is how a mass party emerged, which carried its power not in the extent of its organization or the degree to which it was integrated into society, but rather in its ability to mobilize voters, many of whom were heavily influenced by the media (Körössényi 2019).

The essence of mass democracies is an authoritarian party aristocracy that relies on the paternalism of a population socialized in previous regimes. This population expects to be cared for and at the same time seeks to vigorously enforce the system of values that protects their national pride and guarantees the sovereignty of their country. The existence of sovereignty is especially appreciated in countries where patriotic and progressive political groups have constantly fought for it in previous centuries. In the eyes of Western Europe, these forces are considered nationalist, and Eurosceptic politicians, already popular in their own countries, limit the power of the survivors of the previous regime while ensuring relative economic, political, and cultural peace for the majority of society. They achieve this result through the use of national and EU development resources.

**The Hungarian Solution after the Financial Crisis of 2008**

“Original sin” actually occurred at the time of the change of the two political and economic systems. In the first case, when the countries of the transition zone came under Soviet rule (1945), a path opened up in those countries that the then-democratic forces (peasant and middle-class progressive parties) could not choose, because their representatives had been killed, deported, or expelled by communist terror. In the second case, “original sin” occurred when the countries of the socialist bloc were liberated from the Soviet occupation and became an economic zone of influence for the Western economic system (1990). During the change of political regime, they did not take into account the loss and lack of societal norms caused by the previous era. Western influencers tended to limit conservative, quasi-restorative forces that wanted to draw strength from movements that were active before 1945, because they considered them too nationalistic. Then, a special new capitalism emerged in the transition countries without any serious civic virtue. But it is here that Dahrendorf’s aforementioned argument comes to the rescue: civic virtues cannot be produced; they can only be formed in a society in which there is solidarity, autonomy, creativity, and tolerance.

The political forces (mostly center-left parties) that emerged in the 1990s and came to power in the new political regime were pushed out of power by the center-
right party alliance, which intensified after the 2008 financial crisis and was backed by a new national bourgeoisie as well as by the agrarian oligarchy. This new political formation was also accepted by global interest groups, as they benefited from the maintenance of political stability in Hungary—a country in transition in which they had invested considerable capital and had developed a huge market for their goods. This new political status quo took advantage of the paternalistic attitude that was strengthened in the era of socialism (1945–1990), which was characterized by low incomes and socially vulnerable masses. Mass democracy differed from the previous political system (socialism) and the subsequent exercise of power by the successors of the postcommunist parties (left-wing parties), as emerging middle-class groups came to be counted among its constituents.

The legitimacy of the postcommunist successor party was largely supported by the societal transfers of the state and local governments (sociocultural provisions as different forms of benefits and various kinds of aid), while loyalty to mass democracy was nurtured by keeping national sovereignty on the agenda. Thus, Hungary’s foreign policy, which boldly represented independence and state sovereignty, was also a form of domestic policy aimed toward the middle classes.

In addition to symbolic political instruments, access to EU funds has become an important factor influencing the middle class. These sources are especially important in a state like Hungary, where much of the national capital was lost in wars and during the years of communist rule. Among the many advantages of Hungary’s EU membership is that the development and strengthening of the national capitalist class occurred thanks to the European Union’s financial resources and to the significant support of the state itself. The current ruling political force in Hungary is strong, and it relies on a huge mass of voters, including the rural electorate, the votes of the elderly, and the middle class urban electorate. After the weakening or disintegration of the former state parties in 2010, there is no significant political force that can form a large opposition coalition against the current government.

In Hungary, the ruling political force has no common ideology, as it is organized into a pragmatic, media-influenced mass party, and offers what the majority of voters want from them. Relatively low voter turnout is particularly favorable for it, as it can mobilize the same number of voters almost every time, giving them a sufficient majority in the legislature and thus in formation of government. The political force currently in power in Hungary is based on mass democracy, and its foreign policy emphasizes national sovereignty and stands for anti-federalism in the European Union.

Conclusion

The harmony of progress and sovereignty is possible in a democratic society with civic virtues and an existing bourgeois class. A society interrupted in its civic development cannot easily create such a societal environment: the road between paternalism and
autonomy is long. Hungary has managed to preserve its intangible cultural heritage, dating back to historical times and Christian traditions, and to pursue a responsible policy toward the thirteen officially recognized minorities in the country. It is necessary as well to find and include the lost civic virtues in a new societal contract agreed upon between the political elite and civil society.

