

Acknowledgements

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1 The decay of communist rule in Hungary*

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The collapse of the communist regime in Hungary in 1989 occurred fast, but not without prehistory. The first signs of the crisis had already appeared in 1985; however, the years 1985–87 were the golden age of communist reformism (1st Period). Then, very soon after, the opposition entered the stage (2nd Period). The next two periods of the transition can be characterized by a two-sided process: a rapid decay of the Communist Party and a slow, gradual rise of the opposition (3rd–4th Period). There were no two strong, determined and self-confident characters in this political drama, as with Solidarity and the Communist Party in Poland, but rather several hesitant second fiddlers. The Communists resigned under rather weak pressure, because even they themselves had lost their belief in the legitimacy of their rule, as well as their self-interest in maintaining it (5th Period). The regime had collapsed before the opposition could take power. The five-month power vacuum (6th Period) lasted until the first post-communist parliamentary elections in March 1990.

1st Period The first signs of dissatisfaction: the golden age of political reformism (June 1985–September 1987)

The first signs of dissatisfaction appeared in 1985. The regime could not solve the economic crisis which had lasted more than five years. The moderate but continuous rise in living standards had stopped at the end of the seventies. The first half of the eighties saw the failure of necessary economic reforms. The new economic policy of 'speeding up', announced by János Kádár at the 1985 Congress of the ruling Communist Party, called the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP), led to the mismanagement of the economy and to a deepening debt crisis.

The political signs of growing dissatisfaction appeared on two levels.

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On the elite level it was expressed by the disappointment of professional groups, like the 'reform economists', who had given economic advice to the government. Realizing that their commitment to economic reforms had not yielded anything, they turned towards the public for support.¹ They also took part in the Monor-meeting, where various dissident groups of Hungarian intellectuals held a three-day political meeting.²

Signs of growing dissatisfaction and a legitimacy crisis appeared at the mass level as well. Independent candidates were nominated at the 1985 parliamentary election, and about 40–45 of them were finally elected³ after a bitter and unequal fight against the local Communist Party apparatus, which kept control over the whole election process. Their voices could be heard in Parliament in the following years. The flourishing of quasi-political clubs and societies in civil society also characterized this period.

The years 1986–87 brought growing pressure for political reforms from below. All the political reform concepts, worked out either by dissident intellectuals or by communist reformers, pointed towards some *power sharing* between the Communist Party and the people. The aim of the reformers was to create a constitutional regime, where the ruling party could keep a significant part of its power but its prerogatives would be legally limited. On the other hand, the rights of citizens, as well as the way they can practise them, would be constitutionally defined. This concept aimed at a switch from a one-party dictatorship towards constitutional power sharing and a semi-parliamentary regime.⁴

Behind this liberal and open-minded reformism two kinds of political thinking existed. The first one was a *reform Communist* attitude, which tried to make *socialism* and *democracy* compatible. It had not lost its belief in the possibility of democratic socialism and its ideological way of thinking. The second one was the attitude of *opposition*, which did not believe in any kind of socialism. For them the political reforms towards a constitutional but non-democratic, semi-parliamentary regime simply meant a political compromise. Their long-term task remained to create a parliamentary democracy. The opposition as a political force, however, had not appeared yet. The political scene was dominated by the 'reformer' and the 'hard-liner' wing of the ruling HSWP.

The hard-liners of the HSWP tried to defend their monopoly of power and keep the one-party system. They were also for reforms and for constitutional government in their rhetoric. Reforms, however, meant for them a peculiar thing: the strengthening of their power by legalizing it. Since under the Communists the Hungarian constitution was much more liberal than the regime itself, on a legal level there were no limitations on the rights of assembly and association. Therefore, the aim of the legal reform drafts of 1988 was to fill these gaps in the legal system, regulating the rights of assembly and the rights of association by the law, in such a way that the state administration could keep control over these rights. These reactionary reforms were, however, rejected by society in the second half of 1988. The government had to withdraw them.

