

Michal Kopeček

**Research Report for the Work Completed in the  
Open Society Archives in Budapest  
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**Research aims**

My short research stay at OSA, Budapest has been a part of a larger book research project preliminary called the 'Legacy of Dissidence in East Central Europe 1975-2004'. It endeavors to read the story of the region's anti-communist democratic opposition from the perspective of post-socialist developments in which the contest for the 'legacy of dissidence' has played an important role as an indispensable part of the quest for political legitimacy. The main question, therefore, is how the reconstruction of collective identities and the contest for the right of 'authentic' community representation (in terms of community of dissidents as well as of the nation as a whole) in the alternative political and cultural structures (dissidence, nationally minded opposition, second culture, etc.) preconditioned and shaped the democratic political project in East Central Europe after 1989.

Political differentiation in the transforming East Central European countries after 1989 has been driven by a division between post-communist vs. post-dissident politics that has further differentiated by diverging interpretations of the communist past in the respective camps. In this process the narrative representations of the recent past (that is of 'meaning' of state socialism and of the anti-communist resistance/dissidence) embedded in specific national historical master-narratives played a crucial role. This development has visible roots in the 1970s-1980s that gave birth to the several anti-communist political groupings by creating various idiosyncratic cultural codes and canons as a result of the ongoing negotiation process about the 'meaning' of national history. By analyzing the cultural bargaining in the opposition and semi-opposition and its subsequent transformation into a post-socialist political and cultural quest for legitimacy I am trying to reconstruct the 'world of meaning' of the democratic opposition and of the post-opposition politics respectively. It is above all the first part, the cultural bargaining about the new vision of national history and collective identity esp. in the Hungarian and Polish opposition and the 'grey zone' expert and academic milieus that was the main object of my research at OSA as well as some of the Budapest public libraries (National Library, Library of the MTA).

**Sources used**

Very useful source for my research were the so-called RFE/RL background research reports and situation reports concerning various historical controversies in the 1970s and the 1980s Hungary, Poland, and Eastern Europe. They are contained in the subject files collections both in English and in the local languages. The topic of the historical thought, various discussions on national history and the development of the historical

scholarship at official institutions but also in the opposition didn't attract much attention in the current historical research so far with few exceptions in the Polish case. This naturally makes the work of comparative analysis quite difficult. Therefore, the RFE/RL background research reports – unsystematic as they are – serve me often as the only existing summarizing information about various events and developments in the area of interest. Particularly useful proved to be, for instance, the comprehensive report on the 'Blank spots in the history Soviet-EE relations' from April 1988 (HU OSA 300-40-1, box 1519) or the situation report on the anniversary of the 1945 Yalta agreements the accompanying discussions between the East and the West as well as within the Eastern block during 1984-85 (HU OSA 300-40-1, Box 1527).

Somewhat unexpectedly the most valuable sources that I have found in OSA holdings during my research were related to the Polish samizdat and, to some extent, official historical controversies of the 1980s. Of the RFE/RL research unit following the Polish samizdat production during this decade the most interesting subject files collection for my purposes were the following: the samizdat discussion reacting to the 'blank spots' official discourse during the late *perestroika* period that gave birth to the common Polish-Soviet Party History Commission (HU OSA 300-55-10 Box 7); the samizdat discussions during 1985-1989 concerning the single most blatant 'blank spot' in the official communist historiography and historical self-representation of the regime, namely the Katyń massacre (HU OSA 300-55-10 Box 14); and the samizdat as well as official controversies about the Polish-Jewish relationship in modern history and Polish holocaust perceptions that followed after the Claude Lanzmann's documentary film 'Shoa' has been issued 1985 (HU OSA 300-55-10 Box 38).

Due to very different structure of the historical discourse in the 1980s Hungary my studies of the Hungarian subject files collections at OSA were less effective compared to the Polish ones. As a result of the more 'liberal' approach in cultural sphere in late Kádárist Hungary much of the critical historical discourse, that in other countries could have appeared only in samizdat if ever, has been incorporated into the official historiographical production. This fact not only made the confrontation between the regime and the democratic opposition in the sphere of 'historical consciousness' less acute restricting it more or less to the reinterpretation of the 1956 revolution, but also grinded off somewhat the critical edge of the controversies. Despite this fact, I have found some very useful materials in the subject files collections concerning the historical scholarship (HU OSA 300-40-1, boxes 1516-1535) and the concept of patriotism (HU OSA 300-40-1, boxes 451-454). I did not manage to study the whole collection in detail though due to its relatively considerable scope. Apart from that I have supplemented my research of the Hungarian case by studying some of the most significant 1980s semi-opposition cultural-political journals such as *Medvetánc* or *Századvég* in the Budapest public libraries.

Apart from the archival research per se consultations and conversations with experts and witnesses at OSA and beyond were very useful during my stay, particularly those with Mr. Gábor Demszky, prof. Iván Zoltán Dénes, Dr. András Mink, prof. István Rév, and Dr. Balázs Trencsényi. I would also like to thank to the OSA staff for

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