Ferenc Bódi is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence. Since 1994, he has belonged to the Local Organization of Social Services (LOSS) international research team. During this research collaboration, he has written two books, which were published by EHV Bremen. Nowadays, his main research focuses on the social deficit indicators (anomie) and migration issues in wide international cooperation with the EURISPES (Italy), and on local policy and self-government during the transition period in Central and Eastern Europe. He is a member of the Scientific Committee of the Turati Foundation, Florence, Italy. Furthermore, he belongs to the Editorial Committee of Storia e Futuro in Florence. Email: bodi.ferenc@tk.hu

Ralitsa Savova is a PhD Candidate in the Social and Economic Contexts of Human Resources Program at the University of Sopron, Hungary, and an External Associate at the Centre for Social Sciences, Institute for Political Science, Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre of Excellence. She is a Member of the Editorial Committee of the Online journal of history and historiography Storia e Futuro, Florence, Italy; a Member of the International Scientific Committee Amelio Tagliaferri; and the Official Representative for Central and Eastern Europe to the European cultural route Longobard Ways across Europe, Brescia, Italy. Email: ralitsa.savova@tk.hu

Notes

1. The Kingdom of Hungary (1000–1946, with the exception of 1918–1920) covered what is today Hungary, Slovakia, Transylvania, the territory of Burgenland (now part of Austria), Carpathian Ruthenia (now part of Ukraine), Međimurje (now part of Croatia), Prekmurje (now part of Slovenia), Vojvodina (now part of Serbia), and the Kingdom of Croatia (from 1102).

2. According to the Corpus Juris Hungarici (Corpus of Hungarian Law), an ancient legal corpus that dates to 1534 but that contains statutes from the eleventh century. See Markus (1902).


5. The Tisza River is a large river in Europe flowing through the territory of Ukraine (Transcarpathian Region), Romania (Maramures County), Slovakia (Košice Region), Hungary (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg, Borsod-Abáuj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Heves County, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok, Bács-Kiskun, and Csongrád), and Serbia (autonomous near Vojvodina), a left tributary of the Danube. Length: 966 kilometers (with the right side of the river Black Tisza, it is 997 kilometers). The catchment area is 157,186 square kilometers (IPCDR 2008).

6. The Peace of Augsburg was a treaty between Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and the Schmalkaldic League signed in September 1555 in the imperial city of Augsburg. It officially ended the religious struggle between the two groups and made the legal division of Christianity permanent within the Holy Roman Empire, allowing rulers to choose either Lutheranism or Roman Catholicism as the official confession of their state. According to this treaty, the “whose realm, his religion” principle prevailed: only one Church could remain under one ruler for a long time (Hughes 1992).

7. Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) was a Hungarian poet and liberal revolutionary. He was one of the pivotal figures of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. He wrote his first poem in Pápa (a small town in the Hungarian Transdanubia). The then young poet and Lutheran received serious support and recognition, which gave him the opportunity to attend the local Calvinist school, the benefactor of which was the Catholic Count Esterházy de Galanta.

8. The March Front (1937–1938) intellectual and political movement in Hungary. This movement’s program called for democratic transformation, freedom of the press, reconsideration based on the self-determination of the Danube peoples, land reform, the expropriation of large estates, and restrictions on monopoly capital. The movement drew attention to the dangers of German expansion and protested against the unjust stigmatization of Judaism.

9. The idea of a People’s College was born in the 1930s as a result of the terrible rural conditions discovered by village researchers. By setting up a boarding school, they created training opportunities for poor children, mostly of rural origin. The first People’s College was established in 1939. Some 158 People’s Colleges networked across the country, providing professional and lifelong community experiences for approximately 9,500 high school and college students. The communist government disbanded the People’s College network because in 1949 it did not trust the autonomous movement.

10. The National Peasant Party (Hungarian: Nemzeti Parasztpárt, NPP) was a political party in Hungary between 1939 and 1949. The party was revived for a short time in 1956 during the Hungarian Uprising. The party’s main policy was land reform. It attracted support in the provinces among the lower, middle class, and intellectuals, enjoying the greatest popularity in eastern Hungary. In 1946, the party won 36 of the 411 seats in Hungary’s parliamentary elections. Party members and leaders were repressed by the communist regime. For example, Imre Somogyi (ethnographer), a Member of Parliament, was shot dead by Soviet soldiers in Budapest in 1947, and Imre Kovács, a party leader persecuted by the communist dictatorship, went into exile in the United States.

References


