

## STUDIES

### FROM ELITES TO NOMENKLATURA The Evolution and Some Characteristics of Institutionalised Cadre Policy in Hungary (1945–1989)

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**Abstract:** Based on empirical research the paper summarizes the social and institutional characteristics of the birth and reproduction of the Hungarian nomenklatura system. The research included the reconstruction of the decision making system, and the documents of recruitment. Moreover interviews were conducted with several top officials of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party. The paper argues that although there was a chance to form new elite after World War II., it did not happen because of the infiltration of the Communist Party into the repressive organizations. The take-over of power led to the formation of a nomenklatura.

The paper overviews the impact of the nomenklatura-system on the working of central institutions, the academic world and civil organizations. It investigates the documents dealing with the composition of the nomenklatura and the privileges of its members.

**Keywords:** elite, nomenklatura, cadre policy, recruitment, career patterns, privileges

#### THE “GENESIS” OF THE HYPOTHESIS

##### Elite(s) in the Hungarian Society in the Inter-war Period. The Returns of an Earlier Study of Elites

In 1993 a plan was drawn up to deal with the sociological characteristics of those active in the top leadership positions of the Kádár era, in continuation of the earlier study of elites, that had dealt prominently with the features of the Hungarian elites during the inter-war period. As a first step the period between 1957 and 1963 was studied. A research group was formed with the participation of several institutes.<sup>1</sup> Preliminary collection of materials was started in two directions. At first we surveyed

1 Members of the research group at the Institute of Sociology of ELTE were: Tibor Huszár (head), János Szabó, Zoltán László Kiss, László Huszár, András Bohár, Isván Sponga and Ms L. Németh.

the order of decision-making,<sup>2</sup> and also studied the documents and locations of appointments. Focusing on this group of issues we made career interviews with several leading functionaries of the HSWP in the first phase.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis of the documents and interviews made it obvious already in the preliminary phase of the research that the theoretical assumptions, categories and methods used in the study of the elites, namely the Hungarian elite of the inter-war period in our particular case needed reinterpretation:<sup>4</sup> the elites and the nomenklatura could only be collated on the level of “abstract identity”.

Even if the assertion of the elector’s will was hindered by several conditions in the two-chamber system, such as the *limited* number of the enfranchised, the lack of *secret* ballot excepting the capital and ten (later on five) big cities, and the composition of the second chamber specified by law, excepting the short period before consolidation under Prime Minister Bethlen, the supreme depository of state sovereignty and legislating organ was the *Parliament* in the Horthy regime.<sup>5</sup> Though it was the *dominance* of the *governing* party of various names and of a partly different background that was asserted at the elections and in governance, other parties with legitimate authorization did exist as well. The left-wing parliamentary opposition of the governing party, even though with limited sphere of mobility and without any chance of acceding to power within the framework of the system, was the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Smallholders’ Party (henceforward: FKgP); and from 1939 on the Arrow-cross Party functioned as a competing party, and subsequently the Party of Hungarian Renewal, led by Béla Imrédi, represented a strong right-wing opposition, enjoying vigorous German support (Sipos 1970; Lackó 1966). Thus the system was not democratic, but the principle of *pluralism* had a limited operation up to 19 March 1944.

The operation of *market economy* was restricted at different periods and with diverse rigor, but capital ownership as a subsystem of the economy could *preserve* its essential autonomy at least up to the introduction of *prescribed wartime economy* and up to the anti-Jewish laws entered into force. The *stock exchange* worked, the *organs and bodies of interest representation* (*National Association of Manufacturers*, the *Association of Savings Banks and Banks*, the various chambers, industrial bodies, etc.), and the *occupational trade unions* as important actors of the world of labor even though with limited competency. Arts, book publishing, the press, education, higher education and science could essentially preserve their autonomy, and though the influence of the Churches was dominant in the school system, and the blind alleys, such as the popular school of six forms, the civic school of four forms, the eight-form school of realities and the grammar school focusing on humanities by themselves

2 During the course of this work we utilised the writing of Andás Nyíró, entitled *A párt vezető testületei a határozatok tükrében* [The Leading Bodies of the Party as Reflected by the Decisions] (Nyíró 1990a).

3 Career interviews were made with István Lázár, Sándor Gáspár, Rezső Nyers, József Köből, István Szabó, István Horváth, János Berecz, and Ernő Lakatos of the members of the Central Committee and the Politbureau. Of the interviews made with ministers and secretaries of state I would particularly mention the ones with Károly Hetényi, Miklós Pulai, and Imre Hutás.

4 The results of this research have been used in: Lengyel 1989; Gergely 1987; Szakály 1987, 1989.

5 In greater detail, referring also to differences see Romsics 2002: 220–224.

*limited* upward mobility and the circle of those social strata that could enter university. Those committed to the Christian-national ideology were preferred by those institutions of culture and education where the state or the Church had appointment rights (Gyáni 2000: 215–245). As a consequence of the conditions described above the *structure of the elite* could be constructed with the help of the Statute-book, the Records of Officers' Titles and Names, Encyclopaedias and Annals; the positions could be identified, the social stratification of the elite could be numerically defined, and intra-elite circulation described.<sup>6</sup>

### The Chance and Its Absence to the Emergence of a New Elite 1945–1948

In 1945 and 1946 an opportunity for transformation of a democratic nature was becoming visible. Conditions of a multi-party system emerged and were legitimized by the elections to local authorities and to the National Assembly in the autumn of 1945. The new National Assembly passed Act I of 1946 and as a result Hungary became a republic. The basis of a democratic political system and a pluralist party system was created by law under conditions of limited sovereignty.<sup>7</sup>

The multi-sector character of the *economy* was also retained. Land reform strengthened the position of the wealthy peasantry, and important actors of the *market economy* such as private capital, small-scale industry and retail trade were present in reconstruction, at least up to 1947. The press became pluralistic, and the establishment of the system of general primary education, the setting up of the Council for Public Education, the movement of popular colleges all represented important initial steps on the way to the *democratization of culture*.

Yet, the democratically elected elite, just as much as *the economic and cultural elite once again emerging, could not develop* and consolidate themselves. A detailed presentation of the causes is not the task of the present paper,<sup>8</sup> yet two aspects are regarded as outstanding in view of the meaningful discussion of our topic, too. The first one was the conditioning of the process by foreign policy. The shaping of the plural system, at least temporarily, was required by the accords reached by the Allied Powers.<sup>9</sup>

6 This work was jointly done with Gábor I. Kovács, with the co-operation of István Vida, György Lengyel, Jenő Gergely and Sándor Szakács.

7 The natural and inalienable rights of citizens, particularly the right to personal freedom, to a life free of fear and deprivation, to the freedom of thought and opinion, freedom of worship, the right to assembly and combination, to ownership, personal safety, to work and appropriate human livelihood, to free share in culture and education, and the right to participate in the governance of the state and local governments. Act I of 1946 on the form of government of Hungary. 1946. I. tc. Magyarország államformájáról (*Magyar Törvénytár* é.n.: 3).

8 On the causes and context see in greater detail see Ständeisky et al. 1998.

9 With the words of József Révai said in the summer of 1945 as part of his presentation entitled *Az ország felépítésének politikai feltételei* [The Political Conditions of the Building of the Country]: "The Soviet Union pursues the policy of co-operation with the Allied Nations. Therefore we, at the same time ... cannot pursue a policy contradicting to it ... It is a corollary of Communist internationalism that one has to adjust to international politics, and first of all we have to adjust to Soviet politics," Quoted by Szakács 1981: 39.

Co-operation between the Allies proved to be a transitory one, and it was replaced by Cold War, and the *dependent position* of the Hungarian communist movement on the CPSU was a constant function of that process. This fact proved to be decisive in the elimination of the nascent democratic elite (Szakács–Zinner 1997). External political dependence was becoming stronger after 1947; Hungary was gradually being integrated into the Soviet imperial zone.

The shaping of the democratic elite was crossed over and the basis of its transformation into nomenklatura was laid by the *sneaking acquisition of position* of the *Communist party in the power-enforcement organizations* that could be dated back to 1945, first of all in the Department of Military Policy, functioning under various names, and in the State Security Authorities (henceforward ÁVO or ÁVH), organizationally autonomous at that time. A similar trend could be observed in the organs of law and order, in the Ministry of Home Affairs of decisive significance for the control over county administration (Okváth 2000: 33–56; Gyarmati 2000: 97–134). It was well reflected by the distribution of leading positions by the coalition parties in the Ministry of Home Affairs (Gyarmati 2000: 100).

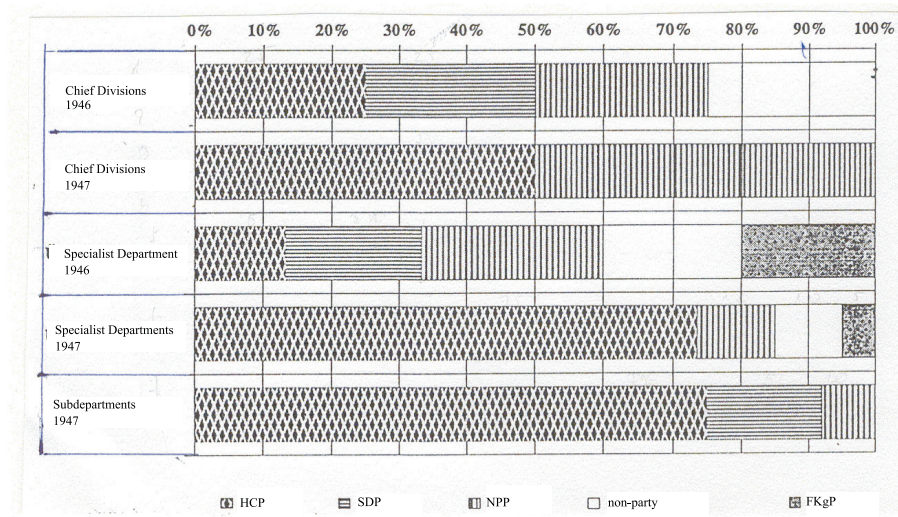


Figure 1. Changes in the distribution of key positions (heads of divisions, departments and subdivisions) by parties in the Ministry of Home Affairs headed by László Rajk between the spring of 1946 and the spring of 1947

The gaining of positions by the HCP in the power-enforcement organizations and in public administration was aimed at the subsequent correction of the results of the first free elections: it kept the process of coalition governance under pressure by so-called direct actions and by other means of coercion. The topic of the present paper does not extend to the survey of those practices and techniques. It is only indicated here that the extent of them covered crypto-communists grafted into the high command of the coalition parties as well as frame-up lawsuits affecting the sphere of influence of those parties and subsequently directly the parties themselves and destabilizing their

leadership. The rudest interference in this respect was the so-called trial of the Hungarian Community (Csicsery-Rónai et al. 1998: 102; Szakács and Zinner 1997: 446–250).

The election results of 1947 were influenced by administrative measures as well as directly. Almost 8 and a half per cent of the enfranchised that is 467 thousand citizens were divested of their right to vote with the co-operation of the ÁVO. The so-called ‘blue-slip’ action modified the results already *during* the elections: with the help of these slips and with the co-operation of the Ministry of Home Affairs a citizen could throw his/her ballot illegally at several places, to the advantage of the HCP.<sup>10</sup>

Blocked democratic transformation was the reason of the breakdown and deformation of the career of several emerging talented politicians nominated to leading positions at a young age. Defeat in the war in fact made the establishment of the Horthy-regime unacceptable in 1945. Using Pareto’s wording, “*separation*” was completed between the ruling conservative elite and the world governed by it, and a *new stratum*, a potentially new elite came to the scene (Pareto 1935: 18–25). And in reality leaders of the democratic parties and institutions, even if they held party offices before 1944, could not play a *governmental* role. The majority of them were born between 1905 and 1920, and they were in their 30s in 1945.

Some characteristic career-patterns are quoted here that indicate the dynamics of the process, and represent an actor who played a leading role or was nominated for it in the nascent political elite. Béla Kovács was born in 1908. Originally he was a peasant cultivator in South Transdanubia and was appointed as political Secretary of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs in December 1944. He was Minister of Agriculture from November 1945 to February 1946; subsequently he took over the management of the Smallholders’ Party. In February 1947 he was arrested by the Soviet internal security forces. He returned to Hungary as a seriously ill, broken man in 1955. In November 1956 the Smallholders’ Party, once again formed, elected him as its leader, and he was Minister of State in the second Imre Nagy government. He was hindered in performing the role offered by the intervention of 4 November and his serious illness. He was 51 years old when the illness he got at the Gulag killed him (Csicsery-Rónai et al. 1998: 259–285, 415–416).

Sándor Kiss was born at Vásárosnamény in 1918. His parents were cultivator peasants. He graduated from the lower-grade teacher training college of Sárospatak, and further on studied and graduated from the college training teachers for the civic schools in specializations in Hungarian and history in Szeged. He was an active participant of resistance during the months of German occupation. He became a member of the Smallholders’ Party in 1945. For a short time he was Chairman in Budapest of MADISZ, an organization founded for unity, and soon he became its national Deputy President. Ferenc Nagy recognized the talent of the 27 year-old young man of profound thinking, and as a result he was appointed Director of the Federation of Peasants in August 1945. He was the chief organizer of the peasants’ days, mobilizing significant masses of peasants in September of the same year. Perhaps he

10 Gyarmati 2000: 105. See further on: „Itt csak az fog történni, amit a kommunista párt akar.” [Here it would happen what the Communist Party wants.] (Gyarmati 1997).

got to the focus of attention at that time. Though he was not an active participant of the activities of the Hungarian Community, he was condemned to three years in jail as fifth-rate accused of the Mistéth trial. He was released on 15 October 1949, but as a person released from jail and under police surveillance he could find a job only as laborer in a bricklaying factory and subsequently as an unskilled laborer at concrete road construction. During the revolution he participated in the reorganization of the Smallholders' and the Peasants' Parties. In November 1956 he left the country. In January 1957 he was member of the Executive Committee of the Hungarian Revolutionary Council in Paris, and subsequently immigrated to the United States. From 1963 on he edited his English-language periodical *East Europe*, and later on became an associate of the radio station the Voice of America. He died in a car accident at the age of 53 (Huszár 1983: 265–326; Borbándi 1997).

The promising second line of the Smallholders' Party started off at a similarly young age and their position was made untenable. The following people, such as Dr Kálmán Saláta born in 1912, László Vatai born in 1914, László Gyulai born in 1914, Tibor Hám born in 1914, were made victims of the show trial against the Hungarian Community, similarly to Sándor Kiss.

A counter-example was József Bognár of outstanding talent, who initially belonged to the centre of the party, and was made a minister already at the age of 29. Giving up his principles chosen at an early age he let go his comrades' hands. After his two-year tenure as Mayor of Budapest he was a minister in governments of various compositions up to 1956, and after the suppression of the revolution he became Director of the Institute of World Economy and an academician (Csicsery-Rónai et al. 1998: 185–209, 406–420). Gyula Ortutay, born in 1911, covered a similar career as a reliable 'fellow-traveller'.

The two other coalition parties suffered losses that were not less. Two key figures of the National Peasants' Party were Imre Kovács and Ferenc Erdei. Kovács was born in 1913 and Erdei in 1910. Both of them were prominent figures of the popular writers' movement and the leading personalities of the March Front. Their path diverged in 1945. Erdei became a confidant of the HCP, and Kovács fostered co-operation with the Independent Smallholders' Party. Imre Kovács was squeezed out of the leadership by the crypto-communist group headed by Erdei in 1947. At first he attempted to found a new party, next he was forced to emigrate. He became one of the leading politicians of the emigration, an associate of Free Europe, and a chief contributor to *Látóhatár* from 1951 and of *Új Látóhatár* from 1958 onwards (Huszár 1983: 62–209). The career of the scholar and politician Erdei was also broken: he did not continue his highly promising sociological work after 1945. The ministerial post and his offices held at the Academy did not alter the fact that he was not the shaper but the servant and ornament of the policy of the state party in the Rákosi era. This position and role were partly modified in the 60s, when he was one of the initiators of the transformation of kolkhozes into co-operatives and of the modernization of the Academy of Sciences. Ultimately the career of both of them was a loss, even if differently, from the angle of the emergence of an autonomous Hungarian political elite.

An early withdrawal of *István Bibó*, born in 1911, was a loss to the process. He belonged to the sphere of the *National Peasants' Party* (Huszár 1995b). Though his

early works are significant, he wrote his most important historical-political essays between 1945 and 1948, and it was at that time that his name became nationally known. His career, similarly to Imre Kovács, took a course opposite to that of Erdei. As a conclusion to the domestic institutionalization of the dictatorship of the proletariat he chose *internal emigration, silence* at the age of 37. On 2 November 1956 he was appointed Minister of State but his public activity was limited to a couple of days, yet his faithfulness to his principles elevated him to be the *emblematic figure* of the revolution. In May 1957 he was arrested and in August 1958 he was condemned to life-long imprisonment. He was released in May 1963. He continued his scholarly activities under difficult conditions, withdrawn from public life. He died in 1979.

The career of important actors of the emergent new elite was broken by the beheading of the Social Democratic Party, too. Mention should be made of *Antal Bán*, born in 1903, of the top leaders. He was minister of industry from June 1945 on; Party public opinion saw the prospective successor of Árpád Szakasits in him. Though he was an advocate of the co-operation of the two workers' parties, he was against their fusion. The trial against his immediate associate, industrial Secretary of State Gyula Kelemen, based on false accusations, aimed at making his position untenable. Bán was offered to leave the country 'legally' and he immigrated to Switzerland, declaring with the refugees in his company the union of the two parties illegal. He founded the representation of the Social Democratic Party abroad which was accepted as a member of COMISCO, the successor organization of International II. He died in Geneva at the age of 48 in 1951. *Pál Justus*, born in 1905, was a dominant figure of the SDP, he was editor of the periodical *Szocializmus*, and justly regarded as the chief ideologist of the Party. In 1949 he was arrested and condemned to imprisonment for life as an accused of eighth order of the Rajk trial. He was released in November 1955, but did not take up a political role. He died in 1965 (Strasszenreiter 2000).

The Communist Party made the leading cadre of the coalition parties as well, the *prominent figures of the nascent democratic elite*, impossible up to the 1949 elections: either by taking them to court, or forcing them to emigrate, or degrading them to become courtlings. All this was done within two or three years, under the constant pressure of changing positions, in a deliberately generated atmosphere of uncertainty, that made the *constant enrichment of the sets of roles necessary to the performance of elite functions, of many-sided knowledge and of international relations* difficult.

The Communist Party to which the *quasi-elections* in May 1949 were supposed to lend a semblance of legitimacy, got into a monopoly position, but it continued sovietization and the artificial enhancement of 'class struggle', instead of consolidation. Soviet foreign policy also encouraged the dictatorial atmosphere, such as the theory of 'two camps' and the disowning of the Yugoslav Communist Party by false accusations (Gibianszkij 1994: 111–144). It is not our task to expound these interrelationships and mutual effects, even though the 'sifting' of the leading communist stratum was also a consequence of sovietization and of a class struggle made hysterical: the HCP, even if by phase delay, *eliminated its own potential elite, too*.

This group was not of identical disposition and was definitely not a faction. Their sole common feature was that they were socialized in the *Hungarian* communist movement, provided they got into contact independently of the Moscow leadership but

**not against it, with the various opposition parties of the day in the democratic, anti-fascist movements** (March Front, Historical Memorial Committee, Hungarian Front) under various names. *László Rajk* was born in 1909, and became a party member at the age of 22, he was 36 when he was co-opted to the Political Committee in 1945, and was elected Deputy Secretary-General of the Party. *János Kádár* was born in 1912, and was 21 when he got in touch with the illegal Party. He became a member of the Political Committee at the age of 33 and Secretary for Budapest. Prior to 1945 alternately both of them were the number one leaders of the illegal Party. Gyula Kállai, born in 1910, *Sándor Zöld* and *Ferenc Donáth*, born in 1913, *Szilárd Újhelyi*, born in 1915, and *Géza Losonczy*, born in 1917, belonged to the second line of the Party right after liberation, but soon became known (*Politikuspályák* 1984).

A new wave of leaders also appeared. The majority of them were in their 20s in 1945. *László Kardos* of a brief past in the illegal movement and founder of NÉKOSZ (Federation of Popular Colleges), *András Hegedűs* and *András Gyenes* may be classified under this heading, further on *Béla Szalai*, *József Halász*, *András Tardos* and *Ferenc Pataki* of the leadership of MEFESZ, and *Miklós Vásárhelyi*, *Péter Kende* and *Miklós Gyimes*, the editors of *Szabad Nép*. The list is an arbitrary one and may be supplemented, but our assumption is justified by their later career: *had* Hungary followed a path of development related to the Finnish one, with a not anti-Russian foreign policy but with a pluralist party structure and parliamentary system these politicians and intellectuals participating in politics *could have become competitive members of a freely elected legitimate elite*. The paths, however, were blocked. The centralized dependency relations of the one-party system, while *eliminating selection by talent, circulation within the leading stratum, a free entry and exit from it, the cadre was put under the control of the central party body, which, in practice meant the extension of the troika* (*Mátyás Rákosi*, *Ernö Gerö*, and *Mihály Farkas*), governing the controlling and ‘constructing’ activities of the ÁVH over the so-called national communists.<sup>11</sup> This is how the *first* characteristics of the principle of nomenklatura appeared, though the ‘work’ was not yet complete.

### **The Economic and Social Antecedents of the System of Nomenklatura**

An important element of the establishment of the system of nomenklatura and of the destabilization of the old and emergent new elites was the *elimination of the market economy* and the *homogenization of ownership relations*. The wording ‘old and new elites’ is not a lapse. The old stratum of owners gradually lost their position in the economic sphere up to 1948 and 1949 (Pető 1998: 95–110). It was a multi-tier process and unfolded as a result of measures of different nature, mutually corroborating each other.

