Monument discourse and the Hungarian case: Competing political interpretations in Budapest's monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956

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Introduction

Since the transition to a democratic republic, Hungary commemorates the Revolution of 1956 as a national-historical event that ultimately led to the change of regimes in 1989/90. It is widely believed that the memory of '56 led to a peaceful transition; thus, is manifestation in monuments seems little surprising. However, the range of monuments set up in Budapest's public spaces differs greatly in style and meaning. The celebration of the 50th anniversary in 2006, was accompanied by a public controversy over a new Central Monument. Seemingly unrelated, riots broke out simultaneously. However, a closer look reveals the analytical potential in connecting monuments for the Hungarian revolution in 1956 to the country's recent political development. Therefore, this paper analyzes a selection of '56 monuments and their symbolic language in relation to the political interests and convictions of the respective patrons.

In general, nations commemorate historical events which loom as unifying forces in the past. The create notions of belonging, and set common framework of references. Hence, the social memory serves as foundation for a collective self-image, future goals as well as present-day political claims. With regard to the commemoration of the Hungarian revolution nowadays, the social memory lacks consensus about the 'correct' interpretation and meaning. In this respect, the approaches to and manifestations of '56 in Hungary features unique characteristics. The history of these monuments deserves attention because without a critical evaluation it is impossible to understand the fierce fights over the revolution's legacy and its monuments as well as the current ideological polarization.

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Apart from the history of the Dual Monarchy, only few art historians have researched the symbolic landscape of Hungarian monuments. Most prominently among these is Géza Boros who has already analyzed the symbolic language of '56 monuments[1]. On the contrary, since the emergence of concepts of social memory, the evaluation of monuments has become common practice in Western European countries. One of the most convincing memory concepts was proposed by the historian of Ancient Egypt, Jan Assmann[2]. He outlines the construction of social memory, and differentiates its function into three layers: the communicative, the collective and the cultural memory. All three types play a role in the construction of present-day social memories of the 1956 revolution. Aleida Assmann, additionally explains the manifestation of memory in material places[3]. Monuments are significant examples of places of memory.

The importance of monuments for national identity is for example approved by a selection of articles by the famous German social historian Reinhart Koselleck[4]. In the programmatic introduction, Koselleck points out the political claims that accompany the raising of monuments. Since the 19th century, they have served as legitimation of political ideologies and power structures. Thus, they were often contested before such well-known cases as the 'Unknown Soldier' in France entered the canon of national symbols. Usually, the raising of monuments was accompanied by political struggles. Thus, Koselleck insists it is

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[1] BOROS, Géza. "Gloria Victis. Wiedergutmachung auf Ungarns öffentlichen Plätzen" [Gloria Victis. Compensation on Hungary's public places], in Akademie der Künste. *Denkmäler und kulturelles Gedächtnis nach dem Ende der Ost-West-Konfrontation* [Monuments and cultural memory after the end of the east-west divide], (Berlin: Jovis Publ. 2000), pp. 199-212.

[2] For example his pioneering first study and the most recent publication: ASSMANN, Jan. ASSMANN, Jan. *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2006), transl. by Rodney Livingstone; *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. [Cultural Memory. Writing, Remembrance and political identity in ancient high cultures], (München: C.H.Beck Verlag c1999).

[3] ASSMANN, Aleida. „Das Gedächtnis der Orte" [The memory of places], in Ulrich Borsdorf and Heinrich Theodor Grüter (eds.). *Orte der Erinnerung: Denkmal, Gedenkstätte, Museum* [Places of Remembering: Monument, Memorial, Museum], (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Publ. 1999), pp.59-77.

[4] KOSELLECK, Reinhart and Michael Jeismann (eds.): *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* [The political cult of the dead. Warrior memorials in Modernity], (München: Wilhelm Fink Publ. 1994).

necessary to engage in an interdisciplinary approach of social and art history to understand the full meaning and implications of monuments.

Hungary is a latecomer, or newcomer respectively, to such studies. Moreover, common West European ideas about collective identity or political ideologies do not necessarily apply to the region of Central Europe. Remarkably, so far the political actors committed to the manifestation of the revolution's memory have not been evaluated yet. Even if attempts were made, as Boros does, they neither scrutinize the origins of the respective ideology nor reveal the political network behind the monuments in detail. Others, like Emilia Palonen[5] or Sonja and Ivan Szelenyi together with Imre Kovach[6] have taken a broader approach evaluating the commemoration and cultural policies in general. Thus, this paper presents a unique approach to monuments for the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

A brief survey of '56 monuments in Hungary's capital Budapest reveals the large range of artistic styles in which the memory of the revolution is visualized. Therefore, I follow the main questions: Who engages in the raising of monuments and how do these participants in the manifestation of memory relate to each other? Which ideological differences are conveyed through the various symbols and styles of the monuments as such? I will identify those symbols which repeatedly appear in Budapest's public places with regard to the revolution. Following, I will research the origins of these differences. Where do they come from and what is their historical context?

I will argue that the personal connections and the institutional framework that dominated the shaping of the cityscape were established during the 1980s. The appearance of public places in Budapest is decided by a limited number of actors; these informal networks

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[5] PALONEN, Emilia. "Postcommunist Histories in Budapest: The Cult of Great Men", University of Essex, Spring 2002; also "Creating Communities: The Post-Communist City-Text of Budapest", in *Tr@ansit online* 2006).

[6] SZELENYI, Sonja, Ivan Szelenyi and Imre Kovach. "Interests and symbols in Post-Communist Political Culture: The Case of Hungary", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No.3, June 1996, pp.679-722.

closely connect artists and politics, who maintain mutually productive and useful interrelations. Superficially, the political polarization that is witnesses in Hungary today also seems to be based in the eighties when the revolution's legacy was first used as political legitimation. Yet, the differences in political ideologies that surfaced after the transition reproduce the political struggle between populists and urbanites of the interwar period. These camps were cussed during the Communist period. Nevertheless, as I will show, the binary opposition returned, first, in the different convictions inside the opposition movement during the 1980s. Finally, when the Kádár regime imploded the dissident movement also fell apart. The emerging political elite dispersed into different, even opposing political camps.

Thus, I will argue that the political culture did not only return to its interwar state. Moreover, I will show that the so-called democratic opposition movement, which mainly contributed to the return of the '56 memory, failed to establish democratic values. By re-assessing the revolution as an accelerator of political reforms, its memory was invested with decisive authority. Consequently, the commemoration and interpretation of the Hungarian revolution turned into a battlefield of political claims. Ultimately, it led to the current, fragmented situation that reproduces the polarization of populists against urbanites. Furthermore, this ideological reactivation fails to acknowledge the procedures, mechanisms and function of a democracy.

Basically, approach derives from Jan Assmann's concept of social memory. For the following paper, I have selected those monuments for an iconological interpretation which are most commonly used and best reflect the intentions of the different political actors. My scarce knowledge of the Hungarian language limits access to some information. However, where it was relevant, I have obtained translations. Moreover, I do not base my thesis exclusively on written sources and I do not aim at a review of literature. On the contrary, I will highlight the complexity of memory constructions which is not restricted to writing but also includes visual

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representations such as monuments. Additionally, I will show that it is not only possible to approach this topic from the position of an outsider but precisely offers advantages for a critical evaluation.

Due to the unique approach of this thesis, literature on the topics I will cover proved at times insufficient. Consequently, I accessed archival sources or institutional documents and files that are not readily available. Still, I have sourced my information as precisely as possible. For example, I have consulted the newspaper clippings of Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty at the *Open Society Archive*, and the files at the *Budapest Galéria*. While the latter are only accessible to employees and accredited researchers, I have received support from staff members at both institutions. Yet, at times the temporal proximity of my thesis posed obstacles to my research; some of the information I needed could only be provided by contemporaries. For example, the artist György Jovánovics, the historian Áron Máthé at the Terror House, the architect Katalin György, or the chairman of the Association of Young Artists, Zsolt Keresű, provided me with vital information which I treated with due care in order to maintain academic standards.

Following, I present the main elements of the concept of social memory differentiating between the forms of communicative, collective and cultural memory. I will address the 'political cult of the dead' as Koselleck has conceptualized it. In addition to that, I will refer to recent developments of the commemoration and representation of the Holocaust in Germany. The studies of the American cultural historian James Young, serve at first as a role model in the analysis of monuments. Second, they present a country's different approach to memory and, third, offer a comparison in commemoration policies. Third, Budapest as well as Berlin underwent significant changes in city planning. Since the political changes in 1989/90, both cityscapes have changed dramatically. Certainly, the memory of the Holocaust cannot be

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equated with the Hungarian revolution; however, the synthesis of these two cases provides an interesting context.

The second chapter frames the context of recent Hungarian monuments for the Revolution of 1956, and their political meaning. I will retrace the political developments from the opposition movement to the consolidation of the multi-party system in the following decade. This political history proves relevant for the topic since it identifies major ideological shifts and trends. At this point, I rely on secondary literature which often proves difficult due to the political commitment or bias of the authors: Besides the collection of analytical articles by Béla Királyi and Lee W. Congdon as well Maria Schmidt and László György Tóth [7]. Most of the authors appear again in this paper as active politicians. In addition to these, I have consulted Barnabas Racz, who has regularly reported on national elections and the development of the Hungarian Left[8]. Then, a brief history of contemporary art in Hungary highlights the close relation between art and politics. Also, this overview introduces some of the artists, trends and art institutions that will be relevant for the analytical chapter.

In the third chapter, I will present a selection of monuments for the Hungarian revolution. The iconological analysis identifies recurrent themes and features which reveal the political convictions of the artists and patrons. This chapter creates a synthesis between the concept of memory, the history of political ideologies and contemporary art in Hungary. A separate section is dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. The previously described polarization process as well as fight over Budapest's streets and places as a reflection of political positioning, seems to culminate in, first, the controversy over the new Central Monument and, second, in the riots and re-staging of 1956 in the fall of 2006.

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[7] Individual articles as indicated in the following body of text. Compiled in CONGDON, Lee W. and Béla K.Király (eds.), *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, suppressed and victorious 1956-1999* (New York: Columbia University Press 2002); also SCHMIDT, Mária and László Gy. Tóth (eds.), *From totalitarian to democratic Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000).

[8] For example RACZ, Barnabas. "The Left in Hungary and the 2002 Parliamentary Elections", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.55, No.5, 2003, pp.747-769.

I. Memory and representation in place and time

I.1 General Introduction

In the following chapter, I will present the concept of social memory based on Jan Assmann's three-fold definition of communicative, collective and cultural memory. All of these types of social memory will prove relevant for the analysis of monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and their symbolic connotations. To a large extent, Assmann bases his approach on Maurice Halbwachs' 1925 studies of the 'cadre sociaux' [social frameworks] and 'legendary topography'[9]. While in 1984, the French historian Pierre Nora introduced the concept of 'lieux de mémoire' [places of memory][10] I will preserve the conceptual context and present Aleida Assmann's connection of places and social memory[11]. Halbwachs already encountered the power of symbolic overwriting. The function and mechanism, origins and consequenes behind such activity are incorporated in Bruno Latour's recent concept of *Iconoclash*[12]. Furthermore, I will address Reinhart Koselleck's programmatic introduction to *The political cult of the dead. Warrior memorials in Modernity*[13] as a point of reference to the former street fighters. The iconological analysis of monuments originates in Ernst Gombrich's coinage of the 'innocent eye'[14]. W.J.T. Mitchell

[9] HALBWACHS, Maurice. *On collective memory*. Ed., transl. by Lewis A. Coser (Chicago and London: The university of Chicago Press 1992), transl. reprint from 1941, orig. 1925. Singled out here is the chapter: "Conclusion: The Legendary Topography of the Gospels", pp.194-235.
[10] NORA, Pierre. „Entre Mémoire et Histoire. Le problematique des lieux" [Between Memory and History. The problematic of places] in *Lieux de mémoire* [Places of Memory]. Vol I „La République" [The Republic], (Paris: Gallimard 1984), pp.XV-XLII.
[11] ASSMANN, Aleida. „Das Gedächtnis der Orte" [The memory of places], in Ulrich Borsdorf and Heinrich Theodor Grüter (eds.). *Orte der Erinnerung: Denkmal, Gedenkstätte, Museum* [Places of Remembering: Monument, Memorial, Museum], (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Publ. 1999), pp.59-77.
[12] LATOUR, Bruno. "What is Iconoclash? Or is there a world beyond the image wars?" in ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe (ed.): *Beyond the image wars in science, religion, and art* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press), pp.14-36.
[13] KOSELLECK, Reinhart. "Einleitung" [Introduction] , in Reinhart Koselleck and Michael Jeismann (eds.): *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* [The political cult of the dead. Warrior memorials in Modernity], (München: Wilhelm Fink Publ. 1994), pp.7-22.
[14] GOMBRICH, E.H.. *Art & Illusion. A study in the psychology of pictorial representation*. (Lonon: Phaidon Press Ltd. c1992 (1960)), e.g. p.12.

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has re-assessed Gombrich's theories of iconology, which can be justly applied to sculptures, too.

I.2 Memory

I.2. 1 Communicative, collective and cultural memory

"Remembering", writes Jan Assmann, "is not simply storing, codifying, saving. Remembering is a creative, modelling process"[15]. The German specialist on Ancient Egypt and internationally acknowledged theorist of social memory, Jan Assmann, differentiates between communicative, collective and cultural memory. He insists that these memories are social constructions just like values and norms[16]. The latter form the framework for the emergence of social memory:

> Both the collective and the individual turn to the archive of cultural traditions, the arsenal of symbolic forms, the 'imaginery' of myths and images, of the 'great stories', sagas and legends, scenes and constellations that live or can be reactivated in the treasure stores of a people.[17]

The importance of the 'cadres sociaux' for individual memory was first pointed out by Maurice Halbwachs in 1925. When humans reconstruct past experiences, he claims, this process is subdued to the respective community, no matter if this consists of the family, a religious group or the national community. Society, consequently, influences individual memories in that contextualizes remembering in a social framework. Hence, aspects may be added, shortened, or modified[18]. Consequently, society also has the power to invest

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[15] ASSMANN, Jan. „Kollektives und kulturelles Gedächtnis. Zur Phänomenologie und Funktion von Gegen-Erinnerung" [Collective and cultural Memory. Phenomenology and function of counter-remembrance], in Ulrich Borsdorf and Heinrich Theodor Grüter (eds.). *Orte der Erinnerung: Denkmal, Gedenkstätte, Museum* [Places of Remembering: Monument, Memorial, Museum], (Frankfurt/Main and New York: Campus Verlag 1999), p.16: „„Erinnern ist ja nicht einfach Bewahrung, Festhalten, Speichern. Erinnerung ist ein kreativer, modellbildender Prozeß." All translations are my own, except otherwise indicated.
[16] ASSMANN, Jan. *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2006), transl. by Rodney Livingstone, p.3.
[17] Ibid., p.7f.
[18] HALBWACHS, here 1992, chapter: "The Reconstruction of the Past", pp.48-51.

individuals with beliefs that root in previous times even if they have been previously forgotten or repressed[19].

Here, Assmann distinguishes between the three forms of memory: Communicative memory establishes ties between generations by handing down experiences and memories to future generations. It beholds the younger members of a generation to respect and appreciate the lives of their elders. This emotional exchange is based on communication and interaction between individuals and, therefore, embraces a time span of about 80 to 100 years. "Every individual memory constitutes itself in communication with others"[20]. Communicative memory is part of socialization, individuals, hence, become accepted and acceptable members of a community[21]. Communication and interaction takes place on numerous levels and among different layers of collectives[22]. Assmann does not presuppose the nation as the ultimate point of reference; instead, he acknowledges the complexity of memories that a single individual maintains. Moreover, the efforts some of the former street fighters put into sharing their experiences fulfill the description of the communicative memory.

Assmann distinguishes the latter from 'bonding' or 'collective' memory which provides group members with "a common point of view":

> Wherever people join together in larger groups they generate a connective semantics, thereby producing forms of memory that are designed to stabilize a common identity and a point of view that span several generations.[23]

Communicative memory passes through a stage 'objectivization' to the level of collective memory. That is to say, that the values and norms which derive from communication are institutionalized: "Collective memory is particularly susceptible to politicized forms of remembering", which one can witness in commemorative practices

[19] Ibid., p.85f.
[20] ASSMANN, Jan and John CZAPLICKA. "Collective memory and cultural identity", in *New German Critique*, No. 65, Cultural History/Cultural Studies 1995, p.127.
[21] J.ASSMANN, 2006, p.3f.
[22] J.ASSMANN and CZAPLICKA, 1995 p.128f.
[23] Ibid., p.11.

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manifested in and around memorials, holidays, flags or rituals[24]. Objectivization makes identity concrete and visible in its manifestations; these are for example tradition and rituals[25]. Such practices exercise the siociogenetic force of bonding individuals together. The political cult of the dead, to which I will turn soon, belongs to this bonding, collective form of remembering the past. Moreover, the memory of the Hungarian Revolution is in the process of objectivization. As long as the former participants are alive, they can actively this institutionalization according to their own beliefs-

Cultural memory may embrace thousands of years, and is less subject to manipulations. "Cultural memory, in contrast to communicative memory, encompasses the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded; and in contrast to collective, bonding memory, it includes the noninstrumentalizabe, heretical, subversive, and disowned."[26] Often it is codified in written form, which forms the backbone of Assmann's studies. Ancient Greece has been preserved though writing and maintains meaning for Europeans up to the present day[27]. Through writing, caesuras can be overcome.

Mainly, Assmann bases his studies on the Exodus of the People of Israel from Egypt[28]. Deuteronomy prescribes ways to remember and, thus, serves as example to highlight, first, the importance of scripture and, second, the perseverance and implementation of cultural memory. Cultural memory isolates the foundation of culture without the present-day manipulative openness of collective memory. It is not an active part of every-day life, but it serves as its distant basis. In addition to that, cultural memory may not only expand

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[24] Ibid., p.7.
[25] J.ASSMANN and CZAPLICKA, 1995, p.128: "'concretion of identity': With this we mean that a group bases its consciousness of unity and specificity upon this knowledge and derives formative and normative impulses from it, which allows the group to reproduce its identity. In this sense, objectivized culture has the structure of memory."
[26] J.ASSMANN, 2006, p.27.
[27] ASSMANN, Jan . *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen.* [Cultural Memory. Writing, Remembrance and political identity in ancient high cultures], (München: C.H.Beck Verlag c1999), p.299.
[28] J.ASSMANN, 1992, pp.296-300; 1999, pp.24-29; 2006, pp.18-20.

indefinitely into the past, but it also embraces different groups and identities at the same time[29].

I.2. 2 Places of memory

In 1984, the French historian Pierre Nora published the first volume of his compilation *Les lieux de mémoire* including the definition:

> Memory is life that is always owned by those alive and, therefore, it is always subject to permanent evolution, open for dialectical changes of remembering and forgetting; unconscious of its consecutive deformations, it is vulnerable for all kinds of uses and abuses, sensitive to long latency and sudden reactivation. Memory invest remembering with sanctity […], as Halbwachs claimed, that there is no memory beyond collectives; that it is by definition multiplied and fragmented, collective, plural and individual. [30]

Les lieux de mémoire amounts to seven volumes with the last one published in 1993. While upon its appearance Nora's concept provoked enthusiastic responses, his condemning separation of history and memory soon met critique: The famous American historian Natalie Zemon Davis, in an introductory essay of *Representation* in the crucial year of 1989, reproaches Nora for underestimating the interdependence between these two theoretical categories. Furthermore, she proclaims, people would care about the accuracy of historical accounts and presentations, and both – history as well as memory – contribute to "setting the record straight"[31]. Thus, from a historian's point of view, Assmann's concept proves more attractive, since it defines various levels of memory and their interaction.

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[29] To stick to the previous example, Greek Antiquity is seen as common heritage for all European states consisting of numerous national and regional identities at the same time. J.ASSMANN, 2006, p.29: "Cultural memory is complex, pluralistic, and labyrinthe; it encompasses a quantity of bonding memories and group identities that differ in time and place and draws its dynamism from these tensions and contradictions."

[30] NORA, Pierre. „Entre Mémoire et Histoire. Le problematique des lieux" [Between Memory and History. The problematic of places] in *Lieux de mémoire* [Places of Memory]. Vol I „La République" [The Republic], (Paris: Gallimard 1984), pp.XV-XLII. Orig.: "La mémoire est la vie toujours portée par les groupes vivantes et á ce titre, elle est en évolution permanente, ouverte á la dialectique du souvenir et de l'amnésie, inconsciente de ses deformations successives, vulnerable á toutes lese utilisations et manipulations, susceptible de longues latences et de soudaines revitalisations. Le mémoire installe le souvenir dans le sacré […], comme Halbwachs l'a fait, qu'il y a autant de mémoires que des groupes; qu'elle est, par nature, multiple et démultipliée, collective, plurielle et individualise." Transl. my own.

[31] DAVIS, Natalie Zemon and Randolph STARN. "Introduction" in *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. (Spring, 1989), p.5.

Nevertheless, Nora raises awareness to the importance of 'place', which includes material, and symbolic entities alike. Aleida Assmann, Jan Assmann's spouse, describes places of memory as purely material givens[32]. She differentiates between holy or sacral places, where a numinous being is thought to reside, and places of memory. A. Assmann explains that places can be read like a text by the members of that particular community which empowers these places with meaning. Places of memory recall a significant past event; they are marked by symbols of a previous presence or present absence[33]. For example, battlefields mourn the fallen dead or former extermination camps turn into memorials.

Like Jan Assmann, who insists that collective and cultural memory are retrospective constructions dependent on the respective community, she insists that places can only 'remember' as long as there are people who cherish the commemorative practice. "Where the cultural knowledge which frames and supports these places ceases or ends, places of commemoration shift to places of memory. The places are meant to continue what culture itself cannot maintain any longer: the construction of significance and continuity of tradition"[34], thus, the fight over authentic places of the revolution.

Places as such cannot remember. But they may turn into a symbol which empowers places of memory with floating significance that is independent from the places' material location. However, places may be reactivated with memory that has survived in 'places of latency' like a museum[35]. The memory of places can recall long forgotten or repressed events, people or objects. After a period of neglect and silence, places re-occur as sites of rituals and ceremonies[36]. Jan Assmann explains the dynamic of forgetting, repressing and re-appearance.

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[32] ASSMANN, Aleida, 1999, pp.59-77.
[33] Ibid., p.63.
[34] Ibid, p.76: „Kein Gedächtnis der Orte[…] ohne bestimmte Formen einer kulturellen Mnemotechnik. Wo das kulturelle Wissen, das die Orte rahmt und stützt, versiegt oder abbricht, kommt es zu einer Verschiebung vom ‚Gedächtnisort' zum ‚Gedächtnis der Orte'. Die Orte sollen dann leisten, was sich die Kultur nicht mehr zutraut, die Konstruktion von Bedeutsamkeit und die Kontinuität der Überlieferung."
[35] J. ASSMANN, 1999, p.31.
[36] A.ASSMANN, 1999, p.74ff.

Latency here does not mean "psychic suppression of an earlier experience, but symbolic neglect"[37]. The return of something forgotten may serve as basis for renewal. In the particular case I am addressing here, the memory of '56 as a revolution could not be visualized or exercised. Yet, the revolution was not forgotten, and made its great comeback in the 1980s.

I.2. 3 The political cult of the dead

In authentic memory places, one can read the traces of a past event. Assmann uses the term 'genius loci' to describe the abstract meaning, the cultural significance that is captured in a place. 'Genius loci' directs our senses to the presence of the dead in these places. The famous German social historian Reinhart Koselleck claims that "commemoration of the dead is part of human culture. To commemorate the fallen, the violently murdered, those who died in battle, in civil war or war, is part of the political culture"[38]; hence, the commemoration of those who died for their home country merges religion and politics[39]. Iconologically, he insists, memorials resemble each other across national borders. Often, they feature angels, women, saints, crosses, or 'Pathosformeln' like obelisks, pyramids or triumphal arches.

Nevertheless, Koselleck continues, the symbolic language might offer national specificities while the most common message of these monuments in all cases remains 'unity'. In accordance to Aleida and Jan Assmann's concept, he explains that monuments are bestowed with meaning only through rituals and commemoration ceremonies; their significance derives from commemorative practices; if these vanish the memorial loses its meaning, it becomes subject to re-assessment or removal[40]. In a brief history of modern monument for fallen warriors, a change of meaning comes to light: While for decades

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[37] J.ASSMANN, 1999, p.29: „Latenz bedeutet dann nicht psychische Verdrängung, sondern symbolische Verschweigung."
[38] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.7. „Der Toten zu gedenken gehört zur menschlichen Kultur. Der Gefallenen zu gedenken, der gewaltsam Umgebrachte, derer, die im Kampf, im Bürgerkrieg oder Krieg umgekommen sind, gehört zur politischen Kultur."
[39] Ibid., p.9f.
[40] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.10.

monuments served as unifying force against an external enemy, they now mainly fulfill internal functions. Remarkably, he explains that at the outset Maya Ying Lin's Vietnam Memorial in Washington was only accepted in addition to a second one by the veterans; soon, though, it gained recognition as the central site of official commemoration. Since it did not impose meaning on the viewer, today's monuments may create inner unity and social solidarity[41].

