

EXTERNAL HELP AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF CIVIC ACTIVISM IN HUNGARY

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Abstract

The political protest movements of the transformation period in Hungary have been institutionalised as political parties or in other organisational forms. They

have become organised and formalised actors in the new democracy, while new social movements emerged with new forms of protest activities oriented to address new socio-political conflicts. Approaches to institutionalisation processes of social movements, "movementism," specific political cultures, and forms of action and organisation of socio-political movements were pushed

back during the transformation into political organisations. The "established" civil society of former Communist countries strives for resources and experiences of

Western democracies. However, Western support is also based on a scarcity of resources, a fact not realised at the time of Communist constraints, when receiving Western aid was a risky activity undertaken only by few groups and individuals. A competitive market for low-risk support by Western agencies is being established.

Civil society activists have to prove accountability, organisational skills, and social and media impact to be supported by Western donors. Intellectual capital and organisational infrastructure must be provided with managerial skills required by Western agencies as distributors of goods and organisers of programmes. A shift from informal social movements to differentiated types of NGOs takes place, as targets of Western aid and a competitive market of Eastern NGOs will be established for the external help.

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Introduction

Autonomous social movements, the forces of civil society, were suppressed in Hungary — like in other communist systems before the transformation and democratisation — and so called “pseudo-movements,” large bureaucratic organisations, claiming to be social movements, dominated the political scene (e.g., official trade unions, peace associations, women’s movement). The authoritarian system had outlawed all non-conformist, socio-political protest (Frentzel-Zagorska 1990, 766-768).

In the crisis of the old system, the emergence of autonomous, social movements of political protest played an important but not dominant role (Knabe 1990). How could civil society actors receive foreign, that is, Western aid for their work? The Communist system hindered communication between autonomous initiatives and Western and other aid agencies. Informal networks and co-operation between Eastern and Western, or Eastern and Eastern movements were ultimate targets of administrative control. Communist systems tried to prevent the mobilisation of international resources by their opponents in the form of joint protest actions, exchange of ideas, and experiences with movements of other countries. The control of an informal “foreign policy” of social movements and civic initiatives attempted to erect barriers against global and regional cultural trends, changes of value, and political orientations that did not fit the official line (Miszlivetz 1989).

In the new democracies of post-communist countries, organisations of civil society have free access to international networks, and there are no political-administrative barriers against global and regional trends and movements. Internationalisation is especially important for emerging or re-emerging civil movements, characterised by the “poor” situation, scarcity of resources, and lack of experience with pluralist conditions. “Poor” Eastern movements are looking for “richer” Western partners and co-operation, and there are attempts among Eastern movements of networking beyond national levels and multiplying the effectiveness of their own resources. These are new functions to be established and accepted by oppositional movements of the former Eastern “underground.” In Hungary, however, there is a new situation with formalised networks involving movements and initiatives of exiled Hungarians from the West and minority Hungarians in neighbouring countries possibly developing co-operation with domestic Hungarian movements in single campaigns or in longer lasting forms.

I will try and provide a brief, general sketch and formulate a thesis concerning different political opportunities for receiving and demanding external, and particularly Western, support for activities in Hungary’s civil society before and after 1989. Regarding the differentiation of civil society actors, the descriptive part of the paper will focus on the transformation of initiatives for human rights, university students, peace and antimilitarism, and ecology in the democratic opposition before 1989 and its successor organisations, parties, and NGOs after 1989 as object of Western support in Hungary.

Changing Political Space of “Movement Sector” and Civil Society in Hungary

Compared to other East-European communist countries, mass mobilisations and political protest are less relevant phenomena in the process of democratisa-

tion in Hungary. There are fewer mass mobilisations and protests than in Poland, the former GDR, and Czechoslovakia, and less violent forms of protest than in Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia. But there were differentiated forms of protest movements with strategies of mass mobilisation during the Hungarian transformation (Ramet 1991).

The political protest movements of the transformation period in Hungary have been institutionalised as political parties or in other organisational forms. They have become organised and formalised actors in the new democracy, while new social movements emerged with new forms of protest activities oriented to address new socio-political conflicts (Szabó 1991).

Accordingly, some approaches to institutionalisation processes of social movements, "movementism," specific political cultures, action and organisation forms of socio-political movements, were pushed back during the transformation into political organisations. Consequently, democratic transformation, former "out-lawed"/opposition movements must suffer a new type of "marginality" in a constitutional system based on the dominance of political representation, or to be transformed into formalised political organisations. If former protest movements are transformed into political organisations, new conflicts will be articulated by new movements. Thus, anti-communist movements are institutionalised in post-communist systems, and new, post-communist protest movements articulate new social conflicts.

