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Veera Rautavuoma

Liberation Exhibitions as a Commemorative Membrane of Socialist Hungary

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ABSTRACT

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This doctoral dissertation explores the so-called ’liberation exhibitions’ (felszabadulási kiállítások) of state-socialist Hungary. The study focuses on six exhibitions in different museums of Budapest between the years 1960–1985, thus scrutinizing the ways in which the beginning of the state-socialist period was commemorated, and how the recent past, socialist present and the ultimate communist future were envisioned. In terms of theory, the study draws primarily on museum studies. The research material comprises heterogeneous exhibition documentation: scripts, photos, memos, reports by party organs and contemporary museological publications. Methodologically, the approach is crystallized in the notion of ’visiting the scripts’, which means the kind of reading that aims at re-creating an exhibitionary space that no longer exists. Further, the exhibitions are approached through the notion of the commemorative membrane, designated to explore the multiple tensions inherent in the public representations of the past, especially in a totalitarian context. The aforementioned tensions are conceived of in terms of narrative, mimetic and discursive tensions. Accordingly, the exhibitions are approached as (heritage) narratives that projected “the road of socialism”, as mimetic fragments embodying specific truth claims and as discursive formations embedded in the context of ‘socialist museology’. The study shows that while the original role of the exhibitions remained the same, their contents manifested a shift in focus from political history to aspects of culture and lifestyle. The exhibition narratives became looser and more aware of their multiple layers of meaning. In their visual appearance, the exhibitions often reflected the dividedness informed by the Cold War and colonial power relations. In terms of commemorative genre, the study reveals that the exhibitions had to reconcile numerous, often contradictory expectations. This study suggests that the liberation exhibitions of state-socialist Hungary may be regarded as a paradigmatic case of ’socialist museology’. The exhibitions reflect the ways a ‘soft dictatorship’ sought to represent itself as a modern socialist welfare state. At the same time, the research setting prompts further questions regarding the role of changing interpretative contexts.

Keywords: commemorative genre, commemorative membrane, exhibition, Hungary, ideology, liberation, mimesis, museology, narrative, socialism.

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I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my grandparents.

Jyväskylä 1.11.2011
Veera Rautavuoma

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Im/permeable pasts: commemorative membrane

Before I really begin, I need to bring in the Enola Gay dispute, which is probably the most debated case in public history and memory in the United States. The case of Enola Gay has been hugely thematized as an instance *par excellence* of the collision between scholarly history and public and private memory.[1] Not surprisingly, when Alan Megill starts off his discussion of the relationship between history and memory, he does so by drawing on the example of the Enola Gay exhibit that has already become a classic within history and memory discourse.[2] At the same time, it is the most debated case in American museology. The exhibition was scheduled to be opened in May 1995 in the Smithsonian Institute, but, as a result of the public debate over the proposed script, the exhibition was cancelled. The core of the criticism, according to critics, was that the planned exhibit laid too much emphasis on the suffering of the Japanese and failed to show the reasons for using the bomb. What is noteworthy, however, is that the exhibition was designated to *commemorate* the dropping of the atom bomb on Japan fifty years earlier. Commemoration is first and foremost an 'exercise in piety'[3] that easily conflicts with critical insights. More recently, several theorists and cultural critics have drawn attention to the fact that the controversy is not merely about history and memory but about the role of the museum. Megill argues that these debates, which encompassed American war veterans, historians, cultural critics and members of the congress, were closely related to issues of memory that may be formulated as the question: Whose memories were to be valued in the exhibition? The question may be refined and posed more generally, namely: Whose political, social, and cultural imperatives will have predominance at any

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1 See e.g. Luke 2002: 19-36; Wallace 1995; Zolberg 1996.
2 Megill 2007:17.
3 Megill 2007.

given moment in the representation of the past?[4] Edward Linenthal highlights this unresolvable dispute between the different interest groups in the debate with the metaphor of a 'commemorative membrane'. [5] While Linenthal does not really spell out the notion of the commemorative membrane, he first uses it in a context in which he discusses the possible consequences of the *physical presence* of an artifact in a museum exhibition. According to Linenthal, "the presence of the Enola Gay established a 'commemorative membrane' around the exhibition space, within which a language of commemorative respect was expected to dominate."[6] In other words, Linenthal draws attention to the visual impact of the artefact within an exhibition that may be in contradiction to the message of the exhibition, or carry unintentional messages because of its physical predominance. The core of Linenthal's argument is that "a monument or an artifact is so 'charged', so powerful, that it cannot be contained successfully in a dispassionate museum exhibit." [7] These charged monuments or artefacts, according to Linenthal, carry a strong element of unpredictability or uncontrollability: "a 'commemorative membrane' encased each site, altering whatever kind of museum exhibit could be presented."[8]

At the outset, we can state that the liberation exhibitions and the Enola Gay project bear some resemblances, the most obvious ones being temporary exhibitions of a commemorative character. Further, both are designated to commemorate decisive historical events at the end of World War II: while the bombing in 1945 puts an end to the war, the year 1945 in the liberation framework marks the beginning of everything. These affinities in themselves, however, are rather arbitrary if not trivial. Rather, what is crucial for my purposes is Linenthal's interrogation of the nature of commemorative practices within a museum setting. I argue that in the process of interrogation, Linenthal's notion of a 'commemorative membrane' is useful, since it draws attention to the materiality in the core of commemorative practices at heritage sites.

The present study adopts Linenthal's powerful and suggestive metaphor of a commemorative membrane and at the same time sets out to "stretch" and explore it, in the process of weighing it against the museum practices in Hungary in the era of state socialism and their current reinterpretation. Within this study, commemorative membrane is taken to mean three different things. Firstly, commemorative membrane pertains to the interpretation and discussion of commemorative practices that lays special emphasis on the role and impact of physical objects or surroundings. The discussion of commemorative practices entails a discussion of what constitutes a commemorative framework in specific settings. As has been pointed out by Linenthal and emphasized by Hubbard and Hasian, the controversy relies in part on differences in rhetorical conven-

[4] This question draws on the views of Eric Foner (2002).
[5] It has to be noted here that Linenthal does not use the term exclusively to discuss the Enola Gay controversy but has used it in several writings that discuss commemorative practices.
[6] Linenthal 1995: 1095.
[7] Linenthal 2000:259.
[8] Linenthal ibid.

tions. Thus, the dispute may be interpreted as a clash between the 'revisionist' and the 'commemorative' genre.[9] Therefore, this study discusses museum exhibitions also in terms of genre expectations and, more broadly, in the light of different conceptions of a museum, especially the 'modern' and the 'postmodern' museum. Secondly, commemorative membrane relates to a mode of reading inspired by the insights of Linenthal that pays heed to the impact of the material presence of artefacts. I suggest that commemorative membrane may also be applied as an interpretative technique to the symbolic forms of material/visual display. This entails reading this similar-but-different set of exhibitions *through* each other: reading *as* membrane. Thirdly, drawing on the insights of Linenthal, but also prompted by the Enola Gay controversy as a whole, the viewing of the Hungarian liberation exhibitions in the light of the Enola Gay dispute prompts epistemological questions concerning the grounds on which we can analyze exhibitions that exist only as constructs in a script. In an epistemological sense, both the liberation exhibitions and the first planned Enola Gay exhibit suffer from virtuality, but for different reasons. The liberation exhibitions are displays that *no longer* exist and may be accessed only through their textual remains. The first Enola Gay exhibit, in contrast, was never realized due to the heated controversy it aroused, and thus is the most disputed exhibition in American museum discourse that *never* existed, except for the numerous drafts of the script.[10] Although the exhibit never existed in a physical form, the commentaries and content analyses of the different version of the script remain accessible on the Internet.[11] However, as Linenthal emphasizes, the mere *physical presence* of one powerful relic may radically change the overall tone or even message of the entire exhibit, and from the viewpoint of the applicability of a content analysis based on scripts, this obviously means a strong unpredictability factor. In other words, the 'persuasive elements of artifacts' as part of the complex memorialisation process need to be taken into account.[12] It is this figurative materiality haunting the scripts that permeates the analysis of both types of exhibits. In short, then, in the context of this study, commemorative membrane refers to the tension between mimesis and narrativity that is created when culturally meaningful objects are displayed for commemorative purposes. Reading that is sensitive to the membrane is explicated in chapter 2.5.

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9 Linenthal 1995: 64; Hubbard and Hasian 1998.

10 By 'never-existing', I wish to emphasize that even though parts of the Enola Gay were eventually put on display in the form of a temporary exhibition in 1995, the original exhibition concept was abandoned altogether, and a minimalist and reserved display was created.

11 See the Enola Gay archive of the Air Force Association http://www.afa.org/media/enolagay/default.asp

12 Linenthal 1998:500.

1.2 Aims and frameworks

The present study sets out to explore a series of museum exhibitions in state-socialist Hungary, constructed with the purpose of commemorating the 4th April, 1945 as the moment when Hungary was liberated from Fascist-Germany by Soviet troops. It looks into the ways the museum institution was adopted as a representational tool in state-socialist Hungary, and how the exhibitions built around a political anniversary constructed a 'heritage narrative' reflecting the 'official' version of the past. In more concrete terms, this entails looking at how the material of the exhibitions has been arranged to create a narrative of socialist Hungary. Since museums primarily draw on material objects in their modes of communication, it is not enough to look at the narrative constructions of exhibitions but also the way objects make meanings in non-narrative ways. Within this commemorative frame, the study sets out to explore what 'memory' in the liberation exhibitions consists of and how it is mediated. Thus, the study looks into the ways this commemorative frame is used to evoke or create memories. Finally, in an attempt to understand the exhibitions' contexts of production, the exhibitions are viewed in terms of the curatorial practices and museological thinking of their time.

To this end, a multiple approach is applied that I call a narrative-mimetic-discursive one. In this approach, narrativity means regarding the exhibitions as (potentially) narrative constructs. Thus, the study relies on the assumption that a narrative depicting the past, present and future can be constructed based on the exhibition narratives. Mimesis, in turn, is concerned with the inherently constructed authenticity-effect of displays; the ways the displayed material appears not only meaningful but also 'real'. Further, mimesis pertains to the evocative nature of material objects, and it is closely related to the way the exhibitions are perceived as material and visual culture. In other words, this means interpreting the displays primarily in terms of visual culture, producing thematic cross-readings prompted by the exhibition material. The analysis and discussion of liberation exhibitions is thus placed between the two poles, as it were, of narrativity and mimesis. However, these two poles are not regarded as mutually exclusive but rather as shifting tendencies in meaning-making and in the communication of meanings. The third element in this triad, discursivity, refers to a wider, theoretical debate around museums and cultural heritage, and the exhibitions are viewed in this wider context. The discussion in this study follows this narrative-mimetic-discursive order. This introductory chapter, apart from outlining the aims, sketches out the historical context of the topic. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical premises and an introduction to the methodological framework. The main discussion is divided into three chapters, each of which has a different viewpoint, namely narrativity, mimesis, and discursivity.

In a 1964 issue of a journal for museum professionals published by the National Council of Museums (Országos Múzeumi Tanács), the aim of the liberation exhibitions is summed up as follows:

> The fundamental objective of the exhibitions is to provide a worthy commemoration of the most remarkable watershed of our national history, the liberation from the slavery of fascism, the democratic rebirth and the two-decade struggle for the victory of the socialist society. Apart from the multifaceted display of the achievements and the road that has been taken by far, the exhibitions must draw attention to the future tasks, as well.[13]

Although the excerpt above addresses the preparations for the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the liberation, this brief summary of the liberation exhibitions' role can be seen as representative of all exhibitions discussed in this study. The ultimate task was to create future-oriented exhibitions that – through the display of the recent past and contemporary Hungarian society – would lead citizens to appreciate the status quo.

There are several relevant contexts or frameworks for the interpretation of the liberation exhibitions. One of these is the celebration of public holidays. During the state-socialist period, national holidays and commemorations were reorganized, with several holidays being taken off the calendar while new ones were introduced. In 1950, while the national holiday of August 20 was retained, though in a strongly reinterpreted form, two new holidays were introduced: the anniversary of the Great October Revolution on November 7 and the anniversary of the liberation. The "liberation" of 1945 was envisioned as a watershed in the nation's history: "the dawn of socialist Hungary", for which "the Hungarian people shall ever be grateful to the glorious Soviet army." Further, the anniversary marked the inseverable Soviet-Hungarian friendship[14]. Whether the "liberation" was really a liberation or the beginning of the Soviet occupation is an issue beyond the scope of this study; what is crucial, however, is that the legitimacy of the "liberation" of Hungary in 1945 was held as a dogma until the democratic transition around the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s[15]. The introduction of the day of liberation as a major national holiday involving commemorative practices was part of the political-ideological doctrine of building and enhancing the self-identity of Hungary as a socialist state. With the demise of Stalinism in the 1956 revolution, an even stronger attempt was made to promote the role of political, secular holidays in contrast to holidays derived from religion, and thus the increase in the importance of the anniversary of liberation (can be seen as) part of the strategy to render secular holidays more significant .[16]

The commemoration of liberation included military parades, galas, including foreign, especially Soviet, delegations and gatherings where commemora-

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13 Verő 1964: 1. All translations of original Hungarian documents are mine.

14 Glatz 1992.

15 For a more elaborate discussion of the significance and character of 'Liberation' as an historical event, see Ungváry 2002a. Also worth looking into is Ungváry's witty analysis of the notion of "liberation" including its over- and undertones.

16 Kalmár 1998: 254-273.

tive speeches were given and wreaths were laid on Soviet monuments and the graves of "heroic soldiers". Cultural and educational institutions organized lectures and exhibitions, the press published thematic issues and television reports were compiled on the commemoration of liberation.[17] After 1956, to distance itself from the Stalinist period, the new leadership used the anniversary of the liberation to announce amnesties for crimes deemed political. State prizes, awards and promotions were granted on April 4 on a regular basis. While the aforementioned forms these actions form the broader context of the commemoration of liberation, the present study focuses on the commemorative practices of liberation within museum settings.

Although the systematic organization of liberation exhibitions was started in 1960, the commemoration of the anniversary of the liberation had earlier, during the 1950s, more often than not included museum exhibitions. Typically, these exhibitions were temporary exhibitions that travelled throughout the country. Often the opening of the exhibition took place on the day the given town or settlement was liberated. Consequently, the commemorations started in October and lasted until April 4, when the last village, Nemesmedves, was liberated. Typically, these exhibitions consisted of texts, photos and graphics (statistics), and were focused on presenting the historical events of the liberation and the history of the labour movement. However, not every anniversary was as remarkable: it was round numbers that were celebrated in more spectacular terms both in and outside of museums.[18] The major liberation exhibitions were organized every five years from 1960 to 1985 in central museums in the capital and in municipal museums alike. This study focuses on six exhibitions in various museums in Budapest. With the exception of the 1975 exhibition, all were organized by, or in collaboration with, the Museum of Hungarian Labour Movement (in the years 1957-1966 called the Museum of Contemporary History). Though they have their antecedents, the liberation exhibitions are primarily a product of post-Stalinist socialist Hungary and as such, they are strongly informed by the changing cultural political focal points and topical concerns of Marxist historiography of the Kádár era.[19] As repetitive representations of socialist Hungary, they reflect Party Congress decrees or present the objectives of the various five-year plans. By envisioning and displaying 'the road to socialism' *as it should have been seen* from the viewpoint of the power holders, the liberation exhibitions often bring to the fore what the central government had at heart. However, the analysis of the exhibitions brings to the fore other things as well: the tension between meaning-making through mediated,

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17 "Államszocialista ünnepeink filmhíradón", http://www.filmintezet.hu/magyar/filmint/filmspir/29/allamszocialista.htm Accessed 28.10.2010

18 For instance, in 1965 it was decided that the military parades on April 4 would be arranged only every five years.

19 János Kádár was the political leader of Hungary from the aftermath of the '56 revolution to the changeover in 1989. His era is generally characterized as a 'soft dictatorship' as compared to other members of the Eastern Bloc, which gave rise to the description of Hungary as 'the happiest barrack in the socialist camp'.

symbolic forms and the prospects of controlling the meanings so created. In effect, much of this study is based on this tension, inherent in the notion of the 'commemorative membrane'. Reading the exhibitions as imprints and evocations of state-socialist Hungary that may be read through each other, rather than compared in detail, enables the treatment of the exhibitions as a cumulative (though varying and contradictory) heritage of Hungarian socialism. Thus, the exhibitions discussed make up a coming-of-age story of socialism in which the earlier exhibitions and their surrounding discourses are implicitly present.

In addition to the commemorative context of liberation as a public holiday, the liberation exhibitions can be placed within the context of the development of historical museology in Hungary.[20] This is due to the fact that the time period of the exhibitions discussed here coincides with the upswing of historical museology, apparent from the 1960s.[21] In Hungarian museums, the 1960s, and especially the end of the 1970s, saw an enhanced interest in contemporary culture, life-style and the mundane, with cities and suburban areas as a focal point rather than the traditional agrarian society. In part, this was due to the realization that, in the age of mass production and the consumer society, the flow of material had speeded up to such an extent that an object in use today may tomorrow be on the top of the rubbish heap. Thus, it is easier to approach, pick and choose from among, the wealth of material culture while surrounded by it, and not afterwards. Attention was focused on urban, mostly industrial workers, and their life-world and life-styles were studied and collected avidly. This resulted in a shift in collection policies, from the late 1970s onwards, from the 'archaic', 'traditional' and 'pre-industrial' to a growing interest in everyday culture and lifestyle.[22] A major agent and driving-force in this work was the Museum of the Labour Movement, and by the 1980s the collection of contemporary history material had evolved into a nation-wide network.[23]

While the context of national holidays is acknowledged, the context of historical museology provides the primary context of production against which the liberation exhibitions are weighed. In interpreting the exhibitions and exploring their meaning-making processes, I apply insights from a wide range of cultural studies and museology discourses. Along with this, I bring in a fair amount of historical and sociological research conducted on state-socialist Hungary. Although the results of these studies are used to comment on the inner realities of the exhibitions, they are not used to contrast the realities outside the museum walls and those embodied by the exhibitions. In Gaby Porter's words, "the focus is not history but representation, not the content of displays

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20 As a term, 'historical museology' is somewhat problematic. What in the Hungarian museology discourse is usually meant by 'történeti muzeológia' is museology pertaining to the subject matter discipline of history, as opposed to other subject matter museologies, especially those of archaeology and ethnology.

21 Bartó Halmi 2004: 471; Vörös 1965.

22 Tóth 2003.

23 Fűrészné Molnár 2004.

and collections but the production of meaning. My concern is not whether something is true, but how it comes to be true in the museum text.” [24]

1.3 Ethnographic moments: the inside-outside syndrome

The origins of this study go back to a term paper on museum studies during my undergraduate years that discussed the educational role and objectives of the museum in Hungary during the first half of the state-socialist era. It was through surveying the museological journals of the 1960s and 1970s that I came across the notion of liberation exhibitions, relatively frequently discussed in the professional literature of the time. These exhibitions instantly appeared as a paradigmatic case of “socialist exhibition politics” and thus seized my attention. Several years later I then returned to the phenomenon, this time not only through literature but primarily through the related archival material. This study is the result of this “return”.

I shall commence with a traditional ethnographic gesture. By this I mean a reference to the many hours I have spent in the field, collecting archive material and conducting interviews and talking to museum curators in numerous museums in Budapest. What is equally important are the months spent ′behind the scenes′ as a trainee in museology in the Provincial Museum of Lapland in Rovaniemi and Déri Museum in Debrecen. These periods have meant getting acquainted with the curatorial practices of museums in Finland and in Hungary. What this means is that in the course of this study, I have not always restricted myself to looking at the exhibitions alone, but allowed myself a few excursions into the realm of ′museum reality′: of selection and thesauration, not only of presentation. Quite obviously, this is a manouver of validation: ″Believe me, I have been there″. At the same time, I have to say: ″I hope I can persuade you to believe me, even though – strictly speaking – I have not been there″. Alternatively, I am tempted to say that this study consists of accounts of my *not being there*, or perhaps my desperate attempts to get there, several decades later, from another reality. This is due to the inherent tension between my ultimate research interests in relation to the nature of the source material available. It is historical archive material, yet I conduct this study as a non-historian, for whom it is difficult to accept that the liberation exhibitions can no longer be accessed as an experience. Yet, for all I know, a museum visit is all about experience: it is about attending to the presence of the exhibited material and its interpretation. If my interests lie primarily in the meaning-making processes within this specific commemorative frame as outlined above, the material should be interpreted paying heed to its potential visual and material impact on the visitor. And yet, the ideal or average visitor of a liberation exhibition (a construct in itself, of course) is my ′Other′ in several ways, due to the cultural, social, political and geographical distance. There is a multiple difference that

[24] Porter 1996: 105-126.

needs to be reckoned with. At the same time, I realise my otherness has become remarkably relative in recent years since, due to my marriage to a Hungarian, I live half of my days in Hungarian, having adopted not only Hungarian metaphors and body-language but also second-hand memories. My intercultural position has often led me to an intense play with identities that includes mimetic moments of *passing for a Hungarian*.[25]

As such, my study process has contained a number of 'ethnographic moments': mostly unpredictable, critical moments and experiences that have evoked sudden insights and quests for knowledge[26]. If we take ethnography as 'an "experience near" form of research'[27], an analytical description and interpretation of cultural scenes that draw on field work, then we will have to admit that the ethnographic moment is more often than not also an enigmatic moment based on numerous intimate encounters with the subject of the study. Whether on a concrete ethnographic field or on a figurative or discursive field suspended over the research material, I as a researcher tend to resort to my experience of the field. In a sense, a *close reading* of the research material is, even if conducted in compliance to a rigid methodological frame, 'an experience near' form of research. Consequently, the present study contains elements that I call 'figurative ethnography': I as the researcher attempt to produce a persuasive account of my encounters on a (partly imagined, partly discursive) field. From my fragmentary research material it follows that often there is a limited set of tools available for me to back up my arguments with concrete passages from my research material. Often I do have things to lean on: photos of exhibition displays, snaps of guest book entries, exhibition criticism or stretches of script. However, all of these are fragments. I may envision things based on the scripts, my (fragmented) knowledge of the collections behind the exhibitions. Then again, a photo of a display may show an installation or a diorama "as it really was" but there is no way for me to be sure of what is framed out of the picture, and if this framed-out material would shake up the signifiers and the signifieds and radically re-arrange my reading. I have to accept that on a figurative field, there are very few things of which I can be certain; this is the price I have to pay for this 'discursive roaming' that I perform. At the same time, however, these scraps of the figurative field prompt me towards reflection and allow me to discuss aspects and cases that I may not be able to soundly argue but – I believe – may add to our understanding of the 'sunk continent'[28] we call socialism. Along the lines of Norman K. Denzin[29], I aim at making situational, local interpretations.

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25 For a more elaborate reflection on my research position, see Rautavuoma 2009b.