The Constitution of 1946 guaranteed the inviolability of ownership, at the same time administrative *restrictive measures*, initially referring to an extraordinary situation, next to abuses and speculations, entered into force. A section of economic

11 On the State Security Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party see Gyarmati 1999: 115–145; Huszár 1998a: 173–219; Huszár 2003: 136–198.

policy was operational at the Department of Political Order of the Budapest Police Headquarters upon the initiative of the HWP, subsequently its functions were taken over by the Department of Economic Order regulated by the minister of home affairs.<sup>12</sup> The organization that became infamous under the name *Economic Police* actually developed the *system of police control* over economic processes, it kept a record of persons and companies and controlled the actors of economic life. The implementation of this aim was served by order No. 8800/1946. ME on *The protection of economic order by penal law*, which, in addition to other tasks was the tool of a “system of control over stocks more concentrated in a single hand (!) than ever before” (Szakács and Zinner 1997: 198–199).

The weakening of the positions of domestic and international, first of all American capital and the preparation of their expropriation by the state were served by the economic show trials organized in several waves, the most spectacular of them were the ones against the Hungarian-American Oil Joint Stock Company (MAORT)<sup>13</sup> and against Standard.<sup>14</sup> The former one was held in November and December 1948, and the latter one between February and May 1950.

These show trials served the *frightening* of the new-old economic elite in addition to their anti-capitalist propaganda function and preparations for their expropriation. This intention of the authority is unambiguously proved by the fact that Simon Papp, the main accused of the MAORT trial was condemned to imprisonment for life, Imre Geiger, Director of the Standard factory was condemned to capital punishment at both instances and was executed, Zoltán Radó, Head of Division of the Ministry of Industry was also condemned to capital punishment and executed kivégezték (Horváth 1992: 283–284). Public prosecution accused eighty-four persons in positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, who were approved in 1945, but were charged in order to make the presence of the cadre of ‘old experts’ impossible. Their state trial began in September 1948, and went on continuously for one month. In the show trial infamously known as *Béla Perniczky and accomplices* a valid sentence was passed against 64 people at the first instance, and against 47 people at the second instance.<sup>15</sup> The Hungarian national economy lost a series of valuable experts by these trials. Simon Papp should be mentioned as an example, who was an internationally noted scientist of carbohydrate research, Professor of the Technical University and Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The completion of nationalizations was decisive to the elimination of market economy, to the homogenization of ownership relations, and to laying the foundations of the nomenklatura. Not only the strata of owners and bankers were eliminated from

12 BM KP Iv. 278. 734/1945. No. BM IV/12. Quoted by Szakács and Zinner 1997: 143.

13 BFL Bp. Nü iratok. (Documents) Sz. 910/1949. Papp Simon és társai ügye; Magyar Belügyminisztérium összeállítása a MAORT szabotázs ügyéről. [The Case of Simon Papp and co. Compiled by the Hungarian Ministry of Home Affairs about the Sabotage Case of MAORT.] Timár and Vásárhelyi 1948.

14 On the trial of Imre Geiger and associates and about the related trials see: Az ÁVH javaslata a Standard ügy tárgyalásával kapcsolatban. 1950 február [The Recommendation of the ÁVH in Relation to the Trial of the Standard Case. February 1950] (Horváth 1992).

15 See a survey of the files produced by trial related to the Ministry of Agriculture and their subsequent destiny in Baczoni 2000: 291–313.

the elite, but even the *selection of leaders strictly based on economic considerations and by market effects*. The first step was the takeover of coal mines<sup>16</sup> in January 1946, followed by the takeover of some heavy industrial companies and major banks by the state for management and their transfer to state ownership.<sup>17</sup> It was followed by the nationalization of bauxite mines and aluminium production in November 1947,<sup>18</sup> and next, as a decisive act of ‘change’ by the nationalization of industrial companies employing more than 100 people, prepared by conspiratorial methods.<sup>19</sup>

Extending *secrecy* on the process of economic production and management was a sign and consequence of the *militarization* of social processes. Democratic politics and co-operation of the coalition presupposed certain *openness* in the declaration of aims, and *publicity* in their communication. It could be seen that the HCP continuously violated this important rule of the game and applied the means of conspiracy in several fields. The nationalization of banks and the major objectives of the three-year plan, however, were announced as yet by the HCP in its own programme prior to the 1947 elections. It testifies to the intention of the preservation of a *semblance* of democratic politics even if it shifted operational guidance to the Economic High Command under its leadership, eliminating the controlling role of the coalition government. The act of nationalizations implemented in late March 1948 was already done with the “secrecy of a conspiracy” (Pető 1998: 107). The new worker-directors, who were informed about their appointment by courier, got the news only at the Headquarters of the Ironworkers’ Trade Union. The majority of them did not have higher school education, and their appointment, just as the very act of nationalization was justified by the leadership of the HCP as a success in class struggle. “The factory is near the workers, for they work there and know every cogwheel of it, inside out. *There is no wizardry in managing a factory* just as there is none in working at the filer’s bench.” (Gerő 1950: 263; Italics mine – T. H.)

This decision was not only significant from the angle of creating the *bases of the system of nomenklatura* because it meant a qualitative step ahead in homogenizing ownership relations, but also because it opened up new channels of *upward mobility, independent of the educational system* thus institutionalizing *new career patterns*.

The conquest of “top economic positions” did not prove to be sufficient to meet the requirements worded by Cominform that had become a main agent in the meanwhile. Nationalization was continued and extended over new branches as well, and it comprised the *totality* of mining, industries, transport and wholesale trade, excepting retail trade by December 1949, and it ensured the decisive weight of the state in the banking sector (Ránki 1963: 206):

16 Order No. 12.200/1945 ME. of the national government on taking over coal mines by the state. *Magyar Közlöny* 20 December 1945. No. 205.

17 Act XXX. of 1947 on the takeover of shares in Hungarian ownership of the National Bank and financial institutions operational as joint stock companies belonging to Section I of the Centre of Financial Institutions to state ownership. MT 1947: 242–245.

18 Act XIII of 1948 on the nationalisation of bauxite mining and aluminium production. MT 1948: 54–60.

19 Act XVI of 1948 on the nationalisation of certain industrial companies. MT 1948: 110–120.

Table 1. The expansion of state ownership July 1947 – December 1949

Branch of the economy	July 1947	July 1948	December 1948	December 1949
Mining	91	91	91	100
Industry	38	80	87	100
Transport	98	98	98	100
Bank	–	95	95	95
Wholesale trade	–	16	75	100
Retail trade	–	–	20	30

Nationalized industry required the development of a new type of centralized system of control. Some institutions retained their name but their functions were essentially changed (National Bank), others were wound up (Economic High Command), the competency and weight of the ministries were modified. The *social impact* of those changes was of primary importance to the development of the *system of nomenklatura*, namely: *the loss of position of the old elite of public administration, and their survival strategies, the inflow of new cadre, the party control of the leadership positions.*

The processes were contradictory in this area for they could not be solved simply by “Red Guard” methods of squeezing out and dismissal. The operation and control of the command economy required the enlargement of the apparatus of public administration already before its full development. Following the so-called B-listings, aiming at the breaking and reduction of the old apparatus, comprising of the elite of public administration, 15,500 new office jobs were created in 1947, and 57,000 in 1948. Even this rapid growth did not basically modify the proportion of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’. According to the survey made by the *Committee of Appointments and Employment* (henceforward: KAB) in 1949, 66% of the public employees were already in their jobs before 1945. It represented almost 200,000 people.<sup>20</sup>

It is only *certain* categories of the leaders who can be classified under the elite according to traditional interpretation. As a result of the dominance of political considerations and making personnel policy (cadre policy) confidential the traditional ways of the selection and socialization of leaders were narrowed and distorted. Consequently the massive presence of the *old* employees “did not at all mean that they occupied *power positions* corresponding to their numerical proportion. First of all the above figures do not contain the personnel of the state security police that is the ÁVH and of the army, though they had a decisive role in respect of the division of power. Second, the summary figures do not show the hierarchical distribution of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ *within the apparatus*, though obviously the higher one moves in an organization the less people are found in leading positions (Kovács 1982: 50).

20 The survey extended over 295,405 employees, and about 25,000 employees of local governments, 67,000 employees of the General Directorate of Universities and Teaching Staff, and 79,000 employees of the Ministries of Agriculture and Domestic Trade were left out of it due to technical reasons. Quoted by: Kovács 1982: 60.

One should focus attention on the distribution of leaders, such as heads of department and above, with the help of M. Mária Kovács, comparing the proportion of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ ones in those positions, and their distribution by party membership and their previous place of work. The proportion of the ‘old’ ones in the distribution of the old and new employees in leading positions in the entire public administration was 66%, and it was 45.5% in the ministries and offices of national competency. It should be noted that the number of the old officials was the highest at the *county organs* of the Ministry of Home Affairs, in the administration of justice, at the Cultural Ministry, at the Hungarian State Railways and at the Post Office.

People who were blue-collar workers earlier held 21.5% of the leading positions and 6.8% of other office jobs. The proportion was approximately the same (24%) in the *ministries and offices of national competency*. Their percentage was much higher than the *national* proportion among officials not in leading positions (21.1%).<sup>21</sup>

Knowing the intentions of cadre policy and setting out from the ideological specifications associated to the concepts of ‘old’ and ‘new’, one may assume that with the passage of time the number of the HCP members would grow and the number of the former FKgP and National Democratic Party would fall with the entry of the new employees who were dominantly blue-collar workers. The *Table* below confirms that assumption.

*Table 2.* Distribution of civil servants by the date of employment and party membership

	Employees prior to 1945 (%)	Employees between 1945–1948 (%)	Employees in 1949 (%)	Total (head)
HWP <sup>22</sup>	46.5	44.12	43.8	118 601
FKgP	7.1	4.3	1.9	15 345
HDPP	3.9	4.3	2.3	9 975
Non-party member	42.5	47.2	52.2	115 484

These data veritably seem to contradict *ideological* presumptions. In the knowledge of the real processes, however, one should not regard them unexpected. The HCP was a small party prior to 1945, and had no meaningful influence on the strata of public authority occupying positions before 1945, and presumably there were, or could be few sympathizers of the Social Democratic Party, too. The public servants undertook membership of the rather pinkish SDP, offering protection after 1945, due to their behavior conforming to the system in the process of attestations and B-listings. Subsequently, with the changes of power relations they joined the HCP, or retained their party-membership in the new one produced by the merger. “Presumably this

21 See Kovács 1982: 51.

22 The Table was compiled by Kovács, M. Mária on the basis of the KAB report. The survey used as a source does not contain data about the former affiliation of HWP-members prior to the merger of parties (Kovács 1982: 53).

circumstance explains why it was the *old* employees who constituted 67% of the HWP members.” (Jakab 1979: 129)

In fact it was more important for the HCP to conquer the *positions of public administration* than the *meaningful reform of administration* regarding the *democratic* principles of the drafts proposed by the coalition parties and particularly of the Erdei-Bibó proposal. It explains why the HCP sabotaged the organization of the reform of public administration on the basis of the coalition.<sup>23</sup>

The reform was “postponed” and the issue was meaningfully raised only after the formation of the HWP, “when a separate body was established in the party headquarters for the creation of an administrative organization based on communist platform. This – as it is rightly stated by György Gyarmati in his paper – leads, however, to the immediate prehistory of the system of councils set up in 1960...” (Gyarmati 1984: 18), to the *creation of a system of administration that is quasi independent, formally elected, and constitutes part of the power machinery and controlled by the nomenklatura.*

The liquidation of market economy unfolded fully in the command economy (Pető 1998: 108). It is not the task of the present paper to give an analysis of controlled economic activity and of central redistribution. It should be stressed, however, that the indices meant to *regulate every detail of production at every level of the multi-tier hierarchy of control* were further specified in detail.

Market regulation was practically replaced by “*bureaucratic co-ordination*” in every segment of the *economy*. As its ‘logical’ corollary, cadre management also had to be centralized. The introduction of the system of appointments was a logical consequence of this decision. Further on, if bureaucratic co-ordination had to be asserted at every level of the multi-tier bureaucracy,<sup>24</sup> *a system of appointment had to be developed so that it may comprise as a net the control posts of the economy, preserving the “right to appointment, transfer and removal” for the party organs expropriating supervision in the case of the major commanding positions. And this is already essentially the assertion of the principle of nomenklatura, without its unification and definitive naming.*

The *party organizations* present in the production units and offices, the *apparatus* transmitting the resolutions of the party leadership meant a new type of governance and control, the control mechanism of the party-state (Bihari 1979: 110–115). Of the actors of the economy the formerly autonomous *occupational* trade unions, performing functions of *interest protection and assertion*, were transformed into organizations of *branches*, subordinated to the Central Council of Trade Unions, a trade union bureaucracy centralized along the Soviet pattern. As transmission organs of the party, their primary task was to encourage the realization of the plans, to organize the movement of work competition, to confirm labor discipline and to

23 Jogi reformbizottság iratai 1946. (Documents of the Reform Committee of Law.) Lásd Beér János hagyatéka az MTA Állami és Jogtudományi Intézetében [See: The Bequest of János Beér at the Institute of State and Law of HAS]; Erdei 1946: 86–94.

24 On planning and direct bureaucratic regulation, on bureaucratic co-ordination see in greater detail: Kornai 1993: 128–131, 140–160.

struggle against falsifications of norm and wages.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously the *autonomous* bodies of the elected shop-floor committees and chief shop stewards were eliminated.<sup>26</sup>

### **Breaking the Autonomy of Universities and the Academy, Nationalization of the Institutions**

József Révai, chief ideologist of the HCP stressed the elimination of the cultural monopoly of the former ruling classes as the number one aim of the so-called *cultural* revolution. The aim had some basis of reality in so far as the students of worker and peasant background were under-represented particularly in secondary and higher education. The movement of popular colleges, the specialized matriculation exam, workers' schools were supposed to open *new vistas* for *upward mobility* as institutions enriching opportunities of further education (Kardos 1978a).

Similar aims were served by initiatives of the other parties of the coalition. The Social Democratic Party also established its own college movement, the so-called DOKOSZ, and the Peasants' Party, just to mention one example, initiated the foundation of the Hungarian Popular Institute of Culture (Illyés 1946: 2–4).

These initiatives, however, proved to be transitory: the elimination of pluralism was accompanied by the expropriation of cultural authority. The “period of the shiny winds” – to quote László Nagy's metaphor: was followed by the period of “grim picnics in May”, it was replaced by the course of the *nationalization of culture* and the creation of *ideological monopoly*.

Though the party criticism of NÉKOSZ and its subsequent dissolution was only one act of the nationalization of culture and of the ‘hibernation’ of democratic initiatives, but due to the emblematic nature of NÉKOSZ the decision is suited for the characterization of the entire process. From 1946 on, essentially within two years, 160 colleges were founded with 10,000 students. The colleges became the *workshops of self-education and community building*. On the first anniversary of the launching of the NÉKOSZ movement Mátyás Rákosi still appreciated the educational programme of the movement in July 1947 as follows:

“I have paid extraordinary attention to the methods of the popular colleges, particularly to their autonomy, and the manner individual freedom, self-reliance and of the individual are developed, but what was even more important to me is the way the popular colleges can realize community spirit and the resulting social behavior and social practice.” (Kardos 1978a: 737) In order to appreciate this pedagogical aim László Kardos was awarded the Kossuth-Prize on 15 March 1948.

25 Az MDP Politikai Bizottságának határozata a szakszervezeti munka egyes kérdéseiről. 1950. július 28. [Resolution of the Political Committee of the HWP on Some Issues of Trade Union Work. 28 July 1950] (MOL 276. f. 53/56. file series.)

26 It was the 17th congress of trade unions (17–20 October 1948) that decided on a transfer to organisation by industrial branches, as a corollary the former shop-floor committees lost their legal status and functions. SZOT Elnökségének határozata a műhelybizottságok választásáról. [Resolution of the Presidium of the CCTU on the Election of Shop-floor Committees.] *Szabad Nép*, 29 October 1949.

Just a few months later, in harmony with the change of strategy of the CPSU and of the East European communist parties, the Political Committee of the HWP already condemned NÉKOSZ as an avant-garde movement and made its leaders responsible for “ideologically and organizationally isolating” the communist students of the college movement from the “party”, and that they spread a muddy, anti-Leninist ideology instead of a Marxist-Leninist education, and educated for “*some kind of autonomous »Nékosz consciousness«*...”<sup>27</sup> (Italics mine – T. H.) József Révai, who initially was the number one supporter of NÉKOSZ, stated among others in his presentation given at the meeting of the communist activists of NÉKOSZ, after the resolution: “There was the idea behind such a construction (!) of relationship to the party that the party was some kind of a barracks, or perhaps even some kind of a prison and that one should »get free« from this prison, from this barracks, from this party discipline.”<sup>28</sup>.

Ideological branding simultaneously served to make intellectual life uniform and the justification of organizational consequences. As a first step László Kardos was removed, next, in June 1949, NÉKOSZ was dissolved and the colleges were nationalized.<sup>29</sup>

*The history of NÉKOSZ is in direct relationship to the wearing out of the democratic alternative of the selection and training of elites and to the genesis of the nomenklatura system.* In the summer of 1947 László Kardos outlined the plan of the *Vasvári Academy* (Kardos 1947). To quote his words, the Academy “is not a party school, not the school of a certain party, but the *college of progressive Hungarian politics*...The Academy gives qualifications and a final certificate. The Academy is built on an *autonomous* teaching and educational system, and faithfully to the nature of the old academies, it wishes to realize the unity of the students and faculty, the educators and the educated, of the school and college.” (Kardos 1978b: 867–871; Italics mine – T. H.)

The *function of training the elite* can clearly be discerned of the definition of the teaching and educational aims of the Academy. In fact the Vasvári Academy professed as one of its fundamental tasks to develop a progressive “*political type*”, attractive in personality and methods, “reliable in its steadfastness”. The Academy would admit its students only by *selection*, therefore there were no bodies with the right to delegation. The most important principle of selection was openness, because the Academy was ready to throw its gates wide open to “the suitable daughters and sons of any social class, irrespective of party position”, and it openly undertook its elite functions, its functions of training the elite, because it set as its aim the properly trained “*progressive*

27 Az MDP Politikai Bizottsága határozata a NÉKOSZ helyzetéről. [The Resolution of the Political Committee of the HWP on the Situation of NÉKOSZ.] *Szabad Nép*, 19 September 1948.

28 *A NÉKOSZ helyzete és feladatai.* Előadás a NÉKOSZ kommunista aktíváján. 1948. szeptember 24. (*The Situation and Tasks of NÉKOSZ.* Presentation at the Communist Activists’ Meeting of NÉKOSZ. 24 September 1948.) In: Same author: *Élni tudunk a szabadsággal (We Could Use Freedom)* Szikra, Budapest, 1949. pp. 644–648.

29 A népi kollégiumok küldöttei III. közgyűlése. Horváth Márton, az MDP PB tagja felszólalása. [3d General Assembly of the Delegates of Popular Colleges. Address of Márton Horváth, member of the Political Committee of the HWP.] *Szabad Nép*, 12 July 1949. On the issue see in greater detail: Pataki 2005: 330–354.

*political type* of reliable individuality and attractive methods”. The preference of this function is also suggested by the declaration that “The Academy has taken as its guiding principle the needs of the state, social and political organization of a developed and modern country ... in the development of its draft curriculum.” A half-year, or longer study tour to a state of Central or Eastern Europe, or to a “Western democratic country” served this purpose within the three-year training period.

The first year was launched in the 1947–1948 academic year, but the announced programme ultimately became a stumbling-block and an element in accusing NÉKOSZ. After the so-called political change delimitation from part(ies) and an avoidance of ideological options were not regarded as a merit but an aberration, similarly to the taking of the training system of Western (“developed democratic”) countries as a pattern, and to disregarding relations to the Soviet Union. The Vasvári College was doomed to wither away. The training and extension training of leaders in a *closed* system was taken over initially by short-term party courses, next by the Party College from 1949 on, and after completing the one-year preparatory course of the Oleg Kosevoy school, further education was available at Soviet universities and the training of aspirants based on the Soviet pattern.

The dissolution of NÉKOSZ and the nationalization of the colleges was only one, though important stage of making the school system and higher education organizationally and ideologically homogenous.

### “Carpet Bombing”

The coalition period was characterized by contradictory processes in the faculty of universities as well as at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences though to different extent.

In the first years after 1945 the universities attempted to protect their autonomy, though they could not avert the suspension of several scholars and scientists establishing schools, during the processes of attestation, even though they could not be blamed for war crimes.<sup>30</sup> The losses suffered by certain disciplines, such as state law, geography, pedagogy, proved to be particularly significant. At the same time chairs were allocated to academics of international renown who had been bypassed due to political and religious reasons, and areas of learning pushed to the background gained opportunities, such as sociology, social psychology, urban studies, and measures serving the modernization of higher education.<sup>31</sup>

The change in the direction of homogenization was a multi-tier one. Certain features of the limited pluralism of the coalition period were still retained in the reform

30 It was not only the faculty that was sifted during those years. In the spring of 1949 entire faculties were suspended. This way the training at the Debrecen, Keszthely, Mosonmagyaróvár sections of the Agricultural Faculty of the University of Agrarian Sciences was discontinued. MTA RAL XIX. K. I. nm 55555/1949.