The mobilisation of social movements and the use of political protest are not brand-new phenomena in Hungary. They were also present during the Kádár regime, but the political opportunity structure of "Kádárism" forced social mobilisation and protest into illegality; it was unable to appear in official publicity and mobilise broader masses. Social mobilisation and political protest were illegal, part of a "secondary" publicity, and had a marginal social effect. The rapid and radical transformation of political opportunity structures in 1989-1990 produced constitutionalism, rule of law, a multi-party system, free elections, and institutionalised rights and freedoms to associate and assemble.

The general political conditions of mobilisation and protest are similar to Western democracies now. Social movements are acting legally, publicly, and they may mobilise as much support and as many resources as they are able to organise. These changes had an effect on the former opponents of the Kádár regime, who had to fit into the new framework of representative democracy, to avoid a "new marginality" in the post-communist system. They had to change the character of their socio-political activities and patterns of mobilisation of political protest.

Some of the general trends of these changes for former "underground," "clandestine," protest movements in a pluralistic democracy in Hungary are as follows:

Legalisation

During the Kádár regime, all types of autonomous, socio-political mobilisation were forced to be illegal, including informal social movements, because of the absence of legal forms for associations, trade unions, and political parties. Now, initiatives are free to choose among different organisational forms provided by constitutional and political systems, and to establish associations, parties, trade unions, or foundations. While informal, "clandestine," networking, "underground" forms of social movements were necessities for non-conformist socio-political ini-

tatives before 1989, they may now find their favoured legal form in a pluralist system. "Movement versus formal organisation" became a major strategic dilemma for former oppositional movements, and the new political opportunity structure is a challenge for them to be institutionalised.

Differentiation

The former anti-communist opposition movements were forced to solidarity with each others under the repressive socio-political control of the regime. All informal groups had a common enemy, the party-state which supervised and suppressed them. They suffered from the same restrictions of mobilisation, institutionalisation, and protest activities. This situation resulted in a general "brotherhood" of former oppositional movements, despite of their differing and conflicting orientations, goals, and demands. During and after the democratisation, the common enemy disappeared and the conflict of former "solidarising" protest movements with each other was publicly articulated. Mobilisation and counter-mobilisation of social protest is a widespread phenomenon in post-communist Hungary. Movements are in conflict and compete on the same political market, for the same goods of support and resources; they are competitors and even enemies with good reasons.

Networking

Co-operation of protest movements in organised form, and the sharing of resources and infrastructures were systematically prevented by the Kádár regime to avoid multiplication of the protest potential. In contrast to the GDR or Romania, the Hungarian communist regime, headed by János Kádár, tolerated isolated movements and initiatives to a certain extent, but tried to suppress immediately all forms of networking. Although the movements tried to overcome this barrier and build up their networks, the latter could not be formalised publicly during the Kádár era. Only democratisation opened up strategic alternatives of formalised-legalised networking for protest movements and removed political risks for their members. Networking in formally organised and legal form among protest movements is a new phenomenon in Hungary. Movements are using this strategy because of the scarcity of their resources and the advantages of shared infrastructures in mobilising protest potentials. Former clandestine and informal networks are becoming formal and public, which sometimes is a process producing personal and collective conflicts but also collective benefits. "Alliances," "networks," and "federations" of different initiatives are widely accepted organisational forms in contemporary Hungary; in some protest campaigns, "networks of networks" for single protest issues are established.

Legality and Legitimacy of the Protest

There is a new conflict between legality and legitimacy in the post-communist democracies based on "legalised" political protest. The communist systems had a monopoly for the dominant, official political direction to use political mobilisation and protest, while non-official forms of mobilisation and protest were outlawed, and political protest was illegal. But they were "legitimate" for opposition movements alienated from the communist power structures and referred to the democratic values of U. N. declarations or the Helsinki Charter (Tamás 1993).

Since rule of law and Western type constitutionalism have been institutionalised in post-communist countries, and a legal space for demonstrations, gatherings, and other forms of political protest has been created, a new type of legitimacy must be found for protest strategies beyond the legal framework (Csapody 1991). The concepts of “civil disobedience” and “peaceful resistance” are articulated in intellectual and political discourse as sources of the legitimacy of illegal protest. How large is the political space for legitimate but illegal political protest in a new and unstable constitutional order and pluralistic system? This is not an academic question given the widening repertoire of illegal protests in the new Hungarian democracy.