The main aims of the hard-liners were in 1988 to keep the reforms

within the framework of the one-party system. Being unsuccessful, in 1989 they turned their attention to preserving the privileges of the ruling HSWP, such as the *nomenklatura* system, the presence of party cells at workplaces, the Workers Militia, and the property of the party. The most well-known politicians of the hard-line Communists were Károly Grósz, János Berecz, until his fall János Kádár, and a representative of the extreme left Róbert Ribánszki, who appeared on the political scene in the autumn of 1988. These politicians, however, did not represent a united group of conservatives, but rather politicians who were competing for power. Their strongholds were the county and local party apparatuses which were interwoven with the parallel state and business administration. More or less formalized factions of the hard-liners had been established since the autumn of 1988, such as the Ferenc Münnich Society (1988), the Marxist-Leninist Unity-Platform (Ribánszky, 1989), and the Union for Renewal of the HSWP (Berecz, 1989).

On the other side of the party was the *reform wing* of the HSWP. It was also a loose alliance of party politicians and technocrats of the government, primarily of the economic administration. The market-oriented liberal economic experts and bureaucrats of the civil service supported the Grósz-government in 1987–88 as well as the following Németh-government. Grósz tried to present himself as a committed reformer, at least in the sphere of the economy. He was regarded as the father of some 'reform dictatorship' as a 'red Pinochet', who was ready to combine tough economic liberalism with a new political dictatorship. Therefore, diverging from the Grósz-line, the main features of the 'genuine' reform wing were in the realm of politics. The leading figure of the reformers was Imre Pozsgay from the beginning of the eighties. He incorporated more and more national and democratic slogans into his rhetoric and gained prestige among the reform-oriented intellectuals, and also among professionals both within and outside the party. As general secretary of the Patriotic Peoples Front (PPF), which had been a satellite organization of the party since the fifties, Pozsgay transformed it into an 'umbrella' organization of the reviving civil society, comprising memorial and patriotic clubs, associations and the people's college movement, and made room for the reform initiatives of professional groups as well. The stamp of the PPF was a great help to the 'reform economists' in publishing *Turn and Reform* in 1987, which opened the series of political reform packages.

Diverging from the old Kádárist leadership, Pozsgay appealed for a national debate on the future of 'reform'. ('Reform' was still a key word in Hungarian political discussion in 1987.) The most detailed expression of Pozsgay's political philosophy, the concept of 'democratic socialism', was worked out by Mihály Bihari, a well-known political scientist, in the summer of 1987. It was entitled '*Reform and Democracy*' and was spread like a *samizdat* in the following months.⁵ Beside 'democratic socialism', Pozsgay's political message was also *national*. He had supporters among the national-populist intellectuals and he was present, at Lakitelek, at the foundation of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF). The 'third way

socialist' ideology of the populist movement was compatible at several points with the ideas of 'democratic socialism'. Zoltán Bíró, the first president of the HDF, had a close personal and political connection with Pozsgay.⁶ Reformist factions within or around the Communist Party were the New March Front (Nyers, 1988), the Reform circles (spontaneous movement of the rank and file, 1989) and the Movement for Democratic Hungary (Pozsgay, 1989).

2nd Period The opposition enters the stage: the succession crisis of the Kádár regime (September 1987–May 1988)

The years 1988–89 marked the re-emergence of political pluralism in Hungary. The starting point was at Lakitelek, in September 1987. There, at the meeting of populist writers and intellectuals, was founded the first big opposition movement, called Hungarian Democratic Forum (Forum). The Forum tried to keep an intermediate position very consciously between the regime and the Democratic Opposition,⁷ and enjoyed some support from the reform wing of the Communist Party. In spite of some personal overlapping with the reform Communists, the HDF was definitely an independent movement from the very beginning. It had its own ideology, 'populism', and began its own independent political activity. The winter of 1987–88 was the beginning of public mass meetings, organized by the Forum, where more and more citizens took part and criticized the policy of the communist regime.⁸ Issues like the oppression of the Hungarian minority in Rumania, press censorship, the constitutional prerogatives of the Communist Party, the lack of free elections and parliamentary government, etc. were raised and the achievements of the four-decade-long communist regime were discredited.