31 Such measures were the split of the Faculty of Arts at the Budapest and Debrecen Universities of Science and the creation as a result of autonomous Faculties of Science and Economic Science, the increase of the number of students at the Technical University, etc. Ladányi 1986: 12.

programme of higher education of the HWP in 1948. *All in all* this draft already put into a *bureaucratic framework* and wished to realize also the above-mentioned positive initiatives by *central command*. This trend became even more unambiguous in the modifications of 1949. The planning of higher education was subordinated to the logic of *training the workforce and planning of the economy*, and the narrow profiles of occupational training became decisive in the spirit of this bureaucratic logic.

The *historically justified* programme of the social renewal of university students was similarly distorted. The introduction of categories by origin made the practice recalling the institution of the *numerus clausus* general by branding and exclusion, while the increase of the number of students of worker and peasant background, without considering abilities and conditions, became a tool for the *self-legitimacy* of the system (Örkény 1991: 28–29, 34).

Bleeding the faculty as well as the Academy was the task of the *Hungarian Academic Council* (henceforward: MTT) headed by Ernő Gerő. This body had autonomous authorizations for “the direction of Hungarian learning and higher education” as stipulated by Act XXVII of 8 September 1948 (Huszár 1995a: 11). The functions of the Council were the elimination of *university autonomy*, curbing the *autonomy of the Academy* and reinterpreting its authorizations, and building the mechanisms of *party control* besides screening mentioned above.

Here one may not survey the stock of the Byzantine means of corrupting, terrorizing and abusing by which the series of measures fundamentally affecting the segments of the intellectuals of the old and new elite were implemented. What should be pointed out in relation to our topic is the operation of the *machinery* utilizing the activities of the co-operating intellectuals, devaluing their activities to a *semblance of activity*, merging state and party authorizations, mixing legally correct measures and the set of tools of a classical coup.<sup>32</sup>

The more important decisions were made at the sessions of two bodies, of the Presidium of MTT and of the Party College of MTT. This fact itself requires elucidation. Act XXXVIII of 1948 as the legal basis authorized the Hungarian Academic Council to make decisions. No enacting clause, however, was issued about the Act, and though the members and secretary-general of the Council were appointed in December 1948, the plenary session of the body consisting of highly respected academics, was held at a *single* occasion: when it was formed in March 1949. *Legal* forums of consultation of the *Presidium* were the *specialized departments*, but it considered the reference materials of the *specialist cadre councils*, set up by the Scientific Committee of the Department of Cultural Policy of the HWP, as competent ones.<sup>33</sup> *Essential* decisions on organization and personnel were made at the *Party College* of MTT controlled by Ernő Gerő.

*Party colleges* operated in the ministries prior to the *formal* institutionalization of the system of nomenklatura. It was made necessary by two conditions: prior to the total conquest of power there were few influential party members in the ministries, and, not

32 Huszár Tibor: Felterjesztés az MTT Pártkollégiuma elé. A Magyar Tudományos Tanács ügyrendje. [Proposal to the Party College of MTT. The Rules of Procedure of the HAS.] MTA Lt. MTT 1/1.

33 Ernő Gerő was the president of the MTT Presidium. Gyula Ortutay was co-president, members were Imre Vajda, István Rusznyák, and Géza Zemplén.

independently of this fact, there were no party committees concentrating a small membership in the institutions under these main agencies. The party colleges, operating parallel to the colleges of ministries, were to mediate the political decisions and expectations of the HWP. The function of the Party College functioning besides MTT was similar to those of the ministries. Ernő Gerő was president of MTT as well as of the Party College. At any rate, the members of the College were appointed by the Political Committee of the HWP. The list of members emerged as: József Révai, György Lukács, Gyula Hevesi, István Kossa, and György Alexits as Secretary-General.<sup>34</sup>

The *Party College of MTT* was a characteristic *transitory* institution of the creation of the party-state structure. It was a product of a period when the party, institutionalizing its hegemonic role, penetrated into state institutions and bodies on the level of *operational management*, too.

The MTT was a *state* body, yet its rules were not approved by the supervising Council of Ministers in March 1949, but by a *party body*, the Party College of MTT,<sup>35</sup> and it was approved by the Presidium of MTT without changing a word, in May 1949 (!).<sup>36</sup> The rules of procedure, made for internal use, contained the following among others: “The Presidium would have monthly sessions, if possible, in the same month when the decisions made by the specialist departments, in order to discuss and make them legally binding. It is also necessary that all the *decisions of the Party College* related to the operation of MTT as a whole, should be passed by the *Presidium as its own resolutions*, thus lending it a form that is *legally binding* and public for those members of the Academic Council who are not communists.”<sup>37</sup> (Italics mine – T. H.) The procedure and manner of regulating authorizations unambiguously suggest characteristics of the *party-state*.

The proposal to select university professors was discussed for the first time by the Party College of MTT on 16 September 1949, under the title “The issue of pensioning off university professors”.<sup>38</sup> The presentation of details related to implementation is not to be done this time, only one line is stressed, namely the one that is significant from the angle of *extending the system of nomenklatura to this field* and the *manner* it was done.

The series of measures related to the removal of professors began *already* in March 1948. At that time it was the preceding organization, the Committee of Intellectuals of the HWP that surveyed the sphere of those to be removed and newly appointed<sup>39</sup>

34 Az MTT Pártkollégiuma. [The Party College of MTT.] MOL 276 f. 68/2. file series.

35 Feljegyzés az MTT Pártkollégiuma elé. A Magyar Tudományos Tanács ügyrendje. [Memo for the Party College of MTT. The Rules of Procedure of the Hungarian Academic Council.] MTA Lt. MTT 1/1.

36 Magyar Tudományos Tanács ügyrendje. [The Rules of Procedure of the Hungarian Academic Council.] MTA Lt. 1/4.

37 Javaslat az MTT Elnökségi ülése tárgyában. [Proposal on the Subject of the Sessions of the MTT Presidium.] MTA Lt. MTT 1/2. 4.

38 Az MTT Pártkollégiuma f. hó (szeptember 16-án) tartott ülése. [The session of the Party College of MTT in the current month (16 September).] MTA Lt. MTT 1/9.

39 Az egyetemek káderhelyzete. MKP Értelmiségi Bizottsága 1948. március 31. [The Cadre Situation of Universities. Committee of Intellectuals of the HWP. 31 March 1948.] MOL 247. f. 24/17. file series.

Though the authorizations of universities and ministries to propose and appoint were still in force, the party organ planned the removal of almost forty professors. At the faculty of Law of the Péter Pázmány University 15 of the 17 chairs were occupied, and here almost total replacement of the heads was proposed. It is reflected by the proposal that there was not a single communist or social democrat professor in several universities. It is this proposal that initiated for the first time the appointment of professors by leading party organs. Act XXXVII of 1948 specified the competency of the MTT in relation to universities and colleges in one respect: it was granted the *right to the expression of opinion* “in respect of appointments of university professors and teachers of colleges”.

The proposal presented to the 24 September 1949 session of the MTT, in harmony with the above-mentioned initiative, was prepared by the cadre department of the HWP and the Personnel Department of the Ministry of Religions and Public Education. Their proposal was demonstrably removed from the agenda by Ernő Gerő. The reason was that the proposal was not discussed by the Party College of MTT, and bypassing it the cadre department of the HWP took it to the Secretariat of the Central Leadership.<sup>40</sup>

Gerő's step may have been motivated by prestige considerations as well, but the decision also stresses that the Ministry of Religions and Public Education was *not* competent in the *political* qualification of the leading university cadres, on the other hand, it demonstrates that the proposal was made disregarding specialist activists *delegated by the party*.

These considerations are contained in the text of the resolution. According to our assumption, however, the supporting arguments do contain other aspects, too, that are important from the angle of the *political climate of the introduction of the nomenklatura principle*. In early the autumn of 1949 Gerő played a curious double game with the agreement of the camarilla of Rákosi, Farkas, and Révai. On the one hand he utilized the possibilities deriving from the Rajk trial, but while he was escalating the atmosphere of fear in this segment of the intellectuals, the planned measures (forced pensioning off of professors, their extraordinary promotion, downgrading academicians to honorary membership that is practically excluding them, and the appointment of new ones) mediated a message, particularly to a certain group in the field of technical and natural sciences that *if you are loyal we (I) would protect you*.

The proposal of the Ministry of Religions and Public Education and the cadre department, and particularly the manner it was drawn up, was not suited for the purpose. In fact expert participation, besides its representation, had another function, too: initiation, which, beyond the compromising effect of participation also ensured a special medium of message transfer. This message was addressed to those who participated in that work: the fact that they could participate in this work made *top secret* was an indication of our confidence. You should not offer any reason to shaking this confidence.

40 Előterjesztés egyetemi tanárok nyugdíjazása, kinevezése tárgyában. [Proposal in the Subject of Pensioning and Appointment of Professors.] MTA Lt. MTT 1/10.

As the building of the nomenklatura was not yet complete, the first list of national competency, drawn up in August 1949, did not, as yet, contain professors, deans, rectors and members and leaders of the Academy. Gerő did not make a secret of his aim that the Party College of the MTT should have a list of its own competency after (forced) pensioning off and downgrading of people. And it was in fact drawn up even if with some delay by November 1949.<sup>41</sup>

The Party College of MTT discussed the proposal approved and presented by the specialist activists at its session on 24 September 1949, and ultimately decided upon the early pensioning off of 20 professors.<sup>42</sup> At a first sight this figure does not seem to be high, but in the knowledge of the context and *qualitative* characteristics it is so really at a first glance only. The number of those who had been removed by the so-called B-listings and those who chose to emigrate was rather high, just to mention the name of György Békési, Albert Szent-Györgyi, and Zoltán Bay by way of example. Several professorial positions were vacant; as a result of the reforms of 1948–1949 entire faculties were wound up. Their teachers were pensioned off or put on the unattached list almost without exception.

The minutes of the specialist activists have been preserved. Professors of international renown, who established schools, were included in the list whose replacement to their full value was not possible.<sup>43</sup> Presumably this explains that, according to the testimony of the Minutes, why the Chairman of the Special Division for Social Sciences (and the Co-Chairman of MTT), Gyula Ortutay, further on György Lukács, Ferenc Mérei, and Sándor Szalai were *not* invited to the 21 September session of the arts activists, meant to legitimate this list. The Special Division was represented by Béla Fogarasi and Secretary Erzsébet G. Fazekas. Further on, the specialist presenters of the body and representatives of the Ministry of Religions and Public Education were present. In other words, the approval of the list was not legitimate even according to the rather flexibly interpreted rules of the game of the MTT.

The sessions of the activists in the field of natural sciences, medical and technical sciences were essentially conducted the same way; the activists were not called in session with the aim of assessing expertise and educational qualities. And it was not accidental: while the action generated fear and was a tool of ideological homogenization, it was the manner the *nomenklatura was built* at the universities with significant losses of quality (Ladányi 1986: 16–20).

41 Feljegyzés Csendes (Károly) elvtársnak a tudományos kádermunka tárgyában. Budapest, 1949. október 21. [Minutes to Comrade /Károly/ Csendes on the Subject of Work Related to Academic Cadres. 21 October 1949.] MTA Lt. MTT 3/3. 1.

42 MTA Pártkollégium 1949. f. hó (szeptember) 24-én tartandó ülésének meghívója. [Invitation to the Session of the Party College of HAS to be held on the 24th of this month September, 1949.]

43 The specialist activists of the Faculty of Arts proposed the immediate pensioning off among others Béla Zolnai [Department of General Philology], Gyula Bisztray [Department of Hungarian Literary History], István Hajnal [Department of Modern World History], Lajos Prohászka [Department of Pedagogy], Gyula Lasaczius [Department of General Linguistics and Phonetics], and at the Szeged University of Sciences Károly Kerényi [Department of Classical Philology]. Javaslat a Bölcsészkaron sürgősen leváltandó professzorokról. [Proposal about the Professors to Be Urgently Removed from the Faculty of Arts. Budapest, 16 September 1949.] MTA Lt. MT 5/3.

The reorganization of the Academy was in progress even more conspiratorially. The aim, as it was mentioned earlier, was dual here, too. On the one hand the *autonomy* of the Academy was to be limited to the minimum and to be sunk to the level of semblance by the passing of the new act on the Academy, and to transform its internal structure and order of operation for this purpose, and to found the proper party representation within that body by replacement of the personnel at a grand scale on the other. In other words, this conspiratorial action *served the nationalization* of the Academy, articulating it as part of the party-state structure, while placing the body of academicians into a privileged position by benefices, along the Soviet pattern (Huszár 1995a: 168–279).

In the process of reorganization 117 ordinary and corresponding members of the Academy were downgraded.<sup>44</sup> In other words, *more than fifty per cent of the total membership of the Academy* (!), including several ordinary or corresponding members, including Károly Kerényi, István Bibó, and István Varga, who became members of the Academy after 1945. After the takeover of the universities, the professors who were forced to retire lost their membership of the Academy, *too*. Simultaneously the 14-member *Department of Fine Arts*, representing the intentions of the founder István Széchenyi, was abolished. This is how the Academy got rid, among others, of Gyula Illyés, Dezső Keresztúri, and Pál Pátzay.<sup>45</sup>

The expulsions and the co-opting of new members were done with the exclusion of the President of HAS and of its Board of Directors. Incidentally, there were also eminent people among the new members. The Board of Directors and the General Assembly would have accepted the mathematicians Alfréd Rényi and László Kalmár, or the physicist István Kovács even in the case of secret ballot, but it is highly improbable that they would have consented to the nomination of Erzsébet Andics, or László Rudas, who did not meet even formal requirements. In their case the intention was to document the equality of *ideological* ‘knowledge’ with *professional* one. This decision of the value of message had a *symbolic* significance, pointing beyond the persons from the angle of asserting the principle of *nomenklatura*.

At the session of the Board of Directors and of the *Session of All*, meant to formally approve of these decisions, the President, Zoltán Kodály did not participate.

Several members of the Board of Directors, including Sándor Eckhardt, Ákos Navratil, István Varga, and Gábor Andreánszky were informed about the proposal to downgrade or exclude them only at the Session of All.<sup>46</sup> It is understandable in the atmosphere of fear, spreading in the months after the Rajk trial, what was written by

44 By departments: from the Department of Social Sciences and History: 54 persons, from the Department of Philological Studies: 21 persons, from the Department of Mathematics and Natural Sciences: 11 persons, from the Department of Medical Sciences: 11 persons, from the Department of Technical Sciences 8 persons were downgraded as honorary members, in other words, they were practically excluded from the body of academicians.

45 Following the 19 October 1949 decision of the Secretariat of the HWP the Academy was left with 3 honorary, 56 ordinary, and 70 corresponding members. (MOL 276. f. 54/62. file series.)

46 The following members of the Board were present at the session of the Board of Directors: Dezső Pais, Gyula Németh, Sándor Eckhardt, Lajos Ligeti, József Turóczy-Trostler, Miklós Zsivai, Farkas Heller, István Varga, Ákos Navratil, Béla Fogarasi, György Alexits, Gábor Andreánszky, Sándor Jávorka, Rezső Manning. MTA KK RAL 265/1949.

György Alexits, Secretary-General of MTT in his report addressed to Mátyás Rákosi: “At the Board of Directors Navratil was grumbling, he openly expressed his dissatisfaction, Eckhardt did not say a word, pale of anger, Varga and Andreánszky only dared to make stylistic proposals related to the statutes... At the decisive moment of voting on the list, though Navratil loudly /audibly/ sighed, *not a single vote was against the proposal*, hence the Board of Directors *unanimously passed it*.” (Italics mine – T. H.)<sup>47</sup>

The risk of the *Session of All* was greater, because the proposal of “self-destruction” was to be approved by secret ballot. At the 30 October 1949 *Session of All*, performing the function of the later General Assembly, only the honorary and ordinary members had a right to vote, and their decisive majority were non-party members and were negatively affected. In his proposal calling the session, György Alexits stated with quite some cynicism: “...HWP members constitute only 32% of those with a right to vote. If, however, it is remembered, that part of those having a right to vote are so aged, another part of them would come with us unconditionally, even in the case of secret ballot, surely we can achieve 60% of the votes. If we add to it that many of the neutral ones can be cajoled, and that the election has to be approved by the Presidium, the success of every election required by us in the future seems to be sure by the composition of the Academy proposed by us.”<sup>48</sup> (Italics mine – T. H.)

Those words of the otherwise eminent mathematician Alexits well document the inference we have reached by our preliminary studies: if *sovereignty, the free play of the principle of election, and the internal democracy of the nominating bodies* are indispensable preconditions of *the natural selection of the elite* then the *reorganization of the Academy is an example of model value of the partial or total loss of the characteristics of the elite, and of the genesis of the nomenklatura*.

In fact the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was the institution of the Hungarian learned elite, despite all its meritocratic features, some internal exclusivity and conservatism (Huszár 1993: 20–38), and it particularly became one as a result of Albert Szent-Györgyi’s brave reform initiatives.<sup>49</sup> Act XVII of 1949 on the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, however, made the new situation emerging after its nationalization, implemented as a coup, unambiguously clear: “The internal organization of the Academy is determined by the statutes approved by the Presidium of the Hungarian People’s Republic... (2) The legality of the operation of the Academy and its compliance to its statutes are *controlled by the Council of Ministers*... (3) The funds covering the personal and real costs related to the operation of the Academy are to be ensured under a *separate title of the state budget*. (4) The employees of the Academy are *public service* employees, who are appointed by the President of the Academy and contracted by him up to salary class VI.” (Italics mine – T. H.)

With this act the process of *nationalization* was completed. The picture, however, is more complex than outlined above: the Academy was granted the right and

47 Jelentés Rákosi elvtárs számára. [Report to Comrade Rákosi.] MTA Lt. MTT 3/3.

48 Az akadémiai tagságra vonatkozó megjegyzések. [Notes Concerning Membership of the Academy.] MOL 276 f. 54/67. file series.

49 On Albert Szent-Györgyi’s reform proposals see: Péteri 1989: 18–24.

opportunity to establish a broad research network; several eminent members (could) retain their position and even got roles in the leading body of the Academy; not everyone was a mute witness of the transformation, one should remember the case of Kálmán Sántha (Huszár 1998a): when the new members were elected the sessions of the departments could assert their correcting considerations by secret ballot as a result of the not yet precisely formalized authorizations of the HWP, etc. The attempts at correction mentioned here did not modify the decisive fact that the *agenda of the general assemblies of the Academy*, the list of corresponding members to be elected by the general assembly, and the *membership of the elected ones of the Academy were approved before a session by the HWP, and subsequently by the Political Committee of the HSWP*.

### Associations in Bourgeois Hungary and in the Party-state

The law-making of bourgeois Hungary created the legal framework of the operation of associations with delay and in a lopsided way, asserting the weight of the state in this field, too: governmental policy influenced, permitted or prohibited the operation of social associations in keeping with its interests (Halmai 1990).

Governmental will and legislation promoted only *limitedly* the strengthening of the more refined fabric of social life even at the time of the rule of liberal governments and parties, and those limitations grew stronger during the decades of Horthy's Hungary. Nevertheless, there *was* a regulated and relatively extensive association life, particularly in the cities.

The number of associations founded in the twenties was trebled in comparison to the previous two decades and approximated one thousand. It is remarkable that the 'leap' was caused by a growing number primarily of the fraternal and patriotic associations as well as sports ones besides the associations of interest representation.

This fact has a lesson to be considered in view of our topic, too. The increasingly *paramilitary character* of the patriotic, fraternal, and partly of the sports associations was conspicuous. This fact is also explained by the limitation of the size of the armed forces stipulated by the peace treaty. (The majority of the fraternal associations, for instance, were formed between 1920 and 1924.) At the same time, their set of symbols and organizational obligations reflect vigorous *characteristics of Estates*, several of them served rather a return to feudalism and the introduction of those forms of contact and not civic values (Dobrovits 1936: 44).

*Associations promoting bourgeois development, offering a framework to self-organization, were established in several segments of social life.* At the same time, their territorial distribution and extent were not adequately proportionate; legal regulation also *hindered the emergence of a strong civil sphere against the statist efforts and the spirit of paternalism* in several respects. All this is related to the characteristics of bourgeois Hungary and was its corollary symptom.

The development of association life between 1945 and 1949 and its subsequent withering and beheading have *essentially not yet been processed*. It can be only indicated here that the name of 6448 different associations figure in the list of the

Hungarian National Archives. Their distribution as grouped by the Archives is the following: corporative associations of forced nature (494); cultural associations (704); social associations (1296); associations for insurance purposes (335); professional associations (500); hunting associations (1480); associations for the protection of animals and breeding (405); small religious denominations and communities of not 'traditionally accepted' religions (!) and associations (50).<sup>50</sup>

In view of the fact that archive material is not properly arranged, even these figures can be regarded as estimates. Further on, the classification is uncertain, the types have been delimited on the basis of unclear considerations. (Amateur associations, literary and scholarly ones and foreign affairs associations figure among associations of cultural type; and the small denominations, communities of not traditionally accepted religions and Masonic Lodges are classified jointly under religious associations.)

A methodical processing of this material would offer several important lessons from the angle of our topic, too. On the one hand, one would have an idea what associations were not re-established after 1945, by what political practices a series of the 'conservative' associations were branded as reactionary and were dissolved or made to wither, and what *new* associations were organized. The latter information would not only help answer the question whether the limited pluralism of the years between 1945 and 1947 was accompanied by the emergence of networks of new associations, but it would offer further material to prove the statement that the introduction of Soviet-type state socialism in several steps did eliminate *every* domestic democratic and socialist initiative (Hankiss 1980: 13). In this respect the modes of winding up and reorganization would equally offer some lessons.

It should be added to the overall picture that the deliberate disintegration of several communities and associations of great tradition began already in the years before the war. As a result of the anti-Jewish laws, for instance, associations and social formations manifestly undertaking their Israelite character were partly or totally pushed back, and dissolved during the later years of the war (Kovács 1985: 69–82).