26 Fitzgerald 2006.

27 Fitzgerald ibid.

28 With 'sunk continent', Péter György refers to the sense of disorientation following the realization that the Cold War frameworks of interpretation have permanently become outdated while, at the same time, there are no alternative schemata that could as such be applied. After state socialism with its semantics and symbols has been abandoned, there is nowhere to go home to. The postsocialist or postcommunist condition is thus characterized by a sense of foreignness in the redefined spaces. See György 2009:11-25.

29 Denzin 1997.

This means dialogical and reflective interpretation, which aims at charting various voices and tensions – mapping out different discourses. Indeed, my preoccupation with the present derives from my researcher position as an interpreting subject, and this aspect casts an ethnographic net over the entire study. As much as about historical representations born in a specific historical context, this study is about the possibilities and limits of historical knowledge in a museological context.

As already mentioned, the present study is undeniably about historical representations, and is therefore historical in nature. Further, the representations of liberation exhibitions have, for the most part, been made by historians working as curators and thus representing the historical museology discipline. Yet another aspect that should be noted is that much of the academic discussion over the role and character of historical museology is done among historians or 'museum historians' as museologists working in history museums prefer to call themselves in Hungary.[30] What I regard as crucial in my study is the direction of my gaze: ultimately, it is cast on the society outside the museum, but it begins from within the exhibition and the museum institution, in the *proximity* of the displayed material and the collections. In other words, the impulse to look at and discuss the social realities outside the exhibitions stems from the exhibitions themselves, and this I regard as characteristic of the museological gaze.[31] I don't see my role as a researcher as one of a historian reconstructing the exhibitions: what I do is rather 'slipping in and out of the museum's structures', as Gaynor Kavanagh has put it.[32] This means the structures of the specific locations where the liberation exhibitions were held but also the museum as a metaphor, as a theoretical construct of heritage space and memory action unit.

In this brief reflexive passage, I seize the opportunity to trace the reasons, or rather those encounters with the research material that prompted me towards the approach I call 'visiting the scripts', explicated in chapter 2.5. My initial idea was to contrast and compare the exhibitions (scripts) in terms of the differences they manifest in representing Hungarian society. First, my hypothesis was that all the liberation exhibitions are more or less the same, since they were born within a rigid framework that did not allow for alterations. Then, as I soon came to understand the more or less subtle shifts in emphasis from political history to life-style and the realm of the everyday, I began to think that beneath the surface, these exhibitions must manifest a change in terms of the ways the regime is 'sold' to the visitors. The problem was that while this shift was in a way evident, it was difficult to track down its exact extent. How do we measure this change: by counting the items of the script, attempting to envision the impact of having two Marx or Lenin busts within the exhibition space instead of

30 Éva Gyulai (2002: 29) points out how the concept of the museum historian ('múzeumi történész') has been adopted by the profession in Hungary.

31 In a sense, this is in line with the approach Volker Barth adopts in his analysis of the relation between the display and the real thing in *Exposition universelle de 1867* in Paris. What I call 'proximity of the displayed material', he calls 'the recognition of the microstructures of the exhibition grounds' (2008:24) . See Barth 2008.

32 Kavanagh 1996: 4.

one? Eventually, what seems to gain more significance is the prevalence of certain elements rather than the change of representations: the impressive lists of the achievements of socialism, the recurring samples of political posters, the 'empowering projections' of having symbols of state authority (e.g. image of the parliament or copy of the constitution) and images of every-day people displayed next to each other. Are the perceived alterations difference-in-sameness or sameness-in-difference? My response to this dilemma is 'visiting the scripts', which, as a contradiction in terms, is coined to underline the inherent paradox of the attempt to construct vision with hindsight. Of course, there is a wide range of documentation available, including photos, but these do not provide access to the exhibition space. While the focus in the analysis of meaning-making is on particular objects and installations and their 'visual statements', there remains a grey area that falls outside of the captured images and scripts, however detailed, and it is this grey area towards which the 'visiting' is directed. Visiting the scripts is then primarily an ethnographic gesture – an opening up of a space that figuratively inscribes experience, even in the absence of 'real' historical experience. Consequently, rather than providing an alternative account of the changing historical representations of Hungarian society during state-socialism, my aim is to provide reflexive contextual readings of material culture that, on the one hand, take account of the ideological-political contexts in which they were born and, on the other, the contemporary context of post-socialism. With this, emphasis is laid on the role of the experiencing and interpreting subject, be it the (often theoretical and speculative) visitor to the exhibition or the researcher figuratively re-entering exhibitions that no longer exist.

If the otherness of the past as a 'foreign country' and my relative 'non-Hungarianness' prompt me to reflect on my researcher position, so does the third Other in the context of this study, namely the totalitarian frame of state socialism. The concrete textual and discursive articulations of the communist utopia frequently contain grotesque or absurd elements which may have uncanny, humorous and touching effects all at the same time. In other words, due to the persistent awareness that everything my research material testifies to was done 'under the flag of socialism', my encounters with the material unavoidably contain a reifying element, in which the otherness of socialism is being celebrated.[33] However, in the context of post-socialism, things easily appear as ironic, even if the researcher has attempted to refrain from ironizing: it is enough to look at the extensive use of quotation marks around terms such as "liberation" to become aware of their distancing and ironizing effect. As András Gerő and Iván Pető point out in their book *Befejezetlen szocializmus* (Unfinished socialism), it is easy to treat the phenomena of an extinct world with irony, and this is made especially easy when this extinct world is a system of language emptied of meaning and political rituals which lacked honesty even in its own eyes.[34] However, this study wants to make a distinction

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[33] For a more elaborate account of my encounters with the 'Other' in the research material, see Rautavuoma 2012 (forthcoming).

[34] Gerő and Pető 1997:8.

between *seeing the irony* (since much of it really is contained in the visual statements of the exhibitions) and *ironizing* done *from a post-socialist position*. This means that while attempting to analyse the forms of irony that necessarily are there, the possibility of ironizing is left for the subjects involved; those people whose life-worlds were rooted in the every day of state-socialism.

Finally, my quest to read the research material partially through the Enola Gay dispute serves several purposes. First of all, it is done as an attempt to connect a relatively unknown phenomenon in museum history to the wider, international discourses of the politics of memory. Secondly, it is to indicate my point of entry into the discourse: it is from the outside that I approach the object of my study. It has thus been a deliberate gesture to start off the sections on ′Faithful reflections′ with a reference or insight from the international museology discourse, then proceed towards the ′centre′. At the same time, my constant drawing on the Enola Gay dispute is my response to the problematic of my researcher position. No matter how much my ′non-Hungarianness′ has in the recent years been relativized, I still enter the field of the recent past as a stranger. This constellation I find problematic, since it easily appears as if I as a non-Hungarian were assuming the role of an objective reconciliator helping a post-communist country to come to terms with its socialist past, *while* assuming the position of a voyeur observing the absurdities of a totalitarian system. After all, ′state-socialism′ has an awkward and powerful resonance to be engorged and fetishized. I hope that dragging along the Enola Gay case serves to highlight the ideological pursuits that necessarily lay behind the politics of memory and heritage production, in spite of governmental structures.

1.4 Research material

The primary source of my research is the archival material related to liberation exhibitions, which consists of exhibition plans and scripts, photos, guest books, memos, exhibition catalogues, letters, contracts, professional evaluations, popularizing articles and reviews by critics. This material is stored in the archives and documentation departments of several museums in Budapest. The majority can be found in the Historical Documentation Department of the National Museum but a significant amount has been collected in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest History Museum and Kunsthalle. In addition, I use museum journals of the socialist era, most importantly the *Múzeumi Híradó* and the *Múzeumi Közlemények* which were published by party organs and were thus a medium for the dissemination of the viewpoints of the central government. The museum journals provide a wider discursive scope than the archival material on its own: they contain information on the museum legislation, the changing institutional framework and the objectives set for the museum field in each ‘phase in the construction of socialism’, as the frequently used phrase had it. In addition to providing insights into curatorial practices of the time and the overall role of the museum within the society, the journals open a window into

a specialized branch of cultural policy. They demonstrate, often in very concrete terms, how the objectives of the next five-year plan or the resolutions of the latest Party Congress are to be translated into the museum field, what are to be the focal points in exhibition planning and collecting. The liberation exhibitions are discussed in the light of this immediate museology discourse. However, in the analysis of the exhibitions, a broader, cultural studies aligned scope of discourse is drawn upon.

In the course of my research, I conducted five interviews and had numerous discussions with museum workers who were involved in the making of liberation exhibitions. In the body of research materials, the interviews form a marginal and problematic cluster of knowledge which, granted its recollective nature, is heavily present-oriented. Therefore, the interviews were used mainly as background information with a few minor quotations.

The study explores the following six exhibitions:

Year	Title	Venue
1960	Magyarország a szocializmus útján. 1945-1960 (Hungary on the Road to Socialism. 1945-1960)	Modern Historical Museum
1965	A népi demokráciánk húsz esztendeje (The 20 years of our People's Democracy)	National Museum
1970	25 éves a szabad Magyarország (The Free Hungary is 25 years old)	Museum of Fine Arts
1975	Budapest felszabadítása és 30 éves fejlődése (The Liberation and the 30 years of development in the life of Budapest)	Budapest History Museum
1980	Művészet és társadalom 1945-1980 (Art and Society 1945-1980)	Kunsthalle (Műcsarnok)
1985	Utunk, életünk. Életmódbéli változások Magyarországon 1944-1985 (Our Road, our Life. Life-style changes in Hungary 1944-1985)	Museum of Ethnography

Choosing the exhibitions for discussion and analysis was not an easy or clear-cut task, since the contexts of their production vary to some extent. As already pointed out, the 1975 exhibition was *not* made by or in collaboration with the Museum of Hungarian Labour Movement, which is a common denominator for the other exhibitions. From this it follows that as such, the exhibitions do not allow detailed comparison. Another factor that complicates a thoroughgoing comparative analysis is the fact that each exhibition was held in a different museum, and thus the core of the exhibited material, the collections of that particular museum, varied to some extent. While the first three exhibitions drew mostly on the same (or similar) material, the exhibition of 1975 in the Budapest Historical Museum, and even more so the exhibition of 1980 in the Kunsthalle drew heavily on their own areas of expertise. In the case of the former, this meant bringing in the viewpoint of the Soviet soldier, in the latter, resorting almost exclusively to pieces of art in narrating the story from WW2 to the present. Further, comparison of the exhibitions is made more difficult on account

of the rather heterogeneous nature and scope of the available archive material. For instance, there is no detailed script available of the exhibition of 1975 that records the actual exhibition texts; instead, there is a thematic plan and lists of objects to be put on display. Then again, only two of the exhibitions included a catalogue, which generally is a useful tool for explicating the message and thematic of the exhibition to the visitor. Especially in terms of the discussion of reception, the heterogeneity of the research material is problematic. This is due to two factors: firstly, only the guest books of the exhibitions of 1960 and 1970 could be found, and, secondly, only the exhibitions of 1980 and 1985 had extensive press coverage, including numerous criticisms. Then again, the 1970s was a period of active professional interest in the role of liberation exhibitions, which resulted in several articles in professional publications in the museum field. From this it follows that to discuss either the reception of the exhibitions or to approach them from the viewpoint of experience cannot be done in a consistent manner. Therefore, in much the same way as Hooper-Greenhill discusses the museums of different eras as manifestations of different epistemes, I look at the chosen liberation exhibitions as instances of 'effective history'. This is to say that I acknowledge that their process of selection for discussion may be seen to some extent as arbitrary.

From the nature of the research material it follows that there are several uncertainties that need to be coped with. In the present study, the exhibitions, along with their scripts, are regarded as products of joint authorship, with the particular subjects behind the texts seen as secondary in relation to the joint product. Many scripts have names attached to them and indeed, in the recent museological literature much attention has been given to the issue of having a bundle of nameless representations offered to audiences as "The past". In a sense, my leaving aside considerations concerning actual individuals as the authors of the exhibitions may seem contrary to this aim of bringing the curators into the exhibition space. However, I believe that highlighting the collective authorship of the exhibitions is justifiable, considering the process of mounting exhibitions. Needless to say, the realization of an exhibition is team work par excellence, in which almost everyone is involved, from the persons in charge of a specific collection to the technicians and visual designers who carry out the visual image and concrete solutions. First, curators came up with a thematic plan, on the basis of which first and second drafts of the script were written, which is when historians of specific fields were often drawn into this work. Following this, several "workshop debates" took place during which the museum professionals not only debated the main lines of the exhibition but also sorted out practical questions concerning the availability of certain material and exhibits. What is more, the exhibitions were not mounted by representatives of the museum profession only, but also included the contribution and surveillance of an external authority, often a representative of the party. It is enough to skim through the audit statements ('lektori vélemény') of the scripts to see to what extent the exhibitions actually were multiple revised collective products. This is to say that the entire concept of liberation exhibitions should be seen as a prod-

uct of political anniversary-related genre conventions and central government-based cultural policy. In this sense, the exhibitions may be seen as 'plan-driven' to such extent that emphasizing the authors of these texts would not do them any justice. Another aspect of this joint authorship is connected to the commemorative nature of the exhibitions, of their being temporary exhibitions tied to a specific anniversary and therefore often put together at short notice. Although it should be emphasized that the exhibitions that are the main focus of my study were big efforts on behalf of the museums and related institutions and well planned beforehand, this was not the case with all commemorative exhibitions that fell under the category of liberation exhibitions. In a short period of time, everything and everyone had to be mobilized for an exhibition to come together. As one of my informants remarked, "If we had to, we could spit out an exhibition in two weeks"[35].

Another insecurity factor that I already touched upon above is the relation between the scripts and the concrete exhibitions. What complicates the detailed analysis of certain parts of the scripts is that some passages may not be totally complete. This is what I call 'the uncertainty of the text to come'. This problem arises especially with themes that have been implemented through collaboration between experts and institutes outside the museum/party organs. For example, in the case of the 25th anniversary exhibition, the passage presenting science and technology contains the objects and images but in many cases the text is still missing, indicated by the phrase "Text to come". For the researcher there is no way of filling these gaps.

A similar problem is caused by handwritten, highlighted or crossed out parts as well as handwritten remarks on the margins. When reading the scripts, the researcher may try to make sense of these singled-out elements but if, for instance, certain photos or artifacts are circled in the script, there is no way to be certain why this has been done. Are these highlighted points those that need emphasis, are they to be left out or simply something that the curators need to come back to?

Yet another aspect of uncertainty is the unbridgeable gap between the experience of reading the exhibition scripts and visiting the actual exhibitions. This difference extends over the whole of the exhibition, including its affective dimension. To some extent, the relationship of reading a script of an exhibition and reading the exhibition itself is related to the experience of reading a film script, or in some cases, to reading drama. A script often gives cues to the ideal process of reception, in that it tells the reader what effect certain aspects should have, spells out symbolism and links between different elements that may remain unnoticed by a visitor or a viewer of the 'final product'. Further, a script not only contains highlighted, additional information but also provides the kind of aesthetic pleasure that in some respects may be very different from the aesthetic of the end product. It is my conviction that the researcher has no other choice but to keep slipping in and out of the museum's structures: spend some time in the exhibition built up by the texts available and her imagination, then

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35 "Ha kellet, akkor két hét alatt összeköptünk egy kiállítást."

use the back door and go behind the scenes to check up on the collections, then consult volumes of scholarly history to make sure her interpretations don't get too fer-fetched and that they are anchored in some sort of existing consensus on Hungarian history and society.

1.5 A note on terminology

For the sake of clarity, the usage of a few terms should be defined at this point. Both 'communist' and 'socialist' are used in this study, but they are used to denote different things. Along the lines of János Kornai, 'communism' pertains to the communist utopia, the ultimate goal of socialism, whereas the political system in Hungary is referred to as 'socialism'.[36] This distinction is in line with the distinctions made in the exhibitions: they were to show 'the road of socialism' towards the future goal of communism.

When it comes to 'ideology', two different senses need to be distinguished: the one pertaining to Marxism-Leninism as official or state ideology during the state-socialist period, and the understanding of ideology informed by media and cultural studies as constitutive of meaning. Since museums as disciplinary institutions are necessarily permeated by complex power-knowledge structures and will to power, they are always inherently ideological. From this it follows that the production of an ideology-free exhibition is an impossibility. Consequently, as this study acknowledges that ideology is 'meaning in the service of power'[37], this means that the exhibitions as discursive formations are complex and often contradictory articulations of 'ideology', or for that matter, several competing ideologies. At the same time, while the liberation exhibitions were designated to articulate and thus propagate the Marxist-Leninist worldview, it would be simplistic to view the exhibitions as mere reflections of this dominant ideology. Further, the several political doctrines that become articulated in the exhibitions are not all derived from Marxist-Leninism. Moreover, it could be argued that the post-1956 quests for political legitimation more often than not were only remotely connected to Marxism-Leninism. What further complicate the issue of 'ideology' is that there was, eventually, little shared understanding of how Marxism-Leninism should be translated into concrete museum theory and practice. From this brief discussion it becomes apparent that 'ideology' in the context of the present study is both rather vague and versatile. This said, 'ideology' will be reserved primarily for referring to those sets of ideas and goals – either implicit or explicit – that may be perceived or assumed behind the power claims of the exhibitions. This means that unless indicated otherwise, ideology pertains to either the theoretical or abstract ideas of Marxism-Leninism, or to the more concrete cultural political aims informed by state socialism. Thus, in its 'mobilized' form, ideology pertains to

[36] Kornai 1992:35-36. See also K. Horváth 2008: 247.
[37] Thompson 1990:7.

the 'materials of cultural politics' such as subjectivity, meaning, knowledge, truth and history.[38]

As for 'history', there are two aspects that are of primary relevance here. Firstly, history's alignment with narrative structuring. Thus, 'history' may be conceived of as consisting of an endless set of 'histories' as narrative accounts of a known past. These accounts, in turn, necessarily rely on emplotment. Through narrative structuring, past events become structured history, characterized by continuity and meaningful sequentiality.[39] From this it follows that temporality is an inherent dimension of history: history is the past conceived in narratives that unfold in time. These narratives, however, are never neutral but always told from particular vantage points and, as a result of their structuring, motivate their own interpretation.[40] As remarked by Frank Ankersmit, 'narrative integration has always been the historian's main instrument for appropriating and domesticating the past.'[41] Secondly, 'history' is something that pertains to scholarly history, that is, the study of the past practised by the history discipline. These two senses of history are equally important in this study, and, in the body of this work, they very much coincide, since the collective responsible for the production of historical representations in the form of exhibitions were, for the most part, historians. Thus, the meaning of the term 'history' in this study may be summarized as the past conceived as narratives produced by historians. In the context of this study, the term 'historiography' as meta-analysis of the history discipline pertains almost exclusively to the theory and practice of the Marxist-Leninist writing of history. Further, 'history' as an entity needs to be differentiated from 'memory' as traces of a past that may, but not necessarily, be mediated in narrative form and may be either personal or collective. Further, 'memory' in this study pertains to multi-disciplinary discourse that is based on the assumption that memory as a phenomenon belongs both to the private and the collective sphere or domain and is thus a field of interest to history, sociology, psychology and cultural studies alike. While some scolars highlight the radical difference between 'history' and memory', what is more important for the purposes of the present study is the contention that the museum institution is equally relevant for 'history' and 'memory', and especially so in the case of the liberation exhibitions that, apart from being primarily historical representations, that is, produced from the perspective of the history discipline, draw on and manifest the emerging discipline of 'historical museology'. The interrelations of history and memory are discussed in more depth in chapter 2.4.

In this study, the terms 'object' and 'artefact' are used as synonyms to denote material things that can be seen and touched.[42] While 'object' is more neutral, 'artefact' has an undertone of being a result of skill and human intervention but it is also distinct from 'specimen' which primarily denote things that

38 Jordan and Weedon 1995:569, quoted in Hooper-Greenhill 2000:19.
39 Fulda 2005:175.
40 White 1984:20-25; Fulda 175-176.
41 Ankersmit 1994:197.
42 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:104.

are derived from the natural world. In this sense, 'artefact' may be seen as an object of historical interest[43] of relevance for the present study. What is crucial, however, is that in the museum, whether we talk about objects or artefacts, they are always already within interpretative frameworks: a characteristic of objects is that knowledge and experience about them already exist, as, by definition, objects are always targets for feelings and actions.[44] Objects may thus be seen as sites at which discursive formation intersects with material properties[45]. While this latter insight permeates the study as a whole, it becomes highly relevant in chapter 5, where the liberation exhibitions are weighed against the 'socialist museology' discourse.

Further distinctions need to be made between 'exhibition' and 'display'. 'Exhibition' is understood as a conceptual whole the concrete outcome of which is the set of displays that the visitor can walk through. As a conceptual whole, 'exhibition' is also the primary locus of the museum narrative, made up of diverse objects and a range of sources. 'Display', in turn, is taken to mean the mode of display, that is, the way given objects (or ideas) have been put on display. Further, I use the term 'display unit' to mean an assemblance of exhibited material that may be perceived as a 'conceivable chunk': something that appears in the body of the exhibition as embodying or conveying an idea. A display unit may be realized in a variety of ways, as a montage, installation, an interior or some other form of grouping. It is a rather loose category and should be understood as a technical rather than analytical term to denote those elements that are likely to be interpreted as making a 'visual statement', as explicated in chapter 2.2.

1.6 The historical context

In order to understand liberation exhibitions as a phenomenon, a brief historical overview is necessary. Here, the focus is on the impact historical changes have had on the museum institution in Hungary. Of course, it could be argued that this brief sketch belongs under the title of 'the museological context'. While this is undoubtedly true, the focus here is different from that of the next sub-chapter, which sets out to conceptualize the museum scene and exhibition politics from a theoretical-philosophical viewpoint, primarily as a means of controlling visibility and using commemoration as a vehicle of political socialization within a totalitarian frame. In contrast, the historical context here pertains to museum history and institutional changes, but, at the same time, it is not merely museum history but attempts to account for the dynamics of the broader historical context in more general terms.

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43 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:106.
44 Hooper-Greenhill ibid.
45 Crary 1990:31, quoted in Hooper-Greenhill 2000:103.

It would be beyond the scope of this study to go through the history of collecting and the museum institution in Hungary. Suffice it to say that, more or less, the overall development of museum history conforms to a general European pattern, starting with the Renaissance collections of King Mathias Corvinus to the private collections of aristocrats and noblemen. In the wake of national Romanticism, the striving to create a central collection to embody the nation led to the establishment of the National Museum in 1802, when Hungary was under Habsburg rule. The Compromise of 1867 which established Hungary as a kingdom of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, meant new pespectives also for the National Museum.[46] The augmenting and management of collections gained more independence, since it was no longer necessary to send newly found valuable artefacts to Vienna for inspection.[47] In the last decades of the 19th century, new local interest groups appeared and initiated the augmentation of local collections. The different collections of the National Museum went through specialization, as a result of which several collections became detached from the museum. At the same time, enhanced interest in folk culture and ethnographic collecting foregrounded the role of folk culture as a part of national culture, in contrast to the hitherto universal, anthropology-based collecting rationale. The Millenium celebration in 1896 commemorating the 1000-year existence of the Hungarian state had an impact on the museum field, too, contributing to the establishment of several museums in the capital city. The turn of the century saw the birth of the museum profession and practice-driven museology: methodological guides were published, courses organized for museum workers and catalogues were developed for more efficient collection management.