The political consequences of the deepening economic crisis appeared within the Communist Party as well. Kádár's reputation was declining among his comrades and he was criticized at local party meetings all over the country. The succession crisis became evident and visible, but the big competition for power among the three main potential successors, Grósz, Berecz and Pozsgay, had not been decided up until the extraordinary party conference in May 1988.⁹

3rd Period Kádár's fall: the Grósz-era (May 1988–January 1989)

The May party conference did not take place according to a scenario written in advance. Besides the succession crisis, it reflected the revolt of the rank and file of the Communist Party. The 'putsch' against Kádár would not have been as successful without the anger of the dissatisfied delegates elected by the local party committees. The old Kádárist leadership was swept away. Eight old Kádárists, even János Kádár himself, were ousted from the Politburo. Kádár became the President of the party without authority. The winner of the game was Grósz, who became General

Table 1.1 Political cleavages along the regime-opposition dimension

Regime (HSWP)		Opposition	
<i>Hard-liners</i>	<i>Reformers</i>	<i>Moderates</i>	<i>Radicals</i>
F. Münnich Society	Nyers Pozsgay Gy. Horn M. Németh	Hungarian Democratic Forum	Alliance of Free Democrats
Marxist-Leninist Unity Platform	New March Front	Smallholder Party Socialdemocrats	Young Democrats
J. Berecz R. Ribánszki K. Grósz F. Puja	Movement for Democratic Hungary	People's Party	
	Reform-circles	Christian Democratic Party	
<i>after October 1989:</i>			
HSWP	Hungarian Socialist Party		

Secretary and could keep the Premiership as well.¹⁰

During the months of the Grósz era nothing was decided. In the period between June 1988 and January 1989 the future was still doubtful. The political demonstrations of the radical Democratic Opposition, on 16 June, 23 October and 7 November, were banned or dispersed by the police, while the anti-Ceausescu demonstration organized by the moderate opposition Forum on 27 June was permitted. While the former demonstration was held by a few hundred people, more than 100,000 people participated in the latter.

The summer of 1988 marked the beginning of the freedom of the press. In July, for the first time, an action of the opposition was reported on the front pages of the papers with no condemnation. The censorship was first lightened then lifted by the end of the year. The press became more and more liberal and informative. This was the first year for decades when it became worth buying and reading a daily paper in Hungary.

Within the HSWP, the fight between the hard-liners and the reform communists continued. The hard-liner Grósz, in spite of his victory in May, could not stabilize his power. Due to his contradictory speeches he could not keep even the support of the party apparatus. By the end of 1988 he was considered a fallen politician. He had to resign from the Premiership and his attempt to turn the whole process back and to keep it within the framework of a one-party system was unsuccessful. In his last great hard-liner speech for party activists, referring to the opposition, he spoke about an 'impending white terror'.¹¹ His words caused huge

nationwide indignation, so Grósz had to moderate his statement later. Even such hard-liners as János Berecz, the former party secretary of ideological affairs, tried to escape from the sinking ship. He moved from Grósz towards Pozsgay, but it was too late.

However, nothing could stop the foundation of new political parties and the reorganization of old ones. From a loose movement, by September the Hungarian Democratic Forum had become a political organization with more than 10,000 members. The Federation of Young Democrats, which survived accusations of 'anti-state and anti-socialist conspiracy' in the spring, held its first National Congress in October. The groups of the former Democratic Opposition established the Alliance of Free Democrats in November. The historical parties of the last multi-party period of 1945–48, like the Smallholders and the Social Democrats, had come to life again by the end of the year. All these parties demanded free elections, and a new constitution which would abolish the prerogatives of the Communist Party, guarantee the freedom of the press and the rights of assembly, and create a parliamentary government.