I.2. 4 Monuments and iconology

Since the 1980s, images surfaced as independent sources of art and social history[42].. Visual representations as objects of historical and cultural inquiry and the theory of iconolgy are based on the intellectual heritage of Erwin Panofsky, Aby Warburg and Ernst Gombrich. Iconology presupposes a relationship between the artist, the symbols she applies and the viewer. Through this interrelation images establish an "invisible world of ideas"[43]. Gombrich uses the terms of "innocent eye" or "there is no unbiased eye" to describe that the viewer does not approach a painting without previous knowledge, awareness of fashion or taste. Iconology, therefore, focuses on the means the artist applies to convey an image's message. Meanwhile, the artists may possess knowledge that exceeds the one of her/ his audience, but still they belong to the same cultural sphere presupposing shared symbols and attitudes[44]. Goodman notes that the non-'innocent eye' "functions not as an instrument self-empowered and alone, but as a dutiful member of a complex and capricious organism. Not only how but what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice"[45].

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[41] Ibid., 16.
[42] PAUL, Gerhard. „Von der Historischen Bildkunde zur Visual History. Eine Einführung" [From historical science of Imagery to Visual History. An Introduction], in G. Paul (ed.). *Visual History. Ein Studienbuch*. [Visual History. A Reader], (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2006), p.8f. According to Mitchell, the difference between iconology and iconography has been largely exaggerated.
[43] GOMBRICH, E.H. c1992, p.7.
[44] Ibid., c1992, p.256.
[45] GOODMAN, Nelson. *Language of Art. An approach to a theory of Symbols*. (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publ. Company c1999 (1976)), p.7.

W.J.T. Mitchell from the University of Chicago, is particularly interested in "how the notion of imagery serves as a kind of relay connecting theories of art, language and the mind with conceptions of social, cultural and political value"[46]. Symbols and their meaning are comprehensible within the same social framework; the individuals understanding might be enhanced through practice and experience[47]; the repetition of specific symbols for the Hungarian revolution, thus, reinforces their meaning.

However, how does that relate to memory as manifested in monuments? Koselleck explains that iconology is complementary to the social and art history of a monument[48]. The political cult of the dead is mastered in the depiction of martyrs, which merges politics an religion: The human body, Mitchell emphasizes, "is the most highly charged place in our experience". The artistic imitation of the human body, Mitchell assures, is a "godlike activity" since it recalls the biblical creation of humankind.

I.2 5. Symbolic overwriting and iconoclash

Aleida Assmann explains that places may not only be re-activated in their commemorative function; but also, the original meaning may be covered by a new one[49]. In his studies, Maurice Halbwachs, the founding theoretician of memory, focuses on the shift from Judaism to Christianity. He explains that a new idea, such as the Christian faith, was constructed in opposition to the old idea of Judaism. This opposition enhanced the power of the new religion; but to convey the notion of authenticity, and therefore legitimacy

> [society] must persuade its members that they already carry those beliefs within themselves at least partially, or even that they will recover beliefs which had been rejected some time ago. But this is only possible if society does not confront all o the past, if it at least preserves the form of the past. It enframes the

[46] MITCHELL, W.J.T.. *Iconology. Image, Text, Ideology*. (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press c1987), p.2; 30.
[47] GOODMAN, c1999, p.10.
[48] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.10.
[49] A.ASSMANN, 1999, p.62.

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> new elements that it pushes to forefront in a totality of remembrances, traditions, and familiar ideas.[50]

Consequently, the emerging Christian faith and culture embraced elements of the already existing Jewish collective memory, which increased its own credibility and created the notion of stability and durability[51]. The pre-existing culture, Halbwachs continues, was overwritten with (new) holy places, rites, or a new calendar, which preserved Jewish elements, but slowly altered their context and meaning. Therefore, "the traditions of older groups become the natural supporters of a new community's memories"; henceforth,

> the new community takes these traditions up in the current of its memories and detaches them from a past that has become increasingly obscure …[sic] from, so to speak, the dark times when these traditions had lost significance. […] it rewrites them by changing their position in time and space.[52]

Eventually, due to this process of re- and overwriting, "a duality of locations" may emerge; places can serve as sacred and commemorating sites for numerous groups, as the example of Jerusalem during the passing of time has proved convincingly for Halbwachs, or Rome in Aleida Assmann's account[53]. Also Koselleck insists that monuments might be toppled or removed, in case they have lost their original significance and do not prove adaptable to a new commemorative framework[54].

Iconoclasm is another form of over- or rewriting, since it is often followed by a wave of new images, ideologies and icons, Bruno Latour argues. At the same time, though, the destroyed images are often carefully preserved, "as if the destroyer suddenly realized that something *else* had been destroyed by mistake, something for which atonement was now

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[50] HALBWACHS, c1991, p.86.
[51] Ibid., p.215.
[52] Ibid., p.219.
[53] Ibid.,223ff.; A.ASSMANN, 1999, pp.66f.
[54] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.10: „Jede Selbstaussage eines Denkmals setzt Grenzen, innerhalb derer seine Rezeption freigegeben wird. Sie sind nicht beliebig ausdehnbar. Entweder kann die Botschaft eines Denkmals rituell wiederholt werden, oder das Denkmal wird – soweit möglich – umgewidmet, sonst gestürzt oder vergessen." [Every self-explanatory message of a monument sets up boundaries, which limit its reception. These are not endlessly expansive. Either a monument's message is ritually repeated or it is dedicated anew – if possible – or it is toppled and even removed.]

overdue"[55]. Previously, iconoclasm was usually religiously motivated. However, in modern times, Latour emphasizes, a new uncertainty about the intentions of the icon destroyer and the consequences has arisen since the destruction could signal am new beginning or re-directed continuity at the same time. For this new phenomenon, Latour coins the term 'iconoclash'. Metaphorically, it seeks to capture

> what happens when there is uncertainty about the exact role if the hand at work in the production of a mediator. Is it a hand with a hammer ready to expose, to denounce, to debunk, to show up, to disappoint, to disenchant, to dispel one's illusions, to let the air out? Or is it on the contrary a cautious and careful hand , palm turned as if to catch, to elicit, to educe, to welcome, to generate, to entertain, to maintain, to collect truth and sanctity?

While in Halbwachs' account the symbolic overwriting of the Jewish culture with Christian markers appears structured since it has been determined by history, in our age such certainty is yet to come. Therefore, any iconoclasm in the presence has to face investigation into its reasons as well as consequences, the iconoclast's interests and motivations, and the effects the destruction has on both sides – perpetrators and victims[56].

I.3 The Holocaust memorial for the Europe's Murdered Jews

I.3. 1 General Introduction

The Holocaust, Koselleck recalls, posed a particular challenge to historical representation. It also called the possibilities and limits of monuments and memorials into question. Only art can articulate what cannot be expressed with words, Koselleck believes[57]. In relation to monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 156, using the controversy about

[55] LATOUR, Bruno. "What is Iconoclash? Or is there a world beyond the image wars?" in ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe: Beyond the image wars in science, religion, and art (Cambridge and London: MIT Press), p.14.
[56] Ibid., p.26. The 2002 exhibition *Iconoclash. Jenseits der Bilderkriege in Wissenschaft, Religion und Kunst* [Iconoclash. Beyond the war of images in science, religion and art] in Karlsruhe presented cases of iconoclasm with regard to the question of "the inner goals of icon smashers, the roles they give to the destroyed images, the effects this destruction has on those who cherished those images, how this reaction is interpreted by the iconoclasts, and, finally, the effects of destruction on the destroyer's own feelings".
[57] KOSELLECK,1994, p.20.

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the Berlin Memorial for Europe's Murdered Jews might seem a distorting or inappropriate context. However, the Professor of Judaic Studies at the Amherst University of Massachusetts, James Young, did as Koselleck has suggested[58]: Young brought art history and social history together to interpret and understand monuments. In the trendsetting spring 1989 edition of *Representations* on "Memory and Counter- Memory", Young published a pioneering article on "Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Museum" whose title programmatically featured the pretext "The Biography of a Memorial Icon"[59]: Young did not only retrace Rapoport's approach to this monument, but also sketched out how it became the site of commemoration for various, even divergent groups[60].

Indeed to discuss the visualization of collective memory of '56 and the Shoa on a comparative level is crocked since the former commemorates the victimization of a nation, while in Germany it commemorates the nation's previous crimes and its own victims. However, here I will concentrate on the assessment of Holocaust memorials and the 'Memorial for Europe's Murdered Jews' in Berlin as they are assessed by James Young. Even in his works, I will only focus on those elements that serve as context for the analysis of '56 monuments, while an evaluation of this topic in itself is a separate field of study.

Young analyzes monuments not only in respects to their aesthetic means, but also recalls the entire process from the very first idea, to the change of meaning that a monument might experience in the course of time. He takes all sides and aspects involved in monument policies into account: the architect, the initiators, the audience, the opponents as well as

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[58] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.10

[59] YOUNG, James. "The Biography of a Memorial Icon: Nathan Rapoport's Warsaw Ghetto Monument", in *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. (Spring, 1989), pp.69-106. One year earlier, in 1988, he had already published *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation.*

[60] In accordance to Aleida Assmann's description of places of memory, Young insists that also monuments derive and maintain their meaning only through rites and persisting symbols. They are not self-referential as such. Therefore, he legitimately asks, whether monuments actually preserve their original meaning during the passing of time. See YOUNG, James. *Holocaust Memorials and Meaning. The Texture of Memory*. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1993), pp.1-5.

rejected concepts and the interrelation between social memory, history, art and politics. The complex history of monuments in Germany as well as in Hungary prove Geoff Eley's remark on the German 'Historikerstreit': "The memory of dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living"[61].

I. 3. 2 James Young's studies of Holocaust Memorials

Since memory and monuments are social constructions that influence public opinion and social memory, Young discovers patrons' intentions, artistic consideration, and the possibilities or limits of representation: "How do [the monuments] impose borders on time, a façade on memory? What is the relationship of time to place, place to memory, memory to time? […] And how does this memory of a past time shape understanding of the present moment?"[62]

Since 1989, Young has intensively focused on Holocaust memorials in Germany and the possibilities/ limits of Holocaust (memory) representation in art. His interest arises from the observation that

> Holocaust memorial-work in Germany [..] remains a tortured, self-reflective, even paralyzing occupation. Every monument, at every turn, is endlessly scrutinized, explicated and debated. Artistic, ethical, and historical questions occupy design juries to an extent unknown in other countries[63].

In the early and mid-1990s, Young viewed Germany's monument policies highly critical because he feared that raising memorials for the Holocaust might result in a closure, fulfilling

[61] ELEY, Geoff. "Nazism, Politcis and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German Historikerstreit 1986-1987", in *Past and Present*, No. 121 (Nov. 1988), p.171.
[62] YOUNG, 1993, p.15.
[63] YOUNG, James. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against itself in Germany Today", in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (Winter, 1992), p.269. In 2003, he justified his interest in a similar vein: "For an American watchhing Germany's memorial culture come to terms with the Holocaust, the conceptual torment implied by the counter-monument holds immense appeal. As provocative and difficult as it may be, no other memorial form seems to embody both the German memorial dilemma and the limitations of the traditional monument so well. The most important 'space of memory' for these artists has not been that in the ground or above it, but that space between the memorial and the viewer's mind, heart, and conscience". YOUNG, James. "Memory, Counter-memory, and the End of the Monument", in Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds.). *Image and Remembrance. Representation and the Holocaust*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2003), p.76.

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the desire to forget[64]. Many shared this view on the so-called 'Schlussstrich-Mentalität', the wish to draw a final line under Germany's Nazi past[65]. However, it is impossible to find a 'final solution'[66] to the country's obligation to remember its history; at the same time Young acknowledges the difficulties posed not only by the traditional function of monuments representing state narratives that –in their 19th century perception of glorification – do and cannot apply to the Shoa as well as the emerging generational gap:

> Not only does this generation of artists intuitively grasp its inability to know the history of the Holocaust outside of the ways it has been passed down, but it sees history itself as a composite record of both events and these events' transmission to the next generation[67].

Since Germany commemorates its own victims, Holocaust memorials re-call what is absent; they have to represent the void that the immeasurable Nazi genocide has left in Europe. Consequently, Young perceives what he refers to as 'counter-monuments' as the most appropriate from of artistic visualization of commemoration. To him, the interplay of memory and its representation through monuments has always been of decisive significance[68], but how can artists at the turn of the millennium conceptualize the absence of Jewish culture in Germany, when they themselves have never experienced it themselves? 'Counter-monuments' are "the most compelling results of Germany's memorial conundrum […]: brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being"[69]. These monuments materialize absence, loss. This seeming impossibility was achieved already in 1987 by Horst Hoheisel who reinstated the 'Aschott-Fountain' in Kassel, a donation by the Jewish citizen Sigmund Aschott which had been destroyed by the Nazis in 1939. Instead of reconstructing the fountain in its old form, Hoheisel only re-built the

[64] YOUNG, 1993, p.5.
[65] See TILL, Karen. *The new Berlin: y, politics, place*, (Minneapolis: University of Minesota Press 2005), p.1ff.
[66] YOUNG, 2000, p.191.
[67] YOUNG, James. *At Memory's Edge. After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 2000), p.2.
[68] YOUNG, 1993, p.13f.
[69] YOUNG, 2000, p.7.

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fountain's outline and put the boundary stones back in place. Before Hoheisel, in 1986, Esther Shalev-Gerz and Jochen Gerz built the 'disappearing Monument against Fascism and for Peace' in Hamburg-Harburg. This remarkable monument consisted of an aluminum pillar covered with soft lead in which viewers could scratch their thoughts. 'Absence' was materialized through the disappearance of the monument: Every year the monument was mechanically lowered until it completely sank into the ground on November 10, 1993.

Another example of 'counter-monuments' is Shimon Attie's projections of vanished Jewish presence on Berlin's facades in 1995. In a similar way two years earlier, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock reminded Berlin's citizens of their former Jewish fellow citizens by installing the anti-Semitic street signs of the 'Third Reich' in today's neighborhoods[70]. Although every one of these artists has chosen different means, they meet Young's approval because rather

> than creating self-contained sites of memory, detached from our daily lives, these artists would force both visitors and local citizens to look within themselves for memory, at their actions and motives for memory within these spaces. In the cases of disappearing, invisible, and otherwise 'counter' monuments, they have attempted to build into these spaces the capacity for changing memory, places where every new generation will find its own significance in this past.[71]

I.3. 3 'New Berlin': Jewish Museum and Holocaust Memorial

For years, Young declared that it was impossible to find one single, 'the' central memorial for Germany to commemorate the Shoah. Instead, only the recurring, continuous debates over the different monuments rightly kept this part of German history in the people's mind: the discourse as the ultimate memorial[72]. When Berlin was made the capital of a united Germany, attention and earlier debates shifted towards shaping the city according to the country's new self-image as well as to staging Germany's past in the city's central locations. This task has opened numerous controversies because as "the capital of five different

[70] YOUNG, 1993, pp.63ff.
[71] YOUNG, 2003, p.76.
[72] Ibid., p.76.

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historical Germanys, Berlin represents the 'unstable optic identity' of the nation – for it is the city where, more than any other city, German nationalism and modernity have been stage and restaged, represented and contested"[73].

The significance of Berlin is already visible in the above-mentioned examples. All the memorials Young addressed in his analyzes were fiercely debated in the German public; therefore, he believed that the "surest engagement with holocaust memory in Germany may actually lie in its perpetual irresolution, that only an unfinished memorial process can guarantee the life of memory"[74]. One of the main controversies of city-planning and shaping the cityscape surrounded the fate of the Jewish Department of the Berlin Museum. The design by Daniel Libeskind, which put an end to a debate started in the 1970s, also reflects the concept of 'counter-monuments' by re-inscribing the Jewish past in Berlin's cityscape via creating a void in an "antiredemptory age"[75]. Libeskind describes how the absence of Jews and Jewish culture in Berlin, the home of Max Liebermann, Walter Benjamin, or Mies van der Rohe, struck him. Thus, he

> based the design of the museum on historical documents, both architectural and para-architectural ones: music, books, pictures, the eyes and the looks of people, photographs. I saw that Berlin was organized around a void and around a star that no longer shone. That star was assimilation, the total integration of Jews in Berlin[76].

The deconstructive design perfectly addressed the "philosophical problem"[77] of representing the interrelations of German and German-Jewish history in Berlin, as well as the absence of Jewish culture in contemporary Germany[78].

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[73] TILL, 2005, p.5.
[74] YOUNG, 2003, p.61.
[75] YOUNG, 2000, p.5ff. This term reflects the impossibility of salvation from the Holocaust memory as well as the difficulties of the contemporary post-Holocaust generation to assess the history, memory and representation of the Holocaust.
[76] LIBESKIND, Daniel „Trauma", in Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (eds.). *Image and Remembrance. Representation and the Holocaust*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 2003), p.52.
[77] YOUNG, 2000, p.163.
[78] Libeskind explains in his brief: "The visitor to this museum has to keep in mind that it is not easy to put continuity together across that which is forever gone. That is the meaning of my design for an integrated

Despite his earlier skepticism, Young joined the 'Findungskommission' for the Holocaust memorial to Europe's Murdered Jews in 1997. He had followed debates about the Topography of Terror Center as well as Kohl's inauguration of the 'Neue Wache' as central commemorative locations. Moreover, he approved of the complex, heated and seemingly endless debates around the project of a central memorial. The unsolved situation, he insisted would prevent closure of the commemoration of the Holocaust and assure its continuous assessment[79].

Nevertheless, in 1997 he became the speaker of the 'Findungskommission' and the only Jew and foreigner on the jury, as he repeatedly emphasizes. Although the first competition had already decided upon a winner in 1994, a new competition between such internationally renowned artists Peter Eisenmann, his pupil Daniel Libeskind, Jochen Gerz, Rebecca Horn, Dani Karavan, James Turell and Rachel Whiteread was launched in late 1997. Eventually, the expert jury chose Peter Eisenmann's 'Waving Field of Pillars' that underwent numerous revisions until it had to face political courtesies. As legacy of the Kohl era, after the elections of 1998 the entire project was called into question once more. Not only the aesthetics of 'Eisenmann II' arouse debates, also its appropriateness was contested.

One of the main opponents of this memorial and the project as such, was the Hungarian émigré György Konrád, then president of Berlin's Academy of Science. He reproaches the political use and abuse of the memorial, which question the sincerity of commemorating the murdered Jews. 'Eisenmann II's monumentality, he claims, recalls rather the monumentality of the Nazis' extermination of Jews than the victims themselves. Moreover, Konrád points out the debate about the location appears to him as if the German

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museum, a Jewish museum, They are completely bound together, totally interpenetrated and integrated through the void, through the absence – for so much has been reduced to ash. The state of instability/ stability, of disconnection/ connection, of disorder/ order will be understood intellectually and kinetically." LIBESKIND, 2003, p.57f. Also YOUNG, 2000, p.170.

[79] YOUNG, 2000, pp.184-191. The idea of a central Memorial for Europe's Murdered Jews was first proposed by TV presenter Lea Rosh and historian Eberhard Jäckel in 1988.

public was committing a sacrifice itself. The size as well as the political debate provoke his disgust because it covers the humbleness of a more appropriate already existing memorial: the 1996 Memorial for Burnt Books called 'Bibliothek' [Library] by Micha Ullmann[80]. Young includes Ullman's design in his list of 'counter-monuments', too[81]. On the authentic location of Nazi book burning on Bebelplatz, a glass window opens the view on empty bookshelves underground. First, Ullmann reminds the viewer of the absence, the elimination of Jewish culture and life; second, he calls into mind that the past can only be accessed through books and stories, which again directs attention to Assmann's insistence on the memory function of writing[82]. Konrád explains that commemoration would only become honest, the extent and horror of Nazi crimes only became comprehensible, if one related pictures of exterminated Jewish children to the pictures of one's own offspring. The sheer size of 'Eisenmann II', however, immortalizes the humiliation and extermination[83].

Jan Assmann on the other hand, approved of such a central monument because of the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the incomprehensibility of crimes committed on behalf of the German nation[84]. Although Young opposed the idea of a central location for the commemoration of the Holocaust in Germany, he turned into the spokesman of the project. His previous contempt of the debate, he admits, was "a position only an academic bystander

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[80] KONRÁD, György. „Wovon kündet diese Werk? Gedanken zum Holocaust-Mahnmal in Berlin" [What does this work mean? Reflections on the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin], in Akademie der Künste (ed.), *Denkmale und kulturelles Gedächtnis nach dem Ende der Ost-West-Konfrontation*, (Berlin: Jovis 2000), pp.19-41.
[81] YOUNG, 2003, p.68.
[82] KONRÁD, 2000, p.23: „Ein stilleres Werk als das unterirdische Mahnmal, das nicht einmal über das Straßenpflaster hinausragt, könnte niemand schaffen. Es wäre schön, wenn die lautstarken, kämpferischen Anhänger des Megadenkmals einmal dort hingingen, vor ihren Füßen zu den Regalen des Mangels hinabblickten und verstünden, dass es gerade das ist, was authentisch von jener Geschichte kündet: Verlust der Angehörigen, der Getöteten." [Nobody could create a humbler work than this subterranean memorial, that does not even exceed the surface of the cobblestones. It would be nice, if the noisy and belligerent proponents of the mega-monument went there, looked down to these shelves of absence beneath their feet and understand, that this is the authentic message of history: the loss of relatives, the murdered.]
[83] Ibid., p.22 and 24.
[84] ASSMANN, 1999, p.32.

could afford"[85]. He had carefully followed the debate, and in his engagement that was soon to follow Young took public opinion into account, for he also believes "rather than patronizing mass taste, we must recognize that public taste carries weight and that certain conventional forms in avowedly public art may eventually have consequences for public memory"[86]. The memorials for the Shoa in Germany prove a changing attitude towards monuments as such: Monuments are still stigmatized with their 19th century function of representing and glorification of state power. It is probably one of the most traditional, and thus conservative, art media. Still, in the interwar period, Young explains, avant-garde and modern artists were exempt from official competitions[87]. In return, modern critiques perceived monuments as archaic, hence contempting it as pre-modern and reactionary. While the Second World War did not form new socially critical art trends like the crisis of modernity during and after World War I, the unprecedented killing and extermination of human life did change the function of monuments, as Koselleck has explained, they can no longer be heroic[88]. In the end, the peculiarity of German Holocaust memory, the troubled commemoration of the nation's victims, has modified the artistic approach, too: The concepts of Libeskind and Eisenmann are considered to be progressive milestones in the history of monumental art.

At last, Young did not betray his previous skeptical position. After the expert jury had made its decision, which political organ was competent to pass final judgment became a matter of public debate. At a final public hearing in the 'Bundeshaus' in March 1999, Young defended 'Eisenmann II': In the ongoing debate over the monument, he declared, he saw the

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[85] YOUNG, 2000, p.191. Also, Young's praise of Horst Hoheisel's concept fits into this distinguished position. Hoheisel had suggested blowing up the Brandenburg Gate as the perfect memorial manifesting 'absence' within the center of the new German capital. However, Young admits that it was impossible for the German government to approve of such an idea, which brought the complexity of German Holocaust memory even better to light: "A landmark celebrating Prussian might and crowned by a chariot-borne Quadriga, the Roman goddess of peace, would be demolished to make room for the memory of Jewish victims of German might and peacelessness. In fact, perhaps no single emblem better represents the conflicted, self-abnegating motives for memory in Germany today than the vanishing monument." YOUNG, 2003, p.59.
[86] YOUNG, 1993, p.11.
[87] YOUNG, 2003, p.63.
[88] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.19f.

primary goal fulfilled; the memory of the Holocaust remained perpetually negotiated despite having found a central memorial. Making a commitment to this imperfect concept the viewer herself is left to reflect on its meaning; every German becomes a carrier of memory herself even if she opts to abstain from visiting the memorial. But each is responsible for cultivating and negotiating memory through her actions and reflections.

> In the end, by choosing to create a commemorative space in the center of Berlin – a place empty of housing, commerce or recreation – the Bundestag reminds Germany and the world at large of the self-inflicted void at the heart of German culture and consciousness. It is a courageous and difficult act of contrition on the part of the government and reflects Germany's newfound willingness to act on such memory […]. But because the murdered Jews can respond to this gesture only with a massive silence, the burden of response now falls on living Germany[89].

I.4 Conclusion

Jan Assmann provides a thorough definition of social memory. In distinguishing between communicative, collective and cultural memory, he assesses its different mechanisms and functions. Aleida Assmann explains possibilities to invest places with memory. This memory, however, needs to be repeated and reinforced in order to persevere. Memory and its manifestation in places are social constructions that are open to contestation and changes.

Reinhart Koselleck analyzes the significance of the cult of the dead for political collectives. He shows that the depiction of the ultimate sacrifice for the nation, death in defense of the home country, forges unity and beholds future generations to pay tribute to previous martyrdom. While primarily recalling past events, monuments for the nation's dead legitimate present-day claims and project the intentions of the initiators into the future. Koselleck points out, that monuments are common means to impose particular images and perception of a community and its past.

Thus, monuments capture memory of a specific group at a specific moment in time. Young shows that the notion of continuity and eternity is misleading; even the meaning of

[89] YOUNG, 2000, p.223.

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monuments is flexible. Moreover, he points out that in the end monuments materialize a past – or an image of the past – that is no longer present. Young's analysis of Holocaust memorials in Germany shows the difficulties of representation and collective memory. Monuments are controversial on numerous levels since they touch upon memory, politics, art and history at the same time. But these memorials – or 'counter-monuments' respectively – do not only highlight the interrelation of politics and monuments in a new way, they also imply new artistic possibilities of representing memory. Consequently, artists had to find new symbols and aesthetic means to visualize the uncertainty and instability of collective memory, so that their works remain significant and meaningful also for future generations. They have set new iconological trends that have attracted international attention.