One thing is definite: the old political class did not only lose its power positions during the post-war transformations, but the traditional forms of its social life in associations also disintegrated including the *National Casino*, the *Country Casino*, the *Lipótvárosi Casino*, the *National Federation of Gentlewomen*, the so-called national chambers organized in the spirit of race-protection, and subsequently, in the transitory pluralist period, the formerly powerful federations and associations, such as the *OMGE* (National Hungarian Economic Association), the *GYOSZ* (National Federation of Industrialists), and the *TEBE* (Association of Savings Banks and Banks). The associations of fascist nature, youth organizations, the *MOVE* (National Association of Defensive Forces) and the 'levente' (paramilitary youth) movement as well as the various associations and chambers of race-protection were either not re-established, or they were dissolved in March 1945.<sup>51</sup>

50 The catalogue of titles of the Hungarian National Archives contains 8000 titles. Some associations figure under several headings. The figure 6448 is the result of the elimination of any multiplicity.

51 A fasiszta politikai és katonai szervezetek feloszlásáról. 529/1945. ME. sz. rendelet. [Order No. 529/1945. ME on the Dissolution of Fascist Political and Military organisations.]

As far as the latter ones are concerned, no exact national figures are available but the scale may be inferred from Tibor Zinner's statement according to which only in the capital and in its neighborhood 157 associations deemed as such were liquidated.

These first, partly justified steps, however, meant only the beginning. In 1946 a trial, already containing constructed elements, the so-called "trial of Szaléz Kiss and associates" (Szakács–Zinner 1997: 273–282) resulted in the liquidation of a large number of associations, primarily social ones. The assassination of two Soviet soldiers was made related to the alleged fascist organization of students. As a counter-measure *all the social associations* were subordinated to the top control of the minister of home affairs on 25 June 1946, and in the first days of July 261 associations, including 86 civil shooters' associations, 37 hunters' associations, and 26 gentlemen's casinos were dissolved (Földesi 1995: 128–134).

The dissolution of associations was still in progress when Lieutenant-General Ivan Sviridov, Deputy-President of the Allied Control Commission, demanded further measures of reprisal in his threatening letter dated 28 June 1946, and addressed to Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy, for the case of already fifty murdered Soviet soldiers.<sup>52</sup>

"I propose the following to the Hungarian Government:

1. The following pro-fascist youth associations and organizations should be dissolved and banned: »Scouts«, »KALOT (National Body of Catholic Agrarian Youth Associations)«, »KDSZ (Christian Student Association)«, »KIOTE (General Hungarian Catholic Youth Association)«, »Saint Imre Circle« and other similar associations, and the leaders of these associations who were criminal participants in those terrorist acts should be interned.

2. The youth organization of the Independent Smallholders' Party, the »Independent Youth« should be cleansed of fascist elements.

3. The instigators and organizers of terrorist groups should be ... taken to court and to task...

5. ...The state machinery should be vigorously cleansed of the pro-fascist elements.

6. All the social organizations – associations, societies, circles, clubs, etc. – operating in the country should be newly registered and attested and all those organizations should be banned that offer help to pro-fascist elements ..."

Though the American and British members of the ACC protested, Sviridov did not withdraw his proposals, and Mátyás Rákosi already pressed for the implementation of the measures required at the inter-party meeting on 8 July. Ferenc Nagy's government was forced to act under those conditions. It issued its order No. 7330/1046. ME by which Home Minister László Rajk was authorized to implement repressive measures against associations. After all the associations were placed under the control of the Minister of Home Affairs, irrespective of their aims expressed by their statutes, the *Minister ordered their registration and supervision*, and dissolved 631 local groups of KALOT and 574 local groups of KALÁSZ (National Body of Catholic Girls'

52 I. Sviridov levele Nagy Ferenc miniszterelnökhöz. [I. Sviridov's letter to Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy.] MOL 285. f. 6/160. file series.

Association [Gergely 1977: 50]) and other Catholic associations, as well as the *Federation of Scouts*.

The dissolutions and restrictive measures extended over associations related to other Churches, and, in several steps, over social circles, associations fostering tradition and of learning.

These measures were in the nature of carpet bombing, and practically the so-called civil society was pacified or (and) nationalized down to sports and private insurance associations up to the turn of 1948 and 1949.

This process is not detailed in the following, because the consequence is clear: *every association 'left standing' became part (captive) of the party state based on a one-direction dependency*: their financing, the nomination of their leaders or (and) their supervision became the right of the national, county and local leading bodies of the party. This rapid change had some positive results as well: health insurance became a general one, the financing of sports stable, but the price was the acceptance of dependency, and foregoing of the individual freedom rights. And it happened even if many – of us – did not assess it this way in the first years, and speeding up mobility and change of leadership had beneficiaries.

To sum up: the conversion of the *initial steps* aiming at the development of the *new elite* into the *nomenklatura system*, laying the foundation of unilateral dependency, restricting and eliminating the autonomy of the economic and social actors, were founded on the following series of steps to be classified under three headings:

I. Creation of the political quasi-legal conditions:

– Wearing away of the political assertion of interests, the liquidation of the multi-party system, the leading role of the dominant party to be declared by the Constitution

– Transformation of the national assembly, the local bodies and later on of the councils into a vote machine

– Elimination of juridical independence

– Development of the system of party control over the Hungarian News Agency, the press and the radio

– The operation of the category of descent as a selective principle, a restriction by class considerations selection according to abilities and knowledge; deforming the natural process of selection and selecting.

II. Change of ownership; integration of the economic actors into the command system

– Liquidation of the capital market and the free flow of capital (nationalization of banks, winding up the operation of the stock exchange)

– Nationalization of industry and trade by several steps

– Making the economic and legal autonomy of companies formal<sup>53</sup>

– Restricting the labor market: legal regulation of the choice and change of workplace

– Development of the system of command economy.

53 Lásd 5380/1949. ME sz. rendelet. [See order No. 5380/1949. ME.]

### III. Restriction and suspension of civil rights

- A continuous violation of the autonomy of Churches, the criminalization of their activities, setting up the State Office for Church Affairs
- Termination of the political safeguards of the right to strike, to assembly, and the freedom of speech in practice; a legal prohibition of self-organization, making elections in bodies and associations formal
- Making the ÁVH already a top secret one, autonomous.

### To the Concept of the Elite and the Nomenklatura

The Cold War situation, the Soviet–Yugoslav conflict becoming manifest; the atmosphere that evolved in the wake of the Rajk trial and the hysteria of vigilance also pushed for an early institutionalization of the system of appointments. *Positions* as *watch-posts* of strategic significance were reevaluated, and *cadre* were assigned to the *position* primarily on the basis of *political reliability*. This is why we have seen our presupposition justified according to which the concepts of the *elite* and the *nomenklatura* cannot be regarded as identical: *the elite are selected, the emergence of members* – at least ideal typically – is founded on *respect* based on *knowledge and output*, and this is the source of their *sovereignty*, whereas the members of the *nomenklatura are appointed*, with the exception of extraordinary situations their election for certain bodies is *formal*, the *post festa approval* of the decision of the body appointing the person made in advance.<sup>54</sup>

Thus the party-state structure and the internal organization of the political system *simultaneously* made it possible as well as necessary to *introduce the nomenklatura system*, and this fact is not altered by retaining of personalities enjoying general appreciation first of all in some segments of culture and learning by the system and honored by State Prize, Kossuth-Prize, or by other prizes and decorations and awards. It also served its self-legitimacy: Zoltán Kodály, Gyula Illyés, Artúr Somlai, Lipót Fejér, János Szentágothay were members of the elite in the case of any political configuration, but that meant for them the acceptance of a certain definite conflict situation, which, however, was not specific of the system.

In a sense the conceptual description of the top military leadership was also a special one. The army, as well as all the armed bodies were more closed, the leaders were appointed or promoted: the patterns of the socialization of the officer corps and of the field officers were more standardized, etc. This explains that the elite or nomenklatura of the army was easier to relate on the level of abstract generality, and presumably it explains that the two military sociologists participating in our research, János Szabó and Zoltán László Kiss used the concept of *military elite* in their paper.

54 The very concept of the elite is subject to debate and it has several meanings. C. Wright Mills in his definition of the power elite identified three interrelated and overlapping groups of pivotal powerholders: 'corporation chieftains', 'military warlords', and 'political bosses' who occupy the commanding heights of American society. (Mills: 1962: 24). Mills' concept of the elite is challenged by several authors. See, e. g. Dahl 1958: 463–469; Bachrach and Baratz 1985: 212–224.

Zoltán László Kiss theoretically also supports the suitability of the concept, presenting its internal articulation: *the elite corps, the sub-elite, the mediating strata*, more over, he extends the concept of elite to sub-groups of the civil sphere, too, while his arguments confirm the rightfulness of the distinction. “At the selection of those who were promoted to the top positions of the social subsystem of defense those so-called *principles of purely meritocratic organization of the elite* could not be fully asserted that are effective in the developed plural bourgeois democracies which can be mostly characterized by an organic development of their own, because the new power system was rather characterized by a kind of *defective legitimacy based on external power determination*. The (party) political social subsystem succeeded in subduing the other subsystems of the society to such an extent during the earlier period (primarily between 1949 and 1953) that the functional multi-dimensional nature of the society was practically totally replaced by a *one-dimensional hierarchy*, resting decisively on a *political base*. This fact had a decisive significance in marking the set of relations and thinking and the space of mobility between the party elite exercising real political power and the elite groups of other social subsystems, hence in respect of the military elite, too. Another fact was added to this circumstance, namely that the Hungarian military elite (as representatives of a segment of elite possessing the top positions of the armed forces of Hungary, an ally of the Soviet Union, and accepting active membership in the Warsaw Pact) became one of the major domestic institutional promoters of close articulation into the Soviet power zone, while some of its levels and subgroups totally gave up their relative autonomy and certain basic elements of their set or roles in defense, and had undertaken the role of an uncritical implementer.” (Kiss 2005: 42–44)

The author expounds this thesis in several variants, first of all explaining the situation with the decision-making competency of the (party) political elite that the military elite were unable to more freely assert the generating qualities of their relatively sovereign pattern-giving and relatively autonomous process-generating qualities.

At the same time, the paper indicated that with the passage of time the level of skills was growing, professionalisation was in progress, the modernization of weapons required the involvement of a more significant number of technical intellectuals. (The three colleges, raised to the level of college in 1967, granted dual /military and civilian/ diplomas from the early 70s on; as against 17% in 1960, the number of officers having a matriculation exam or graduation from high civic school grew to 80% in 1980.) The picture, however, became more refined, but it fundamentally *did not* change: the role of the army “subordinated to the party” was not modified meaningfully: the top leadership of the army was an integral part of the nomenklatura.

The same relate even more to the Ministry of Home Affairs and to the State Security Authority, regarded as practically an integral part of the party, its “fist” or “sword”.<sup>55</sup>

55 *Szabad Nép* 20 January 1950. „Éles fegyverünk az Államvédelmi Hatóság.” [Our sharp weapon is the State Security Authority.]

These considerations have altogether justified to modify the group of concepts used by our research strategy for the elite groups during the inter-war period (military, economic, Church, knowledge elites) and to reinterpret their content. The *appointment list of leading bodies* was put into the focus of our study, because the only way and formal precondition of getting into, or getting out of the national and county nomenklatura was the decision of the appropriate level of body.

This presumption was confirmed by the international and domestic literature on the nomenklatura. It should be noted that the interpretation spread in public discourse has a relatively brief past. The concept of nomenklatura was defined by the *Hungarian Explanatory Dictionary* (1972) as “the totality of professional expressions used in a discipline” in the seventies as yet. The change of meaning of the originally Latin expression was supplemented by the following definition (*Sc.*): “A system of naming that is internationally accepted and based on unambiguous roles (particularly in chemistry, in botany and zoology; in nomenclature; index; list of words, *econ.*, the itemized and exact enumeration of certain goods belonging to a certain group.” It is only the dictionary of Ferenc Bakos, published in 2002, that contains the following variant of meaning: “The circle of privileged persons at the time of the *party-state*: the leading public servants of the party and state apparatus”.

Incidentally, the appearance of this meaning of the concept is *not* a Hungarian specificity. One may not meet even the concept itself in the German political and sociological manuals of the 60s and 70s. For instance, the two-volume handbook of sociology, edited by René König (1969), difficult to surpass in profundity, does not indicate a single occurrence in its list of words.<sup>56</sup> According to our knowledge it was Bogdan Harasymiw’s paper published in Canada, among others, who called the system of the *selection and appointment of the leading Soviet cadres* as nomenklatura.<sup>57</sup> The usage of the concept was becoming more frequent in the literature of political science of the 80s,<sup>58</sup> but it was not unambiguous and was rather limited.

The inconsistent or unambiguous usage is related to the simultaneous use of the concepts of the elite and nomenklatura, for the former one has several meanings – just to mention different ones such as position-elite, functional elite, value elite. At the same time, despite the different interpretations researches discussing the change of the concept in its *historical* context agree in that the elite(s) contain the principle and practice of *free choice* indelibly, besides the principle of *appointment* (Zapf 1965). This principle is more dynamically asserted in democratic states and it is weaker in *autocratic* ones, whereas *choice is nominal and can be postponed* in totalitarian states.

There is a significant difference in the practice of *appointment*, too: while it is the *corporate* principle that is asserted in democratic systems in the recruitment of the elites, even if by changing force and influenced by lobbies, its effect weakens in the case of autocratic rule, and it becomes *formal* and *depends on persons* in totalitarian states.

56 Similarly this concept cannot be found in the dictionary of sociology published by the Kröner Verlag in 1972 (*Wörterbuch der Soziologie*. 1972).

57 Harasymiw 1969: 493–512. In his book in 1984 Harasymiw B. still used the concept of *political elite* (Harasymiw 1984).

58 Jaeggí 1967: 19–154., Csanádi 1987: 5–27.; Horváth 1988: 98–99.

It is the merit of T.H. Rigby to study the specifically political meaning of nomenklatura in a historical dimension, and as a result specified its historical changes of form (Rigby 1988: 523–537). It exists in different modes, depending on the political traditions of countries, including democratic political systems as well, it is a system of entitlements for certain positions and fixed in the basic laws of countries. It is a specificity of the format of nomenklatura of the communist parties, first introduced in the Soviet Union, that it summarizes in concentration the positions of ‘social’ organizations beyond the leading posts of the ‘official’ organizations, and subordinates them to the *entitlement of the leading bodies of the party to make decisions*. Therefore the system is *extensive and comprehensive*.

The publications by István Szakadát and his co-authors have significantly promoted the domestic introduction of the concept, the preparations of our study and the specifications of its aims. They have a pioneering role in the publication as well as analysis of the formerly top secret decisions of the Political Committee and of the lists of cadre competencies Szakadát 1997: 98; T. Varga and Szakadát 1992: 73–95; Nyíró 1990b; Szakadát 1993).

We have regarded the interpretation of the concept, carefully elaborated theoretically by István Szakadát, according to which *the system of nomenklatura was a contiguous system of the lists of competencies (and) opinion-forming rights of the party organs at various levels (cadre)* as a suitable starting point. Accordingly the nomenklatura was *not* simply a list of competencies, but a *system of appointments, transfers and dismissals*, with the characteristics of *extent and “comprising everything”*, consequently the social and state jobs filled *formally* by elections are *transferred to the competency of bodies*. *The pile of those appointed, and every position* consists of positions *from one institution and within that institution* (Szakadát 1997: 99, 103–104). We have not pursued the further analytical study of the concept and have placed the “historically embedded” nature of the status system into the focus of our research.

This work was founded on preliminary studies carried on at three planes. On the one hand career interviews were made with the former highly positioned members of the nomenklatura, about the interpersonal relations and struggles among factions that could not always be identified in archival material,<sup>59</sup> we have studied crisis situations<sup>60</sup> monographically with the purpose of a clearer interpretation of historical points of junction, but first of all we wished to study the changing relations of the appointing bodies in greater detail in their progress, the weighting of the positions comprised in the lists of competencies that were different at various points in time, and to see their interrelationships with the decisive trends of politics.

59 Interviews were made among others with György Lázár, Rezső Nyers, Sándor Gáspár, János Berecz, István Huszár, József Köböl, István Horváth, István Hetényi, and Miklós Pulai.

60 Huszár 1995a. On 1956 and its subsequent effects see Huszár and Szabó 1999, particularly: Huszár László: *A hatásköri listában szereplők adatainak néhány jellemőjtje* [Some Characteristics of the Data of People Figuring in the List of Competencies]; Sponga István: *Zártállami parlament. A magyar országgyűlés helye és szerepe a kádári konszolidáció éveiben* [Closed State Parliament. The Place and Role of the Hungarian Parliament in the Years of Kádár’s Consolidation]; Bikki István: *Az ideiglenes Kádár-kormány* [The Interim Kádár Government]; further on: Huszár 1968b. (Both volumes were written with the support of the OTKA programme No. T 018430.)

### CADRES, CADRE POLICY, LISTS OF CADRE COMPETENCIES

What lessons were offered by the *competency lists* of the HWP and the HSWP Central Leadership and their resolutions on cadre policy regarding the specification of the concept of the *nomenklatura system* to placing our empirical research on a historical basis? The first lists of competency and statements of cadre policy, made in 1949 and 1951, showed that the party ‘over-won’ itself both in respect of the positions ‘to be captured’ as well as of recruitment.

Before its reasons and symptoms are surveyed, one should see how the concept of a competency list is defined, together with the authorizations of the party bodies by the first statement of the Organizing Committee dated on 22 August 1949, which can be regarded as a working document.<sup>61</sup> According to the draft entitled “*Principles of the Competency List*” and passed two days after the Constitution was enacted, “the competency list defines the *competency of every party organ, of the organs of various levels of state, economic and mass organizations and their cadre departments concerning the filling of functions, jobs and removals*. It specifies responsibility of the cadres at each organ. Thus it enhances responsibility, too. The competency list clarifies not only in general, but specifically *responsibility by function at every organ* right from the Central Leadership down to the leaderships of basic organs, from ministries to factories, from the central leaderships of mass organizations down to the *local organs*.” (Italics mine – T. H.)

The definition reflects the ‘flush’ of victory as yet, the shortage of cadre, limiting possibilities, one of the symptoms and causes of ‘over-win’ became increasingly conspicuous in the practice of work. In fact the extension of the competency list to every organ from the Central Leadership to the ground units, from ministries to factories, from the top leadership of mass organizations down to their local ones could be difficult to implement even in the case of optimal organization, and in 1949 the freshly collected mass party was not yet sufficiently organized.

This construct was over-sized also because its system of control was based on the assumption that every party organ, the village and the factory ones, too, had a *competency list*. It could be implemented down to the level of county committees but was unnecessary in the case of the basic units and turned out to be impossible to realize. Apparently the Organizing Committee was in quest of new forms of party control, but the *nomenklatura* principle was not its only method.

The working document of the Organizing Committee dealt in detail with the selection and employment of the students of the one-year, five-month and three-week schools, because the Committee regarded it – as suggested by the text – to be an important *institution for the new selection of the stratum of the apparatus and*

61 All the competency lists of the HWP–HSWP are given in the *Supplement* of our volume to be published in Hungarian (*Nomenklatura in Hungary 1957–1989*).

*functionaries*. The standard and nature of the curriculum of those schools by themselves testify to the difficulties in building the apparatus.

The uncertainty related to the competency list is reflected by the distribution of the jobs among the bodies authorized to appoint and even their naming, just as much as the statement that “This list of competencies is *not a complete one, but normative*. The filling of a function of similar significance or its changed role shall be put forward even if the function does *not* figure in the competency list. The Cadre Council *may decide* upon the inclusion of a new function in the competency list, a removal of a function from it, however, it is possible only with the approval of the organ concerned.” (Italics mine –T. H.)

Uncertainty is not only proved by ‘legalized’ plasticity but also that the *legal positions* are blurred and the naming of those *bodies* that specify the *nomenklatura positions* for a definite period of time is not unambiguous. At the same time the *Central Leadership* does not figure among those bodies, and this situation was not modified in the later, ‘altered’ lists either, even if the *nomenklatura* list, approved by the Secretariat on 18 April 1951, was entitled “*Competency List of the Organs of the Central Leadership*”. A transfer of the authority of the Central Leadership was not justified by the documents, but apparently the emergence of the practice was partly due to the fact that there were a relatively large number of former social democrats in the 66-member Central Leadership, and they had five representatives even in the 14-member Political Committee, but after the social democrat trials of 1950 Sándor Rónai remained the only one, while the 8-member Secretariat was totally ‘cleansed’ of social democrats.<sup>62</sup>

Steps that appear to be arbitrary in relation to the jurisdiction of the Central Leadership, and intentional vagueness, however, can be explained first of all by the fact that secret decisions related to state security and the cleansing of the party (leadership), at times upon Soviet initiative, were made by the troika (Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas), and the extended or regular sessions of the Central Leadership ‘approved’ them, if at all, whenever it was deemed feasible (Gyarmati 2000: 132–133; Huszár 2003: 126–198).

As far as the jurisdiction of the other bodies, such as the Political Committee, the Secretariat, the Organizing Committee and of the apparatus is concerned, plasticity and haphazardness were retained for a long time, though it was decreasingly characteristic with progress in time in the Rákosi system.