Following the dissolution of Austria-Hungary after World War I, Hungary experienced three revolutions in 1918-1919. First, Hungary was proclaimed the Hungarian Democratic Republic; this was followed by a Communist take-over in 1919, leading to the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. This meant a radical reformulation of cultural policy, the backbone of which was the idea of culture being primarily a tool in the construction of socialism. To this end, the privately owned material considered as having museal value was declared collective state property. The scientific work conducted in museums was to be placed on a strict Marxist foundation. The museum conception of this short-lived regime was strongly didactic in nature: its aim was to end the elitist museum and create an institution whose objective was solely the education of the people.[48] After 133 days, the regime collapsed following a Romanian invasion, and Admiral Miklós Horthy assumed power. Under his 25-year regency, governed by a conservative-nationalist coalition, the country fell under authoritarian rule. The Treaty of Trianon signed in 1920 meant extensive territorial and population losses to Hungary, and even though agricultural and industrial

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[46] Thus, the years 1867 and 1848 as watersheds of periodization in Hungarian historiography were reflected in curatorial practices.

[47] Korek 1987: 94.

[48] Gerelyes 1967; Korek 1987:103-106.

production grew rapidly, these losses contributed to the economic decline of the late 1920s and increased Hungary's dependence on foreign loans. Despite the scarce resources, the inter-war period is characterized by the consolidation of the museum profession and curatorship, prompted by individual enthusiasts.[49]

While pursuing revisionist policy and economic protectionism, Hungary passed several anti-Jewish laws, pressured by radical nationalists and fascists and in line with German interests. Hungary entered World War II as an Axis power and participated in the invasion of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Following the unsuccessful attempt to switch sides in the war, Hungary was invaded by Germany in March 1944. Hungary had been sympathetic to the German cause, since Hitler could aid Hungary in its territorial ambitions. In return, Germany expected cooperation with Germany's racial and military agenda. Under German pressure, Horthy was forced out of power and replaced by Ferenc Szálasi of the anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi Arrow Cross Party. Civil parties were dissolved, newspapers were banned and more than 400,000 Jews were deported, most of whom died in concentration camps.

The Red Army entered the country in late December and, after a prolonged siege, liberated Budapest in February 1945. A temporary National Government was formed, which declared war on Germany, as a result of which fighting continued until mid-April. The Communists began to seize power in the general elections of 1945. Hungary was in process of being bound more closely to the Soviet sphere of interest, and became a republic in early 1946. By 1949, the multi-party system had been replaced by a one-party state. Nationalization had begun already in 1947, collective farms were established and compulsory delivery of products was introduced. In 1950, a strongly centralized administration was introduced in the form of a system of councils, which replaced the municipalities. The museum sector also underwent a centralization process, and museums were placed under the newly formed councils. The Museum Act of 1949 laid the ground for the socialist museum and created a nationwide Budapest-based museum network.[50] Although the new museum act declared that all material of museal value must be made accessible to the people, this did not include such radical measures as as those promulgated during the Soviet Republic. In 1949, private collections were not nationalized but their material was divided into two categories of 'national' and 'museal' value, pledging the owner of the collection to see to the care and accessibility of the collection, which in case of neglect could be placed in public collections. The strongly didactic spirit was resumed, however, and the ultimate aim of the museum institution was envisioned in terms of the 'shaping of consciousness'[51]. To achieve this goal, much attention was directed towards the development of a didactic,

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[49] Museum histories written under socialism are careful to emphasize the religious and nationalist overtones of the post-1919 cultural policy. From a materialist viewpoint the conception of history of the interwar period was plagued by the history of ideas approach, while the artefacts were derived from the "glittering objects of the ruling class" (Korek 1987: 108), with no trace of the ordinary people.

[50] Dankó 1975:7-14.

[51] Dankó ibid.

thematic exhibition.[52] The liberation exhibitions, along with other exhibitions erected to celebrate the new political anniversaries, may be regarded as a textbook case of this new type of didactic exhibition. During the early 1950s, the role assumed by the museum in people's education was tied even more tightly to the general cultural policy. In 1953, the museum sector was placed under the Ministry of People's Education (Népművelési Minisztérium).[53] Just as the Stalinist leadership under the party secretary Mátyás Rákosi built a cult of personality around the 'Beloved Leader', so the museums too sought to manifest 'the limitless faith in Comrade Stalin'[54]. As show trials became part of the political culture, the museums waged a war to 'liquidate the bourgeois vestiges' and wend off 'imperialist cosmopolitanism'[55]. While the centrally governed planned economy was focused on enforced industrialization in order to turn Hungary into a "country of iron and steel", the task of the museum was to reflect the new relations of production in the social consciousness[56]. In the museums, the most important task was to collect material objects to record the post-liberation historical process.[57] What is more, the museum's role in the construction of socialism was not envisioned solely in terms of documenting, but also prompting future victories: "If the workers, peasants and the intelligentsia see their achievements displayed in an exhibition, they will carry out their tasks with even more enthusiasm."[58] However, this forced enthusiasm could not be kept up for long. Due to a bad policy-making and disproportionate industrialization, the standard of living fell, leading to growing public discontent. The revolution of 1956, that started as a student demonstration on 23rd October and evolved into a nationwide revolt, was suppressed with the help of the Soviet army. Kádár János was elected Secretary-General of the Party, re-organized as the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. In the aftermath of the revolution, thousands of people were executed or imprisoned, among them Imre Nagy, who was prime minister during the revolution.

The new political leadership under János Kádár sought to distance itself from the Stalinist rule of the preceding Rákosi dictatorship. This re-orientation included a significant raise in workers' wages and a generous social security package, including paid maternity leave and extensive housing policies. Small-scale entrepeneurship was permitted, and in 1968, the 'new economic mechanism' was introduced, which meant propping up the plan-based economy with certain market mechanisms. From the 1960s, a gradual decentralization was carried out among Hungary's educational institutions and centralized publishing ended when the state monopoly in publishing was abolished. In 1962, changes were made in the national museum network, and

52 Dankó ibid.
53 Dankó ibid.
54 Pogány 1952: 5. 'A szocializmus építése korszakának muzeológiai feladatai' TAD 267-65. On the cult of Mátyás Rákosi, see Apor 2011.
55 Pogány 1952:1.
56 Pogány ibid.
57 Pogány 1952: 3.
58 Pogány ibid.

the government of the local museums was handed over to municipality-based councils. This speeded up the local development of museums and their collections, especially in the field of ’the newest era[59]’, which more or less coincided with the augmentation of post-1945 material. Along with the Museum of Contemporary History in Budapest, established in 1957, local museums of the labour movement were established. From the early 1960, committees of the newest era (Legújabbkori Történeti Bizottságok) were set up on the local level, and one of their tasks was the realization of different jubilee exhibitions. Thus, it is clear that the task of creating liberation exhibitions was closely linked with the collection of objects relating to ‘the newest era’. Further, not only the collecting but also the display of the post-liberation material was called for: the second five-year plan for the museum sector included a requirement to increase the proportion of newest era materials also in the permanent exhibitions.[60]

Along with the changes in economic policy and welfare, the Party assumed a new role, withdrawing from people’s everyday life.[61] Along with Kádár’s political amnesties, the leadership lowered the level of visible loyalty expected from the citizens. As long as certain political taboos were left untouched – the one-party system, the Soviet occupation, the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring countries and 1956 – people could *seemingly* do whatever they pleased. This was in stark contrast with the circumstances of “the chilliest days of the Cold War in the 1950s [when] virtually no aspects of everyday life escaped socially divisive forms of political signification”.[62] To ensure its political legitimacy, the Party’s political agenda was in part based on securing a steady supply of goods and the expansion of consumer possibilities.[63] People started to travel abroad, bought a car and enjoyed the small comforts of consumer goods. Whereas in the 1950s campaigns had been launched against western consumer patterns, in the 1960s experience-based shopping as consumer behaviour became more or less tolerated.[64] After 1956, the political system with its strategies of legitimation and socialization, evolved from a conflict-rejecting to a ’conflict-avoiding system.’ [65] This change manifested itself in countless social practices, including museum exhibitions. While the outspoken cultural political aims remained more or less the same[66], there seemed to be some uncertainty as to the concrete tools for realizing these aims on the level of the exhibition. In fact, one way to approach the liberation exhibitions is to look at them as variations of this uncertainty. The weakening economy of the Soviet Union accelerated both oppositional politics and reformism within the Party, along with growing civic activism. New parties were being formed and round-table talks were held between the Party and the

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59 The notion of the ’newest era’ pertains to the Marxist historiography, according to which the Great October Revolution of 1917 marked the beginning of the newest era.

60 Béni Miklósné 1963:11.

61 Szabó 2000: 61; Valuch 2005:365-368.

62 Hammer 2008: 56.

63 Valuch 2008:42-43.

64 Horváth 2008:67.

65 Szabó 2000: 10.

66 Korek 1987:183; Selmeczi 1986:254; Sallay Ditróiné 1974:647.

opposition, which gave the changes the name "negotiated revolution". The first free elections were held in 1990.

For the museums, this brought major institutional changes: the Soviet, party and council-based government of the museum sector was given up and instead, local authorities took over. Thematically, new focal points were introduced after the change of regime. These included, for instance, conservative politics and politicians, Hungarians living outside of Hungary, the aristocracy, formerly stigmatized social movements and organizations (e.g. scouts). At the same time, the most debated aspects of 20th century history were brought to the surface within and outside of the museums. The history of Hungary in the 20th century is replete with delicate issues, the interpretation of which is radically different among historians and the public opinion alike. To risk oversimplification, since 1990, the most fervent disputes have been fought between two major poles: the Christian-National-Conservative and the Leftist-Liberal viewpoint.[67] The re-interpretation of the recent past is an ongoing process.

This brief historical sketch, designed to map out the broad political context and the institutional frame in which the liberation exhibitions were made, immediately points to a number of problems relating to narrativization, periodization and the style of narration. Contemporary historiography usually divides the post-1945 history of Hungary into five major periods, which are the transition into communism (1944-1949)[68], the Stalinist era (1949-1956), the Revolution of 1956, the Kádár era (1956-1989), and the era of democratic transition (1989-). All the exhibitions discussed in this study fall into the Kádár era and are thus products of the post-1956 political culture, characterized by a constant balancing between historical continuity and discontinuity in an attempt to obtain legitimacy for the political system. In the above sketch, with the advent of the post-1956 Kádár era, a shift in style may be detected, which has to do with the primacy of the Kádár era as a historical context. Consequently, it is more elaborated and insightful than the account thus far. Further, detection of this shift is also due to an another aspect, namely the immediacy of the historical record related to the Kádár era.

The realization of a social-political agenda entails suitable socializing and educational institutions, from schools and different social organs to the mass media, including museums. Among other institutions, the museum was set the task of building socialism that would lead eventually to a classless society. These demands made by the more concrete museum-related cultural policy in state-socialist Hungary is discussed in chapter 2.2.

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67 Ihász 2001:35-36.

68 Also frequently called the 'coalition years', as a reference to the relative freedom and the multi-party system, when compared to the strict Stalinist rule that was to follow. Ignác Romsics has stressed, however, that such term works rather like a euphemism, concealing the fact that sovietization was nonetheless a major characteristic of the period. See Romsics 2005:271.

2 THE MUSEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

2.1 Cultural Information about the Exhibited Culture and the Exhibition Culture

Given the objectives of the present study, it is not worthwhile to go in depth into the question of whether museology is a discipline or a bundle of methods for curatorial practices. However, if my aim is to map out the range of museological discourses that surround a series of temporary exhibitions in Hungary during the socialist period, we need to be clear about what is meant by 'museological'. In this study, I regard museology as a cluster of interdisciplinary discourses which has its own orientation of knowledge.[69] This said, there appears a need to position museology in terms of disciplines.[70] At the same time, we need to take account of the strong alignment of current museum discourse with cultural studies that has been seen as *the* shared perspective of museology. According to this view, museum studies may be regarded as a branch of cultural studies: "a site for the practical and reflexive application of cultural theory"[71]. Here, Eric Gable seems to be affirming a view that was articulated much earlier by Susan S. Pearce, who distinguished museum theory as part of critical cultural theory, in addition to the levels of resource management and every-day museum work (museography).[72] My frame of reference in this study is primarily the museology discourse informed by cultural studies. For instance, my attempt to map out a (however sketchy) 'geneology of the state socialist museum' along the lines of Foucault

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69 This has been shown e.g. by Ivó Maroevic (1998) and Peter van Mensch (1992), who have respectively presented comprehensive syntheses and historical overviews of museological thinking.

70 There have been on-going debates over the role of museology: if it is a discipline in its own right or rather a secondary or auxilary discipline of the more established subject-matter disciplines of history, art history, anthropology and the like. For an extensive overview of the question of disciplinarity, see van Mensch 1992.

71 Gable 2009.

72 Pearce 1992: 10. See also During 1993:25; Message 2009:128.

and Tony Bennett, entails exploring the contexts of production and consumption of the liberation exhibitions. In other words, the specificity of the ′liberation material′ at the core of my research has to be reckoned with. This means, on the one hand, taking into account the contemporary context and the interpretative horizon in which the exhibitions came into being, and on the other, the over-all historicity of museology as a discipline, and, thirdly (and partly deriving from the former), the subject matter (material) of the liberation exhibitions. Concequently, most of the discussions about the liberation exibitions was at the time done by historians and from the disciplinary viewpoint of history.[73] I realize that conducting a doctoral study which claims to be written explicitly and primarily within a museological frame (before any more established subject-matter disciplines) is first and foremost a matter of engagement – given the still on-going debate on the role and nature of museology in disciplinary terms[74]. But at the same time it is more than engagement since it is coupled with my attempt to point to certain aspects and thematic that can be found in (for the lack of a better term) the ′museological legacy of socialism′.

Theoretically, one of the most distinguished attempts to distinguish museology from other disciplines is the notion of ′museality′ coined by Zbynek Stránský. For Stránský, ′museality′ is a combination of informational and documentative value and authenticity captured in museum objects. Museality thus reflects man's specific relation to reality. As aptly pointed out by Peter van Mensch, Stránsky's understanding of museality has varied, and it has shifted from a value category to denote the specific value orientation itself[75]. With respect to the mission of museology, I agree with Stránský's more recent argument, in which he lays more emphasis on interpreting the why's of museology: the inclination to collect in order to preserve values and, at the same time, attempting to understand museality in its historical and social context[76]. However, what I see as symptomatic in the discussion of museology as an academic discipline is Ivo Maroevic's use of Stránsky's notion of ′museality′ in relation to his distinction between scientific and cultural information. For Maroevic, the information stored in the material structure of musealia may be either scientific, when its value is related to the scientific value of the subject-matter discipline, or it may be cultural information related to the

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73 I might add that this is disciplinary division still prevails in Hungary, and this is enforced by relative lack of suitable platforms for discussing museological questions from a shared perspective of museology. This aspect is taken up also by Éva Gyulai, who has remarked that the birth of the Hungarian Association of Museum Historians (Magyar Múzeumi Történészi Társulat, MAMUTT) in 2001 seems to reflect the idea of ′historical museology′ as an auxilary discipline of history: instead of talking about themselves as historians and museologists, the association chose the term ′museum historian′ (múzeumi történész).

74 While there are theorists, such as Tomislav Sola, who claim that they ″could not care less″, many researchers are still worked up about the question, among them the Hungarian museologist Éva Gyulai, who poses the question whether museology is a science or a method in her article. See Gyulai 2002.

75 van Mensch 1992. Chapter 4: Object of Knowledge.

76 Stránský 1980.

social value attributed to the object. It is this cultural information that Maroevic identifies as museological. [77] Prompted by this somewhat simplistic categorization, I am inclined to say that my focus here, while primarily on this cultural information aspect, also takes into account considerations of the subject-matter discipline of modern history.

So, if we assume that museology has a specific cognitive orientation and further that its related fields of research form a scientific structure, then we may proceed with the one suggested by Zbynek Stránský.[78] The underlying question is – drawing on a definition of museology proposed by Janne Vilkuna – "the way the individual and the community perceive and control the temporal and spatial environment through taking into possession pieces of evidence from the past and the present" [79]. Therefore, the core element of the study is cultural heritage and its representations created and upheld by the museum institution. Quite obviously, my study is 'historical' in the sense that it deals with temporary exhibitions created in specific and changing historical contexts between 1960 and 1985. Apart from drawing on historical sources, the study is historical also in the sense that it utilizes results and insights of the history discipline. The theoretical frame of reference, however, is that of museology, which in this case means exploring exhibition culture but also looking *beyond* the exhibitions themselves at the processes through which certain objects are regarded as valuable, fit for telling specific stories and evoking specific memories.

As Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff point out, the museological context is related to a larger signifying process that invokes notions of community. As part of the signifying process, museums also construct a self, the viewer, and the public. This means that through endowing objects with meaning, museums at the same time play with suppositions about interpretive communities. In the act of their meaning-making, museums promote and seek to exclude certain kinds of viewing[80]. Current critical study of museums relies on the realization that museums not only have history but are also engaged in the attempt to conceal it in the form of naturalization. In the words of Sherman and Rogoff, there are strategies and materials "museums employ to naturalize the concreteness of the social and historical processes in which they participate."[81] Sherman and Rogoff apply the useful division in their proposal of frameworks of critical analysis for museums when they speak about 'exhibited culture' to refer to what museums put out on display and 'exhibition culture' to refer to the ideas, values, and symbols which shape the practice of exhibiting.[82] By the same token, this study aims at a continuous dialogue between the exhibited culture and the exhibition culture. This means taking into account the curatorial practices and other 'institutional concerns' underlying the mounting exhibitions.

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77 Maroevic, quoted in van Mensch 1992. Chapter 4.
78 Stránský 1996.
79 Vilkuna 2000: 9-10.
80 Sherman&Rogoff 1994:xiii.
81 Sherman and Rogoff 1994:x. See also Hooper-Greenhill 1992:1-22.
82 ibid. 1994:ix.

In historiography and cultural studies discourses alike, much attention has recently been paid to the crisis of memory as one aspect of our crisis of modernity.[83] This is connected with the idea of memory's fall from grace'[84], of desperately clinging to the contingent remains of the past in order to re-create a past. In other words, much rather than being a question of preserving a living memory it is a question of stitching together an inorganic whole we more or less voluntarily pass on as 'heritage'.[85] Therefore, viewing it in the light of Kevin Walsh's argument according to which all nations and societies aim to produce a collective memory which is "founded on an idea of age-old organic traditions", it becomes evident that the inner logic of heritage production is at all times connected to harnessing the past to serve the present.[86] Heritage production is inclined to place history 'in a past-pluperfect', which is therefore beyond question. Societies thus seek to represent unique sets of monuments designated to constitute a unified phenomenon representative of a given community[87].

At this point, it may be a good idea to re-iterate the question of what the present study is about. Is it about the curiously repeated and simultaneously changing representations of Hungarian society, the museum institution as the site of a totalizing, modern myth, or the project of socialism superimposed on the museum and its exhibitions? Or, are the liberation exhibitions an alternative path to reading the development of historical museology in Hungary? While the aforementioned partly form my frame of reference, the core of the discussion is the commemorative uses and meaning-making of a specific set of exhibitions: sets of representations that came about to celebrate the memory of socialism. My attempt, therefore, is to explore these sets of representations in the light of the central government-imposed objectives and the curatorial practices of the time. After all, the commemorative and conceptual framework of these exhibitions was about a new world order that not only restructured the material world but also brought certain elements and objects to the limelight while pushing others towards the margin.

2.2 Modernity, power-knowledge and the museum

The critical analysis of museums has been strongly influenced by the early work of Michel Foucault in its focus on thematising power-knowledge relations in terms of epistemic structures, thereby rendering more visible the disciplinary boundaries and the construction of internally coherent discourses[88]. In her study *Museums and the Shaping of knowledge*, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill begins with the Renaissance period, and presents various accounts of what it is to

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83 See e.g. Terdiman 1993.
84 Kansteiner 2002:183.
85 See e.g. Lowethal 1985, Huyssen 1995.
86 Walsh 1992:126-7.
87 Walsh 1992:178; Connerton 1989: 41-47.
88 See e.g. Sherman and Rogoff 1994.

"know" in museums, and on what grounds the phenomenon called the museum bases its ways of classifying the world. Her work gives a historical overview of knowing in museums, but since her approach is heavily Foucaultian, she criticises the traditional historical pursuits of searching for the origins of things and imposing chronologies and emphasising continuity. Instead, she relies on Foucault's notion of 'effective history' in identifying historical forms of rationality and 'epistemes' as productive sets of relations within which knowledge is produced.[89] An effective history of the museum may thus be sketched out as a series of shifts from the temples of Antiquity through Renaissance studios and cabinets of curiosities to Enlightenment-driven control through science. This shift may thus be envisioned as a shift from 'jumbled incongruity'[90] and the magic ruling of the world of the closed cabinets into systematic typologies, democratization and widened accessibility. With its enhanced media technology, late modernity has enhanced accessibility through virtuality and has prompted the re-evaluation of the role of authentic material objects.[91]

The discussion of the 'modernist' museum, or the museum institution as an articulation of modernity, holds a nineteenth century European model of the museum at its core, manifesting the centrality of the nation-state and democratic publicity. What is more, this idea is not only a European but also a Western one. As Ben Dibley contends, the museum is a central institution of modernity, whose history is entangled in the processes of democracy and colonialism in a complex manner[92]. It is obvious that the Hungarian museums spring from these common Western European roots and are part of the history of the formation of the modernist museum that in turn became a powerful institutional form. However, from a historical perspective, there has been little discussion about the nature and significance of the 'socialist museum' within the context of the modernity of the museum. Thus, looking at the Hungarian liberation exhibitions in an epistemic framework entails a discussion of the socialist kind of modernity. After all, socialism is undoubtedly a branch of the modernist project, as Ágnes Heller, among others, has explicated[93]. Although figuring out where the Hungarian socialist museum stands in terms of museum historical epistemes does not belong to the major objectives of this work, the question will be given some attention. This means that the liberation exhibitions, arching over forty years of Hungarian state socialism, are viewed also in the light of the 'symptoms' of the modernist and the post-modernist museum they manifest.