II Politics and art: changes and continuity

II.1 Introduction

This chapter sets the context for the analysis of monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Since it covers two periods of political history as well as contemporary art, it is based on Koselleck statement that only an interdisciplinary art and social historical approach enable full understanding of a monument, its aesthetics and iconology[90].

In order to understand the reasons for the various political actors, who invest in '56 monuments, I will present the emergence of the revolution as symbol of moral authority and source of political legitimation. As Assmann explains, memory may re-appear from places of latency after years of symbolic forgetting. In this case, the return from latency originates in the opposition movement of the eighties. Oppositional claims to re-evaluate the counterrevolution were answered by the new ruling elite of the MSZMP; but these attempts to legitimize the new reform course ultimately led to the system's implosion. The development

[90] KOSELLECK; 1994, p.10.

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of Hungary's negotiated revolution surrounded the anniversary dates of the revolution, creating a symbolic link between the events.

However, the members of the opposition did not only belong to two different age groups but also adhered to different political concepts. Thus, the movement fell apart as soon as elections were announced. Ideological shifts accelerated during the transition period, when political concepts urgently needed legitimation in the new democratic environment. Consequently, while I focused on the protagonists of the opposition movement I will then address the ideological development since 1990.

In a third subchapter, I introduce the history of contemporary art and its institutionalization in Hungary. While I discover basic trends of continuity that reach back to the avant-garde, I concentrate on artists and institutions since the 1970s. This brief outlook into the art scene introduces some of the main artists that have designed present-day monuments for the Hungarian Revolution. Moreover, institutional ties will surface that explain following decisions for a specific artist since not only stylistic continuities exist between the current system and the previous but also institutional contacts have survived.

II.2 Opposition, transition and 1956

II.2. Opposition in the 1980s

In the late 1970s, Hungary's opposition movement entered the political arena. Many had participated in the Hungarian revolution of 1956, and suffered severe repercussions ever since. The 1980s experienced the decline of the Kádárist reform era from 1968 to 1972[91]; which had once founded 'the happiest barrack of the Eastern bloc'. Then, the decade of severe economic crisis soon caused visible social cleavages, too. Until then, the legacy of 1956 was

[91] The 'New Economic Mechanism' introduced in 1968 raised the standard of living and increased the range of consumer goods in Hungary. For an evaluation of the participants in the ORT, see BOZÓKI, András. "The Hungarian Roundtable Talks of 1989", in Lee W. Congdon and Béla K.Király, *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, suppressed and victorious 1956-1999* (New York: Columbia University Press 2002), pp.245.

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largely nurtured by Hungarian exiles, who founded several associations like the World Association of Freedom Fighters in Cleveland in 1959 and others who continued publishing Hungarian journals, books, diaries etc abroad. Most of these, however, returned only after the change in the early 1990s[92].

Recent evaluations of the dissident movement reveal that it lacked popular support and was mainly carried by intellectuals. Moreover, the mere term 'opposition movement' alludes to a unity that soon evaporated. Many dissidents of the late 1980s took leading positions following the transition[93]. However, nowadays, they have dissociated themselves from one another into different, sometimes opposing ideological camps. While in the 1980s, the request for a re-assessment led to a peaceful, negotiated revolution that momentarily created a feeling of unity, the former dissidents are now deeply divided over the revolution's legacy.

Since Miklós Vásárhelyi' article in the Paris-based *Irodalmi Újság* in 1983, the Hungarian revolution was on the agenda of oppositionists, János Rainer explains. While dissident concepts for Hungary's future differed from reform to complete removal of the system, '56 did not pose a rolemodel for political action as such, as discussions between János Kis, István Csurka and Miklós Vásárhelyi already showed in the mid-80s[94]. The former for instance was a member of the so-called Lukács' kindergarten, whose ideas were absorbed by the reform communist in the MSZMP[95]. Differences also occurred in respect to the means and strategies the movement should pursue – for example between György Krassó a student

[92] For example, the current '56 Institute is a successor of the Imre Nagy Institute which operated in Brussels between 1959 and 1963.
[93] OSA fonds PL Box, Folder, Report 48-1-65; Vladimir V. Kusin. "East European Dissidents' Appeal on Hungarian Revolution Anniversary", October 28, 1986, RFE/RL Background Reports. Among others the signatory list names the following persons which will return throughout this thesis: Peter Bokros, Jenö Nagy, Sandor Csoori, Robert Palinkas, István Csurka, Gyula Perlaki, Gábor Demszky, Sándor Rácz, Árpád Göncz, Sándor Radnoti, Béla Gondos, László Rajk, Judit Gyenes, Miklós Haraszti, Janos Kenedi, Jeno Szell, Zsolt Keszthelyi, Margit Szecsi, Janos Kis, Sandor Szilagyi, György Konrád, Gaspar Miklos Tamas, Ferenc Koszeg, György Krassó, Domokos Varga, Gabriella Lengyel, Judit Vásarhélyi, Sándor Lezsak, Miklos Vásarhélyi, Imre Mécs, Tamás Mikes.
[94] RAINER, János. "The Roundtable Talks of 1989", (Budapest: CEU Press 2002), pp.211-222. accessed .
[95] ANDOR, László. "Has the dictatorship over needs ended in eastern Europe?" in *LINKS*, No. 14, January to April, 2000, accessed http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue14/14andor.html in April 2007.

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leader in 1956, and Gábor Demszky and László Rajk who were all active producers of different *samizdat* literature, wherefore they were all subject of police surveillance and harassment. Rajk, was the son of Hungary's probably most famous 1949 show trial victim[96]. Krassó had organized the first commemoration ceremony of the revolution in his apartment in 1981. Five years down the road, BBC broadcasted pictures of Plot 301 in Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery, where the revolutionary prime minister and his associates were thought to be buried and at an oppositional conference in December, future state models were discussed.

Despite their differences, former political prisoners and relatives founded the famous TIB, the 'Committee for Historical Justice', in June 1988 which contributed immensely to Nagy's rehabilitation. Erzsébet Nagy, Judit Gyénes, Ella Szilágyi, Miklós Vásárhélyi, Sándor Rácz, and Imre Mécs were the TIB's protagonists. Additionally, the 'Network of Free Alliances' which later turned in to the SZDSZ urged for historical re-assessment and political change. Certainly, these voices did not pass the Central Committee unheard. As Kádár was getting older and his deteriorating health condition simultaneously with Hungarian economy, the reform communists – most prominently Imre Pozsgay, Rezső Nyers, Miklós Németh – took over the party leadership. Following the TIB, the MSZMP CC established a special committee to analyzes the social and economic development; a subcommittee headed by Iván T. Berend, the then president of the Academy of Science, also dealt with historical questions. But in contrast to such signs of opening and tolerance, the opposition's demonstration on June 16, 1988 – in which for example Arpád Göncz, Sándor Rácz and Imre Mécs participated in– was crushed by the police[97]. On January 27, 1989, based on the committee's report Minister for the Interior Imre Pozsgay referred to '56 as a "popular uprising" in '168 hour' one of the most popular radio magazines. This simple change in terms after an official 30-year-

[96] RÉV, István. *Prehistory of Postcommunism. Retroactive Justice*, (Stanford University Press 2005), pp.60.
[97] OSA fonds HU Judit Pataki, "Demonstration for Nagy's rehabilitation brutally halted in Budapest", RFE/RL background report, Munich June 21, 1988.

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interpretation of a counterrevolution, caused a watershed: Three days after his radio appearance which had been echoed and commented upon in domestic as well as foreign press with great zeal[98], Pozsgay had to explain his autonomous move. He believed that terminological change might serve the planned and necessary reforms. Moreover, "it can lead to social reconciliation and a national consensus", he explained to his party fellows[99]. This attempt, though, completely backfired. With the economy in decline and the Soviet Union itself in distress, Imre Konya claims, Poszgay took down the last founding pillar of the party's legitimation and played into the hands of the opposition movement[100].

II.2.2 Reorganization in new parties

Already in May 1988, Kádár had been named Honorary President, which surmounted to retirement. Still, the direction of reforms continued to be a matter of debate in the PC. But when Pozsgay publicly admitted to the party's unjust interpretation, he opened the floor to question the regime as such and civic organizations mushroomed. Starting from March 22, 1989, due to the invitation by the Independent Lawyers Forum FJF a peaceful transition was negotiated between the MSZMP, the 'Third Side' (further party affiliated organizations) and the Opposition Roundtable which consisted of the Hungarian Democratic Forum MDF, the Association of Young Democrats FIDESZ, the Alliance of Free Democrats SZDSZ, the Independent Smallholders' Party FKGP, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party MSZDP, the Hungarian National Party MNP, Bajcsy Zsilinszky Friends BZSBT, and Independent Trade Unions LIGA. József Antall, for instance preserved his position as an independent mediator

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[98] See OSA fonds HU 300 40 2 Box 1989.
[99] Doc. No. 119. "Extraordinary Meeting of the HSWP Political Committee Discussing Imre Pozsgay's Declaration on 1956, January 31, 1989", in Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, János Rainer. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution. A history in documents", (New York and Budapest: CEU Press 2002), pp.5553-558.
[100] KÓNYA, Imre. "Hungary's negotiated revolution", in Lee W. Congdon and Béla K.Király, *The Ideas of the Hungarian Revolution, suppressed and victorious 1956-1999*, (New York: Columbia University Press 2002), p.269. also BOZÓKI, 2002, p.256. "To remind the public that the Kádár regime had been born in a state of 'original sin' was the best way for its opponents to de-legitimize the communist regime."

before he joined the MDF which had been founded at a meeting in Lakitelek in the fall of 1988. At the same time, his later party colleague Imre Konya lead the FJF.

Alongside these talks, form and procedure of the Nagy reburial were discussed with the TIB. In April the PC fell apart when Miklós Németh, Gyula Horn Kálmán Kulcsár and Mátyás Szűrös banning the demonstration planed alongside the then private reburial ceremony. Finally, the ceremony was organized on Heroes Square on June 16, 1989, which provided the opposition organizations with an excellent forum for their transitory requests. In all recent literature, the afterlife of '56 is taken into consideration; the lasting memory of violence and bloodshed ultimately caused a peaceful transition in 1989[101]. All sides favored a non-violent system change; the Party announced a day of reconciliation and the dissidents, who certainly had vivid memories of the revolution as well as its aftermath, tuned in to the calls for peace and tranquility[102]. As a consequence, only former '56 and TIB members like Sándor Rácz, Miklós Vásárhelyi, Béla Király, Tibor Méray, and Imre Mécs delivered speeches. All of these had actively participated in the revolution themselves; Vásárhelyi had been the spokesman of the Nagy government wherefore he had been imprisoned just like Imre Mécs. Királyi had been the commander of the National Guard on behalf of the revolutionaries; he had escaped to the States where he took up a university chair and started publishing. Rácz had been the president of the greater Budapest workers' council. All of them had earned additional merits based on their continuous opposition to the Kádár regime. Remarkably, their speeches expressed honor and respect to the martyrers and remained cautious due to the unpredictable reactions of the Soviet Union.

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[101] RÉV, István. "The Self-Not-Fulfillling Prophecy", in Lord Dahrendorf, Yehuda Elkana, Aryeh Neier, William Newton-Smith, István Rév (eds.), *The Paradoxes of Unintended Consequences*. (New York and Budapest: CEU Press 2000), pp. 285- 300; PAUL, Lendvai. *Der Ungarnaufstand 1956. Eine Revolution und ihre Folgen* [The Hungarian uprising of 1956. A revolution and its aftermath], (Munich: C.Bertselmann Publ. 2006), pp.263;
[102] OSA fonds HU 300 40 2.

On the same day, the leader of the Young Democrats, Viktor Orbán with a controversial speech entered the political stage, literally as well as metaphorically. FIDSEZ had the advantage of youth, recalling the beginnings of the revolution in 1956. It had been founded in February 1988; in its profile and activities it was distinct from the younger generation of the samizdat production which again was slightly older. In the tradition of 1956, FIDESZ under the leadership of László Köver and Viktor Orbán voted Sándor Rácz to be honorary member. After the announcement of free elections, FIDESZ declared itself a party in October 1989 and the party program of these days is summarized in the key words: "liberal, radical and alternative"[103]. While the elder speakers at the reburial ceremony honoured Nagy, Maléter, Gimes, Szilágyi, and Lossonczy as national heroes and martyrs, Orbán announced:

> The lesson we have learned from their fate is that democracy and communism are incompatible. […] We stand dumfounded when we see that those people who not long ago dishonoured the Prime Minister [Nagy] and the Revolution have suddenly woken up to realize that they themselves are continuing the reform course of Imre Nagy.[104]

On August 16, when Imre Nagy was officially rehabilitated by the Supreme Court, János Kádár passed away. Since the reburial ceremony remained completely peaceful, the reformers gained the upper hand claiming 1956 as their predecessor. For instance, Berend and Gyula Horn – the former left for a chair in history at the University of California in 1990, while Horn became the interim foreign minister and was to pursue a second career as prime minister in 1994 –pushed for a full rehabilitation of Nagy. On October 7, the MSZMP dissolved with the hard-liners forming the Hungarian Workers Party, while the Hungarian Socialist Party MSZP became the immediate successor party in which reform communists like Gyula Horn, Mátyas Szűrös or Miklós Németh were to find a new home.

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[103] FIDESZ-MPP. "The History of FIDESZ", publ. November 27, 2006, on the party's own homepage http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?CikkID=68476

[104] OSA HU fonds 300 42 Box 1988/1989 , Judith Pataki. "Fidesz delegate's speech at Nagy reburial ceremony in Heroes' Square", RFE/RL background report, Munich, 16 June 1989.

Recalling the events of 1988, the 31st anniversary of the revolution took place in a completely opposite setting: In order to ensure the public peace, police and military only appeared unarmed, when on the symbolic date of October 23, Szűrös declared the Democratic Republic of Hungary. Based on amendments that had been worked out by the ORT earlier, Miklós Németh took the post of interim prime minister. Democratic elections were announced for spring 1989.

The following months the opposition members and those who saw the time for political activism come busied themselves to come to terms with their political concepts. On both sides of the ORT, it had been representatives of the elite, the intelligentsia and bureaucracy. Now it was time to win the electorate, which had only recently discovered its opposition towards the Kádár regime[105]. In the short period of transition, the opposition members dispersed into different parties. For example, János Kis and his fellows of the Lukács-Kindergarten had long abandoned their "parents'" worldview. In order to "represent a human rights tendency of liberalism" they found the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats in November 1989[106]. Quickly, the samizdat periodical *Beszelő* came to stand for Hungary's new liberals and further prominent dissidents like Göncz, Mécs, Demszky and Rajk joined the Alliance.

FIDESZ whose members ranged from 16 to 35 years old, was a unique phenomenon in the region; they represented the more radical opposition youth. The membership contained a large number of lawyers or law students, which reflected the overall importance generally granted to building a constitutional state[107]. In addition to these, some of the historical parties were revived which I have already mentioned. Furthermore, a huge number of organizations and parties appeared, but most of them passed by short-lived or never gained any significance.

[105] BOZÓKI, 2002, pp.246.
[106] ANDOR, 2000, http://www.dsp.org.au/links/back/issue14/14andor.html
[107] G.M. Tamás as well as Imre Konya and András Bozóki identify civil society, constitutional state, civil rights and popular sovereignty as the prime and unifying interests of dissidents of various colors.

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Of those, which have at least proved enduring are for example György Krassó's MOP, the Hungarian October Party, the name reflecting the commitment to '56 or the Association of Political Prisoners founded by likewise dissidents Jenő Fonay and Ferenc Fogacs[108]. All in all, 30 organizations listed candidates for the first round of elections.

This wave of new organizations was a striking development, because until the summer of 1989 skepticism towards such political parties and organizations prevailed. Only once the Party itself disappeared, civil society became identified not only with social movement but with parties as essential characteristics, too, Bozóki claims[109]. Nevertheless, so far I have spared out the most important party in 1989/90, the Hungarian Democratic Forum. The oppositional intelligentsia opted either for membership in the MDF or SZDSZ.

I will present both parties more detailed in the following chapter, because these parties occupied the two most important state offices after 1990: Prime Minister József Antall from the MDF and President Árpád Göncz from the SZDSZ. However, this short subchapter highlights the importance associated with 1956 during the regime change. The key events of the transition in Hungary evolved around the anniversary dates of the Hungarian revolution. Moreover, many of those former '56 participants who had stayed in Hungary, returned from their political hibernation in the 1980s and formed in the dissident movement which made the change of regimes in this form possible. In the latter, they were joined by a younger generation born after 1954 who contributed to the return of 1956. The re-evaluation of the Hungarian revolution, initiated by the MSZMP itself, deprived the party of its moral foundation and historical narrative; thus, it lost all political legitimation. '56 was used as a symbol for reforms which in the end, led to a peaceful, democratic transition. Two of these

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[108] RFE collected a list of the emerging parties and organizations, explicating their founding date and program, members, publications etc. OSA fonds HU 37-6-109, Zoltan D. Barany. "Hungary's Independent Political Groups and Parties", RFE/RL background report, September 12, 1989. Sánor Rácz filed in as new leader of the MOP after Krassó's death in 1991.
[109] BOZÓKI, 2002, p.250.

currents will return with new vigor: the instrumentalization of the revolution's heritage as a means of political (de-)legitimation, the generational gap between eye-witnesses and the next generation concerning the 'right' understanding. Moreover, most of the persons I have mentioned here, will return either due to their interest in monuments for the Hungarian revolution or because they took important political positions following 1990. Finally, the common goal of a peaceful transition as depicted here contrast the recent developments in Hungarian politics in which '56ers still play an important role. Not only 1956 is open to numerous interpretations, also the form and content of today's democracy widen the divide between the different political camps. Here, one can detect the early roots of a crash that culminated in last year's riots and monument controversy: The former '56ers derive moral authority from their participation in the revolution, while the younger generation evokes the symbol for its own means.

II.2 Politics in Democratic Hungary

II.2.1 The first elections: new profiles, old images

While the election campaign in early 1990 indicated restoring historical continuities, the historical parties as such have lost their influence by the end of the decade; only the 'system-changing parties' have remained in parliament. With respect to the polarization in 2006, which will re-appear in the final empirical chapter on the New Central Monument for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, I will retrace the ideological changes the different camps have undergone. All parties, Nigel Swain claims, advocated social market economy. Additionally, all alluded reminiscence of Hungary's cultural heritage[110], but to different extents as I will point out.

[110] SWAIN, Nigel. "Extremist Parties in Hungary", Working Paper No.7, General Series (University of Liverpool).

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In the run-up to Hungary's first democratic elections, the new parties searched for ideological profiles to convince the electorate to cast their votes. Most of them did find it in historical predecessors "prime symbolic clusters from the stockpile of pre-existing national symbols infused with timeless power"[111] as well as anti-communist slogans. The Independent Smallholders' Party for instance could draw on their tradition since it had been the most popular party after 1945 and the last to subdue to the Communist take-over. Hence, private property appeared once more on its program. In a similar vein, the FKGP focused on their previous voters in the countryside. The resurrected Christian Democratic Party is close to the FKGP in that it also drew most of its voters from the countryside; but, logically, Hungary's Christian heritage featured more prominent in the KDNP's profile.

The Socialists had a difficult stand considering the anti-Communist spirit during the election campaign. Moreover, former Communists did show in their ranks, which left a stale taste since already during the ORT rumours and real discoveries about further corruption – like the myth about the Rose Hill Pact – caused public unrest[112]. In addition to that, it lacked a clear differentiation from the re-founded MSZMP. Thus, to balance the negative perception the MSZP chose to convey security through social reforms; the campaign posters showed families and children to portray the party's care. However, since these "timeless family symbols appeal to fairly predictable emotions", they were a common sights on Budapest's walls in early 1990[113]. Still, it had to compete for the social democratic constituents with the resurrected Social Democratic Party, too. Yet, it needs to be noted that former members of the Kádárist MSZMP did disperse into non-socialist parties, too: Imre Pozsgay for example was integrated in the MDF.

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[111] VASARY, Ildiko. "Comrades, it's over!: The election campaign in Hungary 1990", in *Anthropology Today*, Vol.7, No. 4 August 1991, pp.3.
[112] KÓNYA, 2002, p.267; also HELD, Joseph. "Building Civic Society in Post-Communist Hungary" in Democracy and Right-Wing Politics in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, (New York: Columbia University Press 1993), pp.138.
[113] VASARY, 1991, p.5.

The transitory new parties were confronted with the question how to build a political profile distinct from their historical competitors while at the same time conveying stability and reliability? FIDESZ applied its image of youth and fresh start on its playful and inventive posters, too. In contrast to the others, they then omitted national or historical symbols[114]. However, the party's profile did not attract the electorate, and its leaders' age eventually conveyed inexperience[115]. The party filed in 6th and, therefore, last in the elections.

The SZDSZ ran the most 'rational' poster campaign, Vasary analyzes[116]; László Rajk designed not only most of these photos with his typical abstract geometric forms but also the first party logo. According to its self-image and membership, the party considers itself social-liberal. It warned of anti-gypsy and anti-Semitic currents during the transition and requested a quick withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Hungary, and the country's own withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact[117]. The cosmopolitan intellectuals of the dissident movement, those who also had relations to the West as well as the Polish Solidarity Movement, filed in the party ranks: Among others, Göncz and Rajk were immediately voted into parliament, Demszky has preserved his position as mayor of Budapest since 1990, and János Kis became the party's firs president.

MDF posters often featured the 'Kis Cimer', the Hungarian coat of arms with St. Stephen's Crown. While the urban intelligentsia joined the SZDSZ, those writers and critics with a populist background accessed the MDF[118]. Gergely distils the main currents and values the MDF emphasized at the beginning: Constitutional liberalism, Christian morality,

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[114] VASARY, 1991, p.6.
[115] RACZ, Barnabas. "Political Pluralisation in Hungary: The 1990 Elections", in *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1. (1991), p.113
[116] VASARY, 1991, p.6.
[117] RACZ, 1991, p.113. The withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, the withdrawal of Soviet troops and first negotiations about Hungary's potential NATO membership are considered to be some of the greatest success of the Antall era. However, these actions only became possible after the coup in Moscow in 1991; until then, the MDF preferred neutrality. See VÁLKI, László. "Hungary's Road to Nato", in *The Hungarian Quarterly*,Vol.XL, No.154 Summer 1999, accessed via http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no154/003.html
[118] SWAIN, [date missing], p.2.

populism, anti-Bolshevism, the legacy of 1956, as well as the 'third road'[119]. The populist tradition shows later in the MDF's preference for 'authentic' Hungarian symbols to represent the Hungarian revolution. Already in the 1930s, the idea of a third road was the typical theme of the populist. In that respect one has to keep in mind that in 1990, Soviet troops were still stationed in Hungary, which will play an important role in the first government's foreign policy, too.

II.2.2 Changes during the first parliamentary term

The MDF decided to form a coalition with the Independent Smallholders' Party and the Christian Democrats. Still, this centre-right coalition did not make up a parliamentary majority. In order to achieve manageable votes in parliament, the SZDSZ – the second strongest party – obtained the seat of presidency in return[120].

While at first a suicidal economic program was a reason for the MDF not to align themselves with the liberals, it soon surfaced that the negotiated revolution had not addressed the problems of privatisation sufficiently[121]. As already mentioned, quite a number of delegates from the Independent Lawyers' Forum joined the MDF reinforcing the party's stress in a legal, constitutional state. "Law is one of the means of preserving power and influencing social tendencies"[122], Kónya argues. This neglect backfired and quickly it became obvious that the party lacked a stable electoral base[123].

However, the new government used its position and superior constitutional position to implement its worldview lastingly: During the election campaign, the SZDSZ had accused the

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[119] GERGELY, András. "József Antall: Prime Minister of the change of regime", in Maria Schmidt and László Gy. Tóth (eds.). *From totalitarian to democratic Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000), p.150.
[120] For the exact election results I refer to the official data published by MTI on http://english.mti.hu/default.asp?menu=6&cat=35
[121] GERGELY, 2000, p.152; BOZÓKI, 2002, pp.260.
[122] KÓNYA, 2002, p.269. Not only Kónya joined the MDF to become Hungary's first Minister of the Interior, also its president, György Szabad did likewise and became the first parliamentary president. Antall prominently the mediator of the ORT became the first prime minister of the Third Republic.
[123] GERGELY; 2002, p.156; HELD, 1993, p.136.

Forum for its leftist tendencies[124]. However, the party was fragmented into numerous fractions and once in power, Antall pursued a 'third way' policy that negotiated between the party's own leftist, national-populist and Christian-democratic-conservative elements. In a law draft presented to the National Assembly in spring 1990, in contrast to earlier scripts the MDF purposefully omitted the name of Imre Nagy, "in order to distance itself from the leftist content and the leftist tendencies of the revolution"[125]. Following, instead of October 23, March 15 was declared the national revolutionary holiday. The coalition's Christian conviction was manifested in making August 20, St. Stephen's Day, the most important national holiday.