During the Grósz era, the Government and the HSWP attempted through legal reforms to keep the processes within the one-party regime. The communist rhetoric used the term 'socialist pluralism', which meant the liberalization of the system without political democracy. According to this concept, the Communist Party would remain the 'mediator' between the different interest groups and organizations, and define the 'social' interest. Even the most radical reform Communist party leaders, like Pozsgay, never spoke about free multiparty parliamentarism at this time. They spoke about 'democratic socialism' within a one-party system or with the competition of those political parties which *accept* socialism. So the idea of a *limited* multiparty system was still very popular among communist reformers in this period.

The people and the opposition, however, refused this version of reforms. Bills on the right of assembly, on the right of association and on the new election law, which reflected this concept, were deliberately refused even by the officially organized 'social discussion' and by the liberal press, so the government had to withdraw them. The pressure for constitutional reforms intensified. The Federation of Young Democrats pressed unpopular MPs, even the Speaker of the House, to resign. The popular demand to stop the construction of a dam on the Danube was also a heavy burden on the government; this was the most sensitive issue, and the only one which produced a popular movement and mass demonstrations against the government. The regime was on the defensive and in decay. The opposition, however, was still not strong enough to take over the direction of events. The process came to a deadlock for a while.

4th Period The advance of Pozsgay: the opposition is ready for the battle (January 1989–16th June 1989)

What pushed events forward was Pozsgay's action at the end of January

1989. Pozsgay recognized that there would be no consensus without the revaluation of the events of 1956. While Károly Grósz enjoyed the mountains of the Alps in Switzerland, Pozsgay declared in a radio interview that what happened in Hungary in 1956 was not a counter-revolution, as the official communist historiography considered the events, but a 'national uprising'. The effect was dramatic. Grósz called together an extraordinary session of the Central Committee of the HSWP in two weeks' time. During those two weeks hundreds of social and political organizations expressed their agreement with Pozsgay, or at least their appreciation of his statement. Backed by public opinion and the press, Pozsgay and the reformers won the battle. The Central Committee session of February accepted not only the revaluation of the events of 1956, but the multiparty system as well.¹²

The new short-run programme of the Communist Party, issued on 7 March, committed itself to a reform Communist and social democratic orientation. But all for nothing; it could not restore the people's confidence in the party. While one face of the party smiled at the people, the other face showed its teeth. The Communist Party was like a dragon with different heads, each speaking a different language. While Pozsgay began to speak about multiparty democracy, Grósz and Fejti still refused to consider the opposition as legitimate. In fact, the ruling party refused to begin negotiations with the Round-Table of the Opposition Parties for months.

The concept of the opposition was to begin negotiations with the ruling party on questions of transformation, such as the new election law, the review of criminal law, the dissolution of the Workers Militia (the private army of the Communist Party) and the amendments to the Constitution. They did not want to leave these crucial questions of legislation to the government and the parliament, which were not regarded as legitimate by the opposition, and where more than two-thirds of the MPs were Communist Party members.

The resistance of the HSWP did not last long. The coming national and political anniversaries did not help them. On 15 March, the anniversary of the War of Independence and the Revolution of 1848, more than 100,000 people took part in a demonstration of the opposition in Budapest and tens of thousands in the countryside. The demonstrators accused the communist regime of having ruined the country during their four-decade rule.

The reformers and the technocrats of the HSWP, however, were seeking consensus and legitimacy. Beside Pozsgay, there were others like Miklós Németh, who succeeded the unpopular Grósz in the position of Prime Minister,¹³ Gyula Horn, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mátyás Szűrös, the new Speaker of the Parliament.¹⁴ They were successful in creating personal prestige, but the fate of the Communist Party as a whole was sealed.

5th Period The Communists pushed on to the defensive (16th June 1989–October 1989)

The crucial event that caused the psychological breakdown of the communist regime was the Imre Nagy question: the re-burial and rehabilitation of the Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution. The coming anniversary of his execution kept the regime under intense pressure for months. As an uprising against a communist dictatorship, 1956 was a leading topic in the mass media. The Communists and János Kádár himself were blamed for the executions and for the suppression of the revolution. The HSWP were not even allowed to take part in the re-burial ceremony, which turned into a huge demonstration against the system. The HSWP never recovered from this humiliation, and *psychologically* collapsed at this time.