The predominant conception of the modern museum is one of a public museum and thus much of the contemporary political debate relating to the museum revolves around the questions of accessibility and the cultural rights of citizens.[94] The socialist-communist version of modernization was built on

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89 Hooper-Greenhill 1992:9-22.
90 Bennett 1995:2.
91 Šola 1997:17-29, 268-275 ; György 2003:145-155.
92 Dibley 2005:16.
93 Heller 1984.
94 Bennett 1995: 7.

strong central governance, one aspect of which was the 'elimination of spontaneity'[95]. This was manifested also on the level of meaning-making: the system strived for tight control over meanings also in museum settings. Therefore, while reaching all the strata of the population may be seen as the interest of any modern state that uses the museum as an apparatus for education and socialization, it is the obligation to visit that is foregrounded in totalitarian systems. The museum as an institution of influence was not only made accessible to all but also a semi-obligatory place to visit for the 'shaping of consciousness'. Groups of workers, school children and soldiers were brought to the museum as part of their cultural, political and ideological education. Industrious workers, trade union activists of socialist brigades and others were rewarded with field-trips from rural towns to the capital. Thus, groups of people toured around famous spots in Budapest and paid a visit to an exhibition, which more often than not was related to a political anniversary. This is how the museum as an agent of inluence and control became for a moment a vehicle for having a 'grand day out'. Somewhat paradoxically, therefore, the space of the museum worked also as a space of relative freedom from the daily duties of the citizens.[96]

Tony Bennett discusses the museum and related sites of representation in terms of the 'exhibitionary complex' which is created and maintained for the development and circulation of new disciplines and their discursive formations, including their new technologies of vision.[97] As Bennett emphasizes, the exhibitionary complex is not merely about winning over the hearts and minds of people but also making people both objects and subjects of knowledge: "knowing power and what power knows, and known themselves as (ideally) known by power, interializing its gaze as a principle of self-regulation."[98] In this study, I identify several instances where 'cultural technologies of self-regulation' have been applied. Viewing it thus from a Foucaultian perspective, the liberation exhibitions worked as sites within the broader exhibitionary complex to train and discipline subjects in proper forms of conduct. On behalf of the state, the commemoration of liberations were a tool for issuing and circulating representations and embodiments of power that in the exhibition narrative amounted to 'memories'. Further, exhibitions were applied as a machinery for producing 'progressive subjects'[99]: the aim of exhibitions and museum communication in general was quite explicitly to give an ideological education to enhance the Marxist worldview (tudatformálás) and, in aesthetic terms, to 'shape taste' (ízlésformálás).[100] All in all, museums are involved in producing positions of power and knowledge as a microcosmic

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95 Gerő and Pető 1997:9.

96 This issue comes up in several exhibition guestbook entries. For instance, a soldier ponders the value of his visit to the museum, concluding that "There can hardly be more stupid pastime for a soldier than this" TAD 133-75.

97 Bennett 1995: 59.

98 Bennett 1995: 62-63.

99 Bennett 1995: 47.

100 Korek 1987: 180-183.

reconstruction of a totalized order of things: “To name an object is to know it and understand its position within the order of things”[101]. According to Bennett, the rhetoric of power embodied in the exhibitonary complex was one that identified with power, both as its subject and beneficiary. Whereas in the nineteenth century museum this was achieved through drawing on the rhetoric of imperialism between ”that body and other through its representation of otherness” [102], the early modern museum constituted its public through positioning it as modern Man, the culmination of the evolutionary series laid out in the museum.[103] As Bennett remarks, the power-knowledge relations at the dawn of the public museum were democratic enough to constitute the public they addressed. In a similar vein, the birth of the socialist museum entailed re-creating the audience. Thus, especially in the beginning, the museum addressed a rather undifferentiated audience, ’the people’. As we shall see, the liberation exhibitions manifest a gradual differentiation in their intended audiences. In part, this is apparent in the exhibitions’ growing attention to different social groups such as youth and women, as discussed in chapter 4.3. However, I attempt to show that much the same way as the modern museum became an instrument for the self-display of bourgeois-democratic societies, as outlined by Bennett, the socialist museum used the museum to render power visible, and represent it to the people as *their* power. The liberation exhibitions deployed strategies of self-empowerment, which will be looked at in chapter 4.3. However, the monolithic centre of power and control in the form of the Party was transformed into a complex network due to informal relations.[104] What characterized the ’coming of age’ narrative of socialism was the widening gap between the utopian bright future and the political rituals and symbols that formally prevailed until the regime’s collapse.

The museum exhibition as a space for the dissemination of ideas and for evoking “ideologically correct” memories is closely related to visual practices. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill sees the power of display as a method of communication “in its capacity to produce visual narratives that are apparently harmonious, unified and complete”. These narratives are made up of ‘visual statements’ ”constructed through objects in carefully fixed relationships.”[105] For Hooper-Greenhill, these visual narratives are ‘holistic’ and ‘apparently inevitable’, which, of course, has its consequences as regards claims to truth and authenticity. However, if the intention is to make the visitors *learn* something, apart from merely admiring the exhibits, ‘truth and authenticity’ usually comes wrapped up in narratives. In other words, narrativity is seen as closely connected to the primacy of learning: a museum display that favours the presentation of its messages in the form of a narrative wants its visitors to learn. This echoes the views of those scholars and cultural critics who see the modern museum as a site for

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101 Walsh 1992:20
102 Bennett 1995: 67.
103 Bennett 1995: 97.
104 Böröcz 2000; Gal 2002:86-90.
105 Hooper-Greenhill 2000: 151-153.

controlling the past through a systematic, linear narrative.[106] If Susan Pearce and others are right in seeing narrative as having an educational role and thus serving the aim of didactic control, then we may assume that the primary mode of display in a totalitarian system that overtly aims at the 'shaping of consciousness' would be that of a didactic narrative. Indeed, I attempt to show that, firstly, the exhibition narratives were indeed linear, didactic narratives, and, secondly, that their linearity and didactic character become somewhat relative in the course of time. However, I also aim to show how the liberation exhibitions, as commemorative ceremonies performed in the act of visiting them, worked to provide a sense of continuity for the community they addressed. The liberation exhibitions as the narrative of state-socialist Hungary can thus be viewed as attempts at re-fashioning collective memory in post-1956 Hungary. To a great extent, this 'memory' coincides with the narratives of the exhibitions, designed to provide a source of identity. As is characteristic of commemorative ceremonies, also the liberation exhibitions may also be seen as performing a narrative of the past, in which the past appears as infinite 'struggle, sacrifice and victory.'[107]

Much of this study draws on the visual; a realm of hypothetical and constructed visuality. In the third chapter, I discuss the contents of each exhibition via the individual rooms of the exhibition, in order to reflect a sense of the narrative unfolding in front of the visitor as he or she walks through the exhibition as a 'directed itinerary'[108]. Thus, the emphasis is on the way the exhibition is *intended* to be walked through. Rather than an attempt to reconstruct an imagined visitor's experience (a rather precarious task), the idea is to harness the visualizing capacities of the exhibitionary complex, attempting to 'draw into the sphere of visibility' what there was to be seen (cf. Bennett 1994:178). In the fourth chapter, the focus is on selected objects and display units and their visual statements. In other words, I attempt to make the reader the virtual co-witness to a number of scenes that have vanished. In a sense, then, my role as a virtual tour guide is somewhat analogical to a museum visit: since everything cannot be covered, I pick and choose among the displayed elements, offer some for closer inspection (and appreciation) than others. Strictly speaking, then, with my reading I create new virtual spaces and architectures of the traces of vanished exhibitions and thus unavoidably reorganize the relations between space and vision within the exhibitions, which means that through controlling the gaze of the reader I assume the role of the 'Eye of Power' (Foucault 1980b). This said, I acknowledge my employment of power within this undertaking.

From the perspective of visual culture, then, the 'birth of the socialist museum' as the ground from which the liberation exhibitions sprang can be viewed as a re-fashioning of the old spaces of representation, shaped by a new cultural policy that provided a new context for the display of the valued objects. At the same time, it meant harnessing old collections to new social purposes.

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[106] Walsh 1992, Bennet 1995, György 2003, Hooper-Greenhill 2000.
[107] Connerton 1989:35.
[108] Bennett 1994:6.

Bennett asserts that "the museum's reordering of things needs to be seen as an event that was simultaneously epistemic and governmental"[109] In a similar vein, the present study regards the museum's field of representations as a semiotically functioning terrain which is simultaneously a performative environment in which new forms of conduct are shaped and produced.

2.3 Between showing and telling: mimesis and narrativity

Above, narrative was identified primarily in terms of the 'modern, linear narratives of modernity', which are inseparable from truth claims and will to power. Without rejecting narrative's connection to power, narrative and narrativity are approached in this chapter from a different angle, as an element in the dynamic of signification. In his *Birth of the museum*, Tony Bennett regards museums as institutions of 'showing and telling': institutions that exhibit artefacts "in a manner calculated to embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values"[110]. In film theory, art history and cultural studies alike, the relation between showing and telling has often been conceived of as a relation (possibly a split) between narrative and spectacle.[111]

However, in museum settings, it should be noted that it is not only the visual dimension that is crucial but also the materiality of the displayed artefacts: "embody and communicate", as Bennett points out. Therefore, while this study retains the role of the spectacle as the core of visual representation, the scope of the spectacle is broadened with that of mimesis, here understood both as an imitative representation and as embodied knowledge deriving from the materiality of objects. Indeed, it could be claimed that, to a great extent, the mimetic dimension draws on the realm of the visual, that of spectacle, as an impressive and memorable visual display. Further, showing and telling may be interpreted as pertaining to the interplay of mimesis and diegesis. Put in simple terms, the relation between the two may be grasped as follows: 'mimesis represents, diegesis reports; one embodies, the other narrates; one transforms, the other indicates; one knows only a continuous present, the other looks back on a past.'[112]

In general, museums rely on the conviction that the museum can tell stories with authentic objects.[113] In effect, the entire museum profession may be viewed as a manifestation of the belief in the ability of objects to communicate aspects of the past in a meaningful way. This meaningfulness is frequently cast in the form of a narrative. Of all the museum types, it is the history museum

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109 Bennett 1995: 33.
110 Bennett 1995: 6.
111 Especially important in this connection have been Guy Debord's insights of the 'society of the spectacle', particularly in terms of the narrative and the spectacle competing for the attention of the interpreting subject. See e.g. Bennett et al. 2005:336.
112 The International Society for the Study of Narrative http://narrative.georgetown.edu/wiki/index.php/Mimesis Accessed 28.12.2010
113 Ingelmann 2000.

that resorts to narrativity the most, due to its alignment with the conventions of historiography. While the past comes down to us in a number of ways, historical knowledge is inseparable from narrative structuring, characterized by continuity and meaningful sequentiality, as already pointed out in 1.4. Apart from being an act of storytelling, narrative may be understood as 'a textual act of representation.'[114] Such emphasis highlights the fact that narrative may be based on 'any semiotic object produced with the *intent* of evoking a narrative script in the mind of the audience.' Narrative is distinct from narrativity, which refers to the object's *ability* to evoke a narrative script.[115] Thus, the fullest form of narrativity occurs when a representation is both intended as a narrative and construed as such. Applied in the context of history museums, then, we can say that exhibitions generally draw on a high degree of narrativity, not only because they have been constructed as stories of past events, but also because the concept of narrative exhibition is so well-known that it is what an average visitor would expect.

The fact that history museums in particular are perceived as functioning in a narrative frame is by no means in contradiction with the museum's mimetic frame. Eventually, all of the museum's truth claims are inherently connected to a mimesis of sorts. The term mimesis has numerous, even conflicting, meanings to the extent that its value as a concept becomes dubious. What is relevant for the present study, however, is that - instrumentally speaking - mimesis is involved in techniques of exchange between subject and object, which gives rise to imaginative worlds[116]. In this study, I identify mimesis as three overlapping clusters of meaning.[117] Firstly, mimesis appears in the Lukácsian and Auerbachian sense, in which mimesis is understood as imitation oriented towards realism, or as being focused on the truthfulness of (symbolic) representation. Secondly, mimesis is identified as an alternative way of being in the world that draws on sensuous knowledge, embodiment and performativity[118]. This second sense of mimesis becomes relevant in relation to the exhibition's appeal to the sensuous knowledge it provides, most obviously in the form of material objects, evoking a 'mimetic kind of vision' that draws close to its object[119]. Thirdly, asymmetrical power relations often come in mimetic forms, which relate to subordination, colonization and (ritualized) violence. Mimesis also marks the ambivalence of colonial discourse and it may be identified as the deliberate representation of sameness that works to undermine imperial ideologies while it marks colonial difference[120]. The Cold War context along with the Soviet occupation may be looked at in terms of rivalry over 'objects of mimetic

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114 Ryan 2004:9.
115 Ryan ibid.
116 Ricoeur 1983; Barth 2008.
117 Here, my identification of overlapping clusters may be seen as parallel to Andreas Huyssen's discussion of the "multivalence of mimesis", which, in his view, "makes the concept productive for contemporary debates about memory, trauma, and representation in the public realm" (Huyssen 2003:123).
118 Taussig 1993; Buck-Morss 1992; Marks 2000.
119 Marks 2000: 141.
120 Bhabha 1994; Fuchs 2001; Taussig 1993; Huggan 2005.

desire'[121]. As pointed out by József Böröcz, "East-Central Europeans have, since World War II, perceived their region first and foremost as subject to a peculiar process of political colonization by a superpower that is culturally distinct from, and socioeconomically less developed than, the region itself.[122]"

Focusing on the role of liberation exhibitions as commemorative and thus affirmative representations of the state socialist Hungary, mimesis appears as interconnected with the demand for realist, and indeed, socialist realist representation, as outlined by Georg Lukács. Although his theorizations deal mostly with the realism of artistic presentation, especially the novel, and cannot thus be extended to the representations of history within an exhibition as such, it is safe enough to say that Lukács-informed preoccupations with 'correct' reflections of reality permeate the museum discourse of the time. Both Lukács's thinking and the principles of collection and display that not only affected but, in fact, *produced* the liberation exhibitions, stem from Hegelian Marxist thought and the dialectical view of history. Just as Lukács calls for "a truer, more complete, more vivid and more dynamic reflection of reality"[123], so is the striving for 'faithful reflections' central to the discourse around those exhibitions. In his claim for realism, however, Lukács rejects mere 'photographic' representation based on surface appearance, calling for an 'intensive totality' which corresponds to the 'extensive totality' of the world itself.[124] By the same token, museum based realism is not a question of a one-to-one correspondence, even if it often uses authentic material that could be interpreted as fragments of the real amounting to the 'realistic'. Both a work of art and a museum exhibition draw on mediated, symbolic forms of representation: a museum object, once it is displayed, always stands for something other than its own authenticity, its being an 'exhibit' in the verifying sense of the word. From this it follows that a museum object is non-identical in its relation to the outer realities it points at. Therefore, within an exhibition, 'truthful reflections' tend to appear in the form of exhibited fragments. For instance, such a truthful fragment could be a graphical representation of the numbers showing the development of the intake of groceries per capita. According to the text accompanying the exhibit, the figures are to be read as "a faithful reflection of the changes in our standard of living".[125] In this study, the focus is on recognizing and interpreting such visual and material statements that appear as 'telling' in terms of signification within the discursive universe of the exhibitions.

What makes the discussion of mimesis particularly apt within the context of state socialism are the characteristics of the Hungarian type of socialism itself. The economic and political system in Hungary under state socialism is often characterized as a transformation from the rigid plans of the Stalinist era to the hybrid system of 'goulash communism' or 'refrigerator communism' of the

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121 Girard 1978, 1986.
122 Böröcz 1992: 77.
123 Selden and Widdowson 1993:76.
124 Selden and Widdowson ibid.
125 TAD 192-75 p. 9. 'A Magyar nép a szocializmus útján 1945-1960 c. kiállítás forgatókönyve'.

Kádár regime that aimed at continuous growth not only in the fields of industry and agriculture but also in terms of the standard of living and consumption.[126] Indeed, the case of Hungary in particular has given rise to the debate on 'consumer socialism'[127]. This development, characterized as a shift from 'plan-driven' (tervutasításos) politics to that of 'plan bargain' politics (tervalku), resided in complex hegemonic power structures and drew on various forms of informality in relation to the official or dominant ideology, economy and politics. In the public and scholarly discourse, this gave rise to the conception of several 'seconds': the 'second economy', 'second society' and 'second publicity'. In other words, these 'seconds' that have also been called 'quasi publicity' and 'simulated publicity' may be viewed as outcomes of a mimetic logic of sorts: the claim for the imposed uniformity of the 'first' or original at the same time contributes to the birth of a menacing copy, a 'second'.[128] Further, political socialization in state-socialist Hungary has been discussed in terms of 'mimicry-socialization', or 'negative consensus' between state and society in the 1960-1970s as a 'culture of pretence and imitation.'[129] Therefore, in the context of museum representation in state-socialist Hungary, mimesis frequently appears as 'nested' spheres, the inner sphere being the museum's 'mimetic machine' that stands in relation to the realities outside the museum, while this sphere is engulfed by the sphere of the outer realities, which are full of mechanisms that seem to imitate other mechanisms *not* characteristic of state socialism.

Leaving aside the politico-historical particularities of Hungarian socialism for a moment, we may now move on to the role of mimesis in museum settings. In many senses, the museum space is a space of mimesis, whether understood as imitation, mimicry, nonsensuous similarity, sensuous proximity or the act of resembling. Many of the mimetic aspects have been discussed in museum theory but often this has not been done under the heading of mimesis. For instance, Tony Bennett discusses the 'progressive effect' of the performative context of the museum, which for him is the space of the museum as a space of emulation.[130] One particular instance of such emulation for Bennett is related to the birth of public museums, where the working classes could adopt new forms of behaviour and 'proper' conduct by imitation in a formally undifferentiated sphere[131]. In addition to this mimicry based emulation, the museum mode of

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126 Valuch 2005; Vörös 1997.

127 See e.g. the thematic issues of *Replika* 26./1997; *Múltunk* 2008/3.

128 In a similar vein, József Böröcz has proposed a model for theorizing the economic dual dependency of state-socialist countries in East-Central Europe. His model is based on the proposition that the Stalinist and the 'existing socialism' but also post-socialism all work according to the idea of simulation. (See Böröcz 1992.) Similar insights have been presented by Serguei Alex Oushakine in his theorization of one particular sphere of 'second publicity', dissident literature, in the Soviet Union. He warns against making simplistic dual structures of official/dissident and public/underground and relies instead on a mimetic logic that shows the dissidents' ideological struggle with the dominant political structure to be more complicated. (See Oushakine 2001.)

129 Szabó 2000:46; Hammer 2006:4.

130 Bennett 1995: 47.

131 Bennett 1995: 100.

communication, of necessity, is inherently connected with the questions of 'truthful' representation and referentiality. This in turn relates to the material that museums operate with, the material objects and the meaning and value that is attributed to them, which Bennett refers to as the 'culture of the artefact'. Following Barthes (1987), Bennett claims that "the seeming concreteness of the museum artifact derives from its *verisimilitude*", which means the familiarity that results from placing the artefact in a familiar interpretative context in which it is readily recognized as 'truthful' and 'real.'[132] According to Bennett, the dominant view in nineteenth-century museums was that a total representation of human reality was possible through an ordered display of selected material. In other words, as Bennett points out, in their mode of display, museums attempted to simulate the organization of the world outside the museum walls. While we could contend that the dream of mirroring the 'real order of things' is inherent and still prevails in museum communication, it forms yet another set of assumptions within the production and consumption of liberation exhibitions. This modern utopia-informed 'dream of control', as I call it, is discussed in chapter 4.2.

In museological discourse, world expos have frequently provided the terrain for analysing the interrelations of display, representativity and modern utopias.[133] Volker Barth, however, has discussed the *Exposition universelle de 1867* explicitly from the viewpoint of mimesis. Barth analyses the issue of authenticity and representativity of the exhibition by looking at the relation between the display and 'the real thing'. Prompted by Paul Ricoeur's understanding of mimesis, Barth sets out to identify the manifold ruptures in the 'hermetic model' underlying the exhibition. Barth's response to the problem of representativity is to concentrate "on the micro level of the exhibition grounds, leaving aside the question of how representative this 'copy' actually was."[134] In other words, Barth focuses on the mimetic aspects of the world exhibition. However, Barth's focus on the functioning of mimesis in this specific setting is so total that he claims to be ignoring the world outside. He justifies this choice by contending that as it was the entire world the exhibition was designated to represent, it would be futile to trace the correspondences in such a frame. From this it follows, Barth contends, that the visitors' ability to recognize objects and industrial sectors was secondary to the exhibition's self-referenciality. Thus, it was more important to recognize this utopian world as representing 'the cutting edge of progress.'[135] Barth goes on to claim that "The issue of the exhibits' representativity was pushed aside in favour of their significances milestones in the triumphal march of progress. Within the exhibition, visitors found no alternative models for verification or falsification. "[136]

Along Barthian lines, the focus of my study is the construction of the authenticity of the exhibits. While the exhibitionary world of the world exhibition

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132 Bennett 1995: 147.
133 Bennett 1995; Barth 2010; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004.
134 Barth 2010:24.
135 Barth 2004:24-26.
136 Barth 2004:25.

and the liberation exhibitions is necessarily a spatial and temporal condensation drawing on abstraction and synthesis, the scope of the worlds they condense differs radically. Whereas the outer reality the *Exposition universelle* refers to is nothing less than 'the world', the liberation exhibitions attempt to encompass state-socialist Hungary, with its restricted references to 'world politics'. Therefore, to a great extent, the visitors to the liberation exhibitions could look around in their immediate surroundings for verification and falsification. While not all elements of 'the road to socialism' were verifiable, many of them were immediately perceivable: the first step for the visitor was to compare his or her living standard to the contemporary interiors of the exhibitions. Thus, contrary to Barth's pursuits, this study does take account of the outer realities the exhibitions refer to: 'historiographic excerpts' are occasionally brought in to comment on the representations produced in the exhibitions, but this is not done in a consistent or exhaustive manner.