During the election campaign, the MDF had presented the political centre with tendency to the conservative right. However, Held explains that within the first years, the MDF was "increasingly loosing the 'democratic' from its name"[126]. The party's rightist elements were not pleased by Antall's new interest in European and Transatlantic alliances which had suddenly become a viable option after the coup in Moscow in August1991[127]. Regularly, MDF and SZDSZ clashed over the right extent of nationalism: While the MDF was too nationalistic for the liberals, too close to a Horthyiste style of governing, the latter were accused of radical anti-nationalism[128].

The shift to the right evolved mainly around István Csurka, whose anti-Semitic rhetoric became unbearable. In 1993, he left the party to found his own association. Among other incidents, he attacked the American, Hungary-born philanthropist George Soros, who ad

[124] SZELENYI, Sonja et al.. "Interests and symbols in Post-Communist Political Culture: The Case of Hungary", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 61, No.3, June 1996, pp.443.
[125] RAINER; János. *Imre Nagy. Vom Parteisoldaten zum Märtyrer des ungarischen Volksaufstandes* [Imre Nagy. From party cadre to martyrer of the Hungarian uprising], (Paderborn and Munich: Schöningh publ. 2006), p.221.
[126] HELD, 1993, p.136.
[127] VÁLKI, 1999, http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no154/003.html; BRODY, Ervin C. "Literature and politics in today's Hungary: Sandor Csoori in the populist-urbanite debate" in *The Literary Review*, 3/22/1995 accessed http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-16971999.html.
[128] FRICZ, Tamás. "The Orbán Government: An experiment in Regime Stabilization", in Maria Schmidt and László Gy. Tóth (eds.), *From totalitarian to democratic Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000), p.559.

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invested into the democratic change in Hungary since 1986 when he set up the Soros Centre for Culture and Communication. Remarkably, Csurka had visited the US with a Soros scholarship a few years earlier. Still, Csurka was not alone in his anti-Semitic ideology: The populist writer Sandor Csoori and MDF member also clashed provoking a lengthy respond by the historian Péter Hanák "stating that Jews came in as many convictions as there existed among other peoples, and that they come back to Hungary after Auschwitz because they wanted to come home"[129]. Nevertheless, Csurka did not disappear from the political scene: His extreme right MIÉP, the Hungarian Truth and Life Party, entered parliament in 1998.

Still, the continuation of the populist tradition and the separation of Jews, cosmopolitan intellectuals and 'real' Hungarians reminded of an earlier confrontation: In the interwar period, populism had appeared as a political and cultural force for the last time. This populist tradition returned in the 1980s and 1990s reclaiming authentic roots, and at first the MDF continued this worldview. However, when the clashes started to resemble the binary opposition of László Németh's "Deep Hungarians" and (Jewish) cosmopolitans, the MDF tried to free itself of these radical elements. However, the trend had received its initial vigor and populism celebrated a paradoxical revival in the 1990s[130].

Though, the shift to the right was not only perceivable in the MDF which also hesitated to acknowledge the rightist deviation of its populism. Miklós Vasarhelyi for example let the Committee for Historical Justice, which he himself had once founded, due to the radical rhetoric of Jenő Fónay, the president of the radical POFOSZ. At a Central Eastern European Conference of Political Prisoners, Fónay declared:

> I can't bear to see how they compromise. They don't speak about our suffering. I can't be at peace with our destiny. Ex-communists are just looking without worrying in our eyes and nobody is pointing at them. We have to make the past known. When I watch TV I remember when after the end of the war

[129] HELD, 1993, p.146.
[130] BRODY, 1995, http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-16971999.html.

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> communism came and destroyed our lives. Moscow trampled on the small countries' people. If governments don't do anything about it, we should.[131]

In addition to the return of populism, a new phenomenon appeared on the horizon of Hungarian political culture: the politics of the street. Remarkably, out of the older generation of dissidents radicals singled themselves out and started confronting their former fellows. Associations like the POFOSZ or the Association of '56ers confront popular representative who have allegedly betrayed the ideals of the revolution. Tellingly, Rainer states: "The 'unidirectional' memory of this moment of grace gave way to a 'divergent' memory, in a process that continues with the cleaving of many other events of 1956"[132].

On March 15, 1992, a crowd of skinheads gathered for the national holiday. Among them was Gergely Pongratz, the main leader of the street fighters of the Corvin Alley in 1956. He had escaped to Austria after the second Soviet intervention and finally settled down as a pig farmer in Arizona. Until his return to Hungary in 1991, he founded and chaired numerous '56 organisations. Already during the 1991 and 1992 commemorative anniversary ceremonies, Pongratz led nationalistic protests which created such an atmosphere that President Göncz was kept from delivering his key speech[133]. In their calls for revenge and compensation, these self-declared freedom fighters were not alone: Imre Kónya strongly

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[131] Fonay quoted on http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Cafe/1718/jjpoliticalprisoners.html
[132] RAINER, 2002, [133] OSA fonds HU-OSA 300-40(Hungarian Unit)-2 (Subject Files in English) BOX 87. see RFE "CNO 0071 A-Wire 23 October 1991" and "24 October 1992. FF0075 B-Wire". The reactions by MDF leaders to the skinhead demonstration were reported as "Prime Minister Jozsef Antall regretted the incident"; since the SZDSZ accused the government organizers for deliberate passivity "Interior Minister Peter Boross, who was standing with other member of the government during the incident, said the opposition allegations were 'ill-considered and impulsive. No organiser can be responsible for what comes out of people's throat'".

opposed the president, when he announced to abstain from revengeful investigations of the secret service files[134].

Moreover, during demonstrations on October 23, 1991, the rioting skinheads behind Pongratz shouted slogans renouncing the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty along with claims that the state media was still run by communists[135]. Politics of the street is also the explicit policy of the MOP, which had been taken over by Sándor Rácz after Krassó's death in 1991[136]. Antall reacted mildly to such extreme rightist incidents, and thus, provided grounds in public as well as literally on Budapest's main squares, Kossuth, Heroes and Freedom Square.

II.2.3 The 1990s

In contrast to these noisy radical right-wing organizations, it was the MSZP, the successor party that gained an absolute majority in the second election in 1994. In that, Hungary was no exception in Central Eastern Europe. With the socialist vitories in Warsaw and Vilnius in mind, the MDF reactivated its anti-Communist rhetoric which failed to realize the country's changed attitude. The "apparent restoration of prewar politics"[137] seemingly proved short-lived. The economic repercussions following the transition nurtured nostalgia for the Kádár era as well as disappointment in the ruling conservative parties. The MSZP dressed itself in the tradition of European social democracy, and promised economic stabilization based on a structured privatization.

Numerous reasons contributed to the MDF's loss of voters. Certainly, the death of PM József Antall in 1993 played a role as well as the party's fragmentation leading to the dismembering of the extremes right elements. Péter Boross, who succeeded Antall, did not undertake the necessary restructuring of the party which might have clarified the party's

[134] NALEPA, Monika. *The problem of Credible Commitments in Transitions to Democracy*, Dissertation 2005, p.2.
[135] OSA fonds HU 300-40-2, Box 87; CNO 0071 A-Wire 23 October 1991.
[136] SWAIN, [date missing], p.6
[137] SZELENYI et al. 1996, p.468.

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centrist and not right position. Instead, the party indulged in a nostalgic reburial ceremony of Hungary's regent Admiral Miklós Horthy in 1993. The Independent Smallholders' Party, Antall's junior partner, repeated its "God, country, family" and "wine, wheat, peace" slogans during the second election campaign[138]. This time, however, it failed to please voters, since in contrast to the MDF the radical populist József Torgyán had become the FKGP's most articulate representative.

The SZDSZ also experienced struggles over its profile. During the first term, Racz argues, it appeared "ambiguous and Janus-faced"[139]. In addition to the questions of investigating past involvement in secret service activities, it disagreed with the MDF on topics such as compensation or media control, while the later requested both. Only in 1992, after the presidency went from Péter Tölgyessy to Iván Pető, the social element gained the upper hand. While in 1989/90, SZDSZ members had attacked the MDF for their leftist tendencies, it was exactly the SZDSZ who in the run-up to the elections in 1994 publicly hinted at a possible coalition with the MSZP[140]. Although this policy became reality after the ballots were sealed, the liberals' number in mandates dropped from 94 in 1990 to 69. Moreover, the decline has continued down to 19 in 2002.

At the party's fifth congress in 1993, FIDESZ undertook significant changes. The party chair revealed a rupture in the leadership between Viktor Orbán and Gábor Fodor, which ended with the latter leaving for the SZDSZ. As part of re-orientation the 35-year-age limit for membership was abolished. The rump party yet lacked an independent profile, since on the one hand it did not differentiate itself enough from the centre-right government and at the same time, it even took alliance with the MSZP, the strongest opposition party at the time

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[138] VASARY, 1991, p.3; RACZ, Barnabas and István Kukorelli. "The 'Second-Generation' Post-Communist Elections in Hungary in 1994", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.47, No.2, March 1995, p.262.
[139] RACZ and Kukorelli, 1995, p.258.
[140] TÓTH, László. "The post-communist government in Hungary", in Maria Schmidt and László Gy. Tóth (eds.), *From totalitarian to democratic Hungary* (New York: Columbia University Press 2000), pp.462.

into consideration. Voters missed orientation and a clear profile; thus the Young Democrats barely made it into parliament in 1994[141].

Racz insists that the electoral success of the Socialists was not unexpected; quite on the contrary, those media responses which immediately buried the successor party acted rashly ignoring surveys that indicated the strong commitment to socialist values and policies in the population[142]. After short considerations to nominate Miklós Nemeth, Gyula Horn became the new prime minister. During the campaign, the SZDSZ and the MSZP had balanced the potentials of a coalition, which with a MSZP victory of 54% added up to a safe two-thirds majority. In 1995, Göncz was re-elected as president. From this outset, success appeared guaranteed; however, Horn ended his term as "the least popular political leader in the country"[143]. In contrast to the expected social security, the Horn government pulled out a stabilization policy cutting down on welfare benefits, the Bokros package named after Finance Minister Lajos Bokros[144]. Moreover, another scandal, the 'Tocsik case', renounced earlier campaign promises about ordered privatization and fight against corruption.

In addition to these disappointments, the public resented the attention the coalition paid to the country's perception abroad. While negotiating Hungary's EU accession, the SZDSZ and MSZP seemed to forget that their electorates sat at home suffering from a struggling economy as well as social insecurity. At this point, EU membership and the accompanying conditions appeared more as a burden than an advantage. During the election campaign, both ruling parties, Fricz believes, mistakenly over-stressed the successes of the

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[141] FRICZ, 2000, pp.522.
[142] RACZ, 2000, p.323; compare the earlier publication SZELENYI et al., 1996, pp.697-722.
[143] RACZ, Barnabas. "The Hungarian Socialists in Opposition: Stagnation and Renaissance", in *Europe-Asia Studies* Vol.52, No.2, 2000, p.323.
[144] Ibid., pp.324; FRICZ, 2002, p.528.

balance sheet 1994-98[145]. To the regular voter the fact that the Bokros package meant stagnation or even reduction of wages was hard to sell[146].

After two governments, the public was left disappointed with the MDF as well as the MSZP, and ready to turn towards a new party. In response to the decline of the two previously strongest parties, FIDESZ polished its image as centrist-bourgeois and called for "national solidarity"[147]. Since 1995, the party carried the addition MPP - 'Hungarian Civic Union' in its title and ran the new program titled "For a Civic Hungary". Also it signed a cooperation agreement with 'Századvég', an institute for economic, political and historical analysis, briefly: a policy think tank[148]. Moreover, the party's leader Viktor Orbán backed up from his radical image which had been a matter of controversies within and outside of the party headquarters. In general, Fricz argues, the party liberated itself from its radical, young and, thus, inexperienced image[149]. Instead, the change in appearance to a politically responsible and competent alternative appeared credible and attractive. Moreover, the focus on a bourgeois Hungary supported the party's claims to take the lead of the centre-right political camp.

Although FIDESZ-MPP did need a coalition to govern, the comeback after 1994's 5% is remarkable. Predictably, the FKGP and the MDF became the new ruling partners. The KDNP had – partly due to Forum's shift to the right – not made it into parliament, while instead, István Csurka's MIÉP entered with 14 representatives. However, while Fricz' analysis of campaign period sheds positive light on the change in the party's as well as Orbán's attitude that, the succeeding term and FIDESZ-MPP's commitment to democracy is viewed critically by others. Except for the brief centre-left government from 1994 until 1998,

[145] FRICZ, 2002, p.530.
[146] RACZ, 2000, p.325.
[147] FRICZ, 2002, p.530.
[148] See "The History of Fidesz" on the party's official homepage http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?CikkID=68476
[149] FRICZ, 2002, p.530.

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Racz evaluating the elections of 2002 detects a political polarization and proclaims "right trend since 1990"[150]. Although according to Fricz "[populism] is unacceptable to the Young Democrats because […the party] has striven for a pragmatic and task-oriented attitude even if it is sometimes thwarted by a forceful ideological undertone"[151]. Nevertheless, this supposed reservation did not prevent signing a coalition agreement with the Independent Smallholders' chairman József Torgyán, and Sándor Lezsák of the MDF. While both of these parties dominated the conservative right at the beginning of the nineties, FIDESZ absorbed their electorate at the turn of the millennium. Therefore, the party moved away from its founding liberal image to the mainstead of centre-right forces symbolizing the general shift in political conviction. Thus, it is worthwhile to ask what exactly happened at the end of the 20th century in Hungarian politics?

II.2. 3 Towards Polarization

After the electoral victory, Orbán declared: "It is more than a change of government and less than a change of regime"[152]. The new centre-right government aimed at centralization and replacement of the old bureaucracy and administration, a necessary move neither Antall nor Horn had executed. The establishment of a Prime Minister's Office, a regular post created by the previous government but not implemented due to inter-coalition disputes, increased the prime minister's control over state affairs.

However, stretching the break between parliamentary sessions to three weeks, put too much power in the hands of the executive, oppositionists cried. Moreover, rulings by the Constitutional Court were interpreted rather arbitrarily. Additionally, dissolving the Conciliatory Council, which led negotiations in the name of the trade unions and workers,

[150] RACZ, Barnabas. "The Left in Hungary and the 2002 Parliamentary Elections", in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.55, No.5, 2003, p.747.
[151] FRICZ, 2002, p.533.
[152] FRICZ, 2002, p.537.

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once more emphasized the party's anti-Socialist attitude. In general, although not in possession of a majority itself, the FIDESZ government exercised a majoritarian policy, which meant basically ignorance of oppositional opinions[153]. In the domestic sphere, FIDESZ stressed values according to the new image of bourgeois Hungary which were reminiscent of the interwar period. Raising family benefits which seemed reasonable in regard of Hungary's demographic situation underlined the preference of the bourgeois middle class. Also, increased subsides drew the historic churches – Catholic, Protestant Lutheran, Orthodox Christian and Calvinist – closer to the state. Impressively, these relationships were communicated to the public during the millennium celebrations: Hours of television broadcasting covered the placement of St. Stephen's crown in parliament. The government had passed the relevant law and the crown of the medieval king, who first turned Hungary into a Christian mainland, was moved out of the National Museum, to an ecumenical mass in Esztergom and back to Budapest.

Looking at Hungary's foreign policy which since 1920 usually includes minority question, too, Fricz praises FIDESZ-MPP for "shifting emphasis from minorities to concern with the majority and the average Hungarian citizen"[154]. This evaluation seems rather euphemistic considering the scandal that erupted around the 2001 status law which granted ethnic Hungarians benefits in their 'home country'; the EU heavily criticized the Hungarian government for interfering and violating its neighbor's sovereignty. FIDESZ in return interpreted the EU's intervention as arbitrary itself: This understanding fed into the government's foreign policy that relieved EU accession from the priority list. Interestingly, the Status – or Benefit Law in official terminology – was passed by a 92% vote; only the SZDSZ refused approval[155].

[153] RACZ, 2003, pp.749.
[154] FRICZ, 2002, p.549.
[155] RACZ, 2003, p.753.

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The relationship to the Liberals deteriorated during the FIDESZ-MPP government. The parties accused each other of philo- or anti-Semitism respectively, which ultimately calls the traditional division between cosmopolitans and populists into mind. The capital Budapest is – like I already mentioned earlier – a fortress of SZDSZ voters. The entrance of the MIÉP to parliament opened the floor to anti-Semitic stances on the federal level, too. Regularly, opposition parties, rightly or wrongly, accused FIDESZ-MPP of ties and support from the Hungarian Justice and Life Party[156].

FIDESZ-MPP entered the 21st century as the main centre-right party in Hungary. As outlined above, it embraced values that had been essential to the MDF in the transition period. However, the formerly liberal Young Democrats looking for an attractive profile in the mid-90s discovered the vacuum left after the defeat of and disillusionment by the MDF. Thus, FIDESZ adopted the Forum's strong anti-Socialist, nationalist to populist ideology. It elevated family as well as religious values while supporting ethnocentric views. While Hungary's economy slightly recovered during this government term, it experienced a relapse in democracy, in return.

At the beginning of the new millennium it was up to the SZDSZ and the MSZP to respond adequately to their defeat in 1998 as well as to the rise of this new catch-all party. In 2002, only four parties made it into the National Assembly: FIDESZ-MPP, MSZP, SZDSZ and MDF. The difference between the two political camps – social-liberal vs. centre-right – was marginal, but in the end the Socialist Péter Medgyessy became Hungary's next prime minister of a MSZP-SZDSZ coalition government. After only two years in office, Medgyessy resigned. A newspaper revealed the possible engagement of the PM and

[156] FRICZ, 2002, p.553. The 2002 trial against György Metes and Lóránt Hegedűs Jr. for incitement against the community led to heated debates over ounitive measures for 'hate speech' and holocaust denial which previously had been phenomena absent from legislation as well as pubic awareness. For further reading I like to refer to See János Dési, András Gerő, Tibor Szeszlér, László Varga (ed.). *Anti-Semitic Discourse in Hungary 2002-2003*, (Budpest: B'nai B'rith Lodge 2004), pp.303; also PÁL, Gábor. "Hate Speech. The History of a Hungarian Controversy", in Márton Szábo (ed.). *On Politics. Rhetoric, Discourse and Concepts*,eBook Working Papers, (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Science 2006), p.18-21.

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nine other MPs in secret service activities during the Kádár era. An investigative parliamentary committee headed by Imre Mécs confirmed the claims. In 2002, Ferenc Gyurcsany took over the office of prime minister. For the first time, in 2004, a prime minister in Hungary was re-elected. I will return to the political development in the last chapter on the 50h anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. However, this analysis reveals the most important ideological trends and shifts Hungary as experienced since the founding of the Third Republic.

Summing up, the previous two subchapters presented Hungary's political history during the last 20 and more years. The shifts and instability during the 1990s reveal that neither the '56ers nor the dissidents as such did have a political concept that could meet up with the challenges after the Kádár regime had collapsed. While in opposition they were united precisely in their opposition. During the 1980s it was still possible and even necessary, because one 'fought' for the same cause, to meet on common grounds. After 1990, however, it became obvious that during the last 30 years the '56ers had not worked out their ideological discrepancies. Instead, with the time passing, each camp could elaborate its own interpretation of the Hungarian revolution. Already Maurice Halbwachs argued, that

> it is precisely the presence if direct witnesses which increases the chances that some of its features will be changed, so that it becomes quite difficult to determine its characteristics. This is especially the case when the event is of a nature that arouses deep emotions in groups of people, giving rise to passionate discussions[157].

Closely related to the strong ideological differences of the so-called 'democratic opposition', a term which I have deliberately avoided, the different parties that emerged inherited this oppositionist lack of orientation. At least a decade passed until the camps were sorted out in concrete party profiles. Following, I address the interrelation of politics and art

[157] HALBWACHS, c.1992, p.194

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with a special interest in stylistic developments in Hungary since the 1970s. The synthesis of both of these foci facilitates analyzing current monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. As I will show in Chapter III and IV, the fierce fight over the 'authentic' memory of '56 was first taken to the streets with regard to monuments, and then in 2006, literally.

II.3 Art in Contemporary Hungary

II.3. 1 Introduction

Art did not start anew in 1990; quite on the contrary, "Hungary's revolution in the visual arts […] preceded by more than half a decade the great political turnabout of 1989"[158]. Furthermore, personal as well as institutional continuities have survived the political change of regime. One reason is that artists had already experienced greater freedom since the groundbreaking exhibition of the first 'Iparterv' exhibition in 1968. In the 1980s, Hungary experienced an enormous multiplication of styles and trends with new workshops, groups and soon gallery openings that had long broken the stiffness of official cultural policies. At the same time, this non-conformist generation enjoyed the support not only of the tolerating state but also of Western investors. The 1980s, therefore, can be considered a sort of golden era of contemporary visual arts.

On the contrary, the 1990s are marked by elevating the non-conformist middle and older generation as the authentic 'national' art style as retribution for not fully committing themselves to the regime. Moreover, they were recognized for having already gained international merits abroad. However, since the previous state-funding system and interest of foreigners in contemporary Hungarian art rapidly has decreased, the younger generation in the 1990s suffered from lack of orientation and institutional infrastructure. Only in the last years of the decade, possibilities opened up for younger artists. Thus, the main problem of

[158] ANDRÁSI, Gábor. "The Eighties. 'The Avant-Garde is Dead'", in *The History of Hungarian Art in the twentieth century*. (Budapest: Corvina 1999), p.218.

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"Hungarian contemporary art is that it is closed", János Szoboszlai from the Institute of Contemporary Art – Dunaújváros claims[159]. Consequently, in the following subchapter I will present the "counter-culture" – as the prominent art historian Éva Forgács terms it[160] – of visual arts since approximately the late 1960s. Then, I will address the institutional changes and perseverance since 1990. This brief outlook in Hungarian art history serves as background to the practices of and reasons for granting commissions to specific artists after the change of regime.

II.3. 2 Art in Hungary as 'counter-culture'

The visual arts, Gábor Andrási explains, was governed by the 3T's policy introduced by the well-known and probably most compelling cultural policy-maker of the Kádár-regime, György Aczél. Aczél had joined the regime after the crushing of the '56 revolution; his reign is remembered for "támogatás, tûrés, tiltás", which spells out as support, toleration and prohibition. Miklós Szabó, historian and dissident himself, explains:

> The "3 T's" meant a relaxation of censorship, expressing a distinction between two types of permission: "support", which was enjoyed by politically "functional" works created in a spirit of identification with the regime, and "toleration". The latter meant that works for which the regime had no direct use, but which posed no threat either, were allowed to be published.[161]

However, this policy was never explicitly introduced and particularly in respect to visual arts applied rather inconsistently, Gábor Andrási states[162]. The first important group that existed apart from the official dogma and was to have an impact on subsequent generations was the so-called Zugló Circle. Since 1963, artists gathered in Sándor Molnár's

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[159] SZOBOSZLAI, János. "… and the background", on http://www.policy.hu/szoboszlai/back.htm accessed on May 22, 2007.
[160] FORGÁCS, Éva. „Kultur im Niemandsland" [Culture in noman's land], in Hans Knoll (ed.)."Die zweite Öffentlichkeit. Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert [The second public. Art in Hungary in the 20th century], (Vienna and Dresden: Overseas Publishers Association 1999), pp.4-57.
[161] SZABÓ, Miklós. "Kádár's Pied Piper", in *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 147, Autumn 1997; accessed http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no147/p91.htm.
[162] ANDRÁSI, Gábor. "All at the same time: Art in the late fifties and early sixties", in *The History of Hungarian Art in the twentieth century*. (Budapest: Corvina 1999), p.145.

apartment in Zugló, a fancy district in Budapest, re-discovered the legacy of Lajos Kassák, the personification of Hungarian avant-garde and translated art theories by Kandinsky, Malevitch and Mondrian. Despite differences in message as Imre Bak emphasized, the geometric and abstract trend of the 1960s relied on the constructivism pushed by Kassák in the 1920s[163]. The members of the Zugló Circle – besides Molnár and Bak, István Nádler, Pál Deim, later also Tamás Hencze, Gábor Attalai, Miklós Halmy, Endre Hortobagyi, László Molnár and the sculptor Tibor Csiky – did not represent a uniform style, but in addition to continuing Kassák's legacy they based their work on European tradition and American abstract art[164]. Although this trend met resistance from the authorities, and the group soon dispersed pursuing individual careers, the *Young Artists' Studio* embraced these artists from 1966 onwards. This institution had been founded in 1958 to promote newcomers that fulfilled official expectations. It functioned as Kaderschmiede, which granted its artists financial freedom.

In 1968, the Galerie Müller in Stuttgart hosted the groundbreaking 'Iparterv I' exhibition, in which the art historian Péter Sinkovits included many former Zugló artists. Imre Bak, Krisztian Frey, Tamás Hencze, György Jovánovics, Ilona Keserü, Gyula Konkoly, László Lakner, Sándor Molnár, István Nádler, Ludmil Siskov and Endre Tót demonstrated the dynamics of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde showing their awareness of international trends like Pop Art and in their geometric minimalism and pictorial language consciousness of their own tradition: Kassák and the European School This direction was complemented by the same new subjectivity in literature[165].

One year later, 'Iparterv II' followed and included further examples of Hungarian artists – Miklós Erdély, László Méhes, János Major, András Baranyay, Tamás Szentjóby –

[163] FORGÁCS, 1999, p.46.
[164] ZWICKL, András. "Beyond the limits of Panel Painting: Surnaturalism, the Zugló Circle and Gesture Painting", in *The History of Hungarian Art in the twentieth century*. (Budapest: Corvina 1999), pp.162ff.
[165] FORGÁCS, 1999, p.48ff.; ZWICKL, 1999, p.166ff.