In addition to this, the next stroke came very soon, with the by-elections of the summer. Since a couple of communist MPs were 'called back' or pressed to resign by the pressure of the opposition, by-elections were held in four single-member constituencies at the end of July. The communist candidates were defeated in three out of the four constituencies. Two-thirds of the electorate voted for the candidates of the opposition parties.

The wind of the Imre Nagy affair and the coming visit of George Bush, the American President, made the HSWP begin negotiations with the Round-Table of the Opposition. The negotiations, due to the divergent viewpoints, were unsuccessful for several months.¹⁵ The moderates of both sides, however, urged the others towards a compromise. As a result of these efforts, the Great Pact was worked out and signed by both sides on 18 September. However, the compromise caused a serious rift within the opposition. The radicals, like the Young Democrats and the Free Democrats, refused to sign it.

Until the autumn of 1989, it looked as though the Forum and the reform wing of the Communist Party would dominate the new political scene.¹⁶ The following six months, however, were marked by two big political landslides. The first was the collapse of the reform Communists.

The 'reform circles', the local bases of the communist reform wing, forced the HSWP leadership to call an extraordinary party congress by the beginning of October. It was expected to be the final battle between the hard-liners and the reformers. The revolt of the rank and file helped the reformers to push the conservatives back and to change the party's image from Communist to social democratic. Yet, the result of the congress was not clear for weeks. They aimed to reorganize the party under a new name: it was to be called the Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP). However, the continuity of the membership was not automatic, and in the meantime the parliament, under pressure of public opinion, banned party activity at workplaces. The practical consequence of these two coincidental events was equal to the dissolution of the party. The Communist Party became completely disorganized, and most of its 700,000 former members did not join either the new reform-oriented HSP or the old hard-liner HSWP.

They were happy to be out of the party without taking any personal risk. The heart of the communist rule, the old *nomenklatura* system, suddenly collapsed. The new Hungarian Socialist Party had less than 20,000 members at the beginning of November 1989, and not more than 50,000 by March 1990. (The old HSWP, which was able to recruit 100,000 members¹⁷ from the older comrades, lost all its power. The HSWP did not have any influence beyond its own members.)

6th Period The power vacuum: from the collapse of the Communist Party to free elections (October 1989–March 1990)

In the meantime the radical opposition, which did not sign the pact with the Communists, began a campaign for a referendum on those four questions which were not settled by the pact, namely: 1. the dissolution of the Workers Militia; 2. the banishment of party activity from workplaces; 3. the HSWP should account for its property (i.e. most of it comes from the state budget and not from membership fees); and 4. the most controversial question of contemporary Hungarian politics, the timing and the procedure of the presidential election.

Regarding the first three questions, the only difference between the radical and the soft opposition was whether to accept a temporary compromise or not. The real cause of the split, however, was the fourth question. The parties of the moderate opposition, such as the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the People's Party, the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders, accepted the reform Communist concept of the transition, which focused on a directly elected president with significant constitutional power. The reform Communists and the moderate opposition thought that a legitimate constitutional power, a president, could make the transition smooth and safe and could guarantee political stability for the months before the first free parliamentary elections. All of them regarded Pozsgay as the right person to do this job. The radical opposition, however, refused this concept. They regarded it as giving the Communists a chance to preserve their power behind the facade of a presidential system. They preferred a solution in which parliamentary elections would be held first, and then the new, freely elected parliament would elect a president.¹⁸

In addition, the Free Democrats accused the Hungarian Democratic Forum of betraying the opposition and of making a secret pact with Pozsgay. Their campaign for a referendum on the four crucial questions of the transition was quite successful. Their petition was signed by 200,000 people, so the parliament had to call a referendum on these debated areas. The November referendum ended with a marginal victory for the radicals.¹⁹ The presidential elections were postponed.