By far, the most illuminating discussion of mimesis explicitly in museum settings has been presented by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, especially in terms of the problematic of exhibiting 'ethnographic fragments'.[137] For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the artfulness of the ethnographic object, its artifactual autonomy, is based on "an art of excision, of detachment, an art of the excerpt"[138]. In order to locate meanings, it is necessary to distinguish between *in situ* and *in context* as approaches to objects. In-context approaches that entail theoretical frames of reference may be characterized by the strong cognitive control they exert over the objects. This control draws on the power of classification and arrangement that may position artifacts from diverse historical and cultural settings in relation to one another. The notion of *in situ*, in contrast, entails metonymy and mimesis. On the one hand, the art of the metonym highlights contiguity and the inherently fragmentary nature of objects, so that their very partiality is what grants them their 'aura of realness'. The art of mimesis, on the other hand, works by expanding the boundaries of the objects, inviting "mimetic evocations of what was left behind"[139]. This is what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls the rhetoric of the mimetic mode, which, through drawing on in-situ installations, provides 'slice-of-life displays' that are, nevertheless, always charged. Mimetic displays are thus guided by representational conventions and therefore their seeming realness is always constructed. What is of importance here is how Kirshenblatt-Gimblett takes pains to distinguish two kinds of metonymy within the exhibition space: the one deriving from the authenticity of the objects – their being fragments of a real past – and mimetic metonymy, which is aligned with the authenticity effect rendered by the in situ installation. For her, what is mimetic belongs to a second-order realm and representation that is contrasted with the 'tangible metonyms', the artefacts that are 'really real'[140]. While I am sympathetic to her theoretical distinction, I wish to emphasize

137 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990, 1998.
138 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990: 387-390
139 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990: 389.
140 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990: 394.

here that in this study, my use of the term mimesis differs from that of Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in one significant respect: it encompasses both the metonymy of the authentic objects and the metonymy of the 'authenticity effect'. This is because the focus here is on the functioning of the exhibition as a 'mimetic machine', so to speak, within which *every object* is second-order anyway: from the moment the object enters the museum, it becomes a representational object that, apart from its being authentic, also stands for something else. This is to say that the mimetic power of the object is derived from metonymy, and it is this power of persuasion that counts, whether it comes from the 'really real' or the seemingly real. If we accept Carol Fleisher Feldman's notion of mimesis as "an imitative representation of life"[141], then within a museum setting, mimesis is, more than anything, representation that, in its forms of showing, mimics a reality (or a historical event) outside the museum. Therefore, while museum theory and practice makes a crucial distinction between authentic/fake and original/copy, from the viewpoint of mimesis these distinctions are irrelevant: it is the installation's power to convince the visitor of its truthfulness (of its being a faithful reflection) that is at stake. This is to say that even if the authentic objects (or their fragments) necessarily retain their metonymic link with the real persons and historical events they are part of, in mimesis the objects assume their realness by virtue of their appearance as 'real' and truthful. This realness relates, of course, to the question of the 'culturally constructed patterns of representation' involved in mimesis.[142]

It should be emphasized here that from the point of view of narrativity, mimesis and diegesis as modes of showing and telling are by no means exclusive of each other. Moreover, diegetic narration may be conceived of as the verbal storytelling act of a narrator, as is the case with narratives of 'history'. Diegetic narration thus presupposes language, either oral or written. Mimetic narration, in turn, is an act of showing, a spectacle.[143] In museum settings, however, this distinction of showing and telling has important implications with regard to the material presence of objects and their mode of communication. Within an exhibition, it is often the narrative desire of the curator (or the visitor as the reader) that is imposed on the artefacts that as such are not carriers of formally inscribed meanings but fall prey to the general laws of polysemy: it is the limitless set of possible contexts in which the artefacts as meaningful signifiers gain their meaning. The best way for the curator to endow artefacts with meaning is to embed them in a narrative. This narrative mode coincides with the interpretive horizon and expectations of the visitors, too: museums claim to tell stories about the relationship between the past and the present. What is more, an educated visitor familiar with this concept is inclined to set out to look for the story the exhibition has to tell. Consequently, the museum mode of display is mostly produced and interpreted within a narrative frame[144]. In a sense, then, within

141 Fleischer Feldman 2005: 503-513.
142 Fleischer Feldman 2005: 505.
143 Ryan 2004:13.
144 Fulda 2005.

this overall narrative frame of the museum exhibition, communication and endowing with meaning may be regarded as an axis between two poles, one being narrative desire (mainly in the sense of the narrative desire of the dominant ideology articulated in the exhibition) and the mimetic power held by the artefact. In my understanding, this tension creates the charged nature of the commemorative membrane.

While I emphasize the two poles of showing and telling as the basic source of the tension at heritage sites, I do not wish to propagate a simplistic understanding of this showing as exclusively artefactual and the telling being reserved for written texts only. The interplay proposed here does not mean that objects mutely appear while narratives do the talking. Moreover, mimesis is inherent in all symbolic action and semiosis and thus such simplifications would be misguided. A narrative does not need to be verbal, yet it can be claimed that language is the best suited for storytelling. As Marie-Laure Ryan points out, "Every narrative can be summarized in language, but very few can be retold through pictures exclusively."[145] In the museum, the story-line of an exhibition cannot be captured by focusing on the written texts only – they are but one layer of the exhibition's multimodal, multidimensional narrative. A concrete indication of this is the way the present study has been structured: while it generally follows the reading for narrative/reading for mimesis–divide, aspects of mimesis are also taken up in the chapter pertaining to narrativity and vice versa. More precisely, when mimesis is discussed in chapter 3, it is done because these particular aspects of mimesis are seen as narrative elements. However, on the level of individual objects and display units, the mode of communication often draws on mimesis rather than narration: the objects as signifiers appear and *show* themselves, and this showing (or self-exposition) necessarily stands in relation to a "real" outside the museum.

Earlier, it was pointed out that museums are 'narrative institutions' since they are based on the assumption that they can tell stories with objects. At the same time, museums are as much 'mimetic institutions', since their role in society is grounded upon their 'truthfulness': their willingness and ability to embody and display objects from a 'real' past, since they house 'material facts'. However, what is deemed as 'realist' depends as much on a theory or ideology as anything, despite its apparent transparency. As Gaby Porter emphasizes, 'realist' is intelligible as realistic because it is familiar and reproduces the already known.[146] Once the inherent polysemy of material objects is acknowledged, the necessity to provide interpretive frames and cues for the visitor is also realized in order to ensure the grounds for meaningful communication. As Tony Bennett has put it, museums

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[145] Ryan 2004:10.

[146] Porter 1996: 108.

> are places for telling, and telling again, the stories of our time, ones which have become a doxa through their endless repetition. If the meaning of a museum artefact seems to go without saying, this is only because it has been said so many times.[147]

This condition, in which meaning apparently goes without saying, is best achieved with the help of both narrative and mimetic power. While the narrative is something that structures and gives a temporal dimension to past events, that is, contextualizes also historically, mimesis accounts for intimate, sensuous encounters with displayed objects that provoke wonder through their ability to 'resonate'. This resonance, contends Greenblatt, is derived from the nature of objects and the way the objects are contextualized. Resonant objects and contexts expand the scope of the object and stretch its boundaries so that the visitor is not only spell-bound by the wonder of the object but may also understand something significant about the phenomenon at hand.[148] Carefully selected and skillfully incorporated into the exhibition narrative, objects are made culturally meaningful. These objects may then be harnessed to propose and propagate.

2.4 Between memory and history: workings of the membrane

Current museology discourse has come to consider the museum a space where memory and history are brought together[149]. In this study, memory studies and museum studies are treated as related and overlapping sets of discourses, in which the museum appears as a site of institutionalized cultural memory. Since the museum, along with the library and the archive, comprises the basic pillars of institutionalized memory responsible for the selection, preservation and communication of heritage, this memory frame-work is relevant. It also enables a more profound problematisation of the nature of temporary exhibitions as reflections of collective memory. The heritage-space of a museum exhibition can be seen as a space for activating, after Jan Assmann, 'latent' or 'potential memories'[150]. It is in this interplay of individual, collective, private and

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147 Bennett 1995:147.

148 Greenblatt 1990.

149 The intertwined nature of memory, history, heritage and tradition are readily apparent in the ICOFOM definition of museology, which concludes with the museum being a 'repository of collective memory': "In its broadest sense, museology is concerned with the theoretical approach to any individual or collective human activity related to the preservation, interpretation and communication of our cultural and natural heritage, and with the social context in which a specific man/object relationship takes place. Although the field of museology is much broader than the study of the museum itself, its main focus remains the functions, the activities and the role in society of the museum as a repository of collective memory." http://icom.museum/international/icofom.html

150 For Jan Assmann, cultural memory is made up of objectified culture: the texts, rites, images, buildings, and monuments designed to recall fateful events in the history of the collective. Cultural memory may be further divided into 'potential' and 'actual' memories. Potential memories are representations of the past stored in archives, libraries and museums. These representations may be actualized in new social and his-

institutionalized memory-space that meanings are made and contested. After all, what we are dealing with is commemorative exhibitions (with the Hungarian word 'emlék' pertaining to memory) and 'jubilee' exhibitions, which refers to celebrating the anniversary. In other words, the exhibitions were designated to celebrate the memory of the liberation that marked the beginning of socialism.

As Gaynor Kavanagh has put it, "museums are a meeting ground for official and formal versions of the past called *histories,* offered through exhibitions, and the individual or collective accounts of reflective personal experience called *memories*, encountered during the visit or prompted because of it".[151] The interplay of histories and memories means an inherent tension at the core of the museum institution. If, then, histories are official and formal, that is, scholarly accounts, and memories are "subjective, personal and deeply experiential"[152], what is this memory made out of? According to Wulf Kansteiner, "Collective memory is not history, though it is sometimes made from similar material. It is a collective phenomenon but it only manifests itself in the actions and statements of individuals. It can take hold of historically and socially remote events but it often privileges the interests of the contemporary. It is as much a result of conscious manipulation as unconscious *absorption* and it is always *mediated.*"[153] (my italics) Further,

> "Although collective memories have no organic basis and do not exist in any literal sense, and though they involve individual agency, the term "collective memory" is not simply a metaphorical expression. Collective memories originate from shared communications about the meaning of the past that are anchored in the life-worlds of individuals who partake in the communal life of the respective collective."[154]

Not only is the non-metaphorical nature of collective memories pointed out by several theorists but also their materiality: "memory seems to reside not in perceiving consciousness but *in the material*"[155]. Along the same lines, Barbie Zelizer has pointed out that "collective memories have texture, existing in the world rather than in a person's head"[156].

Of course, it could be argued that there is a serious discrepancy between the 'official memories' proclaimed in the liberation exhibitions and the subjective and deeply experiential dimension usually associated with memories. In a sense, it could be argued that instead of memories, the liberation exhibitions operated with ideology-driven, canonized representations of the past that are in effect closer to history. Further, it could be argued that there is a dissonance between the idea of the loss of an organic past and the ideological-political aims underpinning an exhibition apparatus designated to legitimize a totalitarian

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torical contexts, when they are given new meanings. See Assmann and Czaplicka 1995:132.

151 Kavanagh 1996:1.

152 Megill 2007: 35.

153 Kansteiner 2002:180.

154 Kansteiner 2002:188.

155 Terdiman 1993:34.

156 Zelizer 1998:4.

regime. In a similar fashion, it could be argued that the socialist museum driven by its strong future orientation does not have much to do with the past but only the better present and a brighter future. While this is undoubtedly true, it has to be kept in mind that the exhibitions were created within a deliberate commemorative framework that was designed to create a sense of a common experience of the past, evoking a sense of a community. For Megill, "commemoration is something willed in the present", arising out of the desire of a community to strengthen its bonds through a shared orientation to past events.[157] It is these commemorative exhibitions that provide the social setting for structuring, representing and using memories that are thought (or made to) have collective relevance.

Further, the discussion of the museum and memory seem in close proximity to each other due to the fact that both rely on the same media, "combinations of discursive, visual, and spatial elements"[158], and consequently, they may be regarded as multimedia collages that consist of "a mixture of pictorial images and scenes, slogans, quips, and snatches of verse, abstractions, plot types and stretches of discourse, and even false etymologies"[159]. The sensuous encounters with the wealth of material in the memory space of the museum is inclined to evoke experiences and memories, even if there were no direct, natural connection between the real and the remembered. This realization draws attention to the arbitrariness and contingency of memory.

In introducing Linenthal's notion of commemorative membrane, I identified several related aspects in his usage of the term that may be applied in the analysis of commemorative practices.[160] I made a distinction between discussing commemorative practices in terms of commemorative rhetoric and genre, as a mode of reading in which related sets of representations are seen through each other with special attention to the presence of material objects and, finally, as referring to the epistemological problematic of analyzing 'virtual' exhibitions. Risking oversimplification, the first two are contained in the notion of the 'Enola Gay effect', which I use to refer to the contingent effects of material presence within a display: its often overwhelming visual impact. The third aspect, in turn, may be contained in the notion of the 'Enola Gay pitfall', by which I mean the problematic of interpretation: the difficulty of finding a balance between discursivity and 'figurative' materiality, that is, materiality that may be accessed mainly discursively.

If these are the different but related instances that make the discussion of the commemorative membrane relevant, then what is the commemorative membrane? In short, it is that something involved in the evocation and communication of the meanings of the past which draws on experience but which

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157 Megill 2007: 30.
158 Kansteiner 2002: 190.
159 Fentress and Wickham 1992:47.
160 Marianne Hirsch has used the somewhat different but related notion of 'collective membrane' in her discussion of the shared inheritance of multiple traumatic histories and the contemporary 'memory culture' to which they have given rise. See Hirsch 2003:108-111.

cannot be pinned down in concrete terms. As membrane, it implies a contact, an encounter or the prospect of touch that relates to material[161]. It is strongly synthetic: its mode of appearance is organic-like and seems to refer to age-old traditions and to the 'deep-time' of societies,[162] but in fact it is an effect of naturalization (Barthes) and thus artificial. The commemorative membrane inclines toward a synthesis of imagined and the material experiences but at the same time presupposes symbolic organization, though it uses material as a medium[163]. Further, its tendency towards synthesis is manifested also as a synthesis of the material and the discursive. Its synthetic character derives in part from synaesthesia, the merging of sensual experience[164]. This effect is enforced by the multimedia collage character of heritage displays. As a membrane, the commemorative membrane functions as an interface or a transmitter between the private and the collective meanings and experience of the past, stimulated and activated at heritage sites. 'Commemorative', in turn, entails a temporal dimension inherent in memory, also in the form of sense impressions: as marks of a contact or an encounter[165], which may be carried over into memory as private to us, but which may be evoked and communicated and thus discussed in terms of a collective experience.

Kansteiner argues that "memories are at their most collective when they transcend the time and space of the events' original occurrence", and, merged with individual memories and taking on a life of their own, they "become the basis of all collective remembering as disembodied, omnipresent, low-intensity memory".[166] According to Kansteiner,

> [c]oncern with low-intensity collective memories shifts the focus from the politics of memory and its excess of scandal and intrigue to rituals and representations of the past that are produced and consumed routinely without causing much disagreement.[167]

This routine consumption of the past seems to be in contradiction to Linenthal's understanding of the membrane, which "is so sensitive to any perceived act of desecration, it immediately becomes an event"[168]. Linenthal's discussion of the commemorative membrane is concentrated around charged relics such as the Enola Gay or major heritage sites, such as America's Holocaust Museum, which

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161 Susan Stewart (1999: 28) has suggested that the musem could be looked at as "an elaborately ritualized practice of refraining from touch".

162 Hobsbawn 1983.

163 Here, we have echoes of Gebauer and Wulf's (1996 :21) notion of mimetic representation that is concerned "with the ways in which symbolic worlds are made through practice" and which "makes use of a material medium and occurs in situations that can be interpreted in material terms".

164 For a more elaborate discussion of senses as potential sources of material memories, see Stewart, Susan "Prologue: From the Museum of Touch", in *Material Memories*, pp. 17-36.

165 This obviously has echoes of James Clifford's conception of the museum as a contact zone, which is derived from Mary-Louise Pratt's idea of the contact zone as imprints of colonial contacts.

166 Kansteiner 2002:189.

167 Kansteiner ibid.

168 Linenthal, quoted in Zelizer 2000:188.

in themselves arouse heated debate. As such, the liberation exhibitions cannot be seen as containing equivalent key relics; rather, it is the membrane of the socialist era as a whole that causes heated debate in the current post-socialist context. Therefore, in addition to looking at the 'events' around which thick layers are encased, my reading looks at exhibition material which is recurrent and routinely consumed. In other words, attention is given also to those persistent fragments of (material) culture that prevail from exhibition to exhibition, and around which the commemorative membrane seems almost transparent.

One of the inherent tensions of the museum relies in its ambiguous relation to materiality and discursivity, and much of this has to do with the role of artefacts as communicators and mediators between the personal and the collective. As Gaynor Kavanagh has pointed out, museum objects manifest tension between the formalist emphasis – of foregrounding 'the fabric and form of the object' – instead of the individual memories behind them[169]. The situation is even more complicated when the discussion of material objects pertains to a past circumstance, in which there is no way to access the concrete materiality of objects but this materiality is figurative or discursive, that is, it may be (re-)constructed only in discursive terms. In a similar vein, Susan Stewart asks whether "[i]n *talking of* an object's qualities do we *form* an object's qualities?"[170] This is also one of the questions included in the problematic of the 'Enola Gay pitfall', as explicated earlier.

Of course, by using the metaphor of the commemorative membrane I could be criticized for deliberately mystifying commemorative practices. The metaphor highlights the blurring and merging of history and memory, and, as a mode of reading, it is prone to lay emphasis on the recurrent, routine elements of commemoration rather than its variation and change. It also holds epistemological problems through its emphasis on the experiential dimension of commemoration. As a mode of inquiry, it 'flirts with experience': attempts to tease out the experiential side of commemoration even when there are limited ways to access that experience.[171] Then again, it could be argued that this merging and sensuous experience is at the heart of a museum visit, from which it follows that such considerations need to be taken into account if we wish to discuss the dynamic of commemoration in museological terms. As Kavanagh points out, "When people visit museums, they can do no other but bring their life histories

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169 Kavanagh 1996: 2.

170 Stewart 1999: 19.

171 There are studies, however, that address the *memory* of visitor experience successfully. In their highly interesting article Anderson and Gosselin (2008) discuss issues of visitor experience from the point of view of collective memory of cultural events. What makes the study especially interesting is the perpective of long-term memory, since the study has been conducted almost 40 years, following Expo '67 in Quebec. However tempting such a framework might seem for the purposes of my study, the liberation exhibitions do not lend themselves to similar explorations for the simple reason that they do not form a single landmark event but were based on recurring commemorative logic, which would make it very difficult to tell each individual exhibition apart from the others, or related similar exhibitions. See Anderson and Gosselin 2008:1-21.

and memories with them"[172]. These situational and localized understandings of the role, meanings and significance of exhibitions manifest a certain bias towards the present and it is precisely this bias that bridges the gap between the liberation exhibitions as representations of Hungarian society and as a fragment of the commemorative membrane of socialist Hungary. The commemorative membrane is prone to 'privileging of the interests of the contemporary'[173] and this contemporary has two senses: contemporary of the socialist era in Hungary and contemporary as what is relevant and 'usable' to us here and now. The latter may be further divided into the current socio-political debates in Hungary, while the other to my readings of the exhibitions in order to show their relevance and importance both with respect to coming to terms with the legacy of socialism but also in aiming to show that these exhibitions are worth looking at in terms of memory-work.

Kavanagh points to the intimacy created through communicating experiences at the exhibition.[174] Although her discussion concerns one particular exhibition, what she says may be extended to encompass exhibitions in general. She argues that "once the imagination is captured, the ability to think further, to be conscious of period is in fact enhanced. If the chronological story-line is like a rope, then this cross-chronological approach is like a web, open yet stronger, more textured and much wider in its scope." This lateral, web-like texture bears a resemblance to my understanding of the commemorative membrane, emphasizing its experiential and imaginative dimension. Of course, the inescapable, inherent paradox at the heart of the membrane is that while I emphasize its material nature (its reliance on the tangible past as locus of memory), its texture that is at times so dense it becomes crystallized[175], it is quite evident that this memory-membrane exists primarily as a textual – and thus textured – entity, a metaphor that is dependent on linguistic persuasion for lubrication. So, I lay my musings upon the membrane on the margins of this study as a 'moody, quicksilver construction'[176], which, in my view, holds some power – both to illuminate and obscure.

So, what should we make of my discussion of the commemorative membrane? In the light of what has been said, I suggest that the complex dynamic of commemorative practices within museum settings may be viewed as suspended between two poles: that of narrativity and that of mimesis. On the one hand is the narrative impulse, or a desire that feeds on the contention and belief that museums are able to make stories with objects. The practice of arranging objects according to a narrative, or imposing narrativity over them is – apart from being a healthy curatorial practice in the service of communicating meanings – at the same time a manifestation of the desire to control, and will to power. Linear, 'evolutive' (Foucault) narratives function to manifest ideas of progress and provide coming-of-age stories of communities, in this case, that of Hungarian so-

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172 Kavanagh 1996:2.
173 Kansteiner 2002.
174 Kavanagh 1996:12.
175 cf. Assmann and Czaplicka 1995:130.
176 This notion I have borrowed from Susan Pearce 1994:28.

cialism. On the other hand, the commemorative membrane is stimulated by the mimetic impulse, which is related to the material existence of objects and their modes of communication as showing. While both dimensions are related to representation, the mimetic impulse entails the aspect of performative imitation embodied in material practices. As an orientation to, and as a mode of, reading, narrativity highlights chronology and change. Mimesis as an orientation, in turn, means highlighting the cumulative, thickening and synthesizing textures and is prone to show similarity and difference rather than development and change. I suggest that it is in the interplay between the narrative and mimetic impulses and desires that the commemorative membrane becomes stimulated. This stimulation may lead to routine and translucent functioning, when rituals and repetition are emphasized. Alternatively, the stimulation may lead to the charged particles of the membrane becoming an 'event', as Linenthal has put it.

It is hardly a co-incidence that the Enola Gay dispute has become a paradigmatic case in memory, public history and museology discourse alike, since it contains ingredients that resonate in several directions, including the theoretical. As Vera L. Zollberg has remarked, inquiry into the Enola Gay controversy "suggests that social memory is not reducible either to a semiotic reading of surfaces or to a simple analysis of dominance relations that are confined to a single society."[177] Accordingly, my aim is to conduct semiotic readings in varying contexts to look at the ways meanings are made and contested within a specific commemorative frame. These contextual readings are coupled with 'discursive roaming' in and around the exhibition space in order to reach beyond the scope of semiotic analysis.[178] Although the liberation exhibitions were born under the flag of Marxism-Leninism, the power relations involved are much more complex than top-down dominance in which the memory-makers of the state provide memory-consuming subjects with 'appropriate' memories. In the following, I shall sketch out the methodological framework of my analysis.

2.5 Visiting the scripts: reading for the membrane

As explicated above, my study explores the liberation exhibitions as narrative visual statements and discursive formations about state-socialist Hungary. These narratives are made up of smaller units: objects, images, models and written texts that can be viewed as forming visual or material statements through which meanings are communicated. This means looking at the exhibitions in the light of the dynamic of 'showing and telling'. The interpretation of the exhibitions therefore entails looking into the ways meanings are made and communicated – in other words, how objects and display units make, and are made to make, sense. For this, I shall rely on a

177 Zolberg 1996:80.

178 Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (1999: 3) emphasize the role of discursivity in the analysis of the contexts of different visual practices. For them, the notion of discourse "rescues us from the solely textual concerns of a semiotic analysis".

semiotic approach that treats these various elements as signs. This approach aims at explicating meaning not only in terms of narrativity but also in terms of mimesis in the core of semiosis. Thus, the mimetic dimension of the exhibitions is viewed as 'complex manifestations of mimesis as power.'[179] Finally, in order not to be locked into 'the semiotic reading of surfaces', the approach involves a discursive dimension. This, in turn, entails roaming the discursive spaces of the Hungarian museum during socialism.

The tension between the narrative and non-narrative understanding of the meaning of objects would appear to inform the title of Susan M. Pearce's influential article: it is titled "Objects as meaning; or narrating the past". Her title readily indicates that in her approach, the way meanings are *communicated* happens through narrativization: it is the stories that (sets of) objects tell and the readings that different viewers produce. In this process not only viewers but also objects can be active communicators and meaning-makers. As Pearce points out, "objects and our relationship to them are analysed *as if* they were written narratives"[180] (my italics). However, material presence does not in itself include a narrative dimension: the emphasis on narrativity goes hand in hand with the process of explicating and communicating meanings. Pearce's semiotic approach outlines the way individual objects accumulate meanings over time. It is grounded upon the idea that meaning develops as an interactive process between a 'thing' and a viewer. Following the lines of Saussurean semiotics, Pearce identifies the langue, or the signified as the body of social understanding, from which the concrete performances and embodiments, the signifiers, are issued.[181] Attaining meanings is based on the interplay of the signifier and the signified, which together produce signs that may be recognized by members of social groups.