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who combined domestic traditions and international trends. However, the neo-avant-garde generation did not solely consist of 'Iparterv' members: Attila Csáji united surrealist and non-figurative painters and sculptors in the 'Szürenon Group'. In 1970, some of them found a mainstead in a former chapel in Balatonboglár. There, György Galántai's 'Chapel Creative Group' organized a series of programs which also featured the first visual poetry performances and experimental theatre groups like the István Kovács Studio or Péter Halász' banned Kassák Theatre. After three years of presenting subversive art, officials shut the location down in an attempt to regain control over the internationally reputed neo avant-garde[166]. While Pop Art remained of marginal interest to Hungarian artists due to the lack of its social foundations, the hyperrealism of Lakner and Méhes gave a accurate picture of Hungarian society under Socialism. This directions was not only pursued by Imre Kocsis and Ákos Birkás and adopted by the 'Young Artists' Studio' but met great resonance in sculpture, too[167].

However, the 1970s brought rise to a contrary trend, too. In the 'Lajos Vajda Studio' in Szentendre amateur artists came together, who in contrast to Bak, Birkás or Jovánovics had been accepted to the Academy of Applied Arts. Szentendre had been the Vajda's working place. Because they blended folklore motifs in their surrealist and abstract paintings, he and some of his contemporaries were denied access to Kassák's 'Munka'-Circle partly in the 1930's. The contemplation of authentic Hungarian culture was a reaction to the modern European trends of abstraction and its related tendencies. In the scientific and political field, this return to the roots was reflected in a rise of populism as ideology. Similarly, in the 1970s, folklore responded to official socialist realism and photo-

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[166] ZWICKL, 1999, p.180.
[167] ANDRÁS, Gabor. "The Seventies. Defining Reality: Figurative Trends", in *The History of Hungarian Art in the twentieth century*. (Budapest: Corvina 1999), pp.182ff.

hyperrealism as well as the neo avant-garde geometricism; also, it was accompanied with a new interest in ethnography[168].

In the tradition of Kassák, Ilona Keserü, Tibor Csiky, János Fajo; István Nádler, Tamás Hencze; Dora Maurer and Imre Bak began working in a neo-geometrical style, which even earned the latter an exhibition at the Műcsarnok in 1977. Most of these artists soon moved on to conceptual and pictoral art. Less tolerable ones of this progressive generation like "Szentjóby, Péter Halász and members of the Kassák Studio […], then Lakner, Tót and László Méhes in succession left the country voluntarily or were expelled"[169]. Those who stayed and the younger generation found a new teacher, theorist and programmatic thinker in Miklós Erdély, whose leadership skills –with some reservations – offer comparison to Lajos Kassák himself, Forgács argues. However, the lack of discourse and the little interest of the public could never seize up to the impact of the first Hungarian avant-garde, she complains[170]. Andrási agrees to this perception of the new generation consisting of also progressive artists such as András Böröcz, Áron Gábor, Zoltán Lábas, László László Révész, Gábor Rosk´, János Sugár and János Szirtes. However, instead of provocation, these withdrew into an alternative rather self-referential public sphere[171].

II.3. 3 The golden era of the 1980s

The 1980s started with the seemingly pessimistic outlook of the "death of the avant-garde", but soon became a thriving and dynamic decade for Hungary, politically as well as aesthetically. Stylistically and material fragmentation became the markers. Some of the older generation – Imre Bak, Ákos Birkás, Tamás Hencze, István Nádler – underwent radical changes and worked with 'new sensibility' like their Western colleagues. Their international

[168] Ibid., p.186.
[169] Ibid., p.207.
[170] FORGÁCS, 1999, pp.52ff.
[171] ANDRÁSI, 1999, p.207f.

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recognition had persevered since their appearance in the 'Iparterv'; thus, their works were exhibited not only in the Galerie Müller in Stuttgart but also in the Folkwang Museum in Essen[172]. Moreover, they had enjoyed scholarships and travel grants from abroad.

Also, Eighties saw the rising star of the middle post-conceptual and post-modern generation, namely : Károly Kelemen, El Kazovszkij, László Féher, Támas Sóos, János Szirtes, György Szőnyei, Gábor Szörtsey, Gábor Záborszky[173]. Stylistic and material fragmentation marked this decade. Miklós Erdély maintained his strong influence on the Hungarian non-conformist art scene: In 1978, he founded the 'Indigo Group' where he continued his teaching of creative exercises and provided a forum for Hungary's intellectual art discourse. Until Erdély's death in 1986, 'Indigo' covered not only all different genres but also connected about any significant artist of the era to its founding father[174]. However, Sugár claims, based on the isolated position of artists and the art scene after the neo avant-garde, Erdélyi "remained totally unknown to the majority of the general public"[175].

The representatives of this 'new sensibility' were quickly incorporated by the official institutions: Such works were exhibited in the Ernst Museum – the contemporary art extension of the Műcsarnok– already in 1984, the Budapest Gallery in 1985 and then the National Gallery followed in 1986. In the same year, Bak, Nádler and Birkas designed the Hungarian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale which two years earlier had still been

[172] HOHNISCH, Dieter. "Rückblende" [Retrospect], in Barbara Sietz (ed.). *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Ungarn. Malerei Skulptur Installation Videokunst* [Contemporary Art in Hungary. Painting Sculpture Installation Video art], (Munich: Matthes & Seitz c1999), pp.23-30.
[173] ANDRÁSI, 1999, p.213ff.
[174] Ibid., p.219ff.
[175] SUGÁR, János. "Schrödinger's Cat in the Art World", in *East Art Map. Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe,* (London: University of Arts 2006), p.213: "Many of the leading personalities in Hungarian art either belonged to his circle or were in contact with him. Meanwhile his career was typical in that he had no official acknowledgement, and remained totally unknown to the majority of the general public. Since his art action during the 1956 revolution, when he put out boxes in damaged Budapest storefronts with a note saying: 'unguarded Money […]', he had irritated the authorities. Unfortunately up until now, neither Erdély's activity nor his legacy has become part of the conventional wisdom if the Hungarian intelligentsia." However, Szoboszlai contradicts him in that he refers to the retrospective exhibition of Erdélyi's oeuvre in the Műcsarnok in 1998. SZOBOSZLAI, "… and the background", http://www.policy.hu/szoboszlai/back.htm accessed in May 2007.

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conceptualized by the conformist sculptor Imre Varga. The Budapest Gallery had been founded in 1979, and although part of the official infrastructure already sent out new signals through its first exhibition 'Trends 1970-80' because it provided grounds for "mostly young and young-at-heart artists who belonged to the tolerated and prohibited categories"[176]. Attila Zsigmond, who has been its director since its foundation points out that this institution has always valued artistic quality independent from and at times contrary to the official standards[177].

Installations, performance and object art were popular genres of this period. Also, postmodernism entered the architectural designs of Gábor Bachmann, Attila F.Kovács, László Rajk, and Tibor Szala. Space became also a matter of conceptualization for Mária Lugossy, Tamás Trombitás, Tamás Körösényi, Valéria Sass and Géza Samu. Lugossy for example filled the entire Dorottya Gallery, the official art trading institution, with just a single installation[178]. However, this newly gained freedom altered the position of art and its role in society decisively: For the 'Iparterv' generation, wandering on creative paths away from the Academy and the official art institutions into the underground, had been "a question of survival"[179] at first. About the only group that still opted for provocation and, thus, suffered from police harassment, was the 'Inconnu Group', founded in 1978. In the 1982 Christmas manifesto, its members Péter Bokros, Tamás Molnár, Tibor Philippi, and

[176] FRANK, János. "Towards a New Corpus", in Budapest Galéria (ed.): *Budapest Galéria, 1979-1994* (Budapest 1995), pp.13-16. Frank refers to the official three t-policy established by György Aczél, Deputy Minister of Culture from 1956 until 1967, which separated art into supported, tolerated and prohibited categories.

[177] ZSIGMOND, Attila. "A message from the director-general", in Budapest Galéria (ed.): *Budapest Galéria, 1979-1994* (Budapest 1995), p.8: "My colleagues and I have, since the outset, striven for complete openness, pluralism and variety in the arts, as well as a continual quest for new values/ works of possible value".

[178] ANDRÁSI, 1999, p.198ff. "From 1984, exhibitions of significance could be seen at the Műcsarnok and its 'branches', the Ernst Museum and the Dorottya Gallery (director: Katalin Néray); also at the two affiliates of the Budapest Gallery, the Óbuda Gallery (until 1987) and the Lajos Street Exhibition House (from 1982 on). Important roles were played during the decade by the Pécs Museum, with its considerable tradition of modern art, as well as the new art gallery in Pécs, opened in 1979." Outside of Budapest and the emergence of Pécs as art centre, Vác, Szombathely and Szentendre contributed exhibitions to the decades' unusual interest in the 'post-neo avant gardist' trends.

[179] HONISCH, c1999, p.27.

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Magdolena Serfőző declared illegality as their primary means of "art=politics"[180]. This evaluation of the 1980s certainly does not intend to play down the significance of this decade in Hungary's art history and its socio-political impact; without the dissident in the cultural sphere, whether samizdat or art, the political change would probably have taken different forms; however, to understand problems the current art scene that roots in this time the ambivalent reception of visual arts needs to be taken into account.

The gradual opening of institutions to Hungary's contemporary artists in the Eighties is sharply contrasted– or maybe even due – to the repression of Samizdat and the literal underground. While the visual arts enjoyed creative and productive autonomy, politicized and politicizing productions were still subject of confiscations and arrests. Two convincing arguments explain this situation: On the one hand, as already mentioned, since the neo avant-garde art was socially isolated. It was insulated in 'a second public sphere' in which only experts and a few connoisseurs, a small segment of society, received and 'understood' the works[181]. In addition to that, the new liberal attitude towards domestic visual artists did not impose existential difficulties any longer. Being granted access to the main institutions and making a living from state support as well as foreign investments, reasons for provocation ceased while authorities lost interest du to the little impact on society in general. The Samizdat exercised social criticism which had marked the avant-garde since its appearance at the beginning of the century. Although its audience might not have been bigger, it was still more explicit in the sense that its demands are articulated and do not need

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[180] ANDRÁSI, 1999, p.248.

[181] SUGÁR, 2006, p. 212: "Looking back, it was like an incubator or a resort: it wasn't difficult to survive, there was plenty of time for talks, meetings, discussions, making contacts, partying and of course in most cases not the slightest hope of a practical result. There were no contacts with the so-called 'first publicity', which was the realm of the general public. It was only access to the general public and the mainstream media that was censored, not cultural production itself. […] As censorship prevented and controlled distribution and lublicity only a few hundred people […] could benefit from the potentials and output of this intellectually booming period. It's somehow like a philosophical question: can anything be valid if no one knows about its existence? […] This is exemplified by the case of samizdat activities, which due to the necessary conspiracy required for its production and distribution, hardly reached beyond those who were already involved."

previous knowledge and interpretation as in the visual arts. The catafalque by Bachmann and Rajk for the reburial of Imre Nagy (stylistically following the monument in Pére Lachaise) and the competition-winning design for the Rakoskeresztur plot 301 by Jovánovics, Andrási argues, signalled the creative end of this golden era[182].

II.3. 4 Institutional framework in the 1990s

There is consent among the art historians, that the change of regimes caused euphoria in the art scene. Already in the 1980s, the institutional network had diversified. State control ceased, taboos were broken and the re-evalution of art since 1945 canonized the non-conformist artists into the 'real' national representatives. Previously unemployable artists like György Jovánovics, Dóra Maurer or János Sugár received teaching positions in the newly found Intermedia Department of the Academy of Arts. The success of the 'Iparterv' generation lasted: In 1991, László Feher designed the Hungarian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, Gyärgy Jovánovics in 1995, Birkás exhibited in Vienna in 1996, Bak received the Herder Award in 1998, and exhibitions of Hungarian contemporary art were hosted in Frankfurt and Berlin, where György Konrád resided as president of the Academy of Sciences[183].

Also in Budapest, euphoria was nurtured by the opening of the Ludwig Museum for Contemporary Art in 1989. The Young Artists' Association (FSKE) gained independence, turned into an agency for young artists in 1990. Its Studio Gallery does not only house exhibition of the current generation but also features innovate programs. Also in 1990, the new School of Art in Pécs under Ilona Keserű generated an additional creative centre in Hungary apart from the capital. In 1997, the decentralization was furthered by the establishment of the Institute for Contemporary Art in Dunaújváros. Since the state lost its

[182] ANDRÁSI, 1999, p.346.
[183] HONISCH, c1999, p.30.

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monopoly over the art trade, galleries gained importance in promoting Hungarian artists here and abroad. In 1983, the Liget Gallery opened, in 1989 the Vienna-based Knoll Gallery, Várfok, Delceg and Eri Galleries to name a few, but lasting examples followed[184]. Tamás St.Auby, another leading figure of older generation who had engaged in numerous artistic activities until he was arrested together with Konrád in 1974 and expelled to Switzerland in the following year, opened the Bártok 32 Gallery upon his return in 1991[185]. Furthermore, the Soros Center for Contemporary Art (now Center for Communication and , short 3C's) started its creative and critical activities already in 1986; some of the currently most important art experts like Lajos Németh, Katalin Néray, Miklós Péternak or András Zwickl have contributed to the centre's re-evaluation of contemporary art[186].

Nevertheless, while this mushrooming of new institutions conveys the impression of a striving art market, a heated debate at the ICA-D ran under the programmatic question "Is the current institutional system capable of producing domestic and international stars?". Furthermore, Aknai and Erdösi criticize that the Hungarian art scene remains isolated from the international market[187]. Sugár explains, that after the fall of the Iron Curtain "Eastern European lost their political sex appeal and the attention of the West has shifted towards new territories"[188]. The former financial security of Western investors vanished just like the new state cut down on financial support, too. "The sponsorship of visual art events is presently inadequate", claims Szoboszlai and Zsolt Keresű, the current chairman of the FSKE agrees[189]. Most galleries are non-profit enterprises, and to make a living younger artists have to participate in projects and competitions issued by the Ministry for Culture or the National

[184] AKNAI, Katalin and Anikó Erdösi. "Contemporary Art and the Market", in The Hungarian Quarterly, Vol. XLIII, No. 166, Summer 2002; http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no166/17.html.
[185] SUGÁR, 2006, p.213f. In 1996, he was rewarded with a solo exhibition in the Műcsarnok under the directorship of László Béke.
[186] SZOBOLOSZLAI, 1999, p.305.
[187] AKNAI and Erdösi, 2002, http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no166/17.html
[188] SUGÁR, 2006, p.211.
[189] SZOBOSZLAI, „… in the background", on http://www.policy.hu/szoboszlai/back.htm; conversation with Zolt Keresű on Liszt Férenc Tér on May 26th, 2007.

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Cultural Heritage Fond which disperse the state budget rather arbitrarily, Szaboszlai claims. While some foreign institutions within Hungary like the 'Pro Helvetia' or the 'Goethe Institute' engage in the country's cultural scene, private investors have not emerged yet[190]. Moreover, the irregular and intransparent decisions of the federal institutions have prevented the development of an independent visual art scene which has led to the eruption of dissatisfaction and outrage among the artists during the 'Pétranyi-Fabényi' scandal. In 2005, Júlia Fabenyi's five-year-term as director of the Műcsarnok was over. The Műcsarnok, as the official venue for temporary exhibitions, still plays an essential role in turning Hungarian artists into stars, and therefore, is regularly a topic of debate. It is an independent legal entity; however, financially t receives its budget from the Ministry of Culture[191] which also decides over the position of director. The scandal broke out, when the applicants remained unknown to the public. When information leaked through that besides Fabényi Barnabas Bencsik, curator of the MEO gallery "a Central European equivalent of the cultural reanimation of the dockyards of London, Lisbon or Hamburg"[192], the architect Gábor Szilágyi and the ICA-D's director Zsolt Petrányi competed over this position. FSKE initiated a roundtable and demonstration on Heroes Square, but then Minister of Culture András Bozóki appointed Petrányi arbitrarily. The scandal highlights the currently uncertain position of visual arts in Budapest. Although the appointment signals a shift away from the previously rather conservative policy under Fabényi, who had been appointed during the

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[190] Ibid.; also SZOBOLOSZLAI, 1999,

[191] See its Founding charter on accessed May 2007.[192] AKNAI and Erdösi, 2002, http://www.hungarianquarterly.com/no166/17.html . Moreover, the authors claim that the MEO belongs to a new wave of galleries which – thanks to their innovative concepts – appear more promising and might open the market nationally and internationally for young artist.

Orbán legislation, and artists' were "rather happy" about this choice according to FSKE chairmain Keresű, the new director and his approach have remained contested[193].

II.3. 5 Conclusions

This chapter serves the analysis of recent monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 in a two ways. First of all, it outlines the stylistic tradition of contemporary visual arts. Second, it introduces not only the most important institutions in the artistic scene but also presents some of the most significant contemporary artists. Certainly, in this very brief summary, many trends and significant personalities – for example the Béla Balázs Studio – have been excluded. Also, the explanations of stylistic developments have remained rudimentary in order to draw attention exclusively to those aspects that will re-appear in the subsequent chapter.

As it was shown, infrastructural deficiencies and stylistic trends are largely based on developments preceding the change of regimes. Therefore, lines of continuity can be drawn between the presence and the 1980s, even until the 1970s. The golden era of the Eighties was followed by a vacuum in which only a few new artists made their appearance[194]. One reason is the retrospective reimbursement of the non-conformist artist. However, the current disinterest in visual arts can be perceived as repercussions to the peculiar role of art in the Eighties and its ambivalent role in society. While the older generation received applause abroad, its reception remained marginal in its home country. Still, the most progressive artists have been canonized as the leading representatives of Hungarian art. These non-conformist artists preserved the tradition of art as a 'counter-culture' to the official dogma that has characterized the avant-garde since Lajos Kassák. Consequently, three major trends in their basic forms can be distinguished throughout Hungarian art history: Besides official

[193] FÖLDES, András. "Nem hozta a papírformát Bozóki", on http://index.hu/kultur/pol/mucs0707/ publ. on July 7, 2005.
[194] See ANDRÁSI and Zwickl, 1999, pp.255ff.

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style that dominated the institutional education, here the persistent dogma of realism, numerous progressive directions developed. In the 1970s, this was geometricism which derived from abstract art. Eventually, the avant-garde and neo avant-garde gained relative tolerance and acceptance. As a third road between official dogma and progressivism, authentic Hungarian folk culture returned in the 1970s, but never became a vibrating or political trend like the neo avant-garde[195]. Peter Weibel sums up the dilemma of neo-avangardist in Central Eastern Europe as follows: On the one hand they could not withdraw to their own avant-garde since it would not reflect the contemporary social situation correctly; at the same time, Western rolemodels did not suffice either. Hence, only their own 'ancient' culture became a resort of creative inspiration. For this trend, the interest in folk culture combined with socialist realism, Weibel coins the term "Retroavantgarde"[196]. Henceforth, until today the likewise unofficial tradition of Hungarian folklore remains less attractive to art critiques – and therefore seldom mentioned.

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[195] The discovery of authentic Hungarian folklore in a politicized context first emerged at the turn of the 20th century; after some modifications and with a changing political connotation it was embraced by the populist movement in the 1930. A short history of populism and Hungarian folklore: HOFER, Támas. "The Hungarian Soul" and the "Historical Layers of National Heritage": Conceptualizations of the Hungarian Folk Culture, 1880-1944" in Katherine Verdery and Ivo Banac (ed.), *National character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for international and area studies, Slavica Publ. 1995), pp. 65-81.

[196] WEIBEL, Peter. "Der Kalte Krieg und die Kunst" [The Cold War and Art], in GROS, Boris (ed.*). Zurück aus der Zukunft. Osteuropäische Kulturen im Zeitalter des Postkommunismus* [Back from the Future. East European cultures in the era of postcommunism], (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Publ. 2004), p. 49-55.

III. Monument discourse and the Hungarian case: Competing political interpretations in Budapest's monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

III.1 Public Art in Transition

II.1.1 General Introduction

"1956 revolution has been commemorated and celebrated through a dazzling array of visual representations". The change of regime was accompanied by iconoclastic activity, symbolic overwriting and was followed by a persistent re-investment of the cityscape with Hungary 'rewritten' history[197]. Obvious cases of symbolic overwriting are the changes of street names. Already in 1991, György Dalos, one of the most prominent dissident writers, bemoaned the peculiar management of street names: Re-naming was often conducted in a little considerate way; when György Krassó and the MOP illegally took down the street sign "Münnich Férenc utca" and replaced it with Nádor utca, their action met understanding, justification and even support; instead of prosecution, the district council sealed the change by legal approval. Dalos provides more examples and reveals a strong nostalgia for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy[198].

This manifestation of the cultural memory that bases contemporary Hungary again on its monarchic foundation, is not only nostalgia for the country's prosperity following the 1867 *Ausgleich*; moreover, it is reminiscent of the Interwar period, when Admiral Horthy claimed regency and re-established the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy. Most of the street names, Dalos explains, were already in place before the Second World War. As Assmann had explained, such a construction of cultural memory selectively installs the past

[197] See also the section "Commemoration, National Identity, and Political Iconoclasm" in FOOTE, Kenneth, Attila Toth and Anett Arvay. "Hungary after 1989: Inscribing a New Past on Place" in *Geographical Review*, Vol.90, No.3, July 2000, pp.305-309.

[198] DALOS, György. "Der große Kampf um die Straßenschilder" [The big fight over street signs], in *Ungarn. Vom Roten Stern zur Stephanskrone* [Hungary. From Red Star to Stephen's Crown], (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Publ. c1997), orig. 1991, pp.7-16.

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with significance that provides meaning for the present[199]. Emilia Palonen from the University of Essex specialized on the politics of Budapest's cityscape. She follows Dalos' footsteps and adds the 'cult of the great men': Not only in respect to streets and squares the Hungarian capital remembers its 19th century greatness, but also honors the country's Greatest with a striking number of monuments[200].

But the scope of "inscribing a new past on place"[201] went even further: 1956 is an inherently new element of Hungarian social memory, which lies at the threshold between communicative and cultural memory: Many participants are still alive, as the short history of the 1980s opposition shows. In addition to these, many returned from exile after the change of regimes. As I already proved their recalling of the revolution varies in content and meaning. Memorials are means to objectify memory and part of the collective memory therefore, they are "particularly susceptible to politicized forms of remembering"[202]. While the memory of 1956 is raised to an essential element of Hungary's new national history, the survivors shape or try to shape its manifestation through their eye-witness' accounts and moral authority as much as possible.

Consequently, I will present a selection of recent monuments for the Hungarian revolution of 1956 and their initiators. I will relate the aesthetic preferences to the respective ideological camps as the subchapters indicate. Finally, I will address the most recent controversy about the Central Monument raised for the 50th anniversary and, following, draft the current political situation as it is reflected in this debate.

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[199] ASSMANN, c1999, p.296.
[200] PALONEN,Emilia. "Postcommunist Histories in Budapest: The Cult of Great Men", University of Essex, Spring 2002; also PALONEN, Emilia. "Creating Communities: The Post-Communist City-Text of Budapest", in *Tr@ansit online* 2006).
[201] FOOTE et al. 2000, pp.301-334.
[202] ASSMANN, 2006, p.7.

II.1.2 Iconophilia and Iconoclasm

During the Kádár era, the cityscape was monitored and designed by the central administration according to the official ideology: workers, peasants, children and animals in addition to the heroes of Socialism and Hungarian national heroes in Socialist disguise[203]. In 1987, the last official monument was set up by the Municipal Council ("Fövarosi Tanács"); during the change, the competency over the city's public art and cartography was decentralized, meaning it was transferred to the different district councils. Moreover, private individuals, civic organizations, institutions, enterprises etc. can now legitimately participate in the shaping of the cityscape. This decentralization is reflected in numbers:

> Of the 249 new works of arts placed on public areas after 1990, 20 were financed by public institutions, 27 by Budapest Municipality, 107 by district governments, 87 by NGO-s, foundations and enterprises, and 9 by private individuals.[204]

This democratization as Géza Boros, art historian and cultural advisor, describes it[205], was accompanied by a diversification of styles. In January 2005, statues, plaques and monuments in Budapest added up to 1,100 pieces which is a significantly high number in Europe expressing Hungarian Iconophilia.

The *Budapest Galéria* is an example of institutional continuity; however, as I have already pointed out earlier, during the 1980s, it opened the state infrastructure to less tolerable artists and allowed greater artistic freedom. Still today, it is responsible for the monitoring, surveillance of the construction as well as maintenance of all monuments on the capital's premises. As such, the *Budapest Galéria* is an independent institution that receives its budget from the municipality. In its "Short history", the BG underlines its function as

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[203] See the catalogue of the February 12- March 8th 1985 exhibition of the Budapest Galéria. *Negyven év köztéri szobrai Budapesten. 1945-85*, (Budapest 1986)

[204] ZSIGMOND, Attila. "Budapest. The Hungarian Sister", presentation at *Sister City Program Public Art Summit* February 17-18, 2005, White Papers, ©2005 by The Sister City Program of the City of New York, p.5. Similar content in Hungarian Budapest Galéria. "Egy kis törtenelem" [A short History], http://www.budapestgaleria.hu. The former also contains the BG's bylaws and the as well as a description of the "procedures for the establishment of public outdoor works of arts".