The victory of the communist reformers at the October party conference and the offensive of the radical opposition with their referendum campaign ruined the communist rule. The old power structure collapsed without changing the members of the government, and the parliament. A

real power vacuum came into being, since no political power stood behind the government and the legislature. The government was like a provisional one, consisting of technocrats without authority. The parliament passed laws under mass pressure. The opposition was out of the parliament and heavily divided. The new, reformed Hungarian Socialist Party lost its members and could not win the confidence of society. Contemporary opinion polls predicted for the first time the victory of the opposition at the coming parliamentary elections, which were scheduled for March 1990.

The second big political landslide was the advance of the most important radical opposition party, the Free Democrats. Whereas before their campaign for the referendum they were hardly known by the electorate, by February 1990 they had caught up with the Forum in terms of popularity. Since the referendum the political scene and the agenda have been determined less by the fight between the opposition and the (ex-) communist parties, and much more by the debate between the two major opposition parties, the Forum and Free Democrats.²⁰

The Hungarian Democratic Forum was the strongest party of a potential 'national centre' coalition and on the political scene as a whole.²¹ The political character of the HDF had significantly changed since its foundation. It had lost its original populist character and had become a 'catch-all' party. After J. Antall followed Z. Biró in the office of Chairman of the HDF in October, the party aimed to play the same role as the West-German CDU or the Austrian Volkspartei had played in post-war politics. Stressing the Christian and national values and the historical and constitutional legacy of Hungary, the Forum relied on the votes of the middle-class and provincial Hungary.

The Free Democrats on the other side of the new political scene, became popular among intellectuals, professionals and the urban population. Having its roots in the human rights movement and in the radical 'Democratic Opposition' of the seventies, the Free Democrats did not make any compromise with reformer Communist successors of the former communist state party. Making no distinction between reformers and hard-liners, the Free Democrats discredited both Pozsgay and the Forum and won the November referendum. This unexpected victory brought the Free Democrats up to second place in the political competition.

The results of the March/April 1990 parliamentary elections showed that the majority of Hungarians voted for moderate centre-right parties (the Forum, the Christian Democrats and the Smallholders), about a third of them voted for the radical left-liberals (Free Democrats, Young Democrats and Social Democrats), and about a sixth of them voted for the stability-oriented former communist parties (HSP, HSWP). Four and a half decades of Hungarian history ended.

Notes

1. A group of 'reform economists' wrote and published an analysis and reform project on the Hungarian economy, entitled 'Turn and Reform'. (László Antal et al., 'Fordulat és reform' *Medvetánc* 1987/2 Melléklet).
2. László Lengyel's article gives an insight into the changing attitude and behaviour pattern of the 'reform economists' in this period. ('Adalékok a fordulat és reform történetéhez' *Medvetánc* 1987/2 Melléklet).
3. On the 1985 parliamentary elections the most comprehensive study is written by István Kukorelli, *Igy választottunk* (Budapest, 1988); on the 1985-90 parliament see B. Rácz: 'The parliamentary infrastructure and political reforms in Hungary' *Soviet Studies* Vol. XLI, no. 1, Jan. 1989.
4. Elemér Hankiss's book gives a comprehensive analysis of these reform concepts: *Kelet-Európai Alternatívák* (KJK, Budapest, 1989). English Version: *East-European Alternatives*, Oxford University Press, 1990.
5. Finally it was published. Mihály Bihari, 'Reform és demokrácia' *Medvetánc* 1987/2 Melléklet.
6. M. Bihari, Z. Biró, Z. Király and L. Lengyel, *Kizárt a párt* (Budapest 1988); Z. Biró, *Első beszélgetésem Pozsgay Imrével* (Püski, 1989); Z. Biró, *Második beszélgetésem Pozsgay Imrével* (Püski, 1990).
7. The Democratic Opposition was a group of dissident intellectuals and human rights activists. It came into being in 1977, when they expressed their solidarity with the activity of the Czechoslovak Charter 77 and began to publish *samizdat*. They were an opposition in principle. Though they had never engaged in political (organizational) activity beyond the *samizdat* publishing until 1988, they were regarded as and accused of being 'opposition' by the regime. The Democratic Opposition began its political activity on an organizational level, founding its umbrella organization, the Network of Free Initiatives, on 1 May 1988. It existed until the foundation of the Alliance of Free Democrats on 12 November 1988.
8. These meetings were held in the Jurta Színház, the only theatre in Budapest that was not state owned.
9. About the power struggle within the HSWP, see: G. Schöpflin, R. Tökés and I. Völgyes, 'Leadership change and crisis in Hungary' *Problems of communism*, 1988/5.
10. op. cit.
11. The speech was given for Budapest party activists in the Budapest Sportcsarnok on 29 November 1988 (*HVG* 1990, márciusi különszám, p. 43).
12. About Pozsgay's role and the phases of the crisis of the regime see Béla Faragó's brilliant article: 'Mi történt Magyarországon? Történelem jelenidőben' *Századvég* 1989/1-2.
13. Grósz resigned on 24 November 1988.
14. The former Speaker of the House, István Stadinger, resigned under the pressure of the opposition and public opinion on 8 March 1989.
15. A series of articles were written about the history of the round-table negotiations by A. Bozóki in the *Beszélő* (1990 március).
16. Public opinion polls in June also confirmed this view. The HSWP still had about a third of the potential votes, i.e. the highest number of potential votes among the political parties. (MKI survey, *Magyarország Politikai Évkönyve* 1990, p. 463. Edited by S. Kurtán, P. Sándor and L. Vass.)
17. Groups of hard-liners, declaring that they were still Communists, did not give up. They appealed to the party cells and party committees of the old party