Breaking the recently established and passed law by protest is a great challenge to the public order and confronts with conflicting values the new constitutional system. Among illegal protest forms, political violence is not widespread in Hungary. Most illegal protests aim to mobilise a broader public through media to give support to articulated demands, while political violence is rarely used in protest actions. There are a few, marginal cases of violent conflicts between protesters and police or counter-protesters between 1990 and 1994 with an immense shift in the conditions of political protest, from “outlawed, but mostly legitimate” to “mostly legal, some illegal, a few legitimate.” Concepts and criteria of legitimacy for political protest had to be rapidly — and recently — established by constitutional and political discourse which developed a “new political culture of protest” with some traditions from the “underground” movements of the communist system, but it had to be rebuilt based on new conflicts and a new consensus.

Trends in the socio-political environment of social movements, external factors of their development, and internal transformations are connected. Using Albert O. Hirschmann’s famous alternatives of the behaviour of members in organisations in crisis, “outlawed” movements were forced into the “exit” options (Hirschman 1970). This means, that they were highly dependent on Western support, but the regime could prevent the reception of aid with the result that different, “clandestine” ways of channelling Western aid were established.

In the time of crisis of the Communist system, the role of external aid for civic activism strengthened its foreign policy. Western organisations realised the extension of political space for their activities, and the authorities did not function appropriately, they practically did not act on the established rules and laws and tolerated external help for civic activism.

The reshaping of the political opportunity structure challenges protest movements to alter their “egos,” their identities, and to discover their new issues, organisational forms and strategies, and new forms of action. Socio-economic development produces new types and forms of social conflict among groups and organisations; restructured conflicts mobilise new types of protests. The “established” civil society of former Communist countries strives for resources and experiences of Western democracies, and the old barriers and constraints are overcome. However, Western support is also based on a scarcity of resources, a fact not realised at the time of Communist constraints, when receiving Western aid was a risky activity undertaken only by few groups and individuals. As far as the possibility for low-risk support activities by Western agencies exists, a competitive market for Western help will be established. Civil society activists have to prove accountability, organisational skills, and social and media impact to be supported by Western

donors. Intellectual capital and organisational infrastructure must be provided with managerial skills “selected” by Western agencies as distributors of goods and organisers of programmes, among other activities. A shift from informal social movements to differentiated types of NGOs takes place as targets of Western aid and a competitive market of Eastern NGOs will be established for the external help whose limits and criteria will be clearly indicated (Les 1994).

From Catacomb Movements and Free World Dichotomy to Poor Relatives and Rich Uncles after 1989

Following is a short overview of the transformation and institutionalisation of former oppositional, “underground” movements of the Kádár regime during democratic transformation with a focus on their external support from Western democracies.

Civil Rights

In Hungary — as in other former communist countries — informal networks of small groups of qualified intellectuals protested against the suppression of civil rights since the early 1970s. Their forms of protest consisted of subscription campaigns supporting civil right demands, spreading information on the state of civil rights in and about the countries, informal discussions and, gatherings. The conflicts that mobilise this type of civic activity change in a democratic, pluralistic system based on the institutionalisation of civil rights. The “catacomb” form of suppressed and persecuted political subcultures was transformed into formal organisations, integrated into the institutionalised political process. Western governments and non-governmental agencies had limited possibilities to provide help for these activities, which were keenly controlled and observed by political police (Szikinger 1996).

The main form of help was substitutive publicity, which provided information on civic activities in Western media, but also in the language of the respective countries, with attempts to disseminate this information within the respective countries. Radio Free Europe or Amnesty International as well as lesser known organisations played this role.

Activists could depend on the possibility that publishing their criticism in the West would have some media impact on the Communist elites in Hungary or in other Communist countries and on their own civil society (Haraszi 1990). In the crisis period since 1987/88, the regime gave different concessions to special relay institutions, like the Soros Foundation and its networks in Hungary and elsewhere to provide fellowships and equipment for the activists and their organisations. These activities were widespread in Hungary at the time, including fellowships, grants and equipment for informal, alternative groups in civil society, and they contributed effectively to the process of institutionalising and organising informal groups as political parties, trade unions, and NGOs of the new democracy (Juras 1994).

During the first free elections after communist rule in 1990, two liberal parties succeeded in obtaining parliamentary seats as opposition, both had been developed from suppressed socio-political movements of the Kádár era when they became influential political parties of the new Hungarian democracy (Bozóki 1992, Csizmadia 1992). The Alliance of the Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége, SZDSZ) and the Alliance of the Young Democrats (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége,

FIDESZ) are the products of institutionalising anti-communist protest movements, which demanded civil rights and democratisation. The leadership of both parties consists of former suppressed and persecuted civil rights activists (Ripp 1995).