This is well exemplified by the 29 March 1950 resolution of the Secretariat “On the reorganization of cadre work”, which, according to our knowledge, used the word ‘*nomenklatura*’ for the first time, noting that “(positive and negative) changes related to the *nomenklatura* are to be presented to the Secretariat once in a month”.<sup>63</sup> The

62 The *Political Committee of the HWP*, the elected members of the 1st Congress (merger) of the HWP were the following: Antal Apró, Mihály Farkas, Ernő Gerő, *József Harustyák*, János Kádár, István Kossa, *György Marosán*, Imre Nagy, László Rajk, Mátyás Rákosi, József Révai, *Sándor Rónai*, *Árpád Szakasits* and *Imre Vajda*. Members of the Secretariat: Mihály Farkas, Ernő Gerő, János Kádár, *György Marosán*, László Rajk, József Révai and *Árpád Szakasits*. Elected members of the Secretariat: Mihály Farkas, Ernő Gerő, János Kádár, *György Marosán*, László Rajk, Mátyás Rákosi, József Révai, *Árpád Szakasits* (the former members of the Social Democratic Party are in italics).

63 A Titkárság 1950. március 29-i határozata a kádermunka átszervezésére. [Resolution of the Secretariat on the reorganisation of cadre work of 29 March 1950.] MOL 276. f. 54/92. file series.

resolution was made on the basis of the report of the delegation studying the work of the CP(B)SU. “In view of the fact” – one may read in the resolution – that the National Cadre Department has been working “*mostly on the basis of papers and not personal acquaintance*” the task is that the head of department and his associates should get profoundly acquainted with “*60 to 80 cadres filling positions figuring in the competency list*” and should *regularly* care for them.

In the interest of the possible broadest control the stock of the department, playing an eminent role in the operation of the “cadre catcher and operator” was increased to 98 members (60 political and 38 administrative associates) who were organized into *cadre departments* corresponding to the departments of the party apparatus, as:

- |                                                   |                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| “1. Subdepartment of party and mass organisations | 5. Subdepartment of administration                          |
| 2. Subdepartment of agitation and propaganda      | 6. Subdepartment of international relations                 |
| 3. Subdepartment of public administration         | 7. Subdepartment for the preparation of cadres              |
| 4. Subdepartment of agriculture                   | 8. Subdepartment of the apparatus of the Central Leadership |

In addition a group keeping a record of cadres, a department secretariat and a group to implement major actions (such as the selection of officers in reserve) should be set up.”

The above-mentioned sheets recording cadre were not preserved, but the organizational scheme, approved on 29 March 1950 by the Secretariat, contained guidelines to the building of party work and of the nomenklatura.

At the same time, the Secretariat modified the *competency list* as well as *jurisdictions*, “According to the practice that has evolved – says the document – about 2700 to 3600 (!) positions were under the *jurisdiction of the Central Leadership* about which it was the *Organizing Committee* that mostly decided, 600–700 proposals for the nomenklatura posts were submitted to the *Secretariat*, and 100–150 proposals to the *Political Committee*.”

According to the approved new proposal the number of posts figuring on the list of the Central Leadership was raised to 3615. Their distribution, regarding the departments preparing the proposal, in view of the decision-making jurisdiction of the leading bodies, was modified as follows.<sup>64</sup>

*Under the jurisdiction of the Political Committee:*

Department of Party and Mass Organizations	145	
Department of Agitation and Propaganda	14	
Department of State Economy	63	
Department of Agriculture	3	
Department of Administration	31	
Department of Armed Forces	20	276

*Under the jurisdiction of the Secretariat:*

Department of Party and Mass Organizations	443
Department of Agitation and Propaganda	685

64 On the policy of submissions of the departments of the Central Leadership of the party see Nyíró 1990b: 35–36.

Department of Public Administration	255	
Department of Agriculture	41	
Administrative Department	85	
Department of International Relations	130	1639
<i>Under the jurisdiction of the Organizing Committee:</i>		
Department of Party and Mass Organizations	547	
Department of Agitation and Propaganda	323	
Department of State Economy	321	
Department of Agriculture	142	
Administrative Department	367	1700
Total	3615	

The *functional* distribution of the nomenklatura positions can be inferred from these tables. It is edifying though not surprising that prominently the largest number of positions that is 1135 ones were handled by the *Department of Party and Mass Organizations*, (henceforward: PTO). Practically from the secretaries of the Budapest districts, of the cities in the country, down to the subdepartment heads of the Central Council of Trade Unions and the “ten biggest shop-floor secretaries” all the more important officials of the party, the CCTU and MINSZ (Hungarian Popular Youth Federation) figured among the nomenklatura positions proposed for (and controlled) by the PTO. The *essentially* subordinated role of the Central Leadership and its members is reflected by the fact that the Political Committee decided on the basis of the recommendation prepared by the PTO also about the *positions of the members of the Central Leadership and of the Central Supervising Committee*.

It is, however, surprising what a *large number* of nomenklatura positions – 1022 of them – were decided upon by the leading bodies in the field of agitation and propaganda. The aim was clearly to *cover* every institution of strategic significance of *intellectual life and culture* (physical culture), and to create the monopoly position of Marxist–Leninist ideology. It is mentioned for illustration that the Department of Agitation and Propaganda supervised, and qualified in its submissions, the “Ministries of Popular Culture, Culture and Welfare down to the level of deputy-head of division; the president, secretary and secretaries heading departments (today called as presidents of departments) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences down to institutions that did not survive 1956 in their original form (such as commanders of study classes named after Dzerzhinsky and Szamueli, commander of the course for staff officers and political officers, etc.).

The political plasticity related to the nomenklatura positions is indicated by the fact that the Secretariat revised the “*list of the jurisdiction of the organs of the Central Leadership*” at its session on 18 April 1951, based on the presentation of the Cadre Department, and presumably it also suggests that sobriety was beginning to return after the ‘flush of abundance’: the number of positions in the competency list of the Central Leadership was almost halved. A passage from the resolution reads:

“On March 14 the Cadre Department presented to the Secretariat its recommendation concerning the new competency list of the organs of the Central

Leadership, proposing to include 3646 functions instead of the former 3812 that is 166 less in the competency list.

The Secretariat did not approve of the proposal saying that the number of cadres belonging to the competency list of the Central Leadership should be *reduced at least by 1000*, thus promoting the autonomy and individual responsibility of ministers and of the external organs.

Our current proposal contains 2414 functions, 1232 less than our March proposal, and 1388 less than the competency list currently in force.”

The Secretariat did not approve of this proposal either, and *maximized the number of those "belonging to the cadre nomenclature of the Central Leadership" in 2000 positions.* (Italics mine – T. H.)

The reduction extended over 183 party positions, “all the university professors (440 positions) with the exception of rectors and deans, it reduced the jurisdiction of the Secretariat over the heads of eighty scientific institutes to twenty-five”; the leaders of ministries and top organs (170 positions) etc. *Not a single nomenklatura position of the military, or state security institutions figured among the positions proposed to be cut.*

At the same time the “*inclusion of*” several “functions” was proposed, such as deputy ministers (30 people), specialist department heads of the Hungarian State Railways and the Post (10 people), the most important stationmasters (10 people), and an additional sixty people related to ministry jobs, to the organization and reorganization of schools.

The reorganization of state bureaucracy is presumably explained by the Soviet pattern, in the Hungarian public administration the secretary of state was traditional, whereas the emphasis added to the specialist departments of the railways and the postal services as well as the ten stationmasters assessed as the most important ones (and their control) may be explained with the atmosphere of the Cold War (and the beginning of war in Korea).

In addition to the unification of the lists of territorial organs<sup>65</sup> and certain refinements no national party competency list was made up to 1957. It explains the fact that the nomenklatura positions, despite the nature of political movements, do not reflect the effects of the correction and backward rearrangement of 1953.

As it was mentioned, the cadre characterizations were not fully preserved, and whatever is extant is not authentic, or precise. The political atmosphere instigated even the former illegal communists to permanently rewrite their biography and origin. It was made possible by the fact quoted earlier that there was no systematized and written record of cadres up to the spring of 1950. It was only the resolution of the Organizing Committee, passed in May 1950, that ruled “to develop and improve the record of cadres”.<sup>66</sup> The Organizing Committee specified the “task of recording” in “having

65 A budapesti és megyei pártbizottságok egységes listája 1951. december. [A Unified List of the Budapest and County Party Committees.] 176. f. 60/476 file series. Határozat a párt hatáskörébe tartozó tömegszervezeti – a DISZ kivételével – káderek funkcióba állítása, illetve leváltási módjára (1956. június) [Resolution on the Manner of Positioning and Removal of Cadres of Mass Organisations under the Competency of the Party, with the Exception of the Democratic Youth Federation /June 1956/]. 276. f. 60/635. file series.

such written material that *really* serves as an important aid to get acquainted with the cadres (CV, questionnaire of supervision, description of party work and work in production //, minutes about individual treatment, placing or removing from position, etc.)” These materials (if at all made) were not fully preserved.

Concealment was *also* almost forced by the practice of cadre policy. The Central Leadership of the HSWP, after the 22 May 1951 report by Rákosi, presenting the “case of János Kádár and associates” listened to István Kovács’s report on the “tasks of cadre work”. The resolution of the CL, among others, stated that the party organizations and organs did not draw the adequate conclusions from the activities of the Rajk–Szőnyi gang and of the treacherous rightist social democrats. The resolution circulated as *internal* material on 7 August 1951, with more than two months delay, mentioned as the most important lesson that the competent ones “did not liquidate the remnants of harmful cadre work”.<sup>67</sup> The statement, *even retrospectively criminalizing cadre work*, is explained by the fact that Tibor Szőnyi was head of the Cadre Department and András Szalai his deputy up to the spring of 1949, when they were imprisoned.<sup>68</sup> (Presumably the lack of written materials is also explained by the fact that the characterizations written or confirmed by them were ‘eliminated’.) Further on, the resolution stated that “it happens that hostile, unreliable and careerist elements are placed in positions ... Our party organs have not considered that a large number of exploiting elements, squeezed out of power, declassed bourgeois, reactionary and hostile elements get in the lines of the enlarged working class and into production besides honest workers, and hence the penetration of the enemy into our party also grows.”

This resolution itself was the enhancement of terror, and the task of the campaign of vigilance in general directly encouraged corrections in autobiographies and a massive production of ‘hiding one’s face’.

According to categories those of worker and (poor) peasant origin were *to be supported*, those who had intellectual or white-collar employee ancestors were *to be tolerated*, and if possible, *to be limited*, the so-called class-aliens, marked with X (industrialist, banker, landowner, former high-ranking state official, kulak) were *to be squeezed out* (later on resettled, to be ‘liquidated’). The actors of the big and tragic social ‘game’ tried to classify themselves one category better, by manipulating one of their ancestors, or were forced to do so out of self-defense (Gyarmati et al. 1988).

All this distorted natural selection besides some other negative side effects. For if we positively qualified the post-1945 encouragement of the further education of formerly not preferred students of worker and peasant origin, the gradual elimination of cultural privileges conserving the Estate-like structural elements of the society, now

66 Az SZB határozata a kádernyilvántartás fejlesztésére és megjavítására. [Resolution of the Organising Committee on developing and improving the record of cadres.] M 276. f. 55/121. file series.

67 A Központi Vezetőség határozata a kádermunka feladatairól. [Resolution of the Central Leadership on the Tasks of Cadre Work.] MOL 276. f. 60/235. file series.

68 Tibor Szőnyi and András Szalai— both of them old illegal communists — were imprisoned on the basis of fabricated accusations in the spring of 1949, and were condemned to capital punishment as accused of the László Rajk trial. They were executed in the autumn of 1949. Their earthly remains were buried at the Kerepesi cemetery on 6 October 1956, after they were rehabilitated.

this changed into its opposite if it legalized new *privileges* on the basis of political and ideological considerations, instead of *selection based on knowledge*: for it made the chances of further education difficult or blocked to the talented descendants of other strata with reference to their origin (Lukács 1991: 60–65).

The implementation of categories of origin directly and indirectly limited the replenishment of the nomenklatura, generating processes of counter-selection affecting *every* group of the society. Horizontal mobility was speeded up, the observance of the rigid and undifferentiated categories of origin for the groups of leaders, and, as it will be seen, particularly in the power-enforcement organizations, resulted in the significant *decrease of the level of knowledge*.

To remain with our topic: mobility was accompanied by constant fluctuation in the apparatuses, making even the comparison of the statistical demographic characteristics difficult.

Characteristic data and statements can be found in this respect in two surviving documents. The first one is a list of *party functionaries* made in December 1952.<sup>69</sup> The interpretation of the concept and the confusion of the organizational units and positions included are edifying and explain the difficulty or impossibility of comparative study. “The statistics was made about comrades working in the apparatus of the central leadership down to basic-organ secretaries. It contains (without differentiation – T. H.) the composition of party instructors, the political departments and party secretaries of the Railways, of the State Units of Agricultural Machinery and of the police.”

The numbers studied also changed. The number of functionaries included in the statistics grew to 24,110 from 17,916 of 1950, quoted for comparison. Of this the number of independent functionaries grew from 4243 in 1950 to 7600. As far as the height of *fluctuation* is concerned, the list states that “in the year 1951 77% of the functionaries were in their function for less than one year. In 1952 this figure dropped to 42.5%.” In the years referred to 65.1% and 42.1% respectively of the functionaries were in their function for less than one year.

The “Summary assessment on leading and medium-level cadres working in state organs”<sup>70</sup> was made in 1951. Those who elaborated it also tried to compare their results with data of December 1950, but while the former one covered 25,796, the latter one covered 6701 “medium-level cadres” in leading positions. The positions were not separately indicated; therefore they could not be selected. “Total comparison – to quote the authors – was made impossible also by the reorganization of state organs in progress”, in other words: fluctuation made permanent.

69 *A pártfunkcionáriusokról készült [értékelés szó áthúzva] kimutatás az 1952. december 1-i állapotnak megfelelően.* [List /the word assessment crossed out/ of party functionaries as of 1 December 1952.] (MOL 276. f. 88/697. file series) Made by the Department of Party and Mass Organisations of the Central Leadership of the HWP in 6 copies.

70 *Összefoglaló értékelés az állami szervezetekben dolgozó vezető és középkaderek 1951. december 15-i kimutatásáról* [Summary assessment on leading and medium-level cadres working in state organs made on 15 December 1951.] (MOL 276. f. 62/34. file series.) Material of the CL Office. Made in 6 copies.

Despite the uncertain use of concepts and the obvious ideological purpose some figures are quoted from the two documents mentioned above. According to the statistical survey made about *party functionaries* 70% of the independent functionaries said they were workers or agricultural workers in 1952, of them 51.6% said they were workers, 9.4% as employees and others (!) and 3.3% were intellectuals. As far as school education is concerned: 62.7% *had less than 8 years of primary education*, 2.8% *were university graduates*. According to the survey made about *state employees* 47% was the proportion of those of worker origin, 10.3% of “working peasant origin”, 10.3% of intellectuals, and 11.4% of employees, whereas those of ‘other’ origin was 18.7% and 1.1% of those coming from big capitalist, wholesaler and kulak (!) background. The writers of the report mention about the latter one that though the proportion of *class aliens* decreased, it was *still high*, and in fact their percentage was higher because “several people of such background were classified under the »category of *other*«.” In December 1951, seven months after the resettlements naturally, camouflaged or declared, only the indispensable experts could stay in their position protected by Ernő Gerő notorious of his strictness.

The picture is partly modified by *original occupation* even though any assessment is made more difficult by *juggling with categories*. The proportion of “*factory, small-scale and agricultural workers*” is mentioned in one unit, because it can be made to surpass 50 per cent that was supposedly desirable ideologically (50.1%), at the same time, the proportion of “workers in large factories” was 31.1%, though it was not specified what factories fell under this category.

As far as distribution by school education is concerned, the statistical data confirm our assumption related to *knowledge deficit*. Naturally a diploma was not of identical value in each case, there were some who obtained a diploma *without* an adequate *background of knowledge*, but it is indicative from the angle of the appropriate operation of the state machinery that *only 27% of the top and medium-level state leaders graduated from a university or college*, 16.5% passed the secondary final exam, 22.6% completed four forms of the secondary school, 30.3% completed 5 to 8 forms of the primary school, while 3.6% had a school certificate only of *four forms of the primary school*.

It is remarkable from the angle of our planned research that to the question “*How long have you been in your present position?*” the makers of the statistics were unable to give an answer.

“In this field no adequate comparison can be made – says the report – with the statistics of last year because several new ministries were set up in 1951. Even if this is considered the fact still indicates significant *fluctuation* that *44.9% of cadres were placed in their position in 1951*. In 1951 fluctuation was the highest, 93.7% among the county and district leaders of the National Federation of Co-operatives, followed by 68.2% at the Ministry of Mines and Energy, by 61.8% at the Ministry of Building, and by 51% at the Ministry of Internal Trade. At the same time the movement of cadres was relatively less in the previous year in the Ministry of Finance, figuring 18.1%, and the State Centre of Supervision, where it was 24%, and it was 25.6% at the National Technical Centre and 30.4% at the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

The exclusiveness or openness of the nomenklatura can be studied only if entry and exit from the nomenklatura, movement between and within the different types of institutions and the characteristic career patterns can be precisely followed and seen.

### CYCLES, TIME SERIES, NOMENKLATURA POSITIONS

The impressions of the years of repression between 1957 and 1962 on the positions of the nomenklatura could be learned from a paper by László Huszár quoted earlier (Huszár L. 1999: 147–160). That study offered also an opportunity for ‘directly’ testing the methodological instruments of the retrospective examination of nomenklatura positions, besides gaining the specific characteristics.

The database was a limited one, because only one document containing *identical* data met the requirements of a sociological survey. Such data sheets made as proposals of appointment, transfer and removal, for the leading bodies of the MSWP Central Leadership. Those sheets yielded the more important sociological and demographic characteristics of the members of nomenklatura positions, also the *stages of career, their movements among and within different types of institutions* determining their political career, such as the party, state power-enforcement organizations, cultural, scientific and economic organizations, ministries and offices.

Despite the relatively few data, since a significant proportion of the studied multitude were not alive in the mid-90s and could not be interviewed, we utilized career interviews made with those still alive and biographic encyclopaedias when we drew up our hypothesis and interpreted the data obtained during the course of the survey.<sup>71</sup>

László Huszár’s paper showed that the way chosen could be negotiated with minor corrections. The tables made contributed with solid but exact data to answering the basic question of research, namely whether the restoration of the Rákosi system or (and) its correction characterized the period between 1956 and 1962. Studies in historical sociology as well testified to the dominance of repression (Huszár T. 1999: 94–140). László Huszár, going beyond the original aim of his paper, hence enriching his database, was in quest of answers to three questions: (1) *What conclusions can be drawn* about the characteristics of the cadre policy of the distribution of data obtained from the *proposals for decisions on cadre*? (2) What conditions the cadres had *before 1956 and after, when they were placed into their first position*? (3) What were the changes in the composition of meetings and congresses of the HCP, HWP and HSWP in 1945, 1954, 1959, and 1962?

71 The hypothesis, the questionnaire, the interpretation of the categories, and the coding order on that basis were made jointly with members of the team who managed the research. The members of the team were: Tibor Huszár (ELTE University, Institute of Sociology), János Szabó (Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence), Zoltán László Kiss (Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence), László Huszár (Penal Authority Department of Education), Erzsébet Kajári (Min. of Home Affairs Archives), Ms J. Németh (Hung. Nat. Archives).

Of the numerous approaches a purposefully conventional aspect is stressed, namely that the “*Kádarian guard consisted rather of few new faces*”. The solid foundation of the statement is perhaps most clearly supported by the analysis by time-series of getting into one’s first position.<sup>72</sup>

The first year of prominence, the year of 1945 is not surprising, for an entirely new set of people had to be recruited. What may be surprising at the most is, knowing the historical antecedents, that it could be done rather fast. (The average age of those who were appointed between 1945 and 1948 was 30 in 1945.) In 1946–1947 there were already relatively few new (first) appointments. The situation was different after power “was taken into possession”: compared to the previous year, the number of the newly involved people was doubled in 1948, but a really massive movement took place in 1949, and there were (became) new cadres added about the same number in 1950, too. As a result the author states that “*a significant proportion (42%) of the pool of cadres of the period under survey was included in the nomenklatura during those three years*”. With the passage of years, as it is suggested by the table quoted, the proportion of new recruits was decreasing, it was the *same* cadres who were transferred to their *second, third, and subsequent* positions. The author does not regard it surprising that there was another peak in 1957, whereas it is much more surprising that only 71 (!) people were newcomers in nomenklatura positions, less than in 1952, and the number of those lifted to the nomenklatura was almost negligible between 1958 and 1962. Hence the conclusion is a rightful one that “*the consolidating Kádár system did not look for new forces, it rather applied the regrouping of the existing set*”. (The average age of those appointed between 1957 and 1963 was 36.)

The second position in career supports this statement even more markedly. Seventeen per cent of all the cadres were transferred to their second post within one year, in 1957 (Huszár L. 1999: 154).

Naturally, these data series by themselves do not prove that the political system prior to, and after 1956 was characterized only by continuity, but in cadre policy, with the exception of an *irretrievably fallen top leading stratum*, continuity was decisive. The numerical series quoted also document that the *second people* stepped ahead and occupied the place of the first ones at strategic posts.<sup>73</sup>

It shows that though appointments to career stages move along in waves on the axis it is clear that a “massive majority” of those positioned got into the system after 1956. The Figure published also spectacularly shows that with the exception of the major rearrangements of 1949 and 1957, a *two to three-year delay of phase* is reflected in the answer given to events of 1968 (the introduction of reform, intervention in Czechoslovakia) and of the “counter-reform” of 1971 (of the Central Committee session in November 1972). The wave moved further at the *second stage of career*, a first twin peak occurred at the turn of 1949 and 1950, and the second one can be dated to 1957. (See the table in László Huszár’s paper.)