[205] BOROS, Géza. "Budapest's Sculptures and Commemorative Plaques in Public Spaces 1985-1998", in Budapest Galéria (ed.): *Budapest Galéria, 1979-1994* (Budapest 1995), transl. Chris Sullivan, pp.7-15.

professional institution which reflects on Hungary's long tradition of statues, maintains their artistic quality and attempts to raise public awareness to the city's monuments. Public art, it is argued, is dominated by figurative monuments. The millennium celebrations in 1896, which were part of the "era of national monuments, 1867-1918", highlight the 19th century tradition of statues in Hungary. While less than 1% of public art in Budapest is of a non-figurative style, only recently, a few artist organizations have started to display contemporary fine art in public places[206].

Complementing the return of iconophilia, Budapest also exercised a peculiar form of iconoclasm: On July 5, 1989 the literary historian László Szörényi suggested to collect all realist-socialist public art in a separate park, since on the one hand these monuments were not to remain in the capital as symbols of oppression, lack of freedom and sovereignty, but nevertheless they should not be demolished because they still maintain some value of a historical artefact. This proposal fueled the debate about "revenge or revision" which in the end was one on behalf of the works' "historical and documentary value"[207]. In 1991, with the support of the Memorial Committee '56, the National Cultural Found [NKA- Nemzeti Kulturalis Alap] the Budapest General Assembly announced a competition, supervised by the Budapest Galéria. The winning concept by the architect Akos Eleőd suggested collecting realist socialist monuments in a park situated on the capital's periphery in the XXII. district. "The distance was necessary and intentional", argue Foote et al., "for it separated statues physically and symbolically from their original sites and political meanings"[208]. *Statue Park* [Szoborpark] was opened in June 1993, and – mostly attracting foreign tourists – provides a new shelter for Marx, Engels, Béla Kun or the participants of the Spanish War[209]. This

[206] ZSIGMOND, 2005, pp.1-4 or Budapest Galéria. "Egy kis törtenelem", http://www.budapestgaleria.hu
[207] BOROS, 1998, p.8.
[208] FOOTE, et al, 2000, p.308.
[209] Basic information is provided by the Statue Park's homepage, accessed January 2007 http://www.szoborpark.hu/index.php?ContentId=11&Lang=en

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iconoclasmic procedure calls attention to the uncertainty of the removal that is neither fully destructive nor constructive, as Latour explained. Instead, moving the monuments and sculptures of the Kádár era to the city's periphery indicates that the assessment of this part of Hungarian history is for the time being rather postponed.

Also, Viktor Kallo's Martyr Statue was moved to the[210]; it used to stand in Republic Square where since 1960 it has commemorated the victims of the counter-revolution: the workers that had been betrayed and deceived by the fascist, Horthyist, and revisionist forces in October 1956[211]. The huge bronze statue depicts 'the nameless' worker who – with his hands stretched out to the sky – seems to be falling or drowning. Its unveiling took place in a time of consolidation when the Kádár regime was about to introduce the 'New Economic Mechanism'. After having crushed the workers' councils as the last fortress of the revolution in December 1956[212], this monument offered a compromise between the state and the people: The latter were visually pardoned for giving in to deception of the 'traitors', by then long executed. Interestingly this monument was reinforced in 1983, when a mural for the heroes of the people's power (again by Viktor Kalló) was installed. Only the statues base remains on Republic Square, which "disfigures the square like an enormous wound"[213]. In 1991, a foundation stone for a new reconciliatory memorial for the "martyrs and victims of 1956" was installed in Republic Square; however, it has been left untouched ever

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[210] Budapest Galéria. *Megyven Év. Köztéri Szobrai Budapesten. 1945-1985*. (Budapest: 1985). Viktor Kalló: Martir Emlékmű; bronze 6,6m, Köztársaság tér; p.68.likewise all monuments, statues and memorial plaques listing artist, investor and title are documented by the Budapest Galéria which publishes its data according to districts on its homepage http://www.budapestgaleria.hu

[211] For the official Communist interpretation of 1956 I like to refer to: NEMES, Dezső (ed.). *History of the Revolutionary Workers Movement in Hungary. 1944-1962*, publ. by the Party History Institute of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Budapest: Corvina Press); orig. *A Magyar forradalmis. munkásmozgalom története* (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó 1972).

[212] LENDVAI, Paul. „Die Zweite Revolution" [The second Revolution], in *Der Ungarn-Aufstand 1956. Eine Revolution und ihre Folgen* [The Hungarian Uprising of 1956. A revolution and its aftermath], (Munich: C. Bertelsmann Publ. 2006), pp.191-213.

[213] BOROS, 1998, p.10.

since[214]. Noteworthy, none of today's '56 monuments commemorates the workers' councils[215].

III.1.3 Iconoclash Survivors

The debate about Socialist public art did not cease with the opening of the Statue Park. Two monuments within the capital's premises are subject of recurring discussion: The liberty statue on Gellert Hill as well as the Soviet monument crowned with the five-pointed star on Freedom Square. In 1992, at the first anniversary of the Soviet troops' departure, the artist Tamás Szentjóby found a unique way by covering the liberty statue with a huge white sheet, "providing at one and the same time a concrete and abstract, blasphemous and reflective solution […] to the dilemma of whether sculptures should be pulled down, taken away or kept"[216]. The monument for the "Soviet Heroes of the glorious Liberation" is regularly a victim of vandalism, as witnessed during the riots in the fall of 2006. Therefore, it is under severe police surveillance and fenced in. However, it is protected by a bilateral agreement between the Hungarian and Russian state which also put an end to another referendum in April 2007, which aimed at its removal[217].

Cemeteries are another peculiar case, since "no matter how politically offensive, no memorials were removed from cemeteries"[218]. Kerepesi Cemetery in Fume street is

[214] Inscription of this very small stone: „1956/ Mártírjainak/ És/ Áldozatainak/ Felálítandó/ Megbékélés Emlékmű/ Jelélül", [Foundation stone of the future monument for the martyrs and victims of 1956]; Stiftung Aufarbeitung. *Gedenkorte zur Erinnerung der ungarischen Revolution 1956 in Budapest* [Places of of memory for the Hungarian Revolution 1956 in Budapest], Documentary Project supervised by Dr. A Kaminsky, „Erinnerungsorte an die kommunistischen Diktaturen im Europa des 20.Jahrhunderts" [Places of Commemoration of the Communist Dictatorships in Europe in the 21st century], (Berlin 2006), p.57.

[215] Noteworthy, the MSZP moved out of its headquarters at Republic Square in March 2007 and settled temporarily in Vérmező utca [Field Of Blood Street] which is named after the Jacobite conspiracy of 1795. Its leaders were executed and later honored with a literary monument 'Vérmező' by Sándor Petöfi. For an interesting history of this street and its symbolic topography I like to refer to: MURÁNYI, Gábor. "History of Vérmező. In time and Space" http://hvg.hu/english/20070321_vermezo_eng.aspx publ on March 21, 2007.

[216] BOROS, 1998, p.10.

[217] LOGAN, Michael. "Abkommen mit Russland. Kein Referendum für Sowjetdenkmal", in *Budapester*, No. 16, April 16, 2007; accessed http://www.budapester.hu/?do=article&id=2460. In April 2007, the World Association of Hungarians MVSZ and the Group Deported '56 collected signatures to initiate a referendum. Many Fidesz-MPs signed the petition relating it to their criticism of Hungary's dependence on oil imports from Russia.

[218] FOOTE et al., 2000, p.309.

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Budapest's main cemetery accumulating national heroes – and former 'heroes': The section for the Soviet heroes who 'liberated' Hungary in the Second World War was extended to include those who died during the counterrevolution. Besides these memorials for a foreign power, it still houses a huge Communist pantheon, where also György Lukács, Imre Mező and Éva Kállai are buried and where the grant reburial of Lászo Rajk on October 6, 1956 was staged[219]. In 1963, József Schall's 'Memorial to the Victims of the Counter-revolution was installed in Kerepesi Cemetery: The official martyrs of the counterrevolution were exhumed from plot 21 and honored with simple square gravestone arranged in a circle around a massive concrete coffin. Nowadays, the inscription "Eternal Gratitude and Honor to the Heroes" is hidden behind small planted trees trying to disperse attention and cover the original meaning[220]. This very practical and affordable solution fits into Latour's concept of iconoclash: a compromise between destruction, removal and maintenance; it is neither constructive nor destructive[221]. Yet, the long-preserved sanctity of cemeteries has been violated recently: On May 2nd, 2007, the bones of János Kádár and his wife were scandalously removed from their graves.

III.2 Post-Communist Monuments for '56

III.2.1 Plot 301

Following the ceremony in Heroes Square on June 16, 1989, the bodies of Imre Nagy, Géza Losonczy, Pál Maléter, Miklós Gimes, and József Szilágyi were transferred back to the new public Rákoskeresztúr cemetery. The Committee for Historical Justice (Történelmi Igázságtétel Bizottsága) called for an open competition to design plot 300, the 'empty' section next to the famous plot 301, where – as was soon discovered – more than

[219] Dent offers a precise and informative overview of the complexity of this cemetery in chapter 41: "Kerepesi Cemetery" in DENT; Bob. Budapest 1956. Locations of Drama, (Európa: Budapest 2006), pp.300-307.
[220] STIFTUNG AUFARBEITUNG, 2006, p.112.
[221] LATOUR, 2002, p.14.

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300 bodies were interred. György Jovánovics, one of the 'Iparterv' protagonists and long-time banned artists, designed a highly complex, neo avant-gardist constructivist memorial, whose meaning is not readily available. It does not include any inscriptions or explanations, only names and dates. Géza Boros, specialist on '56 monuments, analyzes the threefold monument which consist of an open grave, a chapel and a natural rock. The latter is related to the revolution through a letter from the revolutionary István Andor, which the writer István Eörsi rescued before Andor's execution[222]. László Földenyi writes that Joánovics applied his unique style of minimal relief representing "the metaphysical fight between light and darkness. It is this fight between visible and invisible, between life and death"[223]. Furthermore, he explains that the ground plan reflects a cathedral's cupola. Certainly, a bird's eye view facilitates accessing this complex composition. Meanwhile, the visitor walks on a curved path which leads past the sunken gravestones of the revolutionaries to the necropolis: On top of the construction Jovánovics placed a sarcophagus which seems to be covered with shroud, which recalls the belated honor given to the revolutionaries. A small tower arises. The visitor is invited to walk through the chapel construction, like a pass way. It symbolizes the purgatory rehabilitation of the revolution; three large stones resembling those that made up the streets in Budapest in the 1950s. Then the visitor is stopped by a huge in situ rock of estimated million years, which weighs 40 tons. A rectangular is carved in it, alluding to the symbolism of the ancient Egyptian funeral chambers. The visitor can only turn around and walk back. Straight ahead, she encounters an 'open grave' in which a granite hexagonal 1,956 cm pillar is sunk. The competition invitation requested a paved

[222] BOROS, Géza. "Gloria Victis. Wiedergutmachung auf Ungarns öffentlichen Plätzen" [Gloria Victis. Compensation on Hungary's public places], in Akademie der Künste. *Denkmäler und kulturelles Gedächtnis nach dem Ende der Ost-West-Konfrontation* [Monuments and cultural memory after the end of the east-west divide], (Berlin: Jovis Publ. 2000), p.204. Boros quotes Andor's letter as: "A huge natural rock shall be there to the memory of the nameless mob from which we came, with which we united and to which we will return."

[223] FÖLDENYI, László. „György Jovánovics", in Barbara Sietz (ed.). *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Ungarn. Malerei Skulptur Installation Videokunst* [Contemporary Art in Hungary. Painting Sculpture Installation Video Art], (München: Matthes & Seitz 1999), p.103.

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space where official ceremonies could be staged. The open grave is its centre where during the inauguration for the anniversary in 1992, Boris Jelzin, Helmut Kohl and François Mitterand laid wreaths alongside with József Antall.

Therefore, Jovánovics used the basalt cobblestones that were removed after the change of regimes and stored in municipal depots. Since the revolution took place in the city, but the monument is outside in the very far corner of the new cemetery, the basalt stones in the back of the necropolis additionally connect the monument back to the city space. Thus, Boros emphasizes that Jovánovics – by avoiding traditional, Christian or historicizing symbols – achieved to design a deliberately non-political monument[224]. Instead, through all the means and symbols applied he created a timeless monument.

Talking to the artist in persona[225], his inspiration and concept becomes even clearer: For example, he explains that he found the *in situ* stone in a quarry in southern Hungary, where it immediately caught his attention because it had preserved fossile animal traces of primeval times. Moreover, Jovánovics provides insight into the political and personal fights that surrounded the "three years of fighting and building". The TIB had asked him to reserve graves for its members, wherefore now Sándor Kopácsi was buried amongst the other revolutionaries in 2005 following Anna Kéthly after she had passed away in Vienna and András B.Hegedűs among others. Initially, the plot 300 contained 72 additional graves which are slowly being occupied. However, only during the course of construction, Jovánovics learnt that Erzsebet Nagy had decided to bury her father in the adjacent famous plot 301; Imre Nagy's daughter had opposed the neo avant-garde monument and, instead, favored a figurative sculpture. Jovánovics himself insisted not to touch that plot but coming to an end he gave in to Erzsebet Nagy's request to attach her father's grave. Therefore, one

[224] BOROS, 2000, p.204.
[225] The following explanations are based on a conversation with György Jovánovics in the artist's studio on Andrassy ut on June 2nd, 2007.

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nowadays finds an extension on plot 301, for which the artist created a gravestone for Nagy, "Prime Minister 1956" and a symbolic one for the unknown victims. The latter, Jovánovics claims, is a symbol of democracy which can also be found in Heroes Square which invests it with higher symbolic meaning that the surrounding statues of tribal and monarchic kings. Koselleck supports this position which is for him a „consequence of a basic democratic decision not to forget anybody who sacrificed his life ‚for everybody'"[226].

Furthermore, against common practice Jovánovics built gravestones that were sunk into the ground and smaller than the traditional graves. He insists that he did not wish to elevate and, hence, glorify the 'famous' revolutionary martyrs since respect was du to the more than 300 other victims buried in plot 301. Their names – if uncovered – are inscribed in a large, white stone plate on the side of the plot. Among others, István Angyal of the Tűzoltó Group, József Dudás leading street fighter who stormed the Szabad Nép building and Uncle János Szabó from Széna tér as well as László Iván Kovács from the Corvin Alley have been buried in plot 301[227].

Besides these questions of representative art, Jovánovics did not only face public criticism but also experienced a political struggle. During the time of construction, he was confronted with direct libel and aggression that originated in the opposing monument of the Inconnu Group that was simultaneously set up on plot 301.

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II.2.2 The populist tradition

In the summer of 1993, Jovánovics monument was sprayed with David stars visualizing the accusations of it being a Jewish, Communist work of art not worthy of the revolution's memory. The artist resigning laughs, since he is neither Jewish nor Communist.

[226] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.15.
[227] For a more detailed list and life stories: DENT, 2006, pp.327. Dent notes that not all biographies have been researched yet or cannot even be reconstructed. Jovánovics in our conversation also said that the glorification of the plots 301 and especially 298 is morally indefensible, since not only political victims of the regimes, but also criminals like Ferenc Szálasi, the fascist Arrow Cross leader, have been buried there.

Nothing probably illustrates the quick return of the Interwar polarization between cosmopolitan urbanites and populist-nationalist better than the contrasting monuments in Rákoskeresztúr Cemetery. But Jovánovics monument did not only meet opposition from civic side, which was not explicitly discouraged by the government moreover, the artist recalls that his work did not receive support – neither financially nor morally – from the then governing MDF. The fact that he deliberately omitted traditional means offered grounds for criticism. Additionally, he expresses disillusionment over the Inconnu's confrontation, since they used to stage the dissident anniversary ceremonies during the 1980s together.

The Inconnu Group "undemocratically surpassed" the competition of more than one hundred artists, Jovánovics explains. What started out as a single kopjafá on June 16, 1989, has turned into an entire garden of kopjáfak, traditional Transylvanian grave woods. Péter Bokros, Tamás Molnár, Tibor Philippi, and Magdolena Serfőző refused to participate in the competition and preferred once more the way of provocation. Today, the kopjafák are assembled in a spiral around the original one, which is said to be a mythic Hungarian symbol. Moreover, the visitor enters the adjacent plot 298 for the political victims of the 1940s and 50s, the "National Pantheon", through a wooden gate with floral reliefs and folk emblems. Boros explains that re-activating Hungarian folk culture offered an alternative to the emptied and presumably Communist internationalist idea[228]. Foote et al. explain that the kopjáfa appeared in significant numbers in the Protestant funeral decoration of the 18th century. Even more, though, it alludes to be a primordial Magyar symbol[229]. Problematic in this construction is that it put the old question of the Hungarian minority in Romania back on the political agenda, which had been the main reason after the 1920 Trianon Treaty to ally with Hitler Germany. The political implications immediately caused tensions with the

[228] BOROS, 1999, p.210.
[229] FOOTE et al., 2000, p.313.

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neighboring government, Nora Kovács explains. In detail, Kovács researched the origin of this folklorist cult and finely picks out its artificial character[230]. This creation of a cultural memory that presents the Hungarian nation as the great dominating Magyars of the Carpathian Basin is only superseded by crowning an obelisk with the Turul as a monument for the Revolution of 1956. The myth of the Turul claims that this eagle-like bird once brought Árpad, the legendary first king who settled the Magyars in this region in the 8th century[231]. Henceforth, the plot adjacent to Jovánovics conveys a completely different message. "There is no art, just kitsch", Jovánovics claims. While Jovánovics expanded his monument endlessly into the past and future, the kopjáfak allude to Hungary's past greatness. But as Assmann insists, such investment into the cultural memory are always highly selective and serve contemporary means: "History of such kind is a form of collective self-thematizing". The kopjáfa and the Turul envision Hungary's cultural mission in the Carpathian Basin and picture a people reaching beyond its borders, a great nation legitimized by its great historical tradition.

Mostly, kopjáfa have not left their original territory, the cemetery: I have already addressed plot 21 of the Kerepesi Cemetery. Notably, at first plot 21 contained casualties from both sides, but in 1958 some were exhumed and reburied in Schall's pantheon for the martyrs of the counter-revolution. In 1999, the Gracious Committee which already engaged in plot 298, had László Gömbös set up the monument titled "12 Glorious Days". Interestingly, Gömbös was born in 1926 as the nephew of the radical right-wing 1932-36 Prime Minister Gyula Gömbös; he attended the Academy of Fine Arts from 1957 to 1963,

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[230] KOVACS, Nora. *Kopjafas : the anthropological deconstruction of Hungarian grave posts as national monuments*, (Budapest: Collegium Budapest Press 1997), MA Thesis Department of Political Science.

[231] Commissioned by the Gracious Foundation (Kegyeleti Alapítvány) and the Foundation Memorial '56 ('56-os Emlékmű Alapítvány), supported by the former street fighters and emigrants Tibor Hornyák, József Vajda Nemeth and György Lassan the artist Karoly Ócsai built this monument on the Tabán hill in Budapest. The obelisk is 16,5m high and was inaugurated on October 23, 1996. The inscription says: "[…] To the eternal memory of the heroes' exemplary patriotism. Who sacrifices his life for his home country, never dies because succeeding generations will remember the glorious heroes of 1956." Stiftung Aufarbeitung, 2006, pp.13.

in the same period as most of the 'Iparterv I' generation studied in Budapest[232]. Since the 1960s, Gömbös had received official commissions in Budapest, Debrecen and Szentendre etc.

The twelve grave stones, one standing for the revolutionary days from October 23 and November 4th, are placed on brick stones in the national colors red, white and green. In the middle, a separate one topped with a metal flag with the symbolic hole in the middle features a bronze relief: A figure is kneeling on the ground while an angel watches over him declaring: "Rest, heroes! We will protect your dreams and memory as long as the nation is alive!" In the front to the right, the stone for November 4 claims: "Commemorating November 4, 1956, and the malicious attack by the Bolsheviks!"[233] Dent explains that during the Kádár era, relatives used to gather for candle vigilances on All Saints Day here. Since 1989, several smaller memorials were installed privately. The section is – like plot 300 – reserved for '56ers. Thus, many of the gravestones do not only feature the birth and death year, but also the insertion '1956'. In 2006, the Gracious Committee installed a wooden crucifix alluding to the kopjáfák which dominate this section. Christ's hands are tied with a robe while he watches over the heroes of 1956. It reflects the symbolic meaning of the defeat, the martyrdom of the victims that is already depicted and sanctified on Gömbös' monuments which stands opposite to the cross. Koselleck explains that it is the final instance of death, semantically and iconologically invoked, that transport the Christian belief in the heavenly kingdom to this world. Ultimately, it becomes the collective's legitimate claim for eternity[234].

Still, the kopjáfák pose a very practical problem: While they are cheap and easy to produce, wherefore they were a popular symbol for opposition in 1989/ 90, Boros explains,

[232] FITZ, Péter (chief ed.). *Kortárs Magyar Művészeti Lexikon* [Contemporary Hungarian Artists Lexikon], (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiádo 1999), p.206.
[233] Stiftung Aufarbeitung, 2006, pp.54.
[234] KOSELLECK, 1994, p.14.

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the wood sooner or later decays. Thus, they were often later replaced by new monuments. In addition to that, the art historian claims that kopjáfák usually appeared in those districts, where the MDF had won the 1990 elections because it was primarily the Forum which put patriotism and cultural folk heritage on its agenda[235]. With the decline of the MDF as a political force as well as the financial capacities and interests in more impressive monuments, the number of Kopjáfák has decreased in the 1990s, with a slight comeback for the 40th anniversary in 1996[236].

One example of the early appearance of kopjáfák in the cityscape is the corner of Szená Square and Lővöház street, where seven of these grave poles were put in place illegally. Two years later, POFOSZ (Association of Hungarian Political Prisoners) set up a natural rock with the carving '1956' – also illegally. Széna Square was one of the major sites of street fighting in Buda. Additionally, László Gömbös designed a memorial plaque for Uncle Szábo which hangs on one of the facades in Lővö ház street[237]. Szábo, as I have already mentioned, is buried in plot 301. Dent informs the reader, that he had undergone several ideological adaptations: Due to his participation in '56, he was sentenced to death in 1957; his case supported the construction of a reactionary counterrevolution, since he had been a sergeant in Horthy's army in the Interwar period. However, Dent remarks, the prosecutors ignored the fact that he had also been a commissar in the Red Army of the Hungarian Republic of Councils in 1919. Once more, he joined the Communist Party in 1945[238].

In 1991, the MDF added a square stone with the same inscription, '1956', accumulating symbols. A plaque reads: "Through courage and patriotism you set an eternal role model. Honor to the victims and executed of Széna Tér"[239]. In the late 1990s, plans of a new

[235] BOROS, 1999, p.211.
[236] KOVÁCS, 1997, p.31.
[237] All monuments, statues and memorial plaques listing artist, investor and title are documented by the Budapest Galéria which publishes its data according to districts on its homepage http://www.budapestgaleria.hu
[238] DENT, 2006, pp.77.
[239] Stiftung Aufarbeitung, 2006, p.18

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shopping centre raised concerns whether the monument would disappear. Quickly, the citizens of the district organized themselves in an association called Memorial Place 56 (Emlékhely 56). In 2001, with the support of the district municipality which was then run by a MSzP and SzDSz coalition[240], the POFOSZ and the MDF a fourth monument was installed. A figure is trapped down to a huge steel flag with the symbolic hole in the middle which is again filled with the date '1956'. The crushing of the revolution is often depicted through the physical restraining of figures. Another extreme case of this obvious symbolism presents the memorial in front of the Catholic Church on Bakats Square. In 1993, the municipality of Ferencváros unveiled a limestone pillar here; in front of it, a figure lies crushed and face down to the ground on a small segment of imitated street paving covered with a shroud[241]. Like a crucifix Arvai's figure stretches out his arms, face to the sky, and holds on to the larger than life flag pole. The bare-footed figure seems to fly, losing his coat and only held back by the ties. Interestingly, the artist, Ferenc Arvai, born in 1935, was like Gömbös a student of Pál Pátzay at the Academy of Fine Arts from 1956-61, which might justify the iconological similarities between their works[242]. For the 50th anniversary, the Australian Independent Association of Hungarian Freedom Fighters installed yet another memorial plaque on the pillar right next to Arvai's monument. However, this small space does not experience a regular reinforcement of its significance for the '56 memory. Moreover, according to István Rév at the very same place used to stand an office building where a small monument in the courtyard commemorated the Communist victims imprisoned in the prison that was run here during the Interwar period. Széna Square does not only represent a severe case of symbolic overwriting which aims at erasing previous meaning, effacing earlier events from history, but also poses artistic problems: The accumulation of styles and monuments overburdens this

[240] For electoral result of the district see http://www.vokscentrum.hu/m01/o0002.htm.
[241] Stiftung Aufarbeitung, 2006, p.90.
[242] FITZ, 1999, p.85.

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small square preventing each one of its identity. However, as witnessed in Rákoskeresztúr, such artistic considerations are rarely taken into account by the political investors who all wish to leave their mark on such authentic places.