The difference between these two liberal parties is based on different political generations of the Hungarian civil rights opposition and mirrors the differences of their preceding protest movements. While the New Left-oriented activists of the "Budapest School" around the late Georg Lukács formed the first civil rights initiatives and organised "samizdat" publicity at the beginning of the 1970s before establishing the SZDSZ, protest movements of the younger generation in the 1980s were organised as student movements, peace and ecology groups before organising the FIDESZ. To institutionalise the differences, FIDESZ, originally established as an alternative youth organisation, introduced an age limit for its membership (35 years), which was upheld until 1993, and excluded "old-age opposition" from its ranks. SZDSZ originally based on "revisionist" Marxism, upheld its affinity as a political party towards socialist ideals, and its political orientation may be characterised as "social liberalism." Despite the fact, that FIDESZ originated in a younger generation of anti-communist protest movements, including student, ecology, and peace groups, the party has been dedicated from its beginnings to a type of liberal conservatism with very few sensibilities to social problems. FIDESZ, lacking any roots in Marxism, was clear-cut anti-communist, and more radical on some issues than SZDSZ.

The differences between the two parties are also based on the different quality of political values and orientations of the political generations rather than age. For instance, despite abolishing its age requirement in 1993 and including older members, FIDESZ maintained differences in political values, strategies, and organisational forms. Both parties emerged from anti-communist protest movements but continue to differ in their leadership and the dynamics of professionalisation. For instance, the generation of SZDSZ founders, with its political culture in the clandestine, underground movement is being removed from party leadership and replaced by professionalised types of technocrats without "catacomb" backgrounds. The "founding fathers" of FIDESZ preserved continuity in the core group of party leaders, but are becoming professionalised politicians and technocrats. The younger generation of movement activists — who were never "outlawed" for a longer period of time — fit into parliamentary politics, while a significant part of the older protest generation with a history of political persecution has left the professionalised political scene to pursue their original creative, intellectual professions and roles.

The sources of internal differentiation and conflict among intraparty groups with different values and strategies in the two parties is based also on differing strategies and relations towards other social movements. In the case of FIDESZ, there has been — from the beginning — an internal division between "movementist," socially engaged, and participation-oriented followers of Gábor Fodor, and yuppie-technocrats supporting professionalisation and "unsocial" market policies led by Victor Orbán, a successful and popular party leader. The "movementists" tried to uphold the "base" as a democratic element in the party and supported civil rights activism, and peace and ecology campaigns of social movements. This orientation gradually lost out to the yuppie-technocrat line, and the final fight occurred in 1993, during strategic discussions for an upcoming election, when Gábor Fodor and his circle left to join SZDSZ.

The direction of Fodor's "exit" shows a clear-cut difference between SZDSZ and FIDESZ in their strategies toward social movements. Victor Orbán argued — even on a general level — for the "political monopoly" of political parties in parliamentary politics and blamed both extra-parliamentary movements on the left and right for competing with political parties on Hungary's political scene. SZDSZ also had its internal debates and leadership conflicts along a "movement versus party" line, but here party technocrats lost their position and SZDSZ preserved its openness toward social movements and political protest. For instance, during the taxi-driver blockade in October 1990, FIDESZ rejected the protest while SZDSZ leaders — based on their experiences of "resistance" against the communist system — demanded the retreat of government. This "extra-parliamentary" engagement was preserved in SZDSZ and diminished in FIDESZ during the legislative period, when Fodor found his second "political home" in the SZDSZ leadership with his engagement in civil rights activism.

This short comparison of SZDSZ and FIDESZ shows that their historical roles, e.g., the protest movement and their original differences in the protest culture followed them through the period of institutionalisation. Both found their own solutions to "party versus movement" dilemma, which was the basis of some of their political and strategic differences. Also, the institutionalisation of protest movements as political parties in parliamentary systems has different alternatives, and "movementist" parties relate in their own ways to their "underground" past.

The role of external aid in this development is not easy to document. However, the autobiographies of members of parliament of the two parties indicate a significantly higher ratio of support from the Soros Foundation for external and internal fellowships than in other political parties. During and after 1989 and especially in 1990 — the year of first free elections — both new parties received external help from different liberal foundations, including the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (Germany) and the Democracy After Communism Foundation (USA) to develop political skills, provide access to Western public relations, and campaign methods. Although amounts or percentages of external aid are hard to document, both parties, but especially SZDSZ, received a considerable amount of external help to cover campaign costs. Later, as their difference was increasingly emphasised by the two liberal parties, clearly competitive or even confrontational attitudes developed in their respective strategies for receiving Western aid. A "mini-scandal" occurred in 1993-1994 when FIDESZ accused the Friedrich Naumann Foundation exclusively helping SZDSZ. When the director of the foundation was fired, SZDSZ rewarded him with a parliamentary seat in the 1994 elections. The differences between FIDESZ and SZDSZ also polarised their Western liberal supporters, and the polarisation led SZDSZ to a Social Liberal coalition in 1994-1998 and FIDESZ to become the moving and organising force of the centre-right opposition before entering the government in 1998.