In this study, Pearce's approach is applied rather loosely in interpreting the ways in which meanings are attached to individual objects and display units in exhibitions.[182] Meaning is thus seen as inherently dependent on relationships and distinctions. Also in the symbolic space of a museum exhibition, the material put on display forms a potentially limitless number of sets, in which the materials relate to each other in different ways all producing different readings. The objects in an exhibition may relate to each other metonymically, as signs that stand for a whole of which they are an intrinsic part. When there is no intrinsic connection between the signifier and the signified, an object operates metaphorically as a symbol: a social construct which the visitor of an exhibition either recognizes or not. For example, the illegal press machine of the Hungarian Communist Party is a sign for the actual historical events it is part of, and it forms several metonymic sets with the newspapers and flyers

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179 Bogue, Ronald 1984: 6. Recently, semiotics and mimesis have frequently been discussed together, see Maran, 2003; Neiva 1999.

180 Pearce 1990:27.

181 Pearce 1990: 21.

182 The limitations of the structuralism-informed schematism of Pearce's analyses have been pointed out, including by Pearce herself (1992:166-191), also by Rhiannon Mason (2006:19-22).

printed with it, the people working with the machine, the party headquarters, etc. At the same time, the printing machine is a symbol of resistance, bravery and the oppression of the Horthy era, during which the communist party had to operate underground. Further, the printing machine is a symbol of the communist ideals of spreading the word and educating the people but also of biased propaganda. What has to be borne in mind is that the range of possibilities in which the machine may relate to the words and things of its time is constantly being modified and that these 'conceivable chunks'[183] of meaning are always a matter of selection. Meanings vary, change and accumulate as time passes, which means that the metaphorical relations are never fixed but constantly in flux, and this is why it is impossible to control the meanings of the materials on display. All we have is a variety of possible readings, some of which may be more prominent than others within the ideological frame of the exhibition. Objects, selected and arranged in the display are, at the same time, the product of the ideologically endorsed multiple discourses and narratives that have been constructed around events and phenomena. Objects that once were signifiers may become signifieds, embodiments of shared symbols. This is how the experience of a historical event becomes part of the collective consciousness (or memory), and in this sense, it has a role in bringing about social change. What holds the potential for this change is the dynamic and dialogical process of interpretation. We have a text created by an object and all of its contexts and what we make out of them and meaning is created in the interplay between the object and its reader[184]. Nevertheless, what is characteristic of objects is their ability to retain their metonymic relationship to the past they are a part of, and this is 'the power of the real thing', as Pearce puts it. This means that objects hold emotional potency that is crucial to our understanding of them. As Pearce remarks, our reaction to the object is as important as the object itself.[185] The emotional impact of objects is much discussed in the museological literature published in Hungary during the state-socialist period. In these writings, the emotional impact is seen as crucial for reaching the cultural political goals of the exhibition.[186] As emphasized by the display designers of the time, exhibitions offer visual and spatial experiences, which may be made into suggestive experiences with the help of lighting and use of forms and colours. This is a way to convey 'valuable knowledge' through 'enticing form'.[187]

What is the value of these museum semiotical insights in a historical setting when the liberation exhibitions themselves can no longer be physically accessed? If Pearce is right in contending that in the process of making something meaningful, the balance is held by the object itself, through its factual and tangible content, then how can this balance be achieved with hindsight? Needless to say, this is impossible. Instead, a 'reading for the membrane' may be applied, which means interpretation that is sensitive to the dynamic and structures of

183 Ham 1994:107-118.
184 Pearce 1990: 26.
185 Pearce ibid.
186 Korek 1987:183-190; Boreczky 1968: 23-31.
187 Boreczky 1968: 23.

signification within a specific commemorative context. While the exhibitions cannot be accessed as experience, they can be approached as a figurative revisiting. This means constructing vision-with-hindsight, which entails a movement through the exhibition that unfolds in time. Since the liberation exhibitions were made into narrative, didactic exhibitions (as the frequent use of the road metaphor suggests), the reading performed attempts to follow the ideal path taken through the exhibits so that this narrative is also a walk among display units as a temporal entity. In Pearce's view, the dialectical structure of viewing lies in the need to decipher, which "gives us the chance to bring out both what is in the object and what is in ourselves; it is a dynamic, complex movement which unfolds as time passes, and in the act of interpretative imagination we give form to ourselves".[188]

In chapter 3, exhibitions are approached as narrative constructs. As each exhibition is discussed separately as a conceptual 'whole', the contexts of production are given briefly.[189] The mode of reading applied in this chapter could be characterized as 'reading for the narrative': looking for the cues that reveal how the classified and ordered objects are turned into a narrative; the ways stories are constructed by using 'particular conjunctions of artefacts.'[190] As the exhibitions necessarily entail a performative element (as the exhibitions are turned into narratives in the act of the visitor passing through the displays), each exhibition is figuratively 'walked through' room by room, in chronological order. Special attention is paid to the creation of coherence, continuities and discontinuities, along with the marking of turning points in the narrative. While these performed itineraries primarily follow the (supposed) curatorial intention, attention is given to those instances where tensions in the narrative are likely to be perceived. Finally, in 3.7, the exhibitions are 'read together' as a cumulative, varying and changing narrative of state-socialist Hungary. With this, the prospective visitor interpretations of the exhibitions as narratives are taken into account. These visitors may be divided into three groups: 'inner circle visitors', that is, museum professionals and historians who wrote criticism and debated the exhibitions on the pages of professional journals, journalists and critics who presented and wrote about the exhibitions to a wider public in different media, and the 'ordinary visitors' who put down their impressions in the exhibition guest books[191]. In a sense, then, the narrative part of the reading brings to the foreground the temporal dimension of re-taking the road projected in the exhibition: this is the reason why in chapter 3 the contents of the exhibitions are broken down into separate exhibition rooms, on the textual level separated into different paragraphs. In this narrative emphasis, therefore, there is a room-

188 Pearce 1990:27.

189 This act of presenting the contexts of production unavoidably includes a historiographic element of narrativizing the exhibitions –that is, writing their history.

190 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:24.

191 Obviously, the 'ordinary visitor' is as such misleading, since it implicitly contains the idea that individual visitors make up a faceless mass. From the perspective of the guestbook entries, however, the visitors appear as non-differentiated voices in a collective, and in this, particulars such as as class, gender and professional status are secondary.

paragraph–correspondence. The narrative of each exhibition is thus presented according to the temporal and thematic units created by the exhibition designers. In more concrete terms, this means that the narrative is not merely a summary of the plot and characters of the 'road to socialism' but also contains accounts of what there is to be seen. This means that the exhibition narrative is not a narrative told but a narrative shown and told, which is why it is not enough to summarize the narrative but indicate with what tools (mainly objects) it has been put together. This is when the accounts of the researcher as a 'reader-visitor' are brought in.

In chapter 4, the mimetic aspects are the point of departure for the analysis. This means that while acknowledging the exhibitions' nature as didactic narratives, they are approached through their visual statements that mainly draw on mimesis for their effect: the similarities and differences of form or the mere physical presence often creating the 'authenticity effect'[192]. With the mimetic focus, it is primarily the displayed objects or distinguishable display units that are cross-read from one exhibition to another. What is at stake is the *appearance*, not the story, temporality or chronological sequences. The reading is thus based on a figurative viewing process, which is necessarily fragmented for several reasons. Firstly, as pointed out by Pearce, the viewing process is always selective, since the objects themselves are inexhaustible. Secondly, this viewing is not only selective but also fragmented, since it is based on heterogeneous traces of exhibited fragments. Therefore, to think further on Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's notion of 'exhibiting the fragment', then reading as membrane involves re-exhibiting the fragment.

Therefore, while acknowledging that the meaning(s) and manifestation(s) of mimesis within this study are multiple, I still do not consider it worthwhile to attempt to make sharp distinctions between them or attempt to typify them in any way. As already mentioned, the different dimensions of mimesis frequently merge and overlap. Neither would I want to make the claim that the aspects discussed under mimesis are non-narrative as such. Rather, in the instances discussed in chapter 4, mimesis is not conceived as working against narrativity as such, but as drawing the attention away from the narrative. Thus, reading for the membrane in the context of a history exhibition is, in short, reading for tensions. This entails, on the one hand, acknowledging the narrative character (or its claim to being a narrative) of the exhibition, and, on the other, keeping an eye on those elements that are likely to appeal to sensuous knowledge, or – if we accept Susan Stewart's notion of the museum being about refraining from touch – draw on 'mimetic visuality'[193].

In chapter 5, the exhibitions are discussed in the light of the museological discourses of their time, with special attention to the role of ideology in the construction of meaning. This is done from three perspectives: first, as an attempt

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192 Apor and Sarkisova 2008: ix.

193 This notion I borrow from Laura U. Marks (2000:144), who has discussed the film in terms of embodiment and mimesis, drawing attention to the "[t]he perceived need for a mimetic visuality" of several critics.

to locate the Hungarian museological discourse under state socialism in the wider, international museological discourses; second, in an attempt to sketch out the commemorative genre of 'liberation'; and, third, as a simultaneous showcase of historical museology and social progress.

Finally, in methodological terms, the interplay between showing and telling requires awareness on the researcher's behalf, as she constantly needs to seek a balance between her own narrative and mimetic desire in her quest to sort out the meanings of the exhibitions. In this study, the researcher's narrative desire appears in my desire to historicize the exhibitions: to view them "in a row", as if they were beads on a string. Essentially, this means reading for difference over time. My constant reference to individual exhibitions by their year of making, such as 'the 1965 exhibition,' emphasizes the sense of temporality and chronology. Yet, I frequently refer to the limits of the exhibitions for the purposes of comparison: they were not made by the same institutions and they do not draw on the same collections. This is why such arguments as "After 1970, however, dehumanizing signification does not appear" leave me with a sense of unease. Such statements beg the question: why? However, within this heterogeneous set of exhibitions, answering this question runs the risk of reading too much into the differences between the exhibitions. Apart from being narrative exhibitions that draw on a chronology, the liberation exhibitions are exhibitions of repetition, which is intimately linked with the mimetic dimension of the exhibitions. In terms of narrative and display material, each exhibition draws on its predecessor, which in turn drew on its predecessor. In this sense, each exhibition implicitly contains those that went before. The series of exhibitions may be viewed together as a cumulative story of 'liberation', in which each exhibition repeats the same story but *repeats it differently*. The danger of excessive reliance on the mimetic desire is the possibility of being seduced by the visual or material statements of the displays, which in turn may lead to internalization of their rhetoric. Blinded by this 'blurring contiguity', it may be difficult to see the difference in the apparent similarity. This is why the constant balancing between narrative and mimetic desire is crucial.

3 FROM RUINS TO WEEKEND HOUSES: THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM

3.1 “Hungary on the road to socialism 1945-1960”

The first major liberation exhibition in post-1956 Hungary was “Hungary on the road to socialism 1945-1960”, organized by the Museum of Contemporary History. In fact, the Museum of Contemporary History (Legújabbkori Történeti Múzeum, LTM) may be regarded as the primary institution in charge of the implementation of the central liberation exhibitions. The museum, established in 1957, was preceded by the Institute of Hungarian Labour Movement (Magyar Munkásmozgalmi Intézet, MMMI), established six years earlier. The new museum took over the task of collecting contemporary, mainly labour movement-related, material. In 1966, in deference to the demand by the power holders in Moscow, the name of the museum was changed into the Museum of the Hungarian Labour Movement (Magyar Munkásmozgalmi Múzeum, MMM), which it retained until 1991, when the museum was discontinued and its collections were absorbed into the National Museum.[194]

The 1960 exhibition was opened to the public on April 2 and could be visited until October 10, 1960. During this period, the number of visitors amounted to 75 321, with group visits accounting for approximately half of these. There were 52 guided tours of the exhibition. The exhibition was placed on the first floor of the National Museum building. The halls chosen for this purpose were the ’Kupolaterem’ (Cupola hall) and the ’Díszterem’ (Gala hall). According to an early thematic plan, the exhibition was to be a rather modest commemoration of liberation, the 15th anniversary being a less notable one. Accordingly, as the plan had it, it was not necessary to give a detailed account of the contemporary achievements of the construction of socialism during these fifteen years, but it was enough to indicate the main elements (jelzésszerűen

194 In effect, the collection of the Museum of the History of the Labour movement has served as the core of numerous collections focused on contemporary material.

bemutatni). Also, the budget of the exhibition was reported to have fallen two-thirds short of requirements. Judging by the eight exhibition halls the exhibition consists of, the plans must have been changed along the way, but ultimately this is of no relevance for present purposes. The main issue is how the decisicion to "cut the long story short" is justified: not round anniversary, not round (i.e. exhaustive) exhibition.[195]

While the 1960 exhibition may be regarded as the first of its kind, it was not without its antecendents. For the commemoration of the 10th anniversary of liberation in 1955, the Institute of the Labour Movement (Munkásmozgalmi Intézet, MMI, predecessor of the Labour Museum) compiled two identical exhibitions under the title "The History of the Hungarian Labour Movement" which toured 14 towns in six months. The exhibitions were put together by the Institute of the Labour Movement and patronized by the local party committees. The educational departments of the local party councils were to provide two 'political workers' (a teacher, university student, museum curator or an archivist) and one 'technical worker' to see to the functioning of the exhibition. The initial idea was to complete the display with local material relating to the labour movement. This concept was eventually abandoned for reasons not indicated, but it probably had to do with the difficulties of organizing collecting on the local level. Instead, the exhibition concentrated on the liberation and the history of the people's democracy with no references to local characteristics.[196] This is to say that for commemorative purposes, the history of the labour movement (as the title had it) was equated with the liberation and 'post-liberation' history. Thus, the 1960 exhibition drew on earlier exhibitions, most importantly the one entitled "History of the labour movement", which travelled through the country to commemorate the 10th anniversary of liberation.[197]

The 1960 exhibition consists of eight rooms. The exhibition begins with a depiction of the circumstances of the working people during the days of the Soviet Republic but, more importantly yet, the misery that followed the overthrow of the Soviet Republic. While the first room is focused on the attempt to build a continuum between the Soviet Republic of Hungary and the current socialist regime, it at the same time lays emphasis on the poor housing conditions of the working class. It relays images of homeless people and children attempting to find food on a rubbish dump.

After this historical setting is presented and the tone has been set, the thematic shifts in the second room into creating a heroic story of oppression and resistance fought by the communists during the years of illegality. This is the coming of age story of the Communist Party (at the time called

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195 TAD-I-202-75 'A Magyar népi demokrácia 15 éve kiállítás tematikai terve'

196 TAD-I-47-75 '"Magyar Munkásmozgalom Története" kiállítás bemutatásának tervezete'

197 The fact that the earlier exhibitions were used for reference becomes evident when skimming through the archive material of the exhibition, which contain pages and thematic units from earlier scripts with markings on them. However, it is difficult to say exactly what and to what extent has been borrowed from previous displays, since many of the pages are torn and the markings on them are messy.

Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, KMP) and other 'progressive'parties. Much attention is given to 'progressive' mass movements and organisations, along with the thematic of fighting international fascism. The second room closes with the events of World War II.

It is only in the third room that the events of 'liberation' come in. The escalating drama is first and foremost the fight of the Red Army to liberate Hungary. First, the eastern part of the country is liberated, followed by the the Trans-Danubian operations of the Soviet Army, and finally the liberation of Budapest. These military operations are shown on maps and in images of Soviet soldiers fighting on the Great Plain but also Soviet soldiers with liberated Hungarian peasants. In the meantime, the Red Army is coupled with Hungarian partisan fighters in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Slovakia but also in and around Budapest: this is how Hungarians engaged in armed resistance against fascism. The partisan battles are presented in detailed maps showing the positions of the German, Arrow-Cross and 'progressive' fighters. The efficiency of the Red Army pushes Horthy's fascist regime into a 'forlorn, permanent crisis from which there was no recovery'. Horthy's regime is held responsible for the terror, forced labour and mass deportation of Jews. The 'gloomiest days in Hungarian history'[198] are evoked with several images of mass killings, snails used for torture at the Arrow-Cross headquarters and announcements about the trials and labour service of Jewish women. The fate of the Jews at the end of Horthy's regime is evoked by an image of the exhumed bodies of the 'murderers and the victims' of mass killings in a Jewish hospital at Városmajor Street in Budapest. Despite the immense losses brought by the terror, life begins in the areas liberated by the Soviet Army, led by the Temporary National Government. The land reform, the dream come true for the peasantry, follows suit: under the leadership of the communists, the land is given to those whom it belongs, those who cultivate it.

The fourth room is dedicated to the 'victory of the People's Democracy', which in this narrative is inseparable from the quest for reconstruction and the defeat of the 'counter-revolution'. The devastation of the war was immense, since "the fascist troops blew up all the bridges". In terms of visual display, the broken and rebuilt bridges are given much attention: the re-built Kossuth Bridge, for instance, is presented as 'the great touchstone of the Hungarian working-class'. The Communist Party begins its work as a legitimate party now that the time of illegality is over. To stop the hyperinflation, a new currency, the forint, is introduced. This is how the communists showed the reactionary forces that stabilisation is possible, which, in turn, increases people's faith in the Party. The reconstruction, led by the communists, is prompted by the help of Soviet soldiers and the aid granted by the Soviet Union. Detailed statistics of this aid and images of Soviet trains carrying groceries show the 'immense importance' of the Soviet contribution. However, the

[198] This echoes the predominant rhetoric of the post-1945 political authorities, which prevailed throughout the socialist period, despite de-stalinization and the "re-professionalization of Hungarian historiography after 1956". See Romcsics 2011:69-72.

reconstruction , though led by the Party, was not solely the achievement of the political leadership and Soviet help: the Party could also rely on the initiative of the working Hungarian people. "Having heard the call of the party, the people of Budapest began to clean up the ruins". Labour competition was launched, with the 'workers of Csepel' in the fore-front.[199] The victory of workers' power came in steps: first, the general elections of 1945, and second the parliamentary elections of 1947, after which the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party joined forces in 1948, forming the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP). Although the reactionary forces and the bourgeoisie took all possible measures to sabotage this progressive development, they could not stop the course of events. This unification was absolutely necessary for the power of the progressive forces to be realised; even then, a considerable, constant threat is posed to the system by international imperialism and the former bourgeois power elite. The most severe attack against the forces of progress is the counter-revolution, reinforced by deliberate lies spread by the reactionaries. Despite the devastation that cost the lives of innocent, helpless people, order is restored and political power consolidated. It is with gratitude that Hungarians remember the help of the Soviet Union in beating back the attack. Eventually, the economic and political battles lead to the victory of the people. The trust of the people is won back, as shown by the images of crowds in Heroes' Square on the first of May.

The fifth room presents the achievements of the three-year plan and the first five-year plan, with a focus on heavy industry. Mainly with the help of photos and statistics, it demonstrates how Hungary has turned from an agrarian society into an industrial society. It discusses the development of the war-ravaged economy: the traffic, the building of bridges, electrification and the establishment of collective farms point out how "… our working peasantry chose the road of socialist development, the only road, on which, with joint forces and collective pursuits, the peasantry may enter a higher cultural form and reach a higher standard of living". The newly built infrastructure as 'great achievements of socialism' are shown on maps, both on a national level and in Budapest, according to districts. The exhibition is careful to emphasize that alt-hough industrialization proved to be too heavy in its initial phase, as a result of which economic growth was slowed down, the Party re-oriented the course of economy in 1953 and has since conducted 'consistent economic politics'.

The sixth room continues the recital of achievements. On the one hand, the focus is on industrial production, coal-mining, electricity, chemistry, construction, and on the other, on the development of agriculture during the five-year plan period. In industry, selected examples demonstrate the variety of transactions within the eastern bloc. These include images of the construction of

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[199] In the history of the labour movement, the beginnings of the labour competition movement were ascribed to the workers of the Csepel Iron and Metal Works workers of Csepel, who initiated the labour competition movement on the 60 anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. 'Workers of Csepel' thus became the icon of the ardent socialist worker who does the best he or she can to exceed the production plans set for the factory.

the turbine of a Polish water power plant, the building of a telephone centre to be exported to China, and a binding machine from the GDR. While it is the concrete physical achievements that are foregrounded, work itself and the worker-hero, the stahanovist, is given attention, though mainly in the spirit of achievement: a series of labour competition awards is displayed. In agriculture, the shortcomings are discussed. Smallholders did not have enough access to modern technology, big collectives suffered from initial problems. Yet, the 'correct politics of the party' are emphasized, above all the abolition of compulsory delivery. More than two-thirds of peasants are reported to have chosen the road of socialism. The display of collective farm agreements and a scale model of a modern plough enforce the idea of the intertwindedness of progress and the form of production. Thus, the main conclusion is encouraging: despite difficulties, agriculture has been able to satisfy the demands of the people.

The seventh room combines the presentation of trade, social and material welfare and the 'achievements of cultural revolution'. Discussion is focused on the standard of living, the main argument being that despite the decrease in 1951-53 and the damage of 1956, there has been remarkable growth in the standard of living during the last ten years. Images feature housing blocks, electrification, health care, and children's day care, but with an emphasis on the issue of housing, which needs further improvement. Education, science and art are discussed in terms of 'cultural revolution'. The development in the field of culture is demonstrated by the rising consumption of culture, shown also by statistics. Emphasis is put on people's education, while science is merely touched upon with images of a research centre for physics, meteorology, atomic research and forestry. The presentation of art is a blend of 'high' and 'folk': folk art objects, remarkable scientific works, and remarkable works of fiction and poetry are displayed side by side. Images of the major composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály, who extensively draw on folk music, are displayed next to a folk artist from the famous Kalócsa region, and Pál Szabó, the Kossuth prize winning writer, is shown in the company of peasants from Hajdú-Bihar County.[200] The room closes with sports and physical education, showing newly built sports facilities, sports camps, a soccer game between different Budapest teams and the rise in the number of sports club memberships.