72 See *Table Getting into one’s first position* Huszár L. 1999: 151–152.

73 Huszár, László: *A nomenklaturában posztokra kerülők személyzeti előterjesztésének empirikus vizsgálata 1964 előtt és után* [An Empirical Study of the Personnel Proposals of People Appointed to Posts in the Nomenklatura before and after 1964.] (Huszár L. 1999).

The database did not allow for a further refinement of the changes of the bell-shaped curve but it can be rightly stated on the basis of historical studies that the breakthrough of 1949 was explained by the “settling down” of the political system, whereas the movements, the “movements of cadre” of 1957 were due to a forced “leaving behind” of Rákosi’s team as an effect of the revolution, and – due to another reason and in another sense – to the hunt for Imre Nagy and his followers (Bihari 1996). Hence (as well) the statement of the author, subsequently confirmed that at the – rather large-scale – moving of cadres lifted to their second status position in 1957 it was “*not new cadres*” but, under the pressure of circumstances, *it was the second line of the “fifties” who were promoted to act*”. Incidentally, the year 1957 was the prominent one in the case of *appointments* to the *third status position*, too. *Protracted normalization* explains that a more active movement of cadres after the revolution, three times the average of the previous years, “slowed down” only in 1963, that is “two or three years later than in the case of those proposed for the first job”. At the same time, further analysis is required by the phenomenon called *cadre depression* by the author: namely that in the case of those stepping ahead to the second career post there was almost *total immobility*, excepting 1971 and 1975: consolidation and reform. This directs attention to another characteristic of the Kádarian nomenklatura system, to its *conservatism*. László Huszár, based on the analysis of the characteristics of the nomenklatura in one and a half decades studied by him, reached the justifiable conclusion that essentially “there was a single party set, and change was mostly caused by their ageing and natural decrease”.<sup>74</sup>

Ms Sztáray, Éva Kézdy (2005) studied movements inside the nomenklatura system by *political cycles*. The cycles were: 1963–1968; 1968–1973; 1973–1978; 1979–1983; 1983–1989. Such periodization of the process was supported by László Huszár’s study. In fact it was proved that despite shifts in phase, there was a definite interrelationship *between the points of the growing density of political processes and the internal dynamism of the nomenklatura*.

The retrospective study of the first phase, 1963 to 1968, was justified by the fact that László Huszár chose “*the years before and after 1964*” with an experimental nature in his writing and running short of time,<sup>75</sup> he did not study the given pile of cadres in every context; his completed research on the period of repression was published earlier (Huszár L. 1999: 147–160).

According to Ms Sztáray, Márta Kézdy, though the “twin peaks of the wave movement” were slightly shifted at appointments to the first position, one may essentially reach an identical conclusion concerning the *trend and the characteristics of the internal dynamism of the nomenklatura: the sphere of the positions defined by*

74 István Szakadát and Gábor Kelemen attempted to study career types and channels of mobility. The prominently inventive paper contains several hypothetic statements, but their further consideration and experimental attestation could not be undertaken within the framework of the present survey, even though the isolation of the types of cadre in this party of factions in various aspects would make the faceless occupants of positions livelier, and easier to interpret their attachments and attitudes (Szakadát and Kelemen 1990: 41–52).

75 László Huszár and later István Sponga transferred to other – full time – job and research area, however they continued to participate in team discussions and to support the preparation of the research of Eva Sztárayné Kézdy Évát. In the beginning István Sponga acted as co-author.

*the competency lists constitutes a closed structure.* “It can be stated from the angle of mobility that the sphere of positions defined by the competency lists constituted a closed structure. First it was cadres who had been in a position that were appointed in that period, too, *the proportion of new faces was small.* On the other hand, most of the movement took place *within the various organizations and within the different hierarchical levels,* and the proportion of the flow of cadres among the various types of institutions was much smaller. Of all the institutions the *power-enforcement organizations proved to be the most closed ones.*”

Ms Sztáray also refers to the modest movement in positive direction that appeared in 1958 but was not continued, and she identified an improvement in the indices of qualifications, and though signs of the reform could be identified in the field of the economy, the limits of any motion could be well observed as a result of the process being embedded in the system.

The trends of the years 1973–1978, and 1978–1982 confirm this assumption. Locating the curbs of the first, second and third appointments on the time series of the wave curb of the cadre movement there are twin peaks but they fall usually on years *preceding* congresses. Basically it is *rearrangement* and not *renewal*; the *conservatism* and *closed nature* of the nomenklatura were not modified.

The empirical study, due to its possibilities, can only indicate background intentions. Certain events, however, can be reconstructed with the help of archive material. A pre-congress rearrangement, confirming the above statement, was, for instance, initiated by János Kádár always at the sessions of the Political Committee. Therefore filling the nomenklatura positions by the people elected or recommended by the congress or by the county party meetings was doubly prejudged: Political Committee-members to be re-elected or newly elected, to be transferred or pensioned off upon the initiative of the Secretary-General with the *co-operation* of the PC-members to be re-elected or deemed to be dropped were nominated, and the same happened to the designated members of the Central Committee in the *second tier*. The task of the Budapest and county party meetings was to elect the candidates as *delegates to the congress.*

According to our knowledge it does not correspond to fact that János Kádár pulled a list out of his breast-pocket and dictated who would become PC-members and members of the Secretariat. The procedure was more painful than that: he asked a recommendation even from the PC-members about themselves, and had the proposals for individuals voted for at the discussion of that body, while supporting proposals that corresponded to his intention. These proposals, serving the basis of discussion were preserved in the Hungarian National Archives, but not the Minutes of the discussions at PC sessions, with the *exception of a single* case: the “preliminary vote” before the 11th congress.<sup>76</sup> The story here is related to the “counter-reform”, initiated by the Soviet leadership, and its *personal consequences were drawn* in March 1974. The “merciful” and phased auto-da-fe, whose earmarked political victims were György

76 A kongresszus előkészítésével összefüggő káderjavaslatok. Jegyzkönyv az MSZMP PB 1974. február 26-i üléséről. [Proposals of cadres in relation to the preparations of the congress.] (MOL 288. f. 5/631. file series.) The closed session was chaired by Dezső Nemes and the presenter of the agenda item was János Kádár.

Aczél, Lajos Fehér, Rezső Nyers, and Jenő Fock, were decided upon after several PC sessions of consultations, formally upon the proposal of a three-member committee (of Valéria Benke, János Kádár, and Dezső Nemes) “elected” for the purpose.<sup>77</sup> Though János Kádár denied political tendency at the session of the CC approving the proposals, it was clear that the decision served a political and ideological qualification of those *to be removed* of their position.<sup>78</sup> Up to 1987 this is how the mechanism of “re-election” operated, though *with a growing percentage of fault and multiplying disturbances of operation*.

All this is inseparable from the fact that power was concentrated in the hands of János Kádár beyond the competency of the organs. It is not proved by the number of his positions, though he controlled the work of the Central Committee, of the Political Committee and the Secretariat as First Secretary of the Party, further on, he was member of the Presidium and of the Defense Council which legalized the direct management and control of *all the armed forces*, but also his informal influence, which, naturally, could not be separated from his positions. His influence became manifest in the work of the Political Committee and of the Secretariat by the fact that his contributions were identical literally word by word with the focal points and even texts of the resolutions. He wanted to prejudge the discussions in the knowledge of opposite views, therefore he was the first to speak, and was the last when he wanted to confront the opinion of the various PC-members among themselves. The outcome was the same: it was his contribution that was the basis of the resolution, without a separate summary. When he was confronted with marked counter-opinions, as it happened between 1971 and 1974, the disputants were “selected” out, and that too in *both* directions. After the eleventh congress of the HSWP members of the Biszku–Pulai group, striving to become successors and to introduce re-Stalinization once again, were also dismissed. The *termination of the authority of Central Committee secretaries and heads of department* concerning certain items of the competency list in April 1974, was obviously related to these processes.<sup>79</sup> The homogenization of the nomenklatura was not only ensured by the manual governance of the re-elections.<sup>80</sup> It is surprising that big blocs of the nomenklatura were hardly or only indirectly affected by the top-level changes. The confirmation of this statement requires further analysis.

77 A kongresszussal összefüggő káderkérdések megtárgyalása. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP PB 1974. február 26-i zárt üléséről. [Discussion of Cadre Issues Related to the Congress. Minutes of the Closed Session of the PC of the HSWP on 26 February 1974.] (MOL 288. f. 5/631. file series.); A kongresszussal összefüggő káderkérdések megtárgyalása. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP PB 1974. március 5-i üléséről. [“Discussion of issues related to the congress. Minutes of the 5 March 1974 Session of the PC of the HSWP] (MOL 288. f. 5/631/1. file series.)

78 Javaslat az egyes vezető tisztségekben végrehajtandó káderátcsoportosításról. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB 1974. március 19–20-i üléséről. [Proposal for the regrouping of cadres to be implemented in some leading positions. Minutes of the 19–20 session of the CC of the HSWP.] (MOL 288. f. 4/125–126. file series.)

79 Javaslat a Politikai Bizottságnak a Központi Bizottság hatásköri listájának módosításáról. PTO 1974. április 20. [Proposal to the Political Committee on the Modification of the Competency List of the Central Committee. PTO. 20 April 1974.]

80 See in greater detail: Huszár 2003: 177–203, 233–256.

The “growing percentage of fault” was not only, or not primarily *explained* by his failing health in the 80s and particularly in the second part of the 80s, but by *multiplying structural causes of operation leading to crisis*.

Though the presentation of the interference of international and domestic processes may not be our task, yet we have to interpret the growing discrepancy between the speeding up social processes and the little change in the structure and authorization of the nomenklatura for the purposes of our study.

A small degree of modification was a more effective linking of some state positions to the system of applications, the introduction of dual candidacy for parliamentary and council elections (Kukorelli 1988; Lengyel 1993). An important, though much belated measure was contained in the resolution of the Central Committee on 18 March 1986, called as “*cycle rule*” by István Szakadát: “... the Central Committee considers it right to introduce a practice that a certain circle of the elected and appointed party and state leaders and those of mass organizations may fill the same office or job for two terms only. A departure from this rule is possible only on the basis of a decision made by the Central Committee...It is a social need that the circle of leaders should be supplemented by fresh forces in every field of our life. Representatives of the different age-groups should be represented jointly in the leadership; the experience of the older ones should be amalgamated with the receptivity of the young ones towards new things and with their dynamism.”<sup>81</sup> The justification of the step is well indicated by the fact that there were 26 CC-members who were members of the top leading body of the Party for five, and 22 others for six terms,<sup>82</sup> and by the age tree of the CC-members.<sup>83</sup>

Hardly after a few months, however, the PC, in the name of the Central Committee, modified, made the original text “more exact”. On the one hand it named the “circle of those elected or appointed party leaders” that was *covered by the normative regulation* and made the following additional remark: “The introduction should be counted from the 13th congress of the HSWP, further on, from the date of election or appointment in the case of leaders currently in the above functions. The Central Committee recommends to study what circle of elected and appointed leaders is to be covered by the regulation, also in the field of the state and trade unions.”<sup>84</sup>

Despite the multiplying crisis phenomena, or just because of them, the personal decisions of the 13th congress held in March 1985, including the election of Károly Grósz and János Berecz into the Political Committee, served a further consolidation of

81 The 18 March 1986 Resolution of the Central Committee of the HSWP on the Cadre Work of the Party. MOL 288. f. 4/217–218.

82 Némethné, Vágyi, Karola: *A KB-tagok száma és tagságuk időtartama 1956–1989*. A tendencia a párt és tanácsi vezetők szélesebb körét is jellemzi. [The Number of CC-members and the Duration of their Membership 1956–1989.] See (Harcza 1993: 105).

83 Sponga, István: *Összefoglaló jelentés a Központi Bizottság és a Politikai Bizottság összetételének elemzéséről*. [Summary Report on the Analysis of the Composition of the Central Committee and of the Political Committee.] For a comprehensive analysis of some characteristics of the operation of the PC and of the Secretariat over several historical periods see: Szakadát and Szakadát 1990: 11–28.

84 A Központi Bizottság 1986. március 18-i – a párt kádern munkájáról szóló – határozatának módosítása. (1986. november 20.) [Modification of the 18 March 1986 resolution of the Central Committee on the Cadre Work of the Party. 20 November 1986.] MOL 288. f. 217–218. file series.

the Kádarian nomenklatura.<sup>85</sup> “*Opening up as well as rejuvenation*” failed to come about.

This is well testified by an analysis of Ms Sztáray, Éva Kézdy’s survey containing the data of 1983 to 1989. The age composition and the average age that was *49 years* at the time of appointment and can be discerned both show the fact of ageing. When we move backwards along the timeline, the average age of the nomenklatura was *36 years* between 1957 and 1963, the average age of the ones appointed between 1963 and 1969 was *42 years* in 1963, and *44 years* in 1973 of those appointed between 1973 and 1978. Respecting the experienced and older leaders is natural in the case of an elected body, but this figure pertains to the appointment of 1735 cadres which means the entire nomenklatura. Further on: according to the testimony of Ms Sztáray’s survey, the average age of the nomenklatura was *52 years* in 1988, and *53 years* in 1989, running counter to the assumption that the party meeting of 1988 and the dropping off of the Kádarian hard core were followed by the long ripe and announced rejuvenation.<sup>86</sup>

Mobility data of the nomenklatura did not undergo meaningful changes either. Most of the mobility took place *within identical* organs without change and the data studied suggest the *closed nature of the individual organizations*. Thus the conservatism and static character of the nomenklatura did not change, and if it did at all, it closed itself up even more, despite a *speeding up* of social *phenomena* and the *crisis phenomena* demanding change.

The total image is not modified; at the most it is made more differentiated by the fact that data of origin, particularly in the case of economic leaders were excluded from the considerations of appointments (Lengyel 1993). The ‘emptying’ of these categories began earlier and was a logical consequence of the re-stratification of the Hungarian society (Kolosi 1987: 9–63). In the 80s the ideological options were also loosened and categorization by origin is based on an ideological construct. Interpreting the survey of the Central Statistical Office, conducted in 1987, János Kézdi and Rózsa Kulcsár reached the remarkable conclusion that “the topmost circle of leaders insisted on worker and peasant origin” (Kézdi and Kulcsár 1990: 790–791). The ideological and legitimizing function of assumptions is obvious, the data of the survey conducted by Ms Sztáray, Éva Kézdi *confirm* this assumption for an even broader circle: 70% of the cadre, appointed between 1983 and 1989, stated that they were of worker or peasant background, 13.6% said they had intellectual, 12.1% of employee, and only 4.3% as of ‘bourgeois’ or ‘petit bourgeois’ origin.

The total image is further differentiated by indices of education indicating horizontal mobility. Perhaps the datum to be particularly stressed is that all of those who were appointed to their first position between 1983 and 1988 had completed higher education; considering this datum of all the appointed ones the proportion of diploma-holders was 75.6%.

85 MSZMP Szocialista Munkáspárt XIII. kongresszusának jegyzőkönyve. [Minutes of the 13th Congress of the HSWP]. Kossuth, Budapest, 1985.

86 Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt országos értekezletének jegyzőkönyve 1988. május 22. Az 1988. májusi KB tagválasztás. [Minutes of the National Conference of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party. The May 1988 Election of CC-members.] (MOL 288. f. 3/131. file series.)

This positive movement generated tension within the nomenklatura itself, and strengthened the symptoms of opposition to party gerontocracy that were only sporadic in that medium. Crisis, however, was a *structural one*; through the personality of Imre Pozsgay and Rezső Nyers, acquiring positions within the party nomenklatura, the *intellectual reformers having supporters in the high command of the nomenklatura, too*, ‘only’ rationalized the multiple processes branching off to many directions (Csizmadia 1995: 329–502). Viewing it from this angle, one may only agree with Ferenc Gázsó, who assumed that massive inflow from the “*qualified elite*” to the nomenklatura was not motivated by efforts to save authority. It was much more the fact that the emerging situation, the Gorbachev-syndrome, the ever weakening party state, etc., already seemed to favor the realization of reforms that appeared to be basic ones. Their assumption, however, proved to be illusionary. Ultimately the “intellectuals took possession of an already sinking vessel. They got near power in a period when the change of the system could be the only way out of the insoluble crisis of the system.”<sup>87</sup>

### **POWER-ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PARTY NOMENKLATURA; THE NOMENKLATURA OF THE POWER-ENFORCEMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

#### **Contributions (1977–1989)**

The image is a partial one: the leaders of the Ministry of Home Affairs did not permit research into the personal data of the former Ministry nomenklatura in 1993, and even the planned empirical study of the officer corps of the people’s army was not realized in its original form. Yet, whatever research was and could be conducted contains interesting information. Their approach as well as the scale of the institutions and bodies studied is different: the methods, abstractions and levels are different. At the same time the meeting points are also clear and offer some lessons from the angle of the original aims of our research. Here two aspects should be stressed: (1) What internal and external dependencies determined the activities of the power-enforcement organizations and their being structurally embedded in the nomenklatura? (2) The information sources of the party nomenklatura and the power-enforcement organizations.

As far as the first question is concerned, the basic situation is well known: the emergence of the political system and its acceptance were ensured by the armed and political presence of the Soviet Union. The variants of presence and dependency changed during the period of consolidation, the Kádár system was characterized most plausibly by a *limited* space of mobility within the zones of the empire between 1963 and 1968.

How was the changing dynamism of dependency and relative autonomy asserted in the various armed bodies? It was not identical. Though the Hungarian People’s Army

87 Gázsó 1990: 11. See in greater detail: Lengyel 1996.

was also supervised by the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact, the Southern Army Group of the Soviet Army was stationed on the territory of our country up to the change of the system. At the same time, Hungary was by far not the most important member of the WP. Strategically, as it is stated by János Szabó in his paper, those countries were more significant that had a common border with the NATO-member FRG (GDR and Czechoslovakia), all in all, the northern wing of the alliance was more important than the three southern states. At the same time the relative weight of Hungary was bigger than that of Romania, totally surrounded by the other members of the alliance. The fact that the overwhelming majority of the generals, the military nomenklatura graduated from Soviet military academies was regarded as a safeguard of attachment. All in all, “professionalism and professional autonomy that had evolved in the Western type of the military was replaced by the characteristics of the *Eastern type*; by asserting an ideological relationship based on the principle of faith, unlimited loyalty and responsibility eliminating external and internal mechanisms of control.”

The general characteristics of the political system, though with different intensity, do shape the sphere of mobility of the sub-systems, too. Of the armed forces created along the Soviet pattern, despite the fact that the Soviet structure as well as symbols were adapted to a significant extent *without change*, an Eastern type of military society in its ‘full depth’ did not emerge. It became rather a *format subordinated to it* “which lost its earlier traditions the solidarity institutions of which were destroyed and its mechanisms asserting professional autonomy were dismantled”.

No research that claims to being comprehensive and analyze the entire period is available about the Ministry of Home Affairs. It becomes clear, however, from Erzsébet Kajári’s paper that the organizational structure of state security was also built along the Soviet pattern.<sup>88</sup> The Soviet advisers got directly involved in the governance of the Ministry at various levels, and according to our knowledge a *resident* participated in the sessions of the Home Ministry’s college up to the end of the 80s.

Exchange of information was extensive among the records of state security.<sup>89</sup> In the early 70s co-operation became *closer and “more modern”*: co-operation was newly regulated by an agreement signed in Budapest on *30 May 1973* (Baczoni and Bikki 2004). The *extension of concrete* working relationships was laid down in the major areas of state security activity as initiated by the Soviet party. “The operative solution of questions emerging during the course of co-operation, exchange of information and operative materials, and keeping contact *should be done through the representation delegated to the Hungarian People’s Republic* of the Committee of State Security functioning beside the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union.” (Quoted by Baczoni and Bikki 2004: 218.; Italics mine – T. H.)

The development of the system of electronic data recording made possible the exchange of information with other “friendly countries”, too. The Hungarian side was informed between 17 and 20 March 1976, about the conditions of the establishment of

88 On prehistory see: Kajári 2000: 157–186.

89 Az állambiztonság internacionalizmusa: Soud [The Internationalism of State Security: Soud; the documents were selected by Varga, László, and translated by Ungváry, Rudolf.] *Élet és Irodalom*, 1988. No. 29.

the uniform system of register that was later on called *SOUND*. The system was in operation until late 1989.

Direct Soviet control was not only ensured by Soviet advisers in the top leadership of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Cadres employed in the top leadership of that Ministry and in the staff of the armed forces under its control completed their studies in Soviet academies, and participated in extension training there in large numbers. No precise data are available, due to the above-mentioned prohibition, but it is known from an interview made with István Horváth, former Minister of Home Affairs and the CC-secretary supervising the administrative field that sending out the “contingent for training” was continuous up to 1989.<sup>90</sup>

As far as the factors of *internal* conditioning are concerned: there was no meaningful difference between the *hard* dictatorship of the Rákosi system and the *soft* one of the Kádár system up to 1962 in the armed forces. At the same time, the assessment of the officers of state security and of the army was *different* in the period of reprisal. While the former effectives of the ÁVH were attested *as a whole* and only the “pro-Rákosi” top leadership of the ministry was dismissed, several members of the officer corps who showed solidarity or were assumed to do so with the revolutionaries, including those who were classified for positions of the nomenklatura were tried or removed from the army after 1956.

At the same time we can only confirm János Szabó’s statement: “the social status of the professional effectives returned to their position could not be the same as before 1956, despite restoration. Actually this time the social base of the military function was constituted by power restored by *external* violence and by the *internal force keeping order* adapted from a foreign force, in contrast to the declared will of the former »people’s democracy«. The restored character of a party army also decided upon *what the conditions of admission to the reorganized army should be* and what should be the operational standard of the reorganized elite. Selection was made accordingly, including transfer of new people from the party apparatus, making merits acquired in restoration as factors of primary consideration.”