New conflicts and problems related to civil rights are also apparent in the new Hungarian democracy. New protest organisations emerged to cover this field, including the "Democratic Charter," an umbrella organisation of different civil rights movements between 1992 and 1994, like the Raoul Wallenberg Association, the Martin Luther King Association, Action Against Racism, and Club of Publicity devoted to special issues of civil rights protection. These initiatives were organised in the framework of political pluralism and with rather indirect links to former anti-

communist protest movements. The absence of an “underground” past makes them similar to Western movements; they may be involved in joint international networks and protests and compete for external aid on the market of Western aid agencies. Dependence on external help in the case of NGOs and civil rights issues is obvious (Les 1994). They refuse to accept governmental support and aid from Hungary’s civil society is insufficient to perform their tasks. Their main supporters are the Soros Foundation — which focuses its post-1989 activities on new civic groups, when the former support for “outlawed” groups resulted in creating a new political elite — and international organisations, like UN- and EU-agencies, some Western governmental and semi-governmental programmes and international foundations and civic initiatives. A dominant part of the personal and infrastructural budget of civil right initiatives is based on Western aid, according to a survey by my students who interviewed ten selected human rights NGOs in 1997.

Peace and Antimilitarism

During the Kádár era, unofficial peace initiatives challenged the Moscow-oriented foreign policy of Hungary, resulting in harsh repression during the 1980s. International networking with Western and similar Eastern peace movements, especially, was hindered and punished. Supporters and organisations of conscientious objectors were considered enemies of the state, punished by law, and politically persecuted. Peace and antimilitary activists in Hungary were suspected as being traitors or agents of Western powers., resulting in harsh controls and interventions by the authorities; common actions, like “peace camps” or joint demonstrations, were suppressed. The stage dramatically changed with the “*glasnost* and *perestroika*” effects, when fellowships, equipment aid, and publication support could be transferred from the West. However, this thaw occurred when Western peace movements were in decay, and new opportunities for international networking and Western aid were less useful than in the case of civil rights activism. The more stable, organised peace initiatives of the Churches, in particular, could penetrate and find their counterparts in Eastern Europe.

Suppressed peace and antimilitarist movements of the 1980s did not return in the new Hungarian democracy. The restructuring of security arrangements, a change in Hungarian military service, the complexity of local conflicts, and international trends in the development of peace movements, may be mentioned as causes for the demobilisation — or rather for absence of re-mobilisation. New types of antimilitarist initiatives do exist, but they are not directly connected — neither on personal nor on organisational, or issue levels — to the peace protest of the 1980s. Peace and antimilitarism follow new patterns in the Hungarian democracy.

After democratisation in Hungary, there are new types of antimilitarist movements protesting against all forms of violence and supporting conscientious objectors, like Alba Circle, League of Antimilitarists, or Alternative Network. However, the Gulf War and the Eastern expansion of the NATO alliance overshadowed their socio-political impact on civil society; they may be characterised as marginalised groups, which must try to distance themselves from anti-NATO communists, the Workers Party of Gyula Thürmer, and NATO-criticism of the extreme right — in this case, István Csurka’s political grouping. Although the small and rare peace groups refer to the traditions of the unofficial peace movements of the 1980, there

are few personal continuities, mostly found among religious groups protesting against military service. The new peace movements were organised under new, pluralistic political conditions. Their issue orientation follows the changing patterns of international politics, and their main concern is no longer the bipolar system of mutual deterrence, but general issues of antimilitarism. This issue has been connected often with the Yugoslav crises and wars, but presently it is not a wide-ranging, mobilising force in Hungary. Regarding conscientious objection — except for radical religious groups rejecting all forms of military service — the conflict is not over the introduction and institutionalisation of alternative military service, which occurred during democratisation, but over the propagation and further development of existing legal possibilities, and help for conscientious objectors and individuals choosing alternative service.

Issues of peace and antimilitarist movements are unable to mobilise a wider public in post-communist Hungary. There is stable, but small support for protest actions, but despite the solidarity and active help of qualified intellectuals, this protest remains an “undercurrent” when coalitions of protest organisations were able to mobilise mass protest for their actions. “Pure” antimilitarist or peace demonstrations and campaigns remained events dominated by youth, students, intellectuals, or religious subcultures. Joint and international action days, like Hiroshima day, are regularly established protest campaigns in Hungary, however, without mass support. Genuine forms of civil disobedience — as important contributions to Hungary’s protest culture — are imported by peace groups, like Alba Circle, which organised actions against NATO propaganda. International or Western support for peace and antimilitarism is hard to qualify in material terms. The spiritual, “software” help is there in the form of joint seminars, publications, and a spirit of solidarity typical of international protest campaigns. The marginal role of Hungarian peace activism did not succeed in attracting broader Western aid after 1989. In summary, Western aid in this field, non-existent before 1989 due to constraints by the regime, is not existing after 1989 due to the transformation of the issue and the political marginalisation of the respective groups and their Western counterparts.