The last room focuses on the construction of socialism on a global and national scale. The eighth room works to highlight the mileposts to come, as the

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[200] This obvious over-representation of folk or popular elements is undeniably linked with the post-1956 cultural politics that in the field of literature were revised in the spirit of consolidation. While the new cultural political line aimed at emphasizing continuity, at the same time attempts were made to contain problematic artistic and literary movements that were seen to threaten the communist order. One of these concerned the so-called populist writers, who, by dealing with the life-world of the Hungarian peasantry, were considered reactionary in their nationalism. During the events of 1956, many of them had raised their voice in favour of Imre Nagy's reform politics. However, the continuity-hungry post-1956 politics was eager to single out certain, less problematic figures from this heterogeneous group. Here, the inclusion of Pál Szabó, who won a Kossuth Prize twice in the years of Stalinism, is to be seen as a deliberate attempt to emphasize the continuity of cultural politics before and after the revolution. See Kalmár 1998: 79-102.

title ’Forward on the road to socialism’ suggests. The exhibition closes in a reconciliatory spirit of détente and future optimism. The exhibition points out how “The consistent peace politics of the socialist camp resulted in a break-through in the front of the Cold War and forced the imperialist circles to negotiations” and shows several photos of famous politicians in international meetings. The spirit of a global, or indeed, cosmic scale, is reinforced with a graphic image of Soviet spaceships. The national scale is primarily related to the 7th Party Congress of the MSzMP in 1959 and the outlines of the second five-year plan (1955-1959). From among the different areas of the five-year plan, agriculture and standard of living are given special attention. Due to its modest development in comparison to the dynamic development of industry, agriculture will need more attention during the plan period. Through a photo montage, the exhibition propagates collective farm membership as a ‘guarantee for a carefree future’. The restructured ‘socialist village’ is envisioned in a scale model put on display. The discussion of welfare begins with a reference to the 7th Party Congress resolution concerning the striving for a constant increase in the standard of living through production and productivity. Consequently, the plan-related maps and figures point to the *expected* levels which during the plan period will be realized. With the help of statistics, the exhibition shows how the income of workers and peasants will increase, along with consumption per capita, while a decreasing tendency may be detected in *future* working-hours. In a similar fashion, a map of Hungary shows the major investments to be realized during the second five-year plan period. The exhibition draws to a close with the ’mapping out’ of proletarian internationalism: images of the international delegates to the 7th Party Congress are accompanied by a map of the world showing the forty countries from which guests had arrived, among them ‘capitalist, colonial and semi-colonial countries’.

For the reader-visitor, it is the military rhetoric of the exhibition that instantly attracts attention. The first four rooms all have ’battle’ in their titles. The first two halls depict ’the battle of the progressive forces’ within the Horthy regime, the third hall is about the events of the liberation but entitled ”The battle of the Soviet Army for the liberation of Hungary”. The fourth hall depicts the battle of the working class for power. Quite evidently, this language-use is in line with the predominant rhetoric, according to which everything was to be ’harcias’ (combative, battle-like) and ’pártos’ (biased in favour of the Party). However, what appears as symptomatic is that among the six exhibitions, this is the only one to extend the use of such war-like language to the field of culture or, for that matter, to include a photo of “People queuing for tickets to see a film about the counter-revolution” in a section that discusses ‘culture’. Indeed, this is the only exhibition that discusses culture in terms of the ’development of the cultural revolution’ and thus this image of people eager to see how the forces of reaction were defeated is a good indication of the all-permeating nature of this ’battle’. In the 1960 version of the liberation narrative, the ’battle’ is succeded by ’achievements’. Rooms 5-7 are untitled; instead, they can be seen as a thematic chunk of the situation and achievements visible and present now.

These dissolve into each other, making up a continuous image that stretches into the present moment in which the displays are being viewed. However, the achievements resulting from the battle are not free from the battle either.

3.2 "The 20 years of our People's Democracy"

By the twentieth anniversary of the liberation, the nation-wide organization of jubilee exhibitions was made more structured and centrally coordinated. The Agitation and Propaganda Committee of the Party's Central Committee requested museums, libraries and cultural centres to join forces to make local exhibitions that would give an overview of the 20-year development and future prospects of that locality.[201] In the 20th anniversary exhibitions, the Historical Committees of the Newest Era seem to occupy an important role, since many liberation exhibitions displayed material collected by the committees.[202] Prompted by the Ministry of Education, the Centre for Museum Education (Múzeumi Ismeretterjesztő Központ) issued a guide on the organization of jubilee exhibitions, with special attention to local museums outside of Budapest, factories and socialist co-operatives. In February 1965, The Modern Historical Museum organized a conference for museum professionals and popular educators to discuss issues related to jubilee exhibitions.

The second central exhibition, hosted by the Modern Historical Museum and the Ministry of Education, was opened in the National Museum on March 27, 1965 by Gyula Kállai, chairman of the Council of Ministers. As the memos of meetings on November 23 and January 30 reveal, the schedule for the implementation of the exhibition was very tight. The central administrative organ for museums (Múzeumi Főosztály) demanded that the scripts and installation plans for each hall be turned in for review within two weeks. The review of the plans was to be followed by a 'professional overview' of the mounted exhibition in mid-March, so that the exhibition would be ready by March 20, after the corrections suggested by the audit had been made.[203]

As with the 1960 exhibition, here too the emphasis is on political history. A similar division prevails: the first three rooms present political history, after which three rooms are dedicated to achievements. In addition, there is an interim period, through which the visitor passes when entering and exiting the exhibition. The first room depicts the Hungarian society of the mid-1930s, plagued by endemics, unemployment and an inadequate educational system. In Horthy's time, one hundred pupils were squeezed into one room, the poor were evicted from their dwellings and the gendarmerie aroused fear in the people. Communists and other anti-fascist activists were imprisoned and killed, among them Ferenc Rózsa and Zoltán Schönherz, whose execution is evoked with a

201 Bögel 1965:114-5.
202 Balassa 1966:11.
203 TAD 312-75 I. Jegyzőkönyv, LTM, Nov. 23, 1964.

newspaper montage. However, "The heroism of the anti-fascist forces proved insufficient". These circumstances were in themselves enough to foretell the end of the whole regime but the international political situation made the situation even worse, as 'Hitlerist aggressors' proclaimed war on the Soviet Union. "The German occupation resulted in a total depredation of the country", nearly half million Jews are deported to Auschwitz and Birkenau. This is evoked by images from Budapest ghetto, trains heading for Auschwitz, and a pile of corpses. As the Germans aided 'the Arrow Cross bandits' to power and Horthy gave over his position to Szálasi, "the history of our people touched the bottom of its darkest era". While the Arrow Cross terror raged, victims were tortured with snails at the Arrow-Cross headquarters and books of progressive writers were banned, the talented anti-fascist poet Miklós Radnóti, wrote himself a memento mori before his execution. Despite the numerous victims of terror, the progressive forces continued their fight, and the Hungarian partisan movement took its share in this fight. "Although the military significance of partisans was rather small, it would be a mistake to underestimate its moral and political significance."

The second room focuses on reconstruction, the land reform, the three-year plan and the Communist Party's struggle for a 'proletarian dictatorship'. While battles are still being fought in the country, the re-organisation of political and economic life begins in the liberated areas with the help of the Red Army. Soviet trains arrive with foodstuffs and cotton, and the people of Budapest gather at Liberty Square in the March of 1945 to express their gratitude to the Soviets. People's tribunal is set to pass sentences upon war criminals. Reconstruction is begun in the leadership of the Party, and the people take part in this work. Soviet soldiers build temporary bridges and radio lines to compensate for the devastation brought by the fascists. Land reform gives back the peasants the land that was once taken away from them. Land reform is shown with authentic documents and artifacts of land distribution such as measures, chains and axes (Figure 1). Industrial production is re-begun and the dynamic enthusiasm of workers is reflected in the labour competition movement launched by the workers of Csepel. Now that the capitalist exploitation is over, workers' attitude to work is profoundly changed. The gradual solidification of the progressive forces is aided by the introduction of a new currency and the three-year plan but overshadowed by the reactionaries. Eventually, the progressive forces are joined in a new party, the MDP, and the proletarian dictatorship wins the battle.

The third room follows the evolution of the socialist state from the passing of the socialist constitution in 1949 to the restitution of the socialist order after the 1956 revolution in the 7th Party Congress. Socialism is being built in Hungary, backed up by the international socialist 'peace movement' that joins the masses. This movement plays an important role in slowing down the 'imperialist conquistadors'. After the political grounds of the proletarian dictatorship have been laid, it is time to restructure the socialist economy. In socialism, work is a question of honour and hard work is rewarded, as the numerous labour movement prizes – the flags, banners and insignia – show. The restructuring of

work takes place in factories and fields alike: the 'most conscious groups of peasants' join collective farms, of which the "Virágzó" (Blooming) Collective farm from Kisbér is presented as a model. Apart from photos and a bronz statue "The Sower", the display unit includes a sketched map of Hungary showing the location of Kisbér. The collective farm guestbook, available for inspection by visitors, shows that there have been visitors from 28 countries from Bulgaria to Madagaskar. There are also diplomas and statistics of the development in figures. The planned economy is also present as images of the infrastructural achievements realized during the first five-year plan. Most of them are housing blocks, bridges or sports stadiums, or relate to heavy industry. However, the distortions in the party leadership and the inner and outer reactionary forces pose a threat to this dynamic development. Even the 20th Party Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which "opened up a new era in the world-scale battle for the victory of socialism", was not enough to remedy the wrong turning taken with the abandonment of Leninist rule. During the counter-revolution, Hungary was overshadowed by systematic spying conducted by imperialist countries. The exhibition displays the authentic spy-balloons launched into Hungary which were eventually shot down by the army. The counter-revolution that broke out on October 23 posed a threat not only to the socialist pursuits of the Hungarian people but put the peace of the socialist world, Europe and entire humanity in danger. Also many collective farms and socialist co-operatives took up the fight against the counter-revolutionaries. Numerous portraits of the victims are displayed, accompanied with the caption: "Glory to the heroes who gave their lives for the worker-peasant power!" After the counter-revolution, the reformed party acknowledged the grave situation of the country, relying on the faith of the people and consolidating the renewed socialist system. Eventually, the socialist revolution reaped victory, as demonstrated by the crowds of people that gathered in the streets on March 1957 in support of the government. The parliamentary elections of November 1958 proved that the policies of the Party had been correct. The true socialist road is resumed, the system is consolidated: this is highlighted by the images of the 7th Party Congress, accompanied by a statue, "Border guard", by Iván Szabó and photos of a soldier, border guard, police and a military procession held on April 4th. Hungary may rely on the international socialist camp for security: "the guarantee of Hungary's outer security is the Warsaw pact".

From the fourth room onward, political history is put aside and the focus is on the achievements of socialism. The display is organized around the claim that "Since the liberation we have received all the more convincing proof for the superiority of the socialist system over capitalism". Hungary has come a long way from being an agrarian backwater to becoming an industrial-agrarian country equipped with fine heavy industry. The presentation of achievements is done branch by branch from raw material production to heavy and light industry, followed by construction and traffic (Figure 2). Rather than depicting a development, the elements displayed appear as glimpses of 'then' and 'now'. This impression is emphasized with the use of the years 1945 and 1965, indicat-

ing the liberation and the present moment. The development in the volume of production is parallel to the improvement in the standard of living. The display gives the impression of a controlled, plan-driven development. There are quotes from Party Congress decrees that refer to the five-year plans and numerous models of future establishments are displayed. Also scale models of means of production are displayed, ranging from a coalmine and atom reactor to fluorescent light bulb factories.

The fifth room focuses on the significance of COMECON and presents the development of food industry and agriculture. The COMECON display unit is realized in the form of a large-sized map, showing how the 'Friendship pipeline' interconnects the countries. Photos placed on the edges of the map show import and export items within COMECON, ranging from hydraulic hammers to canned peas. Also, the development of food industry is realized with a combination of a large map and photos, presenting cold stores, a brewery, poultry, paprika and the new automatic machinery of a tobacco factory. The development of agriculture, which is given far more space that the two other themes, is presented as the story of modernization and automation, in which science is harnessed to serve enhanced production. Collective farms appear as an important element of this modernization process and 'the road to welfare'.

The sixth room presents the developments of socialist culture. The introductory text of the room propagates the idea that 'socialist culture' is something that is born among the people and grows bottom-up, while the role of the Party and the cultural institution in this process is to help. Further, 'socialist educational politics' is envisioned as an organic part of the construction of socialism. Education in a 'communist spirit' involves active learners, and the array of educational institutions is presented as a procession from the kindergarten to primary and secondary schooling, and on to vocational training and folk education. Educational development is followed through the display of toys and tools, which demonstrate the shift from monotonous repetition and discipline to creativity and different hands-on experiences. Within art education, special attention is paid to folk art, which has great traditions and is cherished by the socialist state and highly subsidized. After a brief discussion of libraries, theatre, film and television, and after emphasizing the role of science in enhancing production and the scientific worldview of dialectical materialism as a vehicle of progress, the visitor arrives at the summarizing welfare thematic of the exhibition. It combines sports, social politics, health care and hygiene, characteristics of the domestic sphere and the rising standard of living. In a sense, it is a reminder of the 'package' the socialist state provides for its people. Everyone is catered for: "The socialist health care system takes care of a person from birth until old age in a planned manner" and "The 'poor-houses' of the past have been replaced by the wide network of social institutions". The new Attila József housing block appears as an embodiment of this modern welfare thematic.

Of the six exhibitions studied, this is the only one to contain two versions of the script, which makes it possible to detect certain nuances in the balancing of focus. The two major changes relate to the display of the 'counterrevolu-

tion'[204], while the other is the sixth room that discusses culture. The entire text pertaining to culture was requested to be revised and quotations from poems were to be included.[205] As a result, there is no sign of 'cultural revolution' so fiercely advocated in the earlier version. The banner that should have been hung here from the ceiling, declaring the need to 'take literacy even to the most remote village' does not appear in the final version of the script. In addition to these two major changes, the alterations are not notable. However, with the omission of 'less important images'[206], the focal points of the narrative become more perceivable. All in all, the difference between the two versions seems to rely on paring down the pathos, pompous or militant rhetoric, and secondly, on whittling down the inner polemic of the social stratification of Hungarian society, in terms class origin. Of course, the revision of the script meant also getting rid of less favourable expressions that, for example, may have had a comical effect, as "the voluntary popular education network grew like mushrooms". This is to say that numerous changes are due to the mere stylistic polishing of the exhibition text and do not as such entail ideological alterations. In any case, what can be seen as symptomatic is that in the newer version, the statistics no longer include the numbers of students of worker/peasant origin of all enrolled students. This is in part explained by the resolution passed in 1963 about social class-based enrollment in educational institutions.[207] This point comes up in the meeting on Jan 23, 1965. The numbers included in the exhibition are deemed misleading, since in 1964, worker-peasant origin was measured only during the first semester. It seems that because of this ambiguity, these figures have been left out.

Comparing the two versions of the script, a certain crystallization may be detected in terms of a more focused thematic. First, this entails a rhetorical emphasis on the metaphor of the 'road of socialism'. The second room opens with a photo with the caption "The road is free". Even without seeing the photo, it is clear that it includes strong symbolism relating to the 'post-liberation condition': the struggle for liberation is over and it is time to seize political power. Further, rhetorical questions have been added into the text, perhaps to highlight the sense of drama when there are decisions to be made. There are questions such as "Which road should the country take?" This strengthens the impression of there being a road on which the country is proceeding, with halts at certain crossroads. "To step in or to stay outside?" ponders a peasant in the caption of a photograph depicting a collective farm. At the same time, highlighting certain events as moments of decision gives the impression of voluntariness: this is the road individuals and collectives have taken because they have chosen to do so. Thus, the ultimate objective of the exhibition is to assure its visitor that the decisions that have been made, that is, the road that has been taken, were the cor-

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204 These will be dealt in more detail in chapter 4.1.

205 TAD-321-75 I. Memo from the Jan 30, 1965 meeting.

206 Although it is stated in the memo that less important images are to be left out, these images are not indicated. Memo of a meeting held with undersecretary comrade János Molnár on Jan 30, 1965. TAD-321-75 I.

207 Romsics 2005:462-463.

rect ones. Or if they now appear as digressions from the right road, even these dead ends have been worth it and have helped to put the nation back on course.

With the greater focus on the road thematic, changes were made in the material objects displayed. For instance, several authentic objects representing work competitions were eventually left out of the exhibition to be replaced by a display on the Kisbéri Virágzó Co-operative. Through the detailed display of one collective farm, the 'new face of the socialist village' was sketched more clearly. In a similar fashion, as the Kisbéri Virágzó Co-operative comes to represent *every* collective farm in Hungary, the Attila József housing block in the district of Ferencváros in Budapest became the icon for the state housing policy of the second five-year plan period. From the point of view of constructing this icon, the two versions of the script are revealing. What is evident in both versions is that the introduction of the second five-year plan is presented closely intertwined with the successes in state housing policy: "Instead of 250 000 flats, 300.000 shall be built in the period of the second five-year plan". However, whereas in the older version this statement is accompanied with a reference to a congress of the Council of Ministers, the newer version brings in a photograph of Attila József housing block (Figures 3 and 4). The older version also uses housing policy as a central element, but includes a number of photographs of several housing blocks and construction sites. In the newer version, the concept is clear and simple: there is a photo of the housing block and next to it a photo of the tearing down of the old barracks of Mária Valéria that stood on the same spot. As the tearing down of the old and the construction of the new was begun in 1957 in the years of political and economic consolidation of the Kádár regime, the housing block became the showcase of the efficient housing policy of the entire era.[208] What adds to the symbolic resonance of this change-over signifying socialist welfare and modernization is the names. Functioning originally as a temporary hospital and a barrack village for soldiers wounded during World War I, the site was named after the Habusburg princess Mária Valéria for her charity campaigns. Thus, when the place of 'Mária Valéria' was taken over by 'Attila József', it was not only a question of the old being replaced by the new, but also of getting rid of the reactionary remains of 'Royal Hungary'. The exhibition contains not only photos of the housing block but also an installation that symbolizes this takeover. This has been realized by displaying the wooden window-frame of the last torn-down house of the Mária Valéria barracks, with a photo of the newly built housing block as a back-drop. For the visitor, then, the old window-frame opens up a view to the new housing block. In other words, what the visitor is looking at is the re-framed life of the proletariat in a new housing block bearing the name of *the* proletarian poet. However, the view that opens up on the new is partially blocked: the lower left pane of the window has been reserved for a quote from Attila József's poem "A város peremén" (On the edge of the town), written in 1933. This partially blocked vision signifies the presence of the gloomy heritage of the reactionary past, and more precisely, the

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[208] Valuch 2006; N. Kósa, Judit "Egy lakótelep, amely kettő". Retrieved from: http://nol.hu/gyujtesek/lelohely/framed/6670

Horthy era – it is not by coincidence that the year the poem was written is included in the visual display. The poem and the year are a stain on the glass, partially impairing vision but something that should not be wiped out: the poem, in which an entire era "scarred with rust and stain" "weighs on the soul", becomes in this post-liberation frame a token of triumph. It is the darkest moment of history (however beautifully captured by the poet) that may be evoked to show the long road that has been taken.

What appears as symptomatic in the press release of the exhibition is its remark about illustrating land reform and 'democratization' with *authentic documents*. Indeed, there are several events or themes in the 1960 exhibition that were more told than shown, that is, they were discussed in the absence of physical objects or documents. In the 1965 exhibition, the tools - the axes, boundary marks and measures - with which the land was divided, were put on display, along with certificates of ownership. By the same token, this exhibition included the remains of the authentic 'spy balloons' that in the 1960 exhibition were only referred to. These instances may be seen as examples of the accumulation of the material heritage of the socialist era but at the time they is an important tool for verifying the narrative of liberation with authentic exhibits.

In addition to displaying more of the authentic, the 1965 exhibition also included something new in terms of display technique. The exhibition included two dioramas, one of which depicted the life of the partisans, while and the other gave detailed accounts of the liberating battles of the Soviet soldiers. Initially, there were plans to include a third diorama to illustrate the reconstruction of Budapest but this was not realized.[209] The use of dioramas was considered a novelty in the display of the labour movement, and it was also emphasized in the introductory info sheet of the exhibition used as a press release. Judging by the thematic of the dioramas, both planned and realized, it is clear that they are in line with the exhibition's emphasis on political history. In other words, investment in the display of these historical events highlight the focal points of the narrative of liberation: the coming of age story of the labour movement as a progressive force, the victories achieved through persistent resistance and the merging of the post-war reconstruction with the Communist seizure of power.

3.3 "Free Hungary is 25 years old"

The third nation-wide central exhibition was hosted by the Museum of Fine Arts. It was opened on February 14th, the day Budapest was liberated, and could be visited until May 15, 1970. The exhibition was mounted as a collaborative effort by curators from the Museum for the History of the Labour Movement and the Budapest History Museum, accompanied by writers, film-

[209] TAD-321-75 I. Memo of a meeting held with undersecretary comrade János Molnár on Jan 30, 1965.

makers and historians. It was produced by the Central Board of Directors for Museums (Központi Múzeumi Igazgatóság), and coordinated by the Ministry of Education. The material for the exhibition was compiled with the help of several museums, scientific institutions and social organizations. [210] The exhibition was designated to display ″the liberation of our country, the quarter-of-a-century development of Hungarian People's Democracy and our lives today together with our future perspectives.″[211] The outline of the exhibition emphasized the ′complex use′ of exhibition material ranging from the museum artefacts and ′objects of our contemporary daily life′ to printed documents and additional exhibitionary tools such as dioramas, scale models, televisions and slides. Several works of art had also been ordered for the occasion. The exhibition thematic of this central exhibition was condensed into a travelling exhibition bearing the same title. The travelling exhibition consisted of twenty-eight tableaux with no authentic objects, although copies of small flags, pins and plaquettes commemorating the unification of the workers' parties were displayed in one show-case. The objective of the travelling exhibition was "to show from where our country started from on its road of ascent, what kind of changes are marked by 1945 and which are the most important social, political and economic signposts that have led to the achievements of today″.[212] The travelling exhibitions were often replenished with local material by municipal museums, and circulated in schools, cultural centres and local museums.[213]

The central exhibition is divided into eight rooms. The first is dedicated to the display of the ′objects of oppression, exploitation and misery′ of the Horthy regime, the battles of the liberation and the governmental evolution of the People's Democracy. The section relating to the Horthy era is realized by displaying the reactionary, counter-revolutional material and the progressive material along opposing walls. As pointed out in the exhibition outline, the mode of display takes pains to show the ′historical superiority′ of the progressive forces by displaying its material in a controlled and well-composed manner, whereas the impression gained of the reactionary forces is one of ′sloppy messiness′. Again, the main thesis is that while oppression and terror dominated, communists and other labour movement groups opposed this oppression ′undergound′, in the realm of ′the other Hungary′. The spirit of resistance is adduced by numerous quotes from ′progressive′ poets: from Attila József there are 14 instances in which lines from his poems are quoted but there are also quotes from Zoltán Zelk and Miklós Radnóti. The ′sloppy′ Horthy regime and the ′disciplined′ but oppressed communists are spatially divided by a monument to the Hungarian fighters of the International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War. Because this large copper plate sculpture dominates the

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210 TAD 269-75. Esti, Béla : 'Tájékoztató a felszabadulás 25. évfordulóján megrendezésre kerülő központi kiállítás tervéről'

211 TAD 269-75. Esti, Béla

212 TAD 248-75 ′Huszonöt éves a Szabad Magyarország /Vándorkiállítás forgatókönyve/′

213 TAD-I-1163-78 Correspondense of curators of the Museum of the Labour Movement and the Municipal Museum of Szabolcs-Szatmár

exhibition space, the 1930s appears to be on the anti-fascists' side (Figure 5). At the same time, the statue serves as a prelude to the events of the liberation. Hungary is liberated by Hungarian and Soviet soldiers in unison, as shown by the display of Hungarian and Red Army uniforms side by side in a showcase. The provisional government is formed and it sees to land reform among its first tasks. However, the temporary government was not alone in its claims to land reform: a three-dimensional map shows the loci of the various movements that claimed to bring about land reform. Among the land reform tools of one village are documents of the land reformer peasant János Asztalos, who died a martyr's death in the counter-revolution. Thus, apart from giving land reform a face in the figure of János Asztalos, the display already hints at the counter-revolution that is to come, and to the way the counter-revolution disrupted the road of reform. With its reconstruction program, the Communist Party starts to lift the country from its ruins in a spirit of solidarity: Party organs in the countryside hurry to help the hungry workers of Budapest. Yet, "Battles were still going on in the country, while the democratic forces, led by the Communists, began to build a new people's Hungary in the liberated parts of the country". All Europe succumbs to the euphoria brought by the end of the war, and Hungary rises from the ashes.