not to dissolve themselves but to keep their basic organizations and begin to restore the old Communist Party (HSWP) from below. It was successful, as far as the high figure of party membership is concerned. They didn't accept the resolutions of the October party congress and considered the reformers as traitors of the workers' movement. Their own party congress was held in December 1989.

18. In fact, the 'danger' of a presidential system was rather low, since the constitutional rights of the president were limited. Besides the preference of the radical opposition for a parliamentary system, their real aim was to prevent Pozsgay from becoming president. They regarded Pozsgay as the political leader of a potential (reformer) Communist-HDF coalition, which might have pushed the radicals to the margin of the political scene.
19. While 95 per cent of the voters agreed with the radicals on the first three questions, only 50.1 per cent voted for the postponement of the presidential election.
20. Both the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats were originally formed by intellectuals, therefore their cleavage reflects a traditional split of the Hungarian intelligentsia between the *populist* (népi) and *urbanist* (urbánus) wing. This split had its origin in the inter-war period, but appeared again in the 1980s and marked the re-emerging political pluralism.
21. András Körösenyi, 'Coalitions in the making in Hungarian politics' p. 30-31. In: *East European Reporter*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (Winter 1989/90).

2 Post-communist transition: political tendencies in Hungary*

András Bozóki

Any definition of the economic and political transitions occurring in Hungary today must begin with an analysis of the earlier structures that are now being dissolved. For a long time the system had no longer been Stalinist, that is, based on a totalitarian ideology which systematically used terror in the exercise of autocratic control over the everyday personal and professional lives of the people. After the 1956 uprising the system could not continue without change. People's memory of the event might be pushed out of their consciousness by the government's retaliation, but the Rákosi dictatorship could not continue as if nothing had happened;¹ the basic economic and political system remained the same, but the political style changed. The party leaders held on to their political monopoly, but stopped trying to persuade the people, reasoning that if the conditions of their lives improved, they would not be interested in politics. When the private sector became free, the decline of Stalinism was possible, Kádár adopted Khrushchev's policy, and remained loyal even after Khrushchevism was abandoned in the Soviet Union. Although it was impossible to prevent the damaging impacts of neo-Stalinism associated with Brezhnev, Kádárism was able to keep its post-Stalinist nature, supporting a higher standard of living and increased consumption while doing its best to isolate the social conflicts; thus, it was a *paternal dictatorship*. But these goals were unrealizable and the country became poor, burdened by international debts, while the Kádár regime lost its credibility.

Now the conditions were established for a transition from a post-Stalinist to a post-communist system.² The weak spot of the post-Stalinist economic structure had been its sluggish productivity, and it

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