Martyrdom and sacrifice are also the main themes of the symbolic grave on Kossuth Square. Typically for the time of transition, the POFOSZ once more illegally set up this monument by Imre Makovecz on October 25, 1991, the anniversary of 'Bloody Thursday'. The inscription informs that it commemorates the "several hundreds of people fell dead onto the ground due to the killer blow of a firing squad" of ÁVH men, the secret police. However, this claim that it was the ÀVH which opened fire as well as the number of victims is still a contested issue and not verified as Dent and Lendvai point out[243]. Nevertheless, the grave and its questionable claim is not removed. Andrea Csik from the Budapest Galéria approves of the taboo that surrounds all '56 monuments: Not only has the Galéria itself never rejected a single initiative for a new monument to the Hungarian Revolution, but also it is "impossible" to remove illegal ones[244]. Dedications to martyrs are literally untouchable on moral grounds. Like Pierre Nora has pointed out: Memory moves the past into the sphere of sacredness.

In addition to that, Makovecz was officially accepted: One year earlier in 1990, he designed the Hungarian Pavilion at the Expo in Sevilla. Born in 1935 and graduating from the Technical University in 1959, he directly experienced the revolution. His architectural style derives inspiration from Hungary's folk culture and his buildings' interiors allude to walks through a wood. He imitates trees and is another representative of the folk-populist trend of Hungarian art[245]. After two decades working for design studios and the Pilis Forestry, in 1981, Makovecz started lecturing at his Alma Mater, the Technical University or the

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[243] DENT, 2006, pp.98; LENDVAI, 2006, pp.89.
[244] Conversation with Andrea Csik in the department of Budapest Galéria in Kossuth alley on February 22nd, 2007.
[245] The artist maintains his own homepage where his most important works are presented. Moreover, he gives brief explanations: http://www.makovecz.hu/.

Academy of Appplied Arts. In 1996, on Dózsa György Square, together with László Péterfy he raised a monument "In the memory of all those who did not die, yet whose lives were still destroyed from 1944 to 1995": Behind steel bars, in a concrete cell a male figure sits bowing his head and covering his ears in despair. The same periodization which turns Hungary into a victim of uninterrupted foreign oppression effaces in the narrative of the Terror House which I will address in a following subchapter.

In 1996, as a reaction to the official monument by Mária Lugossy to which I will return later, the POFOSZ reinforced Makovecz's symbolic grave with a gravestone by László Gömbös. Similar to the '12 glorious days' which he will raise three years later, the gravestone featured a bronze relief: It shows a man with bare chest and a jubilantly carrying the revolutionary flag. On the pictorial ground, the viewer detects Soviet symbols like the sickle and the star, which knowingly had been torn down from public buildings and places during the revolution in 1956. A flag pole flying the symbolic '56 flag was placed behind the gravestone which conveys a function of national representation since it supports the emblem of the coat of arms topped with St. Stephen's crown on Makovecz' memorial. Situated on Kossuth Square in front of parliament, the most representative public place in Budapest, it earns attention without its messages being contextualized in any way. Visitors have to read the topography of Kossuth Square carefully, to read the implications of the memorial plaque on one of the Ministry's of Agriculture arcs across the street. Little black tiles symbolizing the bullets indicate that the firing did not come from the roof of the building[246].

III.2. 3 Reconciliation versus Revenge

The 40th anniversary or the revolution ushered in a frenzy of monuments. Anniversaries are manifestations of the collective memory; here it poses a delicate coincident since eye-witnesses and succeeding generations both try to invest the past with meanings serving their

[246] The memorial plaque by

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own cause. Briefly, I recall the political situation of that year: The MSZP had celebrated a landslide victory in the 1994 degrading the MDF, the first democratically elected governing party, to merely ??? %. A coalition with the SZDSZ, which had sorted out their fragmentation and dressed itself with a Socialist-liberal profile, provided a safe two thirds majority in the national assembly. The conservative, centre-right parties were yet to recover from their devastating defeat and busy restructuring, reforming and re-considering their profiles. Árpád Göncz, enjoying great popularity, was unsurprisingly re-elected for a second term.

Erzsebet Nagy, as Jovánovics recalls, was still not satisfied with the insufficient commemoration of her father. Together with President Árpád Göncz and Sándor Demján, András Faragó, András B. Hegedűs, Károly Karsai, Sándor Kopácsi, György Litván, András Sarlós, János Schiffer, Rudolf Ungváry, János Vészi, as well as Attila Zsigmond – all of them well-known actors in Budapest's cultural and political sphere – she founded the 'Imre Nagy Statue curatory' and invited artists known for their expertise in sculptures and monuments[247].

Tamás Varga, the son of Imre Varga, the official sculptor of the Kádár era, designed the winning concept of a Imre Nagy statue that stands on a bridge by József Finta spanning a water tank. The figure – which despite it realist style does not resemble the prime minister – holds on to the railing and looks towards parliament. Vertátunk Square is symbolically located between the last Soviet monument on Freedom Square and the parliament, which supposes the inner dilemma Nagy faced during the revolution. Additionally, Boros explains the "bridge is designed in such a way that the bypassing people could walk across. The monument's purpose is to bring the historical personality close to the people"[248].

The '56 Memorial Committee also invited Gábor Gáti, Mária Berhidi, Mária Lugossy, and Enikő Szőllőssy to design a central monument on Kossuth Square which would serve as

[247] The invited artists were Tibor Borbás, András Gál, Körösényi Tamás, Miklós Melocco, Iván Paulikovics, Tamás Somogyi, Tamás Szabó, Zoltán Szentirmai, Tamás Varga and Tamás Vigh. Budapest Galéria Fonds Box "Vertátunk tér".
[248] BOROS, 2000, p.131.

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background to state ceremonies. The competition was under the patronage of Árpád Göncz and SZDSZ MP Imre Mécs. Again, none of the artists were newcomers. The jury decided to give the first price to Mária Lugossy, who had made second place in the TIB's competition for plot 301. Together with Pál Deim, she had then conceptualized "a sumptuous baroque-ecclectic sacred space […] for a sanctuary and place of pilgrimage"[249]. The proposal appears familiar: Out of the voluptuous bronze a male figure with a bare chest, dramatically bent to burst to the sky but held back by the material. It fed "traditional expectation", Kovács states. Faces and figures emerging out of glass or bronze, the favourite materials of the 1950 born trained goldsmith, are recurring themes, since they symbolize humankind's evolution. When in the 1980s first sings of the neo avant-garde wearing out appeared, Lugossy had developed her personal style as well as her own symbolic language, which founded her fame in and beyond Hungary. In her works, "Duality is a leitmotif", because "the works are charged by the polarity of violence and love, suffering and hope, memory and denial, life and death"[250].

In 1996, Lugossy`s four meter tall black polished granite square stone with the fragmented, carved top was set up. It alludes to "to "elemental forces, their erosion and suffocation"[251]. On the side, a Kossuth coat of arms – without the Crown – is encarved which counters the symbolism of the Makovecz – Gömbös memorial on the other side of Kossuth Square. Originally, the flame which is placed on the top, was supposed to be lit from Octoebr 23 to November 4th of every year. However, the symbolic claim of eternity of the granite is reinforced since the flame has never been turned off since 1996 turning it into an Eternal flag.

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[249] KOVÁCS, Péter. "The attraction of the Public Space", in Márianna Mayer (ed.): *Lugossy Mária.* Exhibition catalogue *Ice Age*. October 5 – November 7, 2005, (Budapest: Műcsarnock and NKA, Dr. Júlia Fabényi 2005), ((catalogue without page numbers).
[250] LECHACZYNSKI, Serge. „Foreword" in Márianna Mayer (ed.): *Lugossy Mária*. Exhibition catalogue *Ice Age*. October 5 – November 7, 2005, (Budapest: Műcsarnock and NKA, Dr. Júlia Fabényi 2005), ((catalogue without page numbers).
[251] BOROS, 2000, p.203. ["Der fragmenthafte Quader verweist auf elementare Energien sowie auf deren Erosion und Erstickung."]

The location on Kossuth Square appears most important: ’56 was elevated into the pantheon of national heroes. It is situated between the statues of Rakoczi and Kossuth. Jovánovics complains that the square is overcharged with meaning, the different monuments do not have enough space to develop their full impact. Although he voiced his reservation already at the initial stage of the competition, the choice of Lugossy’s monument was justified because it was less monumental and therefore, suite the conditions of the most important representative square in Budapest[252]. The main reason, still, was the lack of a monument in a central location in the capital.

Nevertheless, Lugossy as well as Jovánovics’ monuments met fierce opposition from the right-wing organizations. Instead, these prefer the symbol of the “Pesti Srac”, the young boy from Pest who fought the Soviet tanks with their partially improvised warfare. It evokes the biblical image of the David and Goliath. These organizations have chosen Corvin Ally as their main stead of commemoration since it is an authentic place of the revolution. While Jovánovics memorial bases its meaning on interaction between the work and the visitor[253], who needs to walk the lane, look and the details and reflect upon them, the Corvin Ally is plastered with explicit and available messages. Every year, the different organizations install new plaques on the Corvin Film Palace’s façade. They commemorate ’56 ‘legends’ like the executed street fighters leader László Iván Kovács or Ilona Szabó.

For the anniversary celebration in 1996, the *Association of the Boy from Pest* (Pesti Srác Alapítvány) commissioned Lájos Győrfi to design the ‘Pesti Srác’ which imitates a famous picture of Varga János. The latter was among the youngest street fighters and had joined the group of Pongrátz at the Ally. János, or Jáncsi, was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment after the revolution; however, he was released in 1963. There have been never-ending debates about the age and social background of the fighters, as Dent shows in brief overview of

[252] BOROS, Géza. *Emlékmű ’56-nak*, (Budapest : 1956-os Intézet, 1997), p.145.
[253] BOROS; 2000, p.207.

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literature[254]. Why are these factors so important? Boros explains the symbolism of the Pesti lad: It refers to the biblical fight of David against Goliath, the fundamental fight between good and evil in an unjust fight. The improvised Molotov cocktails of the '56ers could not match up to the tanks and weaponry of the Soviet Army; yet they managed to resist. Eventually, the second intervention made martyrs out of the young rebels; even more, Boros makes clear, the sacrifice of a child is always greater than the death of an adult.

Consequently, Győrfi's lad balances not only the abstract granite monument by Lugossy, but Várga's Imre Nagy sculpture in particular: Imre Nagy is difficult to accommodate as potential 'national hero', as Janos M. Rainer, the current director of the *Institute for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956*, in his detailed biography points out[255]. Although he is a martyr of the '56, he is 'merely' a reform Communist. Dubious files about Nagy's activity during the Interwar period in Moscow have challenged the 'heroism' of the revolutionary prime minister ever since the process of rehabilitation in1989. Nevertheless, claiming the heritage of a reform Communism based on the revolution had been the primary intention of Imre Pozsgay when re-naming 1956 a "popular uprising". Thus, with the electoral approval the Socialist conquered the cityscape with their hero as well as with a post avant-gardist monument. However, it needs to be pointed out that neither 'hero', Nagy nor the Pesti Srác, achieves to represent the diversity of actors and intentions that erupted in the fall of 1956. Accounts on the continuous sessions with different workers', military, student leaders and cabinet members in which Nagy tried to grasp the will of the people reflects the fragmentation of the various actors[256].

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[254] DENT; 2006, pp.201.
[255] RAINER, János M.. *Imre Nagy. Vom Parteisoldaten zum Märtyrer des ungarischen Volksaufstandes. Eine politische Biographie 1896-1958*[Imre Nagy. From Party Soldier to martyr of the Hungarian uprising. A political biography 1896-1958], (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag 2006). This German edition is an abbreviated version of Rainer's 2002 two-volume biography in Hungarian.
[256] LENDVAI, 2006, pp.78; RAINER, 2006, pp.130.

One of the fiercest opponents of left-wing politics, was the post-transition returnee Gergely Pongrátz. Upon his arrival in Budapest, he established a quite questionable private 'museum' for the revolution in the small Southern Hungarian town of Kiskunmajsa which he maintained with private donation. During the revolution, he obtained the leadership of the Corvin fighters from László Iván Kovács. Since the transition, he had been regularly invited to provide eye-witness accounts on television, in which he emphasized the youth of his comrades and their sacrifice. Dent calls attention to debates that questions this emphasis and the rightfulness of sending these kids to fight tanks: Pongrátz known as 'Bajusz', the moustache, was aged 24 in 1956 while the average age of the Corvinistak was an estimated 18. Moreover, while Pongrátz usually burst out into tears when publicly recalling the killing Soviet soldiers, Dent criticizes the romanticizing effect of the Pesti Srác symbol[257]: Taking life for the greater cause of freedom and in the name of the nation is justified by the polarization of good versus evil[258].

Typically, the imagery of the boys from Pest survived in the West and among the exiled street fighters. *TIME Magazine* honoured the Hungarian Freedom Fighter with the 1956 'Man of the Year' Award:

> The Man of the Year had many faces, but he was not faceless; he had many names, but he was not nameless. History would know him by the face, intense, relentless, desperate and determined, that he had worn on the evening of Oct. 23 in the streets of Budapest; history would know him by the name he had chosen for himself during his dauntless contest with Soviet tanks: the Hungarian Freedom Fighter.[259]

Several photographers like Erich Lessing, Jean-Pierre Pedrazzini or George Sadovy gained world fame thanks to their coverage of the events in Budapest. They depict the youth that rose against Soviet oppression, and evoke the injustice of the battle: young, brave boys

[257] DENT, 2006, pp.201.
[258] In 2005, Pongrátz' coffin was placed in front of the Corvin Film Palace and a memorial plaque put on the theatre's façade. A critical orbituary was published by PARTOS, Gabriel in *The Independent* (London), May 28, 2005; accessible via http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_20050528/ai_n14645431/pg_1
[259] TIME Magazine. New York. Monday, Jan. 7, 1957; "Freedom's Choice", © 2006 Time Inc.

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against tanks brutally crushing the struggle for freedom and independence. By using the youth as symbol nowadays, the Freedom Fighters master the image of martyrs since the voluntary sacrifice of a child is much greater than the sacrifice of an adult. "The violent death of an individual", says Reinhart Koselleck, "is already a legitimation in itself, as long as it warrants the political salvation of the entire nation"[260].

The policy of the Corvin Film Palace resembles the one of the Budapest Galéria with regards to illegal monuments: Boros points out that these manifestations by the former street fighters of their '56 memory functions as a symbolic reimbursement for their sacrifice and suffering, which has never been officially compensated for[261]. In a year, when the left-wing government raises two centrally located monuments, the boy from Pest does not only symbolically demand compensation but also challenges the legitimacy of the 'successor party', the Socialists, as such. Moreover, it beholds the younger generations to preserve the memory of their elders who gave their freedom, home and lives for the greater cause. The movie theatre's administration inaugurated a monument in 1996, too. Zsolt Gulácsy-Horváth's build a huge pedestal for a fla post which once again flies the 1956ers flag of the revolutionary flag. The 'Pesti Srác' stands right in front of the flag pole giving the impression of these belonging together. Just like Gömbös, Gulácsy-Horváth has regularly worked for '56er organizations[262].

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II.2.4 The 'new' National Heritage

In February 2007, the Terror House opened a temporary exhibition commemorating the boys from Pest; thus, reinforcing the narrative of the right-wing associations. The opening

[260] KOSELLECK; 2004, p.14 „Im gewaltsamen Tod jedes Einzelnen liegt bereits eine Rechtfertigung, solange er das politische Heil des ganzen Volkes verbürgen hilft". Transl. my own.
[261] BOROS, 2000, p.207.
[262] Already in 1990, Gulácsy-Horvath had designed a simple bronze plaque in the name of the Gracious Committee for '56 ('56-os Kegyeleti Bizottság). The amorphous surface imitates the imprints of a tank chain track indicates a cross. It was installed on the wall now opposite to the Pesti Srác. In 1994, the artist added another plaque financed by the Corvin Alley companions (Corvin közi bajtársak).

of this Museum was largely criticized as a part of the then governing FIDESZ election campaign. However, it has become an essential part of Budapest's cultural life and a great tourist attraction. First, it was established to educate the younger generation who did not experience the previous Communist (and fascist) dictatorship; second, it functions as a memorial for those, who have been victimized in this building in Andrássy út 60.

The neo-renaissance building by Adolf Feszty had been occupied the Arrow Cross since 1937, and after 1945 the Communist Political secret police, renamed ÁVO, renamed ÁVH took over. István Rév as well as Palonen criticize that the presentation of the fascist rule is marginalized[263]. Moreover, Panonen explains that the exhibition does not discuss the background to the Arrow Cross' rise to power; it fails to contextualize Interwar Hungary under Horthy's regency[264]; public. Public criticism in Hungary and abroad only ceased when in 2004 in Páva utca a new Holocaust museum opened[265]. Hungarian history as presented in the Terror House ended with the occupation by Nazi Germany the national narrative only re-starts with the departure of the Soviet troops on June 19, 1991: "The short, but disastrous Nazi occupation was followed by Soviet rule, which established itself for a long duration. Hungary's sovereignty was lost on March 19, 1944. Occupying forces were stationed on its soil for over four decades"[266].

In drawing parallels to Rome's 1932 Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, István Rév claims that the "House is a monument of Fascism"[267]. One reason is the reduction of the

[263] RÉV, István. "Underground" in Retroactive Justice, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005), pp.240-303.
[264] PALONEN, 2002, p.6.
[265] SCHNEIDER; Richard Chaim. "Das Holocaust-Museum von Budapest" [The Holocaust Museum of Budapest] in *Die Zeit*, Nr. 24, June 3rd, 2004; accessed via http://www.zeit.de/2004/24/Ungarn-Kasten?page=all
[266] SCMIDT, Mária (ed.): *Terror House. Andrássy út 60*, (Budapest: NKA, Ministry of National Cultural Heritage 2003), transl. Ann Major, p.7. While the fact that Hungary was the first country to ratify anti-Semitic legislation in Europe after World War I in 1920 is ignored and collaboration was only conducted by "Hungarian authorities", the exhibition catalogue informs the visitor: "Hitler's Germany occupied Hungary in order to secure absolute control over the country's material and human resources in the interests of 'final victory'. Real power rested in the hands of Edmund Veesenmayer, the German plenipotentiary. The Nazis installed a puppet-government and embarked on crushing the spirit of the Hungarian people." Equally the catalogue lacks reference to Hungarian Interwar revisionism of the Trianon Treaty as well as the democratic attempts from 1945-48.
[267] RÉV, 2005, p.293.

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historical discourse from 1944 to 1989-91 as a time of suppression by foreign powers, which are presented as continuity. Palonen argues in the same vein: The Terror House reproduces a specific discourse of the past based on the polarization of good against evil, which would exclude different perspectives, and would prevent sober evaluation and reconciliation[268]. Moreover, it derives its power from its play on emotions: Famously, the building was designed by Attila F. Kovács, the set designer of István Szabó's ?date? movie "Mephisto". One of the curators, Áron Máthé, explains that Kovács wanted to conceptualize the building as a statue and a movie, which the visitor can walk through[269]. Video screenings of eye-witnesses underlines with dramatic music and light effects intimidate the visitor; remarkably, the target audience of the museum is the younger generation. According to Máthé, the Terror House is as much a museum as it is a memorial. The 'Hall of Tears' is based on the famous Yad Vashem Memorial in Jerusalem, "although it is different". Unfortunately, Máthé resents, since the Socialist government returned to power in 2004, the Terror House suffers from decreasing state support; the up-to-date exhibition affords a lot of money, however, thanks to donation they "somehow manage".

The accuracy of the exhibition as well as the historical narrative and the national self-perception it presents are questionable in numerous respects. The characteristics of the latter are highlighted in the second to last room: It shows video screenings of

> the mass demonstrations of the late 1980s, protests against the Bős-Nagymaros dam and the demolishing of Hungarian villages in Romania, as well as the reburial of Imre Nagy and his confederates; the visit of John Paul II to Hungary and the last Soviet troops leaving the country. The sequence concludes with shots of the museum's opening on February 24, 2002[270].

How does the commemoration of 1956 fit in this concept? Máthé explains that it suits the "dramatic narrative" or reaction and counter-action between suppression, revolution and

[268] PALONEN, 2002, p.7.
[269] The following information is taken from a conversation with Áron Máthé in the Terror House Museum on May 31st, 2007.
[270] SCHMIDT, exhibition catalogue 2003, p.67.

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retaliation. In the basement, a hall assembles pieces of the street fights: the trench coat of the unanimous TIME magazine freedom fighter, glass bottles turned into Molotov cocktails, a rusty bike, leaflets etc. On the brick walls the 1956 slogan "Ruszkik haza!" (Russians go home) is reproduced. A room with stylized gallows in which a audio tape announces the names of the "martyrs" is played and a room with postcards written by Hungarian emigrants from all over the world follow portraying the main choice for Hungarians who fought for independence: exile or death.

Consequently, Rév analyzes that the Terror House "is a total propaganda space, where death and victims are used as rhetorical devices"[271]. The weakness of the Terror House is not only its biased narrative, but also its political implications: Its director Mária Schmidt was the Prime Minister's personal advisor from 1998-2002. She explains her engagement in "the obligation to remember" which especially in Hungary is so important since the "old nomenclature did not lose its privileged positions neither in economy nor society"[272]. Through Schmidt, it is also linked to the "'Századvég', a think tank which analyzed the governmental experiences since the regime-change" with which FIDESZ-MPP had signed a contract in 1996 to prepare for government takeover[273]. The links between the Terror House and the Young Democrats-Civic Union are undeniable, although the Máthé tries to disperse the respective critique: József Szájer and Attila Várhegyi, both members of and MPs for FIDESZ, are members of the chair.

Institutionally, Máthé insists, it relies on its own board of historians; it has not functioned as a documentary centre so far, but it has launched a new oral history project; interestingly, the '56 Institute, research and documentary centre of the Hungarian Revolution,

[271] RÉV, 2005, p.296.
[272] SCHMIDT, Mária, „Das Budapester Musem >Museum des Terrors< – Museum der modernen Zeitgeschichte und lebendige Gedenkstätte." [The Budapest Museum 'House of Terror' – Museum of recent history and vital memorial], in Volkhard Knigge and Ulrich Mählert (eds.): *Der Kommunismus in Deutschland und Ostmitteleuropa. Formen der Auseinandersetzung* [Communism in Germany and Central Eastern Europe. Forms of assessment], (Köln, Weimar and Vienna: Böhlau Publ. 2005), pp.161.
[273] FIDESZ-MPP official party history on http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?CikkID=68476.

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which grew out of the TIB works in the same field. However, Máthé ejects any form of cooperation; noteworthy, politicians and academic public figures like Péter Kende, Imre Mécs, György Litván (passed away in November 2006), Domokos Kosáry, János Rainer and others are members of the Institute's board of trustees.

The narrative displayed in the Terror House proves that FIDESZ-MPP had taken over the leadership of the centre-right, populist tradition from the MDF: The Museum combines elements of '56 interpretation that were already conveyed through the use of kopjáfák and the Pesti Srác. Among others, former president of the POFOSZ, Jenő Fónay, appears on the list of staff members. The claims of compensation regularly voiced by the street fighter organizations and represented in their '56 monuments, appear in the museum's list of perpetrators[274]. In a footnote, Schmidt defines perpetrators as everybody "who contributed to the establishment and maintenance of the totalitarian systems of both dictatorships, who participated actively and took administrative and responsible public positions […]". Most of the people in such institutions, she claims, served, supported or committed crimes against human rights and outright war crime. Henceforth, neither the previous nor their following behavior can relieve them off their responsibility[275]. The Terror House does not only echo the political demands for compensation, but re-stages the claim of illegitimacy of the MSZMP successor party MSZP. In 2001, the Socialist publicly debated nominating Miklós Németh as PM candidate which on a naïve level confirmed fears of the return of Communists[276].

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[274] SCHMIDT, exhibition catalogue 2003, p.70. Reproduction of "The Wall of the perpetrators".
[275] SCHMIDT, 2005, p.165, footnote 10 paraphrased above: ["All diejenigen sind als Täter zu betrachten, die während der zwei Perioden der fremden Besatzung Ungarns an der Errichtung und Aufrechterhaltung der totalitären Systeme mitwirkten, aktiv teilnahmen oder in öffentlichen Ämtern beider Diktaturen verantwortungsvolle Positionen bekleideten. Ein Großteil dieser Personen diente solchen Institutionen oder nahm dort verantwortliche Positionen ein, wo eindeutig gegen Menschenrechte verstoßen wurde, wo Kriegsverbrechen geschahen bzw. selbst die eigenen Rechtsvorschriften verletzt wurden. Die Täter nahmen an diesen Verbrechen teil, erließen diesbezügliche Verordnungen, genehmigten derartige Beschlüsse oder wirkten als Anstifter mit. Ihre frühere oder spätere Laufbahn sowie das im Laufe der weiteren Karriere gezeigte Verhalten gelten nicht als Freispruch von der eigenen Verantwortung."]
[276] RACZ, 2003, p.757.

Transferring such positions into a museum, distorts its pedagogical function and turns into manipulation of the audience.

When the Terror House celebrated its grant opening in February 2002, Hungary was in the midst of the election campaign. Polls revealed a marginal difference between the centre-right alliance of FIDESZ-MPP and the MDF and the MSZP and SZDSZ on the other side. As Palonen points out, at the turn of the millennium Budapest's public places were re-invested with a new, conservative self-image when FIDESZ-MPP staged numerous religious and national holidays and anniversaries[277]. Additionally, the party did not just "concentrate on the Hungarian national image consistently" but also "inflated Orbán's charisma successfully"[278] as in the case of the opening ceremony and its perpetual repetition in the exhibition. Ideologically, the Terror House reproduces the divide between populists and urbanites in a fancy new form. Even the institutional network reflects the ideological divide which at the beginning of the 21st century has closed down to a polarization between the MSZP-SZDSZ and the FIDESZ-MPP and associated parties.