Ecology and Environment

Ecology movements played a central role in the protest against the Kádár regime during the second half of the 1980s. Their dynamics were built on protest against the construction of a joint Hungarian-Czechoslovak dam on the Danube river. The action mobilised broad support, because the project had been criticised as the last “dinosaur” — called *Duna-saur* — the last non-profitable and gigantic Socialist industrialisation project of pollution and destruction. The last Communist government in 1989 had stopped the construction of the dam under the pressure of mass protests, and the conflict became a foreign policy issue between Hungary and Slovakia. The Hungarian protest had lost its target when the government accepted the demand of the protest movements.

This success led to a demobilisation of environmentalists and their supporters on this issue (Fisher and Davis 1992). The only Hungarian nuclear power plant and its problems provoked only regional protest, and actions of ecologists are oriented toward regional and special issues; they are not combined with protests against general policy issues of the energy industry, for instance, suggesting a differentiation of protest potentials among issues and organisations within the ecol-

ogy movement. A nation-wide network does exist, however, and there are central issues, but these protests are not connected with problems of democratisation and social change, like in the Kádár era. László Sólyom, an activist of the unofficial ecology movement, observed after the change of the regime that ecology activism in the Kádár regime could not be "apolitical," because it had to be confronted as an autonomous social movement with restrictions on freedom of speech and association (Sólyom 1988, 30-32). Environmentalism, as all unofficial movements in the Communist system, had to articulate demands for civil rights under pressure of restrictive, political-administrative controls. Under conditions of constitutionalism and rule of law, environmentalism now is depoliticised. The ecology movement retains its protest movement character in Hungary by concentrating on its "own" ecology issues, and is no longer concerned about a change of the regime or an introduction of civil rights into the constitution.

External aid to Hungarian ecology activism followed the pattern of the civil rights movement before 1989. However, more communication with Western agencies was tolerated by the Communist regime, which believed in being the "true" ecologists after having established ministries and laws for environmental protection earlier than most Western democracies. But the self-confidence of Hungary's official environmentalists had its limits, and unofficial ecologists appeared to become more interesting to a Western public; the anti-dam groups received the Right Livelihood Award, a type of "alternative Nobel prize," and repression emerged against the Greens. A joint Austrian-Hungarian protest march was dissolved by police, and the monetary award of the alternative Nobel Prize was very difficult to spend because of the harassment by the authorities. The opportunities rapidly changed in 1988, when "softliners" became more influential within the Hungarian Communist elites; environmental demonstrations with participation by foreign activists were the first ones to be de facto tolerated by the police. After a short-lived "Green outburst," when new political forces gained a profile as anti-dam activists, ecology disappeared from the "top" list of protest and civil society activism. Instead, a professionalisation of ecology activism occurred in Hungary with extended and effective Western help. Again, hard figures are difficult to come by, but there are qualitative measures.

A Regional Environmental Centre for Eastern and Central Europe was established in Budapest. It is the main think tank and distributor of Western aid for environmental protection, "software," and environmental civic activism in Hungary and other post-communist countries. Thus, the Centre provides a wide range of activities for ecogroups in Eastern European societies, including manuals for vocal protest activism, courses in lobbying, resource management, and the like. The Centre and other agencies attempt to influence the process of environmental lawmaking in post-communist countries and organised a series of East-East and East-West seminars on environmental legislation for NGOs. For environmental summits, and meeting of government and of non-governmental agencies on global and regional environmental issues, the Centre organised preliminary meetings of Eastern and Western NGOs to prepare concepts and strategies. Support of networking, information webs, Internet, and e-mail is distributed by the Centre to develop a communication web of Hungarian and international environmentalists (Tóth-Nagy 1994). Larger international NGOs, like Greenpeace, have their constituencies and organisation in some of the former Communist countries; they sup-

port the activities of the home NGOs with protest actions covered by international news and media in the East European region. Foreign activism in East Central Europe became lower risk activism compared to before 1989, when international protesters could have had punished for violating the respective penalty codes. However no spectacular cases are known now.