The findings of János Szabó are confirmed and made more detailed from another approach by the empirical study of Zoltán László Kiss. “It was once again found about the majority of the *generals who could be classified under the corps of the military elite in position* during the period under survey that when they were originally selected for a professional officer’s career and subsequently during their career mobility it was *not* primarily professional qualities but the so-called ‘criteria of loyalty’ (such as origin, personal and organizational loyalty, party membership, political reliability) that played a prominent role; and the primacy of the so-called ‘criteria of competency’ (such as higher professional qualification, expertise, skill, professional experience) gained some terrain only gradually and partially. It was also conspicuous that the

90 István Horváth was Minister of Home Affairs from 27 June 1980 to 29 March 1985, and was Secretary of the CC of the HSWP in charge of the administrative field up to June 1987. From 25 June 1987 he was Deputy Prime Minister, and once again Minister of Home Affairs up to 23 January 1990.

different levels of the military elite were characterized by different combinations of the above-mentioned criteria of loyalty and competency during different periods under study.”

Surveying the *mobility indices* of the “military elite” (generally speaking: the professional officers’ corps) of the period between 1972 and 1989, it was conspicuous that in their case (not the least due to a more direct linkage of the army to politics and that professional soldiers were also considered as ‘*power and political factors*’) structural mobility took place *more directly*. It should not be forgotten that in our country (similarly to other former communist countries of Soviet type) the major ‘client’ of the Hungarian People’s Army was not the sovereign state, but the state-party referring to the necessity of party governance of the socialist state practically up to 1988.

During the period between 1972 and 1989 it appears on the basis of the available data about the members of the military nomenklatura that in the subgroups of those having the rank of *general as well as colonel* “*taken together the proportion of those who obtained a diploma in civil life (too) was relatively higher*”.

And the image is further differentiated by progress in growing professionalism. As contrasted to the earlier “*meritocratic nature*” of the officer’s career the rank of the organizational values of “*occupational*” nature was growing, though this change was motivated by the fact that the proportion of those who obtained a diploma in a *civil* institute of higher education was relatively smaller within the military nomenklatura. At the same time, it is also a fact that a decisive majority of persons who can be classified under the subgroups of generals and colonels already acquired a diploma (or more than one) at least from a medium or high-level *professional officer-training* institution(s).

The *decrease* of knowledge deficit can be documented in all of the armed forces.<sup>91</sup> The situation of the nomenklatura of the Ministry of Home Affairs, and even more unambiguously of the Penal Authority is specified, however by the fact that the curriculum, duration, the knowledge level of the teaching staff and the system of extension training offered more modest cultural and professional bases than the military academies, despite the undoubted facts of development objectively documented by József Lőrincz’s paper. And training imparted at the *evening* courses of the legal faculties did not become famous for the high standard of requirements either. Mihály Korom is an emblematic figure in this respect (too).<sup>92</sup>

91 In 1983 of the leaders belonging to the cadre of the Ministry of Home Affairs (2380 persons) 1892 persons (79.5%) had higher, 440 persons (18.5%) medium-level, 48 persons (2%) lower-level qualifications. In *Statistikai adatok a káderállományról 1983*. [Statistical Data of the Cadre 1983.] Budapest, 1983. Published by the Department of Party and Mass Organisations of the CC of the HSWP. Made in 200 copies.

92 *Dr Mihály Korom* (1927–1993) came from an agrarian proletarian family. His original occupation was: agricultural worker. He obtained his diploma at the corresponding course of the Faculty of Natural Sciences of ELTE University. He became a party member in 1946. He completed the three-year course of the party college of the CC of the CPSU. He worked as an agricultural worker, between 1945 and 1951 he served in the army and in the police force. Between 1951 and 1955 he was a political associate of the CL of the HWP, next he was Head of the Division of Investigations of the Ministry of Home Affairs from 1958 to 1960. Between 1960 and 1963 he was national commander of the Border Guard,

As far as *subordination to party leadership* is concerned it was most directly manifest in the management and control of the *Ministry of Home Affairs* and first of all of the *departments of state security* (later on chief divisions of groups) in the 70s and 80s. In her paper Erzsébet Kajári, despite the limited database, describes precisely its mechanism and levels. The forms of manifestation did change but the essence, namely the handling of state security as a *party body did not*.

Here we only wish to stress two elements of this direct governance and linkage, namely the initiating role and control of the leading bodies of the party in *selecting the target persons* and movements to be screened, and the utilization of *information obtained by the Ministry of Home Affairs* in the decision-making mechanism of the top leadership of the party. These two issues are naturally interrelated: such a system of information made possible the direct and appropriate intervention into operative work.

The direct information of the party leadership by Home Affairs was still functioning in the early phase of the Kádarian system, but the Information *system* of Home Affairs developed after the reorganization of state security in 1963 and 1964 (Müller 2004: 147–164). The historical changes of this system are not followed here, it should be stressed only on the basis of Rolf Müller's excellent summary that the significance of the daily *summary political report*, made for the party and state leaders, was upgraded parallel to growing *rigor* appearing in every field of party governance from 1972 on. The report was made by the Evaluation and Information Department of the Division of Data Processing Groups of the III/III of Home Affairs, organized as an autonomous department in 1977.

What circle of party and state leaders could receive the information package representing important political and trust capital? The list of addresses of Home Affairs is an important contribution to the operation of the machinery of *internal hierarchy* and of the instrument of oppression.

Up to the end of the 70s, as it is stated by Rolf Müller in his paper, the most often indicated target stations were members and additional members of the Political Committee. The first more detailed regulation on the "*order of informing party leadership*" was contained in the 28 March 1977 resolution of the HSWP Secretariat.<sup>93</sup> It stated the following: "Members of the Political Committee, secretaries of the Central Committee and deputy prime ministers should daily receive *general political information*. The information should be received by the president of the Central Committee of Inspection, the first secretary of the Budapest Party Committee, and the editor-in-chief of *Népszabadság*." Command 29/1982 of the Home Affairs broadened the circle of those who were to receive that information: as a result daily about *40 to 50 people* received the top secret home affairs information daily. In fact they were the *chiefs of staff of the nomenklatura* on the basis of their position.<sup>94</sup>

from 1963 up to 1966 he was Secretary of the CC of the HSWP, supervising the administrative field. From 7 December 1966 to 22 April 1978 he was Minister of Justice, and once again was Secretary of the CC from 1978 up to 1985. He was President of the Council of Constitutional Law from 1985 to 1989.

93 A pártvezetés informálásának rendjéről. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB Titkárság 1977. március 28-i üléséről. [On the Order of Informing the Party Leadership. Minutes of the 28 March 1977 Session of the HSWP CC Secretariat.] MOL 288. f. 7/522. file series.

At the same time the Home Affairs summary was *only one* element of the so-called *general political information*. It also contained the *daily report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* from the press reviews of embassies, the morning and afternoon report and review of articles of the Hungarian News Agency, further on the summary of the Institute of Boom and Market Research entitled “World Economy of 24 Hours”. The resolution indicated the minister and the head of the state institution as responsible in the case of each element in the order of listing: the minister of home affairs, the foreign minister, the director-general of the Hungarian News Agency and the minister of foreign trade. The daily summary was delivered by the *courier service of Home Affairs* every morning before 9 a. m. A return envelope was also attached to the mail, because the users of the reports were obliged to return them to the respective department of Home Affairs where they were destroyed.

János Kádár himself began his working day with reading the *daily summary political report*. In the 80s, when he was already ailing, he arrived in his place of work always at ten, when the report was on his desk unopened. According to Ms I. Barta’s information he always asked for a strong cup of coffee before he started reading, and after having carefully studied the daily report, he himself put it into the return envelope, closed it and immediately had it sent back by the courier service of Home Affairs.<sup>95</sup>

*Further* information from the quoted resolution of the Secretariat as well as their *thematic* distribution and the *list of addressees* exactly reflect the internal hierarchy of the nomenklatura.<sup>96</sup>

Members of the *Political Committee*, for instance, got the *Minutes* of the sessions of the Committee of Economic Policy, of the Committee of Agitation and Propaganda, the Council of Ministers and of the Committee of International Economic Relations, the monthly report of the Central Statistical Office, the information material of the Department of Foreign Affairs, in other words: they could control *without any mediation* the resolutions and the discussions of all the decision-making organs of strategic significance.

At the same time they received a weekly summary of reports through the party information channel and about the reactions to domestic and international events. These summaries were delivered always on Monday at 9 a. m.

Members of the CC, the first secretaries of county party committees, the secretaries of the Budapest Party Committee and members of the Council of Ministers received more “*meaningful*” information *monthly* and *quarterly*.

The resolution separately regulated information of the heads of department of the Central Committee and of the central party institutions. They received *more* internal

94 Az MNK Belügyminiszterének 29/1982. számú parancsa. [Command No. 29/1982 of the Minister of Home Affairs of the People’s Republic of Hungary.] MOL 288. f. 7/520. file series. Quoted by *Müller Rolf*, op. cit. p. 154.

95 Ms I. Barta was an associate of the CC Office, and János Kádár’s personal interpreter.

96 A Titkárság 1977. március 28-i határozata a pártvezetés informálásának rendjéről [i. m.], [The 28 March 1977 Resolution of the Secretariat on the Order of Informing Party Leadership /op. cit./ Modifying the Order of the Distribution and Publication of the Confidential Publications of the Hungarian News Agency.] MOL 288. f. 7/646. file series.

information than the *CC-members*, but, for instance, they did not receive the minutes of the discussions in the Home Affairs and state bodies.

As contrasted to the belief that the screening and summary of the above-mentioned party documents was made by the organs of Home Affairs, work related to the weekly, monthly and quarterly reports was organized and coordinated by the *Information Subdepartment of Agitation and Propaganda of the CC*.

*The distribution of the confidential publications of the Hungarian News Agency was also linked to position: publications such as the Morning News Summary, the Confidential Information Bulletin, Articles from the International Press, and the International Documents and Theoretical Articles.* There was a modification in March 1982, that the positions and institutions authorized could subscribe for the above-mentioned publications of the News Agency.<sup>97</sup> With the exception of the *Morning News Summary* and the *Confidential Information Bulletin* essentially the *entire nomenklatura*, “institutions and companies figuring on the competency list of the Central Committee” were entitled to order the summaries mentioned above.

Thus the collection and closed-circle distribution of information was going on along *different* channels but the eminent role of Home Affairs in the “*struggle against dissident and hostile groups*” was not modified. Consequently its place was also privileged in the information system. The new, *thematic summaries* belonging to the *field of supervision* of the CC secretaries deserve particular attention from the angle of the *internal mechanism and “division of labor” of the nomenklatura system* because they reflect a *more vigorous criminalization* of politics, and particularly of youth policy and the one related to intellectuals from the second part of the 70s on. The impact, however, is double: the subordinates of György Aczél, and later on of János Berecz, responsible for the governance of cultural policy, called the attention of the minister of home affairs, or of the deputy minister controlling directly the III/III department to the negative phenomena and their actors sensed at the universities, editorial offices of periodicals and in organizations of intellectuals. The ordering nature of “calling attention” is obvious.

Interference is well illustrated by the 18–19 February 1970 resolution of the CC of the HSWP, dealing with the situation of youth, also wording tasks in several directions,<sup>98</sup> and its translation to the language of state security: the ministerial command dated on 25 September 1970 on “Tasks of Operative Work against Hostile Activity in Progress in the Cultural Field”.<sup>99</sup>

The approach of Home Affairs is in harmony with the party line following the 1968 intervention, but it also reflects the existing but yet latent *cleavages in the party nomenklatura*. The party stand made under the guidance of György Aczél laid emphasis on prevention and on the dissolution of tension, whereas the Home Affairs apparatus, led by Béla Biszku, focused on tracing down growing hostile activity of the

97 The 8 March 1982 Resolution of the Secretariat. Ibid.

98 Az ifjúság helyzetéről. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB 1970. február 18–19-i üléséről. [On the Situation of Youth. Minutes of the 18–19 February 1970 Session of the CC of the HSWP.] MOL 288. f. 4/104–105. file series.

99 Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történeti Levéltára 1. 4. 2. Parancsgyűjtemény (Historical Archives of the State Security Services. Collection of Commands.) 45–5–22/70. Quoted by Unger 2004: 166.

youth and the intellectuals. It derives from the division of labor between the two bodies but differences in stress are also explained by the rear action of reformers and the forward advancement of the domestic neo-Stalinists (Huszár 2003: 238–246).

The ministerial order of 25 September 1970 defines the task as follows: “the organs concerned should explore, irrespective of persons and functions, persons carrying on hostile activity generated at any platform of literature, art, science, press, libraries, etc., their foreign and domestic organizations, groups, the aim and contents, the manner and date of their activities.” The command describes 16 such categories for which a given person, group and organization was to be put under operative control and confidential investigation. Even the *suspicion* of hostile activity could serve as a basis of operative activity based on the above categories.<sup>100</sup>

From the second part of the 70s, in the wake of the growing internal tension of the political system of which an increasingly active internal opposition was only a symptom, the policy of the HSWP was becoming *stricter* and, as a result, the role of internal counter-intelligence was once again upgraded in the Ministry of Home Affairs. The *subdepartment* within the III/III Division of Groups, responsible for the production of daily political reports was organized as an *autonomous department* under the name *Assessing and Information Department of the Data-processing Division*; in addition to the daily regular information of the Ministry of Home Affairs the so-called specialist distribution of information reports was also forwarded to some party leaders (Müller 2004: 155).

An eminent topic of those reports was “observing opposition and hostile phenomena”. Those *entitled* were proposed by the head of the group sending out the attached letter and the “*Top Secret! Particularly important*” report could be on its way with the approval of the minister (occasionally of the secretary of state).<sup>101</sup>

The growing strictness of politics (concerning the intellectuals) and the circle of the potential addressees are well reflected by the information report on the Monor conference of 14–15 June 1985, which was compiled of “reliable information” by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The “document” of 220 pages does not only contain the presentations and contributions, but it also carries reliable information on the “assessment” of the conference and in “intellectual circles and about the plans of the organizers” as well.<sup>102</sup> Among the addressees of the document of registration number 4/6 774/1985 the following names can be read: György Aczél, member of the Political Committee, János Berecz, the CC Secretary dealing with issues of ideology and propaganda, István Horváth, supervising the Department of Public Administration and Administration, Lénárd Pál, the CC Secretary supervising the Department of Science, Public Education and Culture (TKKO), and Katalin Radics, head of the TKKO.

100 See in greater detail: Unger 2004: 166.

101 „Javaslat a párt- és állami vezetők részére készülő szakelosztás rendszer egyszerűsítésére”. 1983. május. Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára [Proposal for the Simplification of the Specialised Distribution to Party and State Leaders. May 1983. Historical Archives of the State Security Services.] 1, 11, 10. sz. n. Quoted by Müller 2004: 156.

102 See in greater detail Müller 2004: 156. A monori tanácskozás hozzászólásainak jegyzőkönyve – jelzés nélkül, 1985 decemberében megjelent. [The Minutes of the Contributions to the Monor Conference – without marks.] It was published in December 1985.

The information of the TKKO of the HSWP on the June 1985 Monor conference was made utilizing this document after biding the time for half a year.<sup>103</sup> The document, signed by Katalin Radics, stresses, and this fact testifies to an increasingly marked presence of cleavages within the nomenklatura, that “in addition to the intellectual professions belonging to the »hard core« of the opposition intellectuals, employed by state institutions, were also present in larger numbers. There were several party members, too, among the participants.” In this respect it may be regarded as an even more unambiguous indication that *Imre Pozsgay*, Secretary-General of the Patriotic People’s Front, and several leading associates of party institutions were also present at the Lakitelek meeting of 27 September 1987.<sup>104</sup>

The disintegration of the system, its increasing uncertainty and the meaninglessness of repression are testified by the fact that though Imre Pozsgay informed Károly Grósz in advance about his participation in that meeting, the Prime Minister stated at the 9 February meeting of the Political Committee that the CC Secretariat had initiated an investigation which found that “the declaration of Lakitelek, wedged into the interview, caused political damage”.<sup>105</sup>

Several members of the Károly Grósz leadership and the bloc of the nomenklatura sympathizing with him did not exclude the possibility of ‘targeted’ repressive measures. The internal erosion of the Soviet Union, the domestic power relations and not the least the nomenklatura of the HSWP which was totally divided by that time, the appearance of opposition movements in public made the realization of such an idea totally impossible. And this is true even if the machinery of state security, similarly to the Japanese soldiers stuck in the jungles at the final phase of World War II, was in operation in full gear during that period. Only in 1987 2491 summary reports and other pieces of information were forwarded by them to the editors of the Home Office *Information Bulletin*, but a decisive majority of them remained ‘inside’ and even if a small proportion of them reached the circle of leaders engaged in infighting, they did not serve as bases to decisions.<sup>106</sup>

**ONCE AGAIN ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF NOMENKLATURA  
AND AS IT IS EMBEDDED IN HISTORY.  
(WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DON’T KNOW)**

103 Az MSZMP Központi Bizottsága Tudományos Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztályának tájékoztatója az 1985. júniusi monori találkozóról. 1986 február. [Information of the Scientific, Public Education and Cultural Department of the Central Committee of the HSWP on the June 1985 meeting at Monor. February 1986.] MOL 288. f. 36/10. file series.

104 The Declaration of the Lakitelek meeting was published in the interview entitled “The Capillaries of Public Agreement” made with Imre Pozsgay and published in the 14 November 1987 issue of *Magyar Nemzet*. The list of participants was published by No. 4. of the *Társadalmi Szemle* 191. See in greater detail Agócs–Medvigy 1991.

105 Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottsága 1988. február 19-i üléséről. [Minutes of the 9 February 1988 session of the Political Committee of the CC of the HSWP.] MOL 288. f. 5/1019. file series.

106 Jelentés az 1987. évi feladatok végrehajtásáról. 1988.január 27. [Report on the Implementation of the Tasks of the Year 1987. 27 January 1988.] ABTL 1.11.10. 137–17–2/88. Quoted by Müller 2004: 163.

### The Spatial Articulation of the Nomenklatura

We have set out of such an interpretation of the principle of nomenklatura that the *appointment lists* meant to ensure the filling, control and reorganization of nomenklatura positions were the tools of the exclusive power of the party state, providing the personal conditions of the political aims and change of strategy of the party. We considered it our primary task to study how the system of nomenklatura was *historically embedded* and what were the mutual effects of social processes and the policy of personnel?

The assumption seemed to be self-evident, and the hypothesis was confirmed by the first years of the Kádarian system, that parallel to the growth of the influence of the party the *number of nomenklatura positions* comprising bodies and organizations as a net would *grow*. And truly their number grew to 2789 in 1963, after the consolidation of power. It was less than in 1950, the 3512 positions said to be illusionary earlier, but it was more than 2414 in 1951. In 1967, partly under the influence of the economic reform, their number dropped to 1512, and grew again to 1710 in 1971. This growth was not significant but reflected halt of the economic reform, for if the *fields* covered by status positions are also considered it becomes clear that *political reform*, limiting the authorizations of party functionaries was removed from the agenda. The number of nomenklatura positions did not change up to July 1985.

The lack of change of that figure does not mean the lack of motion. It is known from the study of Ms Sztáray, Éva Kézdy that the nomenklatura positions, changing slowly in their personal composition, essentially ageing with János Kádár, even if not radically yet tangibly underwent modifications in the 70s. Personal changes – see István Sponga's study – were even more marked in the leading bodies; they did not simply serve rejuvenation impossible to postpone, but also political correction. Earlier we have discussed the motivations and the interrelationships.

What we do not know, and do not possess the relevant database, is the modification of the county competency lists, the changes in their personal composition, though their power weight multiplied during those years. As a side-effect of this process the division of power *within* the county was also modified: *significant resources for development were concentrated in the hands of the county central organs and county headquarters*, to the *detriment* of cities, and primarily of *villages*. This process was related to the National Concept for the Development of Settlement Networks of 1971 (henceforward: OTK). We have not conducted any study related to this topic but it is apparent from Gábor Vági's eminent research, that, for instance, in Békés County the percentage distribution of all the resources for development, taking the average of villages as 100, was the following by type of settlement, between 1971 and 1975: large villages: 125%, district centers and large villages: 403%, cities: 740%, county headquarters: 1839% (Vági 1982: 92–94).

In the next five-year plan the *concentration of power within the county* was further strengthened. The distribution of all of the development resources by type of settlement was the following in the above-quoted order: 174, 795, 926, 3054. The data of other counties, as it is shown by the relevant literature, do not show any meaningful

difference (Szegő and Wiener 1976). Those proportions of redistribution are *not* explained by the proportionate and rational distribution of the economic resources, but by a *gesture of the authority* (Vági 1982: 90).