III.3 The 50th anniversary

III.3.1 Polarization

In 2002, the alliance of FIDESZ-MPP and MDF (188 MPs) was barely defeated by the coalition of MSZP with 178 and the SZDSZ with 19 mandates. Only two years later, the Socialist Prime Minister Péter Megyessy had to step down. Magyar Nemzet, the inofficial FIDESZ party organ, revealed the prime minister's previous engagement with the state security. A parliamentary committee headed by Imre Mécs verified the claims including ten further MPs. Ferenc Gyurcsany who notoriously was a leader of the Communist youth

[277] PALONEN, 2002, pp.5. In addition to the Terror House, Palonen addresses the Millenium Park as well as a couple of films. Moreover, I like to refer once more to the new legislation passed on January 1, 2000, which transferred St.Stephen's crown into then parliament building. The ceremony and the mass in Esztergom were broadcasted following and followed by hours of media coverage and documentary.
[278] RACZ, 2003, p.758.

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organization KISZ in the 1980s and made a fortune in an investment enterprise during the transition, took over. On February 14, 2005, the prime minister delivered his programmatic speech on "New Hungary, New Politics, New Left" in which he outlined his future policies. Moreover, it presented a new approach to the past and the party image: The "rebirth of the Hungarian Left" expressed proud in the Socialist heritage and nested it in its European tradition. Aware of the persistent sigma as the successor party, he offered reconciliation in the declaration: "The Kádár era is over. Once and for all. It was a false world, even if it believed in its own benevolence […]". Underlining the new start and the need to come to terms with the past are reflected in his words: "The political change is also over once and for all. The debates of the nineties will not take us any further"[279].

At the same time, FIDESZ-MPP launched the "New Civic Governance Program" which similarly called upon Hungary's renewal. However, the centre-right alliance fell apart because "whereas in 2002 it had a joint list with MDF, the small party's unreasonably hostile attitude toward the leader of the opposition resulted in a strong bond between Fidesz and the Hungarian Christian Democratic People's Party"[280]. In 2006, for the first time in post-Communist Hungary, the government of Férenc Gyurcsany was re-elected.

III.3. 2 The New Central Monument

In the same speech mentioned above, Gyurcsany demanded from his party members: "To be proud when celebrating the revolution of 56 and to confess to its leftist heritage"[281]. In 2002, the writer Géza Szöcs suggested a new Central Monument for the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. Some 150 intellectuals supported the idea. In August 2004, the Prime Minister's Office called upon the Budapest Galéria to issue an open competition for a

[279] GYURCSANY; Ferenc. "New Hungary, New Politics, New Left", Speech delivered in parliament on February 14, 2005; publ. and transl. by the Prime Minister's Office, available at http://www.meh.hu/english/activities/events/en_20050216.html

[280] FIDESZ-MPP party history , November 27, 2006, accessible via http://www.fidesz.hu/index.php?CikkID=68476

[281] GYURCSANY, February 14, 2005, http://www.meh.hu/english/activities/events/en_20050216.html

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monument at (then) Felvonulási Square, where the Stalin Statue had been demolished. The project was supervised by the '56 Memorial Committee headed by Domokos Kosáry, president of the Academy of Arts, the mayor of Budapest, Gábor Démszky, Speaker of the House, Katálin Szili (MSZP) and some civic '56 organizations. The jury this cooperation summoned consisted of prominent professionals, among others: the director of the Galéria, Attila Zsigmond, Dr. Júlia Fabényi, Géza Boros, sculptors and architects as well as Dr. Hans Belting and MSZP deputy-mayor for then cultural affairs János Schiffer[282]. They received expert advice from a board without voting rights to which among others Jenő Fónay and János Rainer belonged. Out of 79 applicants, the first prize was awarded to the i-Ypszilon Group, whose members – Tamás Emődi-Kiss, Katalin György, Csaba Horváth and Tamás Papp – were all born after the revolution.

The new Central Monument was inspired by the photos of the students reaching hands when they marched towards Bem Square. Corroding iron columns emerge from the ground and grow into an 8m tall steel arrow-like bloc that faces Dózsa György ut in a 56° angle. Behind it expands the 'square of silence' paved with cobblestones reminiscent of the 1950s from where the viewer is invited to walk through the columns becoming one with the crowd. "The monument commemorates to that unique moment, when the citizens of Hungary overcame their own individualities, in order to stand up as members of the united community, for the idea of freedom and independence", explains the group's homepage[283]. The artists and architects insist that they wished the visitors to interact and remember the moment of unity that emerged at this place on October 23, 1956. The i-Ypszilon Group says that all previous monuments only commemorated a part of the revolution. Instead, the group wished to

[282] The other members were: the sculptors Enikő Szőllőssy, Péter Csíkvári and Tamás Körösényi, the architects Antal Lázár and István Ferencz.
[283] I-Ypszilon Alkotócsoport Kft, http://www.i-ypszilon.hu.

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"visualize the responsibility of individuals towards their community. It is a more general question as the telling the 'story' of the Revolt could be"[284].

When the winning concept was announced[285], it immediately met strong public opposition. The Association of the Pesti Boy for example summoned a demonstration in September 2006 on "Boots Square" to protest against the "gallows": In their perception, the columns resembled gallows and – since they are arranged from East to West – commemorate the approach and power of the Soviet Army, which reproduces the notion of a continuity between the former Workers' and today's Socialist Party. The poster viewed next to the symbolic grave on Kossuth Square depict a photomontage of Gyurcsany asking Imre Nagy what he would think about the concept: "Nice gallows".

After the inauguration of the monument, *Magyar Hirlap*[286] published a summary discussion about the controversy: Attila Zsigmond unsurprisingly declares his support; Imre Makovecz suggests that the columns should feature round plates resembling faces to humanize the abstract monument. András Bojár from the journal *Octogon* appreciates that this monument does not impose a specific interpretation of the revolution; however, he expresses understanding for the problems this construction poses to the broader public. Moreover, since the monument would fail to make use of this public place in a reasonable and practical manner. Zsolt Pétranyi rejects previous suggestions to raise a monument in form of Stalin's jackboots. Moreover, he says, that one has to consider the next generations and the changes of memory. For the future audience who has no real experience of the revolution a less concrete, non-figurative monument as the present one is more appropriate. In an accompanying interview Attila Zsigmond also criticizes and refutes those who claim that the current

[284] GYÖRGY, Katalin, E-mail subject: "Re: 56 monument", May 18, 2007, 10:41, recipient: V.H.
[285] The official press release MEH No.146/06: PRESS OFFICE, Government Communication Centre "Background material. Central Monument of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence", October 23, 2006.
[286] Editorial board. „Eltérő vélemenek a vasekől", in *Magyar Hirlap*, October 26, 2006, p.18.

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Socialist government cannot legitimately raise a monument for the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

Since the debate had not seized in the summer of 2006, the Prime Minister's office decided to tolerate he concerns and place a flag and an explanation on a stone table[287] next to the monument, and re-name the place "'56 Square". The flag with the hole in the middle has become a 'universal' symbol as the earlier analyzed monuments prove. According to Boros, Laszlo Rajk claims that the flag with the whole in the middle is the true symbol of the '56 revolution because it is a genuine symbol made by the people themselves[288]. Thus, he had used it for the 1988 monument in the Parisian Cemetery Pére Lachaise, as well as an postmodern abstraction of it for the background of the reburial catafalque in front of the Palace of Art in 1989.

Nevertheless, this compromise was in vain: On October 11, 2005 the Memorial Committee, which was in charge of the entire festivity program called for a meeting in the Prime Minister's Office. In the name of the opposition to the new monument, former Prime Minister Péter Boross presented an alternative solution: The initiative suggested letting a 'Public Foundation for Freedom Fighters' decide upon a second monument[289]. The Foundation was autonomous in their decisions and issued a closed competition. Consequently, a few hours before the official monument, Boross unveiled the figurative work by Robert Csíkszéntmihály from the Lájos Vajda Studio in Szentendre at the Polytechnic University. The artist, born in 1940, was a student at the Academy of Arts in 1956 when the

[287] The bi-lingual inscription reads: "Memorial to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence/ We shall forever remember those, who fought for freedom in the 1956 Revolution and during the repression of the subsequent decades, either with arms in hand or with the power of their spirit, to the point of self sacrifice. It is the intention of the Republic of Hungary that this memorial should symbolize the power of desire to be free and the responsibility towards the community as well as the stability of Hungarian society and national unity – the events of October 23, 1956 and of the revolution took place in the spirit of these values/ Erected in 2006 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence."

[288] BOROS, 2000, p.208. "Der Architekt László Rajk sagt: 'Solche Symbole werden nie von Künstlern, sondern von den Menschen auf der Straße hervorgebracht oder sie sind einfach plötzlich da."

[289] The official press release MEH No.146/06: PRESS OFFICE, Government Communication Centre. "Background material. Monument of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence On Műegyetem rakpart (Polytechnic Institute Quay)", October 23, 2006.

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"air was sizzling with revolutionary thought" and he was amongst those marching to Bem Square on October 23rd[290]. Like Szőllössy, Gömbös and Arvai he was a student of Pál Pátzay, before he moved to Szentendre, the home of Hungarian folk art, in 1964.

Although previously the place on the river shore had been ruled out by experts, the 'Public Foundation for Freedom Fighters' unanimously voted for this site. Jovánovics is outraged because – similar to Kossuth Square – it presses yet another figurative monument into a location that is already overloaded with symbolic meaning[291]. The limestone monument shows a crowd of people pressing forward to get free from stylized confining towers on both sides. The group is lead by a female figure, which is not only one of Csíkszéntmihályi's favourite artistic elements, but also – since Delacroix' "Liberty leads the people" – commonly symbolizes the fight for freedom and independence. The composition is surrounded by slender plates, addressing the viewer: "The cradle of the 56 revolution. We greet the youth! We greet the Hungarian nation!" Ultimately, the message of the two monuments is alike; however, the means of communication are different. The openness of the y-Ypszilon concept that does not articulate the artists' intention directly, became its own pitfall. The way the controversy was handled, unfortunately, reflects a lack of democratic discipline and commitment on behalf of the political actors. Katalin György expresses –similar to Jovánovics' recollections – resignation over the public debate which used their work of art as grounds for political fights[292].

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[290] CSÍKSZÉNTMIHÁHLY, Robert. "My life" in Katalin T.Nagy (ed.). *Csíkszéntmihály Robert,* (Budapest: NKA 2005), p.14.
[291] Conversation with György Jovánovics in the artist's studio on Andrassy ut on June 2nd, 2007.
[292] GYÖRGY, Katalin. E-mail subject: "Re: 56 monument", May 18, 2007, 10:41, recipient: V.H. "In Hungary is too much silence about history so every platform where it can be come forward become a ground of political debates. It was honorific for us to take part in conceptualization process of the monument. But we did not want to deal with any political question in this case."

III.3.3 1956 – 2006

The 50th anniversary turned in to a media spectacle: movies, conferences, documentary screenings, even computer games re-enacting the street fights as a comic strip, – and riots. Briefly, I want to address the last year's events and the connection to '56. In time for the municipal election campaign on October 1st, a tape surfaced that recorded Prime Minister Gyurcsany admitting at a party congress in April that previous two years of governing and campaigning were based on lies. When the secretly recorded tape leaked to the press on September 17, during the same night a mob stormed the MTV building on Freedom Square, setting cars on fire, vandalizing the Soviet Monument as a symbol of continuous Communist suppression. The chronology of the riots is not of any interest here, but they reveal the polarization of the political camps in addition to a lack of a democratic tradition that partly roots in the glorification and usage of '56.

September and October were marked by peaceful as well as violent demonstrations, between which the police did not accurately differentiate. Quickly, the connection between 1956 and 2006 was drawn investing the riots with symbolic meaning. For weeks, Kossuth Square was occupied by demonstrators supposingly restaging the revolution. Evoking the historic parallels, Mária Wittner, a former street fighter who was spent the subsequently sentenced to death and spent 12 years in prison, climbed the stage one evening to share her memories of 1956. Having enlisted for FIDESZ-MPP membership she declares that nothing has changed, her martyrdom continues since "Hungary is still oppressed"[293].

FIDESZ-MPP nurtured the symbolic parallel actively while it boycott all events, also parliamentary sessions in which the Prime Minister, the 'minister of lies', took part. Thus, the largest opposition party failed to make use of their constitutional rights of democratic

[293] JANKOVICZ, Oszkár." Mária Wittner: "'Hungary is still oppressed'", Café Babel, October 23, 2006, transl. Akasemi Newsome, accessible on http://www.cafebabel.com/en/article.asp?T=T&Id=8526 . A video recording of Wittner's speech was published on the public open internet forum *youtube.com*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlAiFjnTJJI

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opposition. The party tried to gain momentum from the scandal, and announced the municipal election as a federal referendum to support its requests of Gyurcsany's resignation. Indeed, the election was a watershed for MSZP and SZDSZ alike. Still, Gyurcsány refused to step down. Instead on October 23, he declared in parliament facing empty opposition seats and addressing the demonstrators in front of the building:

> Democratic rules and institutions can be created in a matter of a few months or perhaps a couple of years. But how much time do we need to make sure that freedom, the culture of democratic order, respect for and acceptance of others can be hosted in the hearts and instincts of millions?[294]

While he correctly addressed the complexity of the revolution and its multiple legacies, he failed to take responsibility. The MSZP did not react constructively to the obvious crisis, and neither did the opposition manage to take the constitutional way of a vote of confidence.

Despite inter-party conflicts, the symbolic charge of '1956-2006' has prevailed, although the proximity of FIDESZ-MPP to the violent, neo-Nazi elements of the October events raised public concerns[295]. Preparing for the next national holiday on March 15, 2007, Mária Schmidt declared at a FIDESZ-MPP rally in front of the Terror House[296]:

> Five years ago, we did not even think of experiencing anxiety and fear among the stage sets of democracy […].We must again hide opinions from family members and look at our neighbors with mistrust […]. In our everyday life, small communism surrounds us, when we are silenced with police units and barricades and prevented from practicing our civil rights[297].

However, most fail to acknowledge that, '56 was indeed a fight for freedom and independence, but it was directed against a Stalinist regime. Most participants envisioned

[294] GYURCSÁNY, Férenc. "Formal Address of Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsány in the Parliament on 23 October 2006", publ. and transl. Spokesman Office, accessible on http://www.meh.hu/english/activities/briefing/1en_20061025.html

[295] The 'rightfulness' of the riots and FDESZ-MPP engagement led – among other reasons to internal conflicts; the party experienced fragmentation during the past six months, as István Stumpf from the party's affiliated think tank 'Szazadvég' explains. See Interview with István Stumpf, "Fidesz is no longer one and the same as Viktor Orbán", February 21, 2007, available at http://hvg.hu/print/20070221_stumpf_istvan_szazadveg_foundation.aspx

[296] Her participation in this rally came as a surprise because Magyar Nemzet, the party's organ, had published a controversial article in January, accusing her, "the billionaire", of forming an anti-Orbán faction and alignment with Gyurcsány. See TRENCSÉNI, Dávid. "Something is happening", *168 óra*, No.4, February 2nd, 2007; available at http://www.168ora.hu/cikk.php?id=7149

[297] TRENCSÉNI, Dávid, *168 óra*, No.9, March 9, 2007, available at http://www.168ora.hu/cikk.php?id=7391

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'Socialism with a human face'[298]. 'Politics of the streets' as exercised in 2006 does not take place in the same setting as the street fights in 1956. "Some think it's legitimate to connect 1956 to the events going on here now. That's absolutely false," Imre Mécs is reported to say. "There's no connection between 1956 and the current situation"[299]. President László Sólyom pointed out: The presence is a result of the past, but not its repetition. "Hungary that is independent, sovereign and democratic, where there is rule of law, and where the country could become a member of international organizations such as the European Union of its own free will"[300].

Finally, the events of 2006 as well as the controversy about the new Central Monument and the awkward solution of an 'alternative' monument underline the deep divide in Hungary over fundamental concerns: The political elite is unable to find a consensus concerning the past and its meaning for contemporary Hungary. Instead, historic precedent are evoked and used in a distorted manner in order to authorize current political actions. Moreover, both sides of the polarization fail to acknowledge basic democratic procedures. Democracy is turned into a demand that is voiced if serving specific political goals, but is not respected when it turns into a compromise-demanding commitment.

Conclusion

The selection of monuments for the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 reflects the clashes that derive from the different levels of social memory – communicative, collective and cultural memory. The current patrons belong to different generations; for the time being, the memory of '56 shifts from the communicative to the collective, bonding memory. The former participants aim at shaping the communicative memory, while the next generation likewise

[298] DENT, 2006, p.231. The author recalls explanations by Béla Király from 1983.
[299] Quoted in TRAYNOR, Ian. "Political turmoil and street protests. Rebellion's bitter legacy lives on", in *The Guardian*, October 19, 2006; accessible on http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,1925428,00.html
[300] SÓLYOM, László. "The Address of H.E. Sólyom President of the Republic of Hungary on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the 1956 Revolution and Freedom Fight", at a ceremony in the Opera House of Budapest on October 22, 2006, accessible on http://www.keh.hu/keh_en/speeches/20061022opera_house.html

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instills the memory with political claims; both are motivated by present-day claims: originating in the revolution's evocation in the 1980s, claiming the legacy of the revolution rightly decides over the country's course today.

In the 1980s, the re-evaluation of the revolution was requested as a means to accelerate reforms from both sides, the opposition as well as the ruling Workers' Party. However, the consequences remained unpredictable and when the Democratic Third Republic was announced on October 23, 1989, the one-party state was not immediately replaced by a coherent concept of democracy. The different camps yet had to negotiate their political profiles and situated themselves within the open forum of a multi-party system. Calls for democracy were not based on clear concept of the term's meaning. Quite on the contrary, when the uniting element of fighting a common 'enemy', the party-state disappeared, the opposition movement lost its common goal and fell apart into diverse political camps. Searching for the external enemy against who identity and unity can be created, the different political camps now only find one another. The roots of this fragmentation were already visible in the 1980s, but they did not surface yet. Once left without an enemy-other the emerging fronts looked for role models that might legitimate their different positions. Mostly, historical predecessors were found in the Interwar period. Consequently, the old conflict of populists against urbanites returned to the political and symbolic agenda. Thus, through the iconological analysis of monuments for the Hungarian revolution of 1956, political and artistic traditions can be traced back to camps and styles prior to the Second World War.

The dissident movement failed to establish a stable set of democratic principles. As the fight between the Inconnu Group and Jovánovics reflects, the former members of the opposition did not even find common democratic grounds to interact. During the Kádárist regime, the ideological differences were covered by the ever-threatening state. Constructing the revolution as a symbol of national unity in order to attain political goals fails to

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acknowledge the complexity of the revolutionary demands in 1956 as such. Lendvai rhetorically asks "So who owns 1956[…]?" and then answers "Nobody, not a single group can and should claim the memory of 1956 as their own"[301]. But his justified claim has not been heard yet. Quite on the contrary, the year 2006 witnessed a deliberate violation of parliamentary democracy: Both sides of the political divide secured their position through 'politics of the street'.

'56 probably led to temporary unity in only 1989: All sides, the party, the opposition, the mass, the absent external actors Soviet Union and the West still had vivid memories of the revolutionary bloodshed[302]. Thus, all participants insisted on the peaceful character of the reburial ceremony on Heroes' Square. Before and after, it became a factor of fragmentation. Thus, the history of political ideologies of the dissident movement as well as in the Third Republic imply that also the Hungarian revolution was motivated by a variety of intentions and political goals; however, du to the temporary brevity the differences did not surface. Moreover, it remains questionable in how far the broader public participates in the ideological struggle over '56 monuments or whether this conflict is restricted to the political elite which artificially and inefficiently shapes the cityscape with their symbols.

I have identified different symbols whose iconological analysis revealed their political connotations: First of all, the cityscape was purged of manifestations of the previous regime. In an indecisive move, the sculptures were replaced in Statue Park outside of the city and away from every-day sight. Thus, public spaces could be invested with new meanings. Authentic places in particular were subject to symbolic competition; their meanings were continuously reinforced and complemented. In some location such as Kossuth Square, the symbolic weight overburdens the place. Only those who are familiar with the different

[301] LENDVAI, 2006, p.271.
[302] See RÉV, István. "Transition", in *Retroactive Justice*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 2005), pp.304-335.

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connotations and implications can still read its topography; for all others, it is an assembly of statues on monuments.

During the transition, the kopjáfa was re-discovered as a symbol of Magyar folk culture. While first it can be perceived as a reaction to the internationalist dogma of Communism, it quickly accumulated nationalist implications. This Transylvanian wooden grave pole alludes to the Hungarian folk cultural heritage. Moreover, it potentially constructs the national legacy and cultural mission back until the conquest of the Carpathian Basin in the 9th century as the Turul symbolizes. Interestingly, the crushing of the revolution is commemorated more than the uprising as such. One reason is the higher moral authority of the fight when it implies sacrificing one's life for the greater cause. Henceforth, many '56ers uponj their returned commemorated especially the unjust defeat. The Pesti Srác plays the major role of this imagery whose fight David against Goliath is sanctified by the Christian belief in martyrdom. Alluding to the injustice of the fight and the martyrdom of the '56ers relates the memory ultimately to the request for reimbursement. Moreover, it connects to nationalist claims which sanctify the unity of the nation, which is a unity in spirit: Real Hungarians did not compromise to the regime; instead, they suffered from foreign oppression.

Nevertheless, Socialist tradition has survived the change of regimes despite the recurrent stigmatization of succeeding the MSZMP. Hence, this camp appropriates the reform communist element of the revolution. Instead, the Socialist-liberal, cosmopolitan trend counters the nationalism of the '56 organizations with its emphasis on solidarity and responsibility for the community. Finally, this account shows that political camps and party profiles are not stable entities; they are constantly revised and adapted.

So far, commissions were only granted to artists that had already established themselves prior to the transition. The elder generation which continued the cleavage between avant-garde and folk art lived through their artistically formative years immediately following

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the revolution itself. Thus, the Second World War and the Communist take-over feature in their life stories. The neo avant-garde of the late 1960s/ 70s and those who experienced its decline in the early 1980s, became the 'favorites' of the cosmopolitan intellectuals after the transition, while Szentendre and the traditional Lajos Vajda School still exercised great influence over the populist camp.

Monuments remain a traditional representation of political power. Only in rare cases, the connection between art and politics is broken. Monuments as such are not challenging media; thus, they hardly ever inspire novel ideas. In addition to that, the institutional framework and transitory changes prevented the rise of new artists during the first postcommunist era. First, the non-conformist artists, whether belonging to the folklorist or the neo avant-gardist tradition, were publicly recognized for preserving their artistic autonomy. As such, this belated compensation is justifiable; however, it correlated with financial cut-downs in the art scene. Consequently, the market was relatively closed for new ideas and artists. Moreover, due to the patrons' persistent preference of traditional monuments the aesthetic development has halted.

Radnóti claims that with the exception of Jovánovics' work, the monuments for the Hungarian revolution of 1956 reveal only a low aesthetic level[303]. In many respects, Jovánovics Plot 300 is unique and exceptional. The artist himself is amazed that at a time when chancellor Helmut Kohl arbitrarily decided to place Käthe Kollwitz' Piéta in 'Neue Wache', Hungary opted for a neo avant-gardist concept of a memorial. Nevertheless, the common symbols of the revolution. The recent controversy proved to Radnóti the naivety of the public as expressed in wishes to re-install Stalin's jackboots.

Based on the peculiarity of the German Holocaust memory, new ways of representation had to be developed. Moreover, these monuments cannot establish claims to

[303] RADNÓTI, Sándor. "Kis emlékmű-esztétika" [A small guide in the aesthetics of monuments], *Beszélő*, Vol 11., No.10. October 11, 2006; accessed via http://beszelo.c3.hu/cikkek/kis-emlekmu-esztetika.

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political power, since they commemorate the nation's victims. In addition to that, the architects and artist belong to a generation that has no vivid memory of the Second World War and thus, has to take the construction of memory into consideration. A long process of reflection leads to conceptualization and building. Furthermore, the final decision for the 'Eisenmann II' design was based on democratic grounds: Not only was the decision made in parliament apart from mere party politics, but it also leaves the possibility to abstain from visiting the monument. In any case, Young insists, the debate, the constant re-evaluation of memory is the most important element of social memory. Consequently, the Berlin Holocaust Memorial shows that a discourse set on common grounds is an inherent and necessary element of a functioning democracy. The fact that for the 50th anniversary two monuments were raised, probably symbolizes best – if not the revolution itself –the polarization of present-day Hungary.

Monuments should not satisfy either personal preferences or emotional needs nor should it serve political means, Radnóti insists. Why should one "like" a monument to begin with? Like Jovánovics' memorial in Rákoskeresztúr, a monument should invite the viewer to reflect upon what she sees and what the monument represents. A 'good' monument does not dictate a specific interpretation. Instead, it should remain open to numerous interpretations and future generations, too. As Assmann says the memory of places is made by the people and takes the shape that is given to them. Otherwise monuments cause fragmentation and fights as in the case of monuments for the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

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