Restructuration of the conflict concerning the Danube dam hindered the mobilisation of mass support for this previously central issue in post-1989 Hungary. The conflict was institutionalised (1990-1998) on the foreign policy level. Only small groups tried to influence government policy, and they had diverging attitudes toward the project. Local protests were rather concerned about the unintended consequences of construction or demanded help for their environmental problems caused by the unilateral Slovak construction. Also, there are still small protest groups of intellectuals dealing with the Hungarian withdrawal from project and its consequences.

An internationalisation of protest was unable to add a new dynamic to the anti-dam movement. In Slovakia, harsh and violent repression of protesters, rejection of all types of criticism against the "Slovak" dam, and accusations of criticism and protest as being "pro-Hungarian" — a serious argument in the recently established nation-state with its picture of the Southern neighbour as enemy — stopped protests against the new dam. Western movements are not able and willing to intervene in the conflict between Hungary and Slovakia, which is overshadowed by the problems of Hungarian minorities. Thus, the dam controversy lost its character as a conflict between state and civil society, when Western ecologists could easily identify their partners and pictures of the enemy. The story of anti-dam protest shows how hard the East-East networks of civil society groups worked after 1989.

Despite an absence of integrative, nation-wide mobilising conflicts, there were attempts to organise Green parties in Hungary following the Austrian or German models. During the first free elections, the Greens were divided between traditional environmentalists and alternative ecologists; this division was also overshadowed by the conflict of earlier official and underground environmentalists v. ecologists. The Green party was — from the beginning — paralysed by these conflicts and performed poorly and unsuccessfully in the election. Famous environmentalists and ecologists did not engage in internal debates of the Greens, and were spread over the political spectrum. The Greens — as an organised political party — were unable to politically represent the Hungarian ecology movements.

Between the two elections, Green networks were established on the level of citizens' initiatives and protest movements, but the party formation did not profit from the results. Two conflicting Green parties competed in 1994 in the national elections, the Green Alternative and the Hungarian Greens. The former enjoyed the support of "Eurogreens," but failed in the election, and — after failing to propose their own representatives — its leaders supported small liberal parties. A later right-wing ecologist, or rather "eco-Fascist" party, which received some support by the electorate, was rejected by a large majority of environmental movements as representing right-wing ideas.

As a result, there is no political affiliation of Green parties and movements that functions in Hungary, despite promises of Western aid for the establishment of Green parties in Eastern Europe after 1989. This case is an example of puzzling problems of external aid and internal conflicts; despite foreign support, the Green parties of former post-Communist countries are not doing well, based on the mate-

rial hardship and security problems which move and concern the population and which are not the place for post-material demands and the sensibilities of the New Politics in welfare democracies.

Despite unsuccessful party politics, Hungary's ecology movements are doing well. In the case of networks of initiatives, environmentalists formed a protest movement with influence and profile. For instance, on Earth Day, or at their annual meetings, a multiplicity of regional and special issue-based movements and initiatives appear among the participants of the rallies. They are able to mobilise broad mass support on some special issues and build coalitions across party spectra; the case of air pollution in Budapest, organised by the Working Group Air, may be the most well known Hungarian environmental initiative today. Although the institutionalisation of Hungarian environmental and ecology movements did not succeed in party formations, there is a Green Network, a "network of networks" of different initiatives, movements, and foundations that functions in the forms of joint protests and other type of actions. There are personal continuities on the level of leadership and on issues — except for the Danube dam — with the unofficial environmentalism of the Kádár era, while new wave of initiatives and associations has developed under new conditions.

Changing Structure of Civil Society and Western Aid after 1989

In summary, we may generally identify change of profiles, forms of organisation, issues, and strategies. Some of the protest movements against the Kádár system established political parties, others remained protest movements but fit into the new institutional framework of pluralism. Traditions of the protest movements of the Kádár regime are still alive, but operate under the conditions of "rule of law," "legalisation" when protests occur in the forms of demonstrations, lobbying, or electoral politics.

Social movements and political protest were outlawed under the communist system and separated by administrative means from the "normal" process of politics. In a contemporary a multi-party system and parliamentary democracy, social movements and their protest culture are a special but integrated part of the political process, with their own profile and identity. Political protest and social movements are not central and dominant elements of the new politics in post-communist Hungary. Old and new movements, preserving their identities as protest movements, must cope up with a "new type of marginality" in multi-party systems and representative democracies, where elected bodies and political bureaucracies play a dominant role. Western aid is not blocked but its flow follows rather sober bureaucratic and professional criteria rather than the lead of courageous and risk-taking avant-garde, catacomb-activists before 1989 who had to be helped by Western governments and non-governmental agencies while avoiding sanctions and coercion.

Some characteristic transformations of former protest movements may be recorded in the process of reintegration into institutionalised politics via organisation which influence the strategies and orientations of Western aid to Eastern civil society.