The broadening of the jurisdiction of county headquarters and county councils originally did not serve this purpose. In the period of preparing the reform the *drafting* of the new *bill on councils* was launched parallel to the *settlement development plan*, and the draft served to prepare a package of legislation laying the foundations for *strengthening the corporate principle* and the *realization of local interests* from villages up to the counties. The preparation of the two bills, however, was *separated* already in the second half of the 60s. This change is partly explained by real processes and professional considerations, but it is a fact that building from bottom upwards and the principle of strengthening autonomies were sacrificed to “modern public administration” and “forming of districts”, principles necessary in themselves, which, as testified by the variant ultimately accepted, resulted in the upgrading of the jurisdiction of county councils.<sup>107</sup>

Our statement is a hypothetical one. Its aim is not only to indicate the hiatuses of the present writing, but also to encourage a further consideration of the issue. According to our assumption the combination of the principles of autonomy and corporation with modernization could have been possible only within the framework of the reform of the *political system*. It was *not* possible to implement in the given international political situation, after the fall of Khrushchev that was not a cause but a consequence of *strengthening re-Stalinization*, as it was mentioned earlier. The sphere of mobility in domestic politics became more limited after 1968, and modernization measures could only be realized in the spirit of a technocratic logic.<sup>108</sup> Presumably this is how measures serving decentralization became the means of a *two-tier centralization* in the real processes. *The counties, like the royal counties earlier, became autonomous centers of power* that did *not* challenge the validity of the central directives, at the most they sabotaged the ‘softer’ resolutions of the ‘smell of reform’, while Political Committee-members and first of all János Kádár, visiting the counties, were received with courtly respect and with the arrangement of royal hunts. Upwards, however, they behaved as “lord lieutenants”, though it must be admitted that there were significant differences in style among the various county leaders. The structural conditions were decisive: *the system of redistribution, the concentration of economic, political and communications capital, the conservatism and exclusivity of the nomenklatura system favored the behavior of feudal lords*. There was such a county where the first secretary reigned for two decades and if he did not lose the elections of 1985 surely he would have stayed in his position up to the change of the system. It was commonly known, for instance, about Veszprém and Csongrád Counties, called aptly by locals as “*Pap-land*”, “*royal Komócsin County*” that they were not the citadels of “socialist

107 See Dr Papp, Lajos, an article by the President of the Office of Councils. *A tanácsi közigazgatás korszerűsítése*. [The Modernisation of the Public Administration by Councils.] (Raft 1982: 9–42).

108 In this respect the *language* of the Acts and guidelines, approved by the government, is characteristic. The National Concept for the Development of Settlements (1007/1971. [III. 16.] No. Govt. Dec.), defined the types of settlements by their roles as *top, medium and lower-level centers* as well as villages without any role. See in greater detail Veres 1982: 43–66.

democracy”. When it was suggested that the city of Keszthely, for Zala County had no traditionally urban settlement, and because earlier too, it belonged to Zala County, should be reintegrated by the national plan for settlement improvement, Lajos Papp, First Secretary of Veszprém County stated at the plenary session: *I do not let it be “reannexed”*. The case was taken to the Political Committee and he drew back only as a result of János Kádár’s contribution which had the following key word: “Comrade Papp, Zala County is also on the territory of Hungary.”<sup>109</sup>

This kind of deviance remained under the threshold value, and there was no taking to task. The reason may be *partisanship of order*, the eminent role of the county party and council organs in maintaining *order* and “internal calm”. This consideration was expressed not only in the performance of public functions containing the “possession” of the county appointment lists; the first secretary as chairman of the *county administrative committee* supervised *all the armed forces* operating on the territory of a county the commanders of which were members of that committee.

If our studies extended over those relations and developments, and we attempted to analyze the competency lists of counties we could present with greater validity how the nomenklatura system was socially embedded.

### IDEOLOGY AND INTERNAL COHESION

Naturally, a large number of papers are available on the role of ideology, but the questions we were preoccupied with, those that were specifically related to the operation of the nomenklatura system, required a specific approach.

The papers published in the volume contain several data about the percentage of higher or medium-level *political* school education or political qualifications of the nomenklatura. This figure, if the two forms of education are studied together, is relatively high and shows a continuously growing trend in time. Their percentage is approximately identical with that of diploma-holders who passed exams in ‘Marxist’ subjects for several years at universities or colleges. This is why (as well) the question, what motivations and aims governed their participation in ideological extension training is justified. Was it an expectation of the workplace related to their position? Was it their wish to be promoted? Was it the diploma that could be obtained with less work? These motivations are probable because the *loss of credit of “Marxism–Leninism”* run parallel to the *major scandals of the socialist system(s)*. This is why we consider the *history of the Marxism–Leninism evening university courses* worth studying. This is, however, not a simple story. On the one hand, one should find the documents of the building complexes, erected at all the county headquarters with big capital investment. They were built in years when there was no money for the building or restoration of universities, at the same time, in the luxuriously built “party churches” even a swimming pool was built in several places, while in a number of counties there was no teaching staff on appropriate level, despite the fact that the teachers of university cities did teach at several county headquarters,

109 Interview with Ferenc Boér, Director-General of the North Transdanubian Forests. Keszthely, 1978.

too. At the specialization courses of the Budapest evening university, such as that of aesthetics, philosophy and sociology, a high standard of education was ensured, often with the participation of professors of the universities in the capital who were not party members, but were critical and advocated views that did not correspond to the official stand.

What would the *overall image* show if the full list of teachers could be reconstructed out of document mosaics, together with the demographic and sociological characteristics of the students? For at least in the specialist courses in Budapest there were specialist intellectuals, employees and party functionaries as well among the students. One may, however, have only assumptions regarding the proportion of people holding nomenklatura positions among them. We have even less knowledge about the students of the specializing courses in the countryside. Therefore we plan to survey the students of three university cities (Szeged, Pécs, Veszprém) besides those of Budapest. The image would not be representative even then, but there is a chance that the documents have been deposited in the county archives in those cities and the teachers of those courses may be found so that reconstruction may be helped with interviews.

This research may take us into a blind alley, yet a question is relevant that wants to find out who these people were and what motivated them to deal with dogmas that were already in international crisis and functioned as a state religion, and to devote their leisure to them. At the same time the case study on the specialization course of Budapest could have shed light on the specificities of the Kádarian nomenklatura: the operation of a non-conform party university under the sign-board of the most sectarian party committee. Did they want to represent the possibility of the existence of a quasi-free space, or did they wish to counter-balance the sucking effect of the opposition forums by cynically utilizing the authority of the teachers?

Two other planned studies were to reconstruct the history of two institutions of the CC, namely the Political College and of the Institute of Social Sciences of the CC. According to our hypothesis their difference would have drawn the curve of *re-sacralization* and secularization<sup>110</sup> if put on an axis of time, the first term meaning teaching that was to supplement the cohesive force of *emptying faith by arguing and ideological substitutes*, whereas the second one was hypothetically associated to that interpretation of theory which, breaking away from the *politico-ideological usage of concepts, considered the study of real processes* such as “urbanization”, “emergence from a peasant state” and “change of the social situation”<sup>111</sup> *as its task*. We have remained at fault for the study but we may risk to say that the preservation of the nomenklatura and of its cohesion was most efficiently served by the institution in Durer Alley.

The function of ideology in fact is a successful orientation in the language of “commitment”. It supplies its followers with a common vocabulary with the help of which they can distinguish between the committed and the non-committed, the innocent from the sinner. And this is what the nomenklatura needed first and foremost (Bayer 1990: 44–45).

110 In a broader context of the issue see Tallár 1989: 33–51.

111 On the theoretical and historical context of the issue see Kuczsi 1992: 34–40.

### THE PRIVILEGES

An entire series of *privileges* functioned as bonding agent and promoted the cohesion of the nomenklatura. Books of “*limited distribution*” should be mentioned in the first place.

From 1962 on books were published under the *indication* ‘*Confidential*’, without giving the name of the publisher and the year of publication, among others *Existentialism and Marxism* by Sartre, *World War II* by Churchill, *Memoirs* by Eden, and *The New Class* by Gylas.<sup>112</sup> The publication and distribution of the “*confidential (limited) (!) books*” were newly regulated in 1969. The publication of three types of books was recommended: “(a) works of foreign authors serving bourgeois ideology, in which the new traits and trends of bourgeois social science and imperialist politics were expressed representatively; (b) works of authors who projected themselves as revolutionaries or expressly Marxists that represented the more or less widespread petit bourgeois trends such as the different variants of »Trotskyism«, »Maoism« and revisionism; (c) writings of those foreign and Hungarian authors based on the ground of Marxism but in some details did not correspond to the policy of our party, may be challenged theoretically, or contained such confidential material the widespread distribution of which was not expedient.”<sup>113</sup>

We do not have an exact list of addressees though it would be particularly edifying to know who were qualified by the ideological leadership of the party as authors based on the ground of Marxism... but in some details do not correspond to the policy of our party.

The list of those who utilized the “limited publications” grew from 250–500 to 600–800 people. The list was primarily enlarged by adding leaders in ideological fields and institutions, teachers of Marxist–Leninist departments and leading political associates of the Ministries of Defense and Home Affairs. We have no information about who of the entitled people and how regularly availed themselves of this “service”, what types of books they took and how many of them did not use the opportunity though the books were free of charge or sold at a low price, could be collected only personally at the distribution department of the *Kossuth Publishing House* after they got information about a new publication. As members of the nomenklatura figured in large numbers among the entitled people it would offer interesting information about the degree of their ideological involvement.

The 5 March 1957 resolution of the Executive Committee of the HSWP ruled that members of the Central Committee should get the publications of the *Kossuth Publishing House free of charge*, and members of the five Executive Committees the books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries published by all the publishing houses.<sup>114</sup> No

112 Zárt terjesztésű könyvek. Előterjesztés az Agit.-Prop. Bizottsághoz 1961. [Books of Limited Distribution. Submission to the Agitation and Propaganda Committee.] MOL 288. f. 33/1961/18. file series.

113 Zárt terjesztésű könyvek. Agitációs és Propaganda Bizottság, 1969. április 15. [Books of Limited Distribution. Agitation and Propaganda Committee. 15 April 1969.] MOL 288. f. p. 41/114.

114 Tiszteletpéldányok. MSZMP KB Intéző Bizottság 1957. március 5. [Complimentary Copies. Executive Committee of the CC of the HSWP. 5 March 1957.] MOL 288. f. 5/17. file series.

list is at our disposal about what kind of complimentary copies the ministers and deputy ministers received from the specialist publishers (Ministry of Health: Medicina; Ministry of Agriculture: Agricultural Publisher; Ministry of Culture: Publisher of Textbooks, Publisher of Mass Culture), and we are also unable to assess the value of the additional income gained as an equivalent of the price of books.

The 8 March 1982 resolution of the Secretariat, quoted earlier, already indicated several hundred people and institutions as entitled to receive the confidential materials of the Hungarian News Agency, however, the list, though *reflecting the hierarchical articulation* of the nomenklatura and the apparatus is not *identical* with entitlements. It is because the press reviews of the News Agency covered a scale from top secret down to confidential and the basis of differentiation was timing, for there were some summaries produced daily, or were published several times a day, and others were monthly ones. The full text of the resolution is published in the Supplement of our volume to be published in Hungarian (Nomenklatura in Hungary 1957–1989) because it faithfully reflects the political and trustful nature of the nomenklatura functions.<sup>115</sup>

Another group of privileges contained those linking *housing* and position. The number of accessible party documents is small. There is only one containing a meaningful stand. It decides upon the *Creation of a fund for central housing management* in 1972, to be handled by the Department of Party Economy and Administration of the CC (henceforward: PÜO) with the view of “ensuring financial means to exchanges of flats of public interest”. The sum earmarked for it was HUF seven million.

The fact that the fund ensured to the acquisition of flats owned by the councils or sold by them could offer opportunities to abuse is suggested even by two statements of the brief document. The first one is that the party committees appointed for the purpose may “only give subsidy after the *preliminary approval of the person* by the PÜO...”. The Second one: “The sum of subsidy should be decided upon depending on the family and social circumstances of the comrade transferred so that associates with family should not suffer notable disadvantage neither enjoy advantage out of their transfer.”

The stand is moderate just as well as the report made on the implementation of the resolution.<sup>116</sup> In practice, however, the “doors opened wider” and different rules prevailed. Reference to it can be found even in the report on the implementation of the resolution.

Only some of them are presented here: (1) The county party committees asked subsidies to *building a flat* and to the *purchase* of flats sold by the councils or of co-operatives from the housing management fund with increasing frequency. (2) When assessing an application for a flat it is often not possible to *separate the public and private interests* or it can be done with difficulty...Even a demand for major *qualitative exchange of a flat* occurred, but “there was no possibility for supporting it according to the resolution...” (3) “Based on the relevant legal rules employees of the apparatus asked for subsidy to the *building of co-operative housing, condominium, and family houses*, to purchasing flats sold by the Savings Bank, and to the exchange of

115 A Titkárság 1982. március 18-i határozata...[The 18 March 1982 Resolution of the Secretariat.] MOL 288. f. 7/646. file series.

116 A loan of HUF 30,000 in the average, repayment in six years, 2% of service cost.

their council-owned rented flat for a flat sold by the council, for a family *house* or a flat sold by the Savings Bank as property.” (Italics mine – T. H.)

Knowing the general trend of the changes in demand, the intention to purchase could even be regarded as a rightful one, provided a claim to *the accumulation of wealth* was not realized under the pretext of a socially motivated party measure.

The content of the report, however, is only the tip of an iceberg. The CC itself also decided upon the granting of certain, highly valuable flats and villas owned by the party. They were later on transferred to family ownership. The secretaries of the CC had separate jurisdiction. The manager of this property, the PÜO was an empire within the party empire; its heads, László Karakas, and later on Köbli were the confidants of Kádár and were personally supervised by him. At the same time, the heads of the PÜO themselves had certain jurisdiction. They could allocate grants of HUF one million themselves or (and) with the consent of the minister of finance, to building flats within their own competency, on the basis of resolutions made secret of.

The county or city councils had an even broader sphere of mobility. The county and city party secretary and chairman of the council could not only claim and (on the basis of our experience gained in Veszprém, Csongrád and Baranya Counties) did claim to have a luxurious home on the main square of the city or in its garden city zone, but the City Management Company did continuously renew them at a ‘fair’ price calculation.

The fever to acquire flats and wealth spread over to the acquisition of plots of land for recreation and to building cottages on plots. As a result of the party secretary of Pest County, notorious for her relentless Puritanism, Ms F. Cservenka’s action members of the nomenklatura occupying top positions received an offer to purchase plots of land in the most exclusive holiday resort region of Szentendre; in Veszprém County the nomenklatura had an opportunity offered similarly to build holiday houses at Balatonalmádi and Balatonfüred. During the course of developing districts the local councils of the Balaton hills parceled out land in settlements at Lake Balaton that were “annexed” to them so that plots of land for holiday houses could be obtained by those who were in a decision-making position in central redistribution, such as leading reporters and also the associates of state security. This process speeded up in the 60s and 70s, but the PC-member, supervising the Planning Office could acquire a property of high value and a vineyard for melioration from the co-operative and through the council, under adequate coverage of a legal norm as late as the second half of the 80s.

The *social, labor and health* stipulations constitute a separate package of the system of privileges. We could not undertake its methodical survey and assessment; therefore we can only give some indication of the entitlements of the nomenklatura.

Care for the health of the political elite is a state obligation within the so-called VIP-system in the Western-type societies as well. The system is a public one, elected bodies define the circle who the entitled are to it such as the president, the prime minister, ministers and secretaries of state at the most. In most of those countries it is the central military hospital that is the appointed institution for the purpose.

In the nomenklatura system the set of entitlements is not public; the quota is “flexible” and is expanded with the passage of time. In 1958 15,200, in 1968 21,710 people were entitled to use that service. The party and Young Communist League *apparatus* was dominant among those with entitlement with 3400 and 5400 persons

respectively, but the *totality* of those being in *nomenklatura* positions was *inside* the group of those who were entitled or had permanent permission.<sup>117</sup> The 8 November 1978 resolution extended the circle of the entitled to the ecclesiastic dignitaries as well.<sup>118</sup>

Leaders of the Ministries of Home Affairs and Defense had separate entitlements. The Central Military Hospital and the Ottó Korvin Hospital gave identical, if not better care for those figuring in the quota.

The extension of entitlements may seem to dissolve their privilege nature. Yet, it was not accidental that popular parlance classified the “Kútvölgyi” under the 4Ks (initial letters to Hungarian words), representing privileges, such as the *use of* state-owned cars, K-phone, a window in the passport serving trips *abroad* and the Kútvölgyi Hospital. The new hotel wing of the hospital, its newly built outpatient wing, instrumentation and its supply of foreign medicines ensured exceptional care *at that time* for those entitled, especially compared to the condition of other hospitals and the district outpatient polyclinics run by the health insurance authority.<sup>119</sup>

Though these inequalities themselves ensured advantages to members of the *nomenklatura*,<sup>120</sup> their privileged position was ensured by care given in sanatoria and by exchange visits abroad for recreation and treatment in medical care. The party resolutions are not orienting, even the system of regulation was made top secret, though, according to the former director-general of the ORFI hospital the Ministry of Health ensured a separate quota for the *nomenklatura* in the more prominent sanatoria, or even in separate pavilions (at Hévíz, Sopron, and Balf), and allocations of health resorts abroad were also done through the very same ‘system’. We intended to map their regularity, but could go as far as interviews exploring the problem in our study.

We also planned a similar research reconstructing the strictly hierarchical system of “the leading comrades’ holiday-making”, with special regard to the resort at

117 Javaslát a Központi Állami Kórház és rendelőintézet nomenklatúrájára. Jegyzőkönyv a Titkárság 1968. február 26-án megtartott üléséről. [Proposal for the Nomenklatura of the Central State Hospital and Polyclinic. Minutes of the session of the Secretariat held on 26 February 1968.] MOL 288. f. 7/298. file series.

118 A Titkárság 1978. november 8-i határozata a Központi Állami Kórház rekonstrukciójának befejezéséről, a kórház által ellátandók körének szabályozásáról. [8 November 1978 resolution of the Secretariat on the completion of the reconstruction of the Central State Hospital and on regulating the circle of those who are to be cared for by the Hospital.] MOL 288. f. 564. file series.

119 This fact is well reflected by the following lines of the resolution: “Agrees to it that the director-general of the hospital may issue permission for a single occasion to the dependents of those with entitlement, to the employees of the hospital and their relatives (parents, consort, children not having an independent income), upon a written request, or in a justified case an annual permission; for other persons in a justified case to receive special treatment in the hospital or in the outpatient clinic; the director-general may issue an annual permission upon the written request of the heads of party and social organisations, top authorities and organs of national jurisdiction, in agreement with the Department of Science, Public Education and Culture of the CC, and the minister of health may give entitlement to those listed in the *nomenklatura*.” Jelentés a Központi Állami Kórház és Rendelőintézet munkájáról és az igénybevétel jogosultságával kapcsolatos egyes kérdésekről. Titkárság 1965. október 26. [Report on the work of the Central State Hospital and Outpatient Polyclinic and on some issues related to entitlement to the services of that Hospital. Secretariat, 26 October 1965.] MOL 288. f. 7/354. file series.

120 A Központi Bizottság Titkársága 1978. decemberi határozata a pártmunkások gyógyüdületésének bevezetésére. (A tihanyi pártszálló szezonon kívüli ilyen célú hasznosításáról.) [The December 1978 resolution of the Secretariat of the Central Committee on the introduction of health recreation of party workers. /On the off-season utilisation of the party hotel at Tihany./] MOL 288. f. 7/566. file series.

Balatonarács, to those using the Balatonaliga I and the Dobogókő IV villas and to the system of holidays abroad.<sup>121</sup> We wished to add to this study the reconstruction of the method by which the guesthouses of the *Concord Hunting Association* were used.

And finally: car. It has two linkages to the list of privileges of the nomenklatura. One was the privately owned cars that could be ‘paid for’ and received without waiting in a queue. It was revaluated as a symptom of the society of shortage in the 60s and characterized the East-German, Soviet and Czechoslovak cars. The identification of the right to disregard the waiting list, the right to act and to the advantage in administration stood with the minister of internal trade or his deputy, but a phone call of a secretary of the CC was enough to verify urgency even within exceptional cases. In view of the fact that the black-market price of new cars is estimated to have been 150% and a two-year old car could be sold at the price of a new one, the “favored one” could obtain a new car practically without any additional cost. The other one was the private use of state-owned cars. It was separately regulated for the party and Young Communist-League apparatus, but the use of cars of ministries and councils for private purposes also had a precise order. What should be stressed is the strictly *hierarchical* system of regulation. (Categories: (a) a free and time-wise not limited use of personal cars; travel between the home and the place of work, and for private use up to an annual 80,000 km; (b) the same up to 4000 km for private use; (c) up to 3000 km for private use; (e) travel between the home and the workplace.)

We have not collected a full bunch of the privileges that served as bonding agent for the nomenklatura. Surely a methodological study of the entire *system* of privileges, including the hierarchical system of annual paid leave, early retirement with exceptionally high pay, raising the time of the days of rest in a hierarchical order, the K-phone, would have made the image of the position of the nomenklatura more exact. The ensemble of those economic advantages could become transparent besides the additional power and symbolic capital and that of connections, that *linked* the leading stratum of the system to their *position and corrupted them*.

P.S.

At its 13–14 July 1988 session the CC of the HSWP passed a new list of competencies. The events, however, speeded up dramatically. Hardly ten months later the body, headed by Károly Grósz, was forced to declare at its session on 8 May 1989: “The assertion of *cadre competency ensured by legal norms is not justified*.” Therefore “it initiates the *cancellation* of those legal norms that make compulsory for those *having employer’s authority* to ask for the opinion of bodies competent according to party jurisdiction before personnel decisions.”<sup>122</sup> Giving up the nomenklatura system contributed to speeding up the collapse of power.<sup>123</sup> The *road* from nomenklatura to a new elite is the topic of another research.

121 We only quote a single document. “*Top secret!* Resolution of the Secretariat of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party passed on its session on 26 November 1984, about item 3 of the agenda: The Secretariat, modifying its resolution of 21 November 1977, assents to that members of the Central Committee and of the Central Committee of Inspection may go on holidays abroad with their children in every second year. *To be destroyed after implementation!*”

122 Competency list of the Central Committee and of the Political Committee. 13–14 July 1988.

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123 8 May 1989 resolution of the Central Committee of the HSWP on the termination of the jurisdiction of the HSWP.

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