Issues of protest against a Communist system have changed. They did not disappear, but they are articulated in new forms, like in the case of civil rights, peace, and ecology, which result in the reorientation of Western support programmes.

Some issues, however, may disappear from the forefront while others are transformed.

Differentiated organisational forms are provided for challenging groups in a pluralistic democracy. One of them is the party formation, but it is not the only alternative for protest movements; associations, foundations, citizens' initiatives and their networks emerge from the former underground. Informal groups are no longer looked upon as targets of Western aid in these more or less consolidated democracies; instead, infrastructural stability, "clean" records toward former Western programmes, and clear-cut legal status are required from Eastern partner organisations. Western assistance is following but also strengthening the internally based development toward formalised-bureaucratized structures of civil society groups, the transformation of an avant-garde towards professionalism.

In a Communist system, high risks were connected to political protest, and formal and informal social and political pressures were used to demobilise society. This resulted in restricting the mobilisation of urban, educated, younger white-collar workers in Hungary. In the pluralistic system of the new Hungarian republic, protests and other civic activism become democratised: taxi drivers, poor people movements, peasants and pensioners become actors or clients, and the former monopoly of urban, intellectual and younger groups in civic activism is diminished. However, as statistics have shown, in most of the cases the headquarters of NGOs is located in the capital, Budapest, and they exert less influence on other localities. Indeed, local initiatives have hardly access to Western aid without the administrative and cultural centre of the country. Some Western programmes are trying to break up centralised distribution structures by helping local networking and international communication of local civic initiatives, such as the KAP Programme of the Dutch Embassy, or the DemNET programme of the United States Information Agency (USAID), which support local NGO developments.

New characteristics of civic activism after the Kádár era include legally and constitutionally regulated public mobilisation and protest, which are accepted as political institutions. In the framework of freedom of association and gathering, legal and public networking, resource mobilisation, and non-violent protests are widely accepted forms of political action. Beyond the framework of legal protests, demands for civil disobedience have been articulated by different protest groups. Violent and illegal forms of political protest are rare in Hungary, violent conflicts with police during demonstrations have been marginal in the last years. This means a general trend from confrontational to legalised networking and fundraising plus public relations, reducing Western involvement to solidarity protests only in the case of relatively marginalised groups as peace and environmental activism. The main focus of Western programmes is to help lobbying, and participation, and to influence the decision-making processes and the building of infrastructures, especially in terms of developing human skills for self-help. The aid is no longer aimed at preserving but at building structures with self-preservation capacities and human capital. Most of the activist initiatives distributing or organising Western aid for civil society in Hungary — interviewed by my Pd. D. students in 1998 — were aware of their temporary existence and aimed to help establish self-reliance and self-help capacities within Hungarian initiatives.

Protest movements of the Kádár era still preserved their specific political tradition and identity. A political generation of activists has been socialised into the

underground of the 1980s. They spread over the socio-political spectrum, but the experience of being outlawed in a communist system produced longer lasting effects. Myths, symbols, and fights of the suppressed protest movements are kept alive in the new political culture. How much former underground activists fit into institutionalised and professionalised politics, and how they live with their memories of the past, should be an interesting object of study in post-communist systems. In most civil rights initiatives in Hungary, presidents and the boards, the core decision makers, have a record in pre-1989 activism, and grey professionals joined the groups after 1989. A concentration of power and prerogatives among “martyrs” and professional activity among newcomers characterise the division of labour within these groups.

Risks of civic activism were high in the Communist system, and the space to launch professional activities was restricted. After 1989 issue-, efficacy-oriented activities became more dominant, and non-governmental activity is no longer connected with much risk of repression from the side of the authorities. As a consequence, a new generation of activists with professional or semi-professional backgrounds emerged.

Although the different forms of civic protests do not lose their importance after 1989, protests become only one of the forms of civic activities when administrative barriers against articulation fall away. After 1989, public relations work, fund raising, national and international networking, education, and organisation development become eminently important among civic activists, and professionally trained volunteerism is required for producing efficient services.

General discussions, symbolic issues, the framing of problems, and their interconnectedness are still on the agenda, but nowadays initiatives are issue-oriented in policy frameworks; meanwhile in the communist system the “system” as such had been criticised by every civic activist, and without free praxis, theoretical, “ideologised,” and therefore theoretically overloaded discourses emerged. After 1989, pragmatic and policy-issue oriented approaches are the dominant patterns.

Although civic activism — from the beginning — had connections to similar activities in other countries, the Communist system heavily controlled international travel and communication. After 1989, free international networking and communication make internationalisation and globalisation possible and feasible. Both, Western resources and know-how are badly needed in post-communist Hungary, for joining resources and building common power structures in networking with other post-communist countries initiatives.

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