The second room depicts the major historical events from 1945 to 1956, starting with reconstruction. Along with the rebuilding, production begins: the workers of Csepel initiate the labour competition, mines are recovered – all with the help of the Soviet Union, which donated 250 trucks to Hungary. Bridges, including the Kossuth Bridge, are re-built and the forint is introduced. There are struggles for political power that lead to the victory of the proletarian dictatorship and the unification of the two workers' parties. Production is prompted by re-organization and the plan-based economy, and nationalisation is greeted by the workers. The socialist state – as pronounced by the constitution – ensures good and encouraging working conditions for its people, in which solidarity may bloom: the capital city and the countryside mutually help each other. The worker knows that in socialism, he or she is not contributing to the past triumphs of the capitalists but is building the country for themselves, as the declaration of the third party congress of MKP states. The socialist state values and rewards hard work as the numerous displayed insignia, certificates and prizes show. Among the 'heroes of socialist work' is Ignác Pióker, the most famous Hungarian stahanovist. The documents of collectivisation and the planned economy and the rewarding of socialist work is presented intertwined. The socialist state ensures the right to rest, recreation and health care, offers daycare for children, trade union vacations and builds new schools – in other words, the state sees to the socialization and high-quality leisure of the workers. This peaceful development and welfare is protected by the alliance with the countries of the eastern bloc, realized by such agreements as the Warsaw Pact and COMECON. Together, the Party and the fraternal countries take a stand for world peace and fight inequality at home and abroad. Despite the progressive course and development, distortions in the Party lead-

ership eventually lead to an economic and political crisis. At the same time, the counter-revolutionary forces speed up the preparations for an open attack against the People's Democracy. The years 1948-1956 are in many respects problematic and contradictory, and some of these problems are compiled into a photomontage. Although the country now belongs to the people, as the title of the room claims, there are internal and external counter-revolutionaries who attempt to take the country away from them.

The counter-revolution of 1956 appears as an interlude, placed between the second and the third rooms. The 'counter-revolutionary revolt', brought about by the imperialists and the internal counter-revolutionaries, endangers not only national sovereignty but is an attack against the peace of all humanity. The atrocities and prominent counter-revolutionaries are shown, mainly organized around the diorama depicting Republic Square. Along with the counter-revolutionary flyers, imperialist propaganda tools such as Radio Free Europe and the Western German 'spy balloons' are empathetically present. In these circumstances, the crushing the counter-revolution with the help of the Red Army was absolutely necessary. To this end, the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government actively sought help from Soviet troops to fend off the armed intervention of Western capitalists and to avoid a longer civil war. In times of trouble, all socialist countries are eager to offer their "political, moral, and material help" to Hungary: a photomontage shows how the Soviet trade unions sent gifts to the workers of Hungary; the Czechslovakian people donate goods for kindergartens, Poles offer coal and the Bulgarians medicines. Throughout the events of the revolt, most people remained faithful to socialism and now join the Workers' Militia[214]. Consolidation begins in the leadership of János Kádár, who emphasizes that the power of the Party means the power of the people. The Republic Square diorama becomes visually challenged by a large, illuminated image of the parliament building.

The third room focuses on the years 1957-1962, characterized as the years of 'laying the foundation for socialism'. This foundation-laying is presented in tandem with the post-1956 consolidation under the title "The changing face of our home country". This is followed by an overview of the development of industry, agriculture, traffic and trade. Statistics of production and productivity in industry during the period 1938-1970 are accompanied by illuminated photos of a worker at the factory gate then and now: not only has productivity increased but the worker too has come a long way. His and her work is aided by modernization and automation, and housing blocks are now being constructed from ready-made elements. "Our country has turned from an agrarian-industrial country into an industrial-agrarian country with a developed heavy industry". Innovations not only aid work but they facilitate the ordinary lives of people. We live in a country in which plastic is used for making bone prosthe-

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214 The Workers' Militia was a post-1956 paramilitary formation that came to replace the earlier special police force ('karhatalom') in 1957. Though never deployed, it was a relatively large force of 60,000 members. See Romsics 2005:404.

ses and aluminum is used in an equally innovative and up-to-date way[215]. The "Friendship" oil pipe has been constructed to satisfy the constantly growing need for energy, since growth is constant, as the statistics and images of products show. As a planned economy, Hungary looks always into the future, and is constantly reminded that though progress is convincing, we are not quite there yet: improvement is always possible. Next to images of new Ikarus buses and modern railway wagons, there is an image of old, run-down wagons, with the caption: "Unfortunately, we must rely on these, too". This development is not solely tied to industrial production but pertains to agriculture, the socialist restructuring of which has a positive impact on Hungary's future development, as outlined by the 8th Party Congress. Whilst agriculture today is characterized by research and automation, the "average Hungarian village" may make use of the innovations of Hungarian research institutes. COMECON is not only the basis of energy supply but provides the primary market, as shown by the map of Europe, on which the COMECON countries are marked in the same colour. Although the COMECON and the Warsaw Pact are the primary frames for international cooperation, Hungary has diplomatic relations with numerous countries, as shown on the map, and is a member of influential international organizations beyond the Eastern bloc. The Party is not only the coordinator of production but also a motor for social development. The successfully introduced new economic mechanism[216] is accompanied by a modern social policy, which ensures welfare for everyone. The Party coordinates social and political organs in a way that everyone can feel involved. The success of the Party's policies is due to the fact that they are grounded upon scientific study. All of the action taken by the Party is directed by the ideas of Marxism-Leninism, as shown by the books by Lenin and the theoretical orders of the Party. As a result, "Hungarians eat better, dress more beautifully and live in a more cultivated manner than ever before". Although the Party looks into the future, it "cherishes the memory of past revolutionary battles with honour and gratitude". Along with the increase in wages, the amount of spare-time has increased, and tourism has become an important element of recreation. In their free time, workers have the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful scenery Hungary is full of, as the large illuminated images on the back wall show.

The fourth room is dedicated to 'Our capital Budapest' and it takes the visitor back to the siege of Budapest at the moment of liberation (Figure 6). The siege is depicted as drama, with forts as separate scenes. The Red Army proceeds dynamically and the fascists have no possibility to break through: their only success would be in prolonging the resistance and in this way *sacrificing*

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215 Here the exhibition script has left an empty slot for the display of a novel use of aluminum ("Az aluminium valamilyen újszerű alkalmazása"). The message is clear: Anything goes, as long as it is something up-to-date.

216 From January 1, 1968, an economic reform package was introduced to overcome the inefficiencies of central planning and make the economy more competitive with the help of market incentives. Although the scope of reform was reduced in the early 1970s, the new economic mechanism contributed to the dynamic growth of the Hungarian economy in ways that could be considered exceptional in the context of the COMECON countries. See Romsics 2005:440-442.

Budapest. The city is shown in ruins, with people marching with a "War is over" sign. The survivors bury their martyrs and the nameless victims, who ended up in the mass grave at the Fisherman's Bastion. In this scene of devastation, life is re-begun, and masses organize themselves to clean up the ruins, as artists of the National Theatre are shown doing. But the capital cannot be rebuilt without the countryside: barterers see to the extensive change of goods between the capital and the countryside[217]. By blowing up the bridges of Budapest, the fascists not only broke the organic whole that made up Buda and Pest but also tore apart the ties that bind the eastern and the western part of the country through Budapest. Soldiers of the Red Army are there to help with erecting temporary bridges. Eleven bridges of Budapest are present in the form of graphics, scale models and photos of their reconstruction. The array of scale models continues with traffic, housing, parks and squares, showing the future development of Budapest. A large electronic map shows the major construction tasks for the near future (Figure 7). Along with new buildings, the old are respected, and sites with historic value are preserved. The planning of urban areas is a complex process in which the 'harmful effects of the big city' need to be compensated with possibilities for recreation. Efforts are being made to make the image of the city 'more beautiful, more ceremonious and more cheerful'.

Together the fifth and the sixth rooms present the achievements of socialist culture and science. The cultural achievements are framed in terms of the objectives of the cultural revolution and the need to make the Hungarian people an educated people. Thus, everything that appears in this room is harnessed to serve political socialization. Schooling in Hungary has come a long way since the liberation: not only were the material surroundings insufficient as schools were in ruins, but educational reform was needed and the forces of reaction needed to be swept out of the classrooms, as the newspapers of the time proclaimed. The modern schooling system provides education on different levels, and along with the vocational schools, college and university education is showing a growing trend, with almost 1700 students studying abroad (mainly in the Soviet Union, as the image of the Lomonosov Moscow State University suggests). In addition to formal education, popular education is active in various cultural centres where not only artists and the audience are brought together, but also one's own abilities are tried out in drama clubs and choirs. The cultural centres are also important places for the popularization of science. The development of mass communication has been vast, and there are more books, newspapers and newscasts available than ever before, not to mention the immense growth in the spectator audience of the television. A number of television sets are displayed, from the first experiments to the newest big-screen types. Photos provide glimpses behind the scenes of radio and television broad-

217 As Lajos Burget (2008: 37-38) points out, the term barterer ('batyúzó) gained a new meaning in the aftermath of the Second World War, to denote the bartering between the countryside and the capital. Since in Budapest there was a shortage of virtually everything, bartering meant prospects for a good income for many people from the countryside.

casting work, and the displays contain letter-boxes for visitors to give feedback on the television and radio programs. Also, the museums and the libraries cater for the needs of those who wish to educate themselves. An array of books from Hungary, other socialist countries and from western progressive writers is displayed, as if to challenge the visitor. Yet, not nearly everyone seizes the opportunity: "Today, approximately two million people read. Is this a lot? Yes, since in 1945 not even 100,000 read. Yet, is this a lot? No, it is very little, since there are ten million of us. We still have things to achieve." This is to say that despite our great achievements, we are *not quite there* yet. However, the 25 years of culture has been a rich one, also in terms of cinema and theatre. A selection of still-shots of films is shown, along with the prizes that films have won. When the country was liberated, cinema was there: there is a photo of the first screening after the liberation in Debrecen. "In the years after liberation, tens of thousands of workers and peasants became theatre-goers". Puppets from popular productions are displayed along with illuminated images of popular actors and actresses, whose performance may be heard by lifting the receiver of the telephone beside the image. The exchange between the capital city and the countryside is brought up again, now in relation to cultural policy. A map of Hungary with lights shows the places Déryné Theatre has visited.[218] The music of liberated Hungary is classical music with integrated folk elements represented by Bartók and Kodály, who are both present in the form of large images. This blend of 'high' and 'folk' characterizes the fine arts, too. Next to photos of artists in their workshops there is an interior with folk art furniture and other folk art objects.

The sixth room is designed to present the achievements of science and technology. Hungary is a modern state with a great deal of cutting-edge research and world-famous inventions. Hungarian science boasts extensive international relations, coordinated by the Academy of Sciences. The room presents an array of scientific applications from air condensation devices to halogen lamps and the use of plastics. Among the numerous scale models is the nuclear reactor of Budapest Polytechnic, which is used for educational purposes. While uranium oxide is imported from the Soviet Union, Hungary is self-sufficient in the expertise required for the functioning of the reactor. Among the unique outcomes of scientific expertise are world-famous inventions such as the grinding machine by József Pál, a worker in the Csepel machine tool factory[219] and the worldwide patent product, the revolving plough, invented by István Szabó. The

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218 Állami Déryné Színház was established in 1951 by a decree, and it was designed to cater for the needs of rural theatre audiences who fell outside the visiting productions of the "country towns". From its 11 "country centres", the company travelled throughout the country. Magyar Színházművészeti Lexicon http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02139/html/sz01/91.html 4.3.2009

219 It is not by coincidence that József Pál is reported to be a worker at the Csepel factories. This is how the display of Kossuth Prize-winning invention evokes the worker hero myth of the 'workers of Csepel'.

mode of display combines authentic objects, scale models, images and film especially designed for the exhibition.[220]

The seventh room, "Our youth", highlights the life-world and role of young people in Hungarian society. It emphasizes the contribution of young people to the construction of socialism. The room is characterised as the most cheerful and loudest hall in the exhibition, illuminated with the brightest lights. The loudness of the room derives from the music that is being played, combining socialist movement songs and hits from the last 25 years. Skimming through the material of this room it becomes clear that socialist youth is first and foremost organized youth. Most attention is devoted to the history of the youth movement, of which the pioneer movement is the most dominant. Apart from the pioneer uniforms put on display, the pioneers' presence in the exhibition is centered on the Pioneer Railway[221] (Figure 8.). In the exhibition, the Railway is used to introduce a historicizing perspective: the display shows three railway pioneers from 1948 accompanied with portraits and biographical details of the same people today. A similar 'then and now' approach extends not only to the position of youth in the time of liberation but also during the Horthy era: images of today's youth are placed next to sepia photos of children and young people of the 1930s. In addition to pioneers, the Hungarian Youth Communist League (KISZ) is given much attention. Founded in March 1957, KISZ was the only youth organization in post-1956 Hungary, and claimed to represent all the country's youth and provide a political education for its members, who were 14-26 years of age. A photomontage of the life of KISZ members shows that the organization is everywhere, from ceremonious congresses to housing blocks, and as patrons of the construction of the M7 motorway and the open air museum in Szentendre. KISZ members take part in construction camps and through their work they manifest fidelity and solidarity to the cause of socialism. Further, the display suggests a link between the youth league, sports and the army. In other words, the future optimism, dynamism and physical strength of the young are a valuable contribution to the overall march towards communism. In socialism, the work of the old and the young alike is valued: the show-cases position fine pieces of students' work but also works made by nursery children as treasures to be admired.

The last room, titled "This is how we live", is designated to provide glimpses into everyday problems in a humorous, light-hearted manner, by using caricatures, many of which derive from the most prominent satirical maga-

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220 This multimedia installation of the science and technology room is discussed in more detail in 4.2.

221 Built during the years 1948-1951, this 11-km railway was an important pedagogical tool in socialism. Obviously not without propagandistic aims, the goal was to educate young people, 10-14 years of age, to take on responsibility and operate the railway traffic relatively independently, under the supervision of adults. Only good pupils qualified, and being accepted was considered an honour. Thus, the Pioneer Railway functioned as a show-case for successful political socialization. The railway is still in fuction, now under the name the Child Railway, and several station names referring to the pioneer movement have been changed.

zine of the time, the *Ludas Matyi*[222]. In the display, the visitor can inspect some three hundred drawings, presented in "humour bars", which can be viewed from a seated position under the glass surface of the counter. The focus is on contemporary life, and thus encompasses many spheres: the home and family, love, work, traffic, social life, culture, recreation, sports and travel and tourism. Although the focus is on the present moment, the past ("This is how we lived") and the future ("This is how we will live") are also touched upon. Whilst the thematic dealing with the past sheds light on the 'exaggerations' of the 1950s from today's perspective, the future-related thematic presents possible future cures for certain human weaknesses, for instance with the help of automats and other gadgets. As interesting as this use of grotesque humour in the discussion of current problems undoubtedly is, a more detailed analysis is impossible, since the one-page script, while giving the thematic make-up, does not list the actual contents. Nor is there any photo documentation available.[223]

In terms of the 'road to socialism', the 1970 exhibition is characterized by the further crystallization of important mileposts. What earlier was expressed in words is now compressed into objects or images. Whereas the earlier exhibitions included written accounts of the importance of the Hungarian anti-fascist partisans, here it is all done with objects. There are a few banners and certificates, a memorial emblem for the battles of Madrid and the dagger Máté Zalka received from Lenin. In the second room, the thematic crystallization leads to thematic chunking, as a result of which the room is dominated by three large-sized, illuminated slides: the first one shows reconstruction, the second a crowd of people at the time of the unification of the two parties and the third depicts collectivization. Thus, these three elements – the socialist rebirth of the country, the Communist seizure of power and the re-organization of the economy and ownership – are singled out as the most decisive milestones on the road to socialism. Along with this crystallization of ideas being turned into objects, new elements appear. The 1970 exhibition displays a great number of products as consumer items. Another striking factor is the heavy investment in

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222 A weekly published satirical magazine in the years 1945-1993, the *Ludas Matyi* represented 'official' humour and satire during the socialist period. Though mainly political in character, the magazine featured a broad thematic, which made it popular also among those less interested in political issues. The central government used the magazine for propagandistic purposes as it considered humour and satire useful tools for popularizing certain issues and raising consciousness. The magazine, famous especially for its caricatures, can be considered part of the overall propaganda machinery but as such a problematic one, since – thoughj it was to contain Marxist self-criticism – it was to refrain from ridiculing the achievements of the socialist system. Despite its fidelity to the Party, it was reproved by political leaders on several occasions. For an overview of the 1950s thematic of the magazine, see Takács 2003.

223 When asked about the documentation on the caricatures, one of my informants made it clear that it is no co-incidence that no material traces of the actual images can be found in the archives: "Azért hülyék nem voltunk", was his response, with a smile. This is not surprising, since the caricatures touched upon several sensitive issues that could be interpreted as criticism, in however subtle a way they they might be presented to the visitor. In other words, it seems that what was exhibitable in the temporary symbolic space of the museum in 1970, was better left with no permanent trace in the historical record.

youth, a highlighted theme filling an entire room. In terms of display technique, the 1970 exhibition makes extensive use of film in a new manner, as a narrative tool that interacts with the displayed material. However, the exhibition seems to be plagued by an inherent tension and inconsistency in terms of envisioning the *entire* road of socialism up to the present. As pointed out in Károly Vörös's criticism, the mode of display shifts from a historicizing presentation to a sociographical presentation from 1956 onwards. Vörös sees the rich historical image that dominates the beginning of the exhibition fading into a static, continuous present, especially with the display of most recent history, the 1960s.[224]

In effect, if we look at each exhibition in terms of versatility, it is the 1970 exhibition that shows 'the liberation repertoire' in its full-fledged form. Though the coming-of-age story of the progressive forces is more condensed than in the earlier exhibitions, it is *not* parcelled into carefully selected signs, as in the last two exhibitions that manifest a more focused and compressed version of the coming-of-age and achievement display. At the same time, the 1970 exhibition manifests a forceful opening up towards youth culture and contains symptoms of the emerging consumer society in the form of consumer goods. While it lays emphasis on political history and manifests vigilance in its visual appearance, it nevertheless incorporates humour and witty installations that draw attention to the system's shortcomings and compromises.

3.4 "The Liberation and the 30 years of development in the life of Budapest"

This exhibition took place in the Castle Museum of the Budapest History Museum, and it was scheduled to be opened on the anniversary of the liberation of Budapest. The exhibition could be visited from the 13th of February until the 15th of May, 1975. It is unclear whether this exhibition was designed to be a central, nation-wide exhibition, along the lines of those made or coordinated by the Museum of History of the Labour Movement, but in the press release it is 'marketed' as an exhibition that has been made not only for the people of Budapest but for the whole country, since "Budapest is the capital of each and every citizen". As discussed earlier, the Museum of History of the Labour Movement was not involved in the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of liberation. The most probable reason for this is that the curators of the Museum of History of the Labour Movement were occupied by the planning of the new permanent exhibition, opened to the public in 1977.

The first four-page synopsis of the thematic script of the exhibition was written by the museum director in the beginning of September, 1974, but the concrete work seems to have begun in January, 1975. The statistics had to be prepared for graphic design, the models transported to the museum, where they were checked and repaired if needed, and carpentry work had to be done

[224] Vörös 1970: 78-82.

for the respective Hungarian and Soviet parts of the exhibition. The photos had to be selected and prepared: "From the 18th of January onwards, all the photographers of the museum are not allowed to work on anything else but this exhibition". The summarizing texts had to be made and placed in the exhibition by January 20. The exhibition was to be erected from January 30 to February 10. These were followed by the final touches: cleaning up, press conference on the 12th and finally the opening of the exhibition on the 13th of February, the anniversary of the liberation of Budapest.[225] The opening ceremony required preparations; the extension of the museum cloakroom and the placing of loudspeakers in the halls and hallways. The making of the exhibition mobilized a great many workers in factories and firms, and not only as visitors who were brought into the museum. On several instances, social brigades took part in the erection of the exhibitions, especially in the logistic tasks. Within the framework of a 'socialist agreement' agreed upon by the Budapest History Museum and the 'Petőfi Sándor Socialist Brigade' of Tempo co-op, the members of the brigade contributed a total of 100 hours of work in the form of "moving materials" for the exhibition. For this work, the members and their families were invited to visit several museums of Budapest free of charge and were given exhibition catalogues.[226]

The opening ceremony, planned for 200 guests, was held on the 13th of February at 11 a.m. The guests arriving at the museum met a ceremonious line-up of 180 pioneers that paved the way from the main entrance hall to "Camara hall". The opening speech was given by Mrs. András Király, secretary of Budapest Party Committee, and was followed by a banquet catered by the Országház restaurant in the "Gothic" and "Renaissance hall". Throughout the event, five cleaners saw to the cleanliness of the halls.

While its jubilee character required the 'honoration of the festive occasion', museum curators were aware that these expectations were problematic in the sense that the rigid anniversary framework was inclined to produce similar kind of displays time after time. In the thematic script of the 1975 exhibition, the director of the Budapest History Museum points out that the same material on which the exhibitions of the 10th, 15th, 20th and 25th anniversary were based simply cannot be displayed again, since it has been wrung dry before Hungarian audiences.[227] According to the initial idea, the 1975 exhibition was to focus entirely on the Soviet viewpoint on the liberation. For this, Budapest History Museum borrowed material from the Soviet Museum of Military History, on which an exhibition titled "This is how the people of the Soviet Union saw the liberation of Budapest" had been based. Thus, the exhibition was to narrow its focus to the capital city and to the historical events of the liberation itself from an exclusively Soviet point of view. The three thematic units were planned to be the preparations of the Soviet soldiers for the liberation of Hungary, the siege of

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225 BTM Adattár M.100-79 'Munkaütemterv' (Work schedule)
226 BTM Adattár M.100-79 "30 éves évforduló" Szocialista szerződés
227 BTM Adattár M.100-79 Miklós Horváth in the thematic script of the exhibition, dated Sept. 6, 1974.

Budapest and the battles fought over the liberation of the capital city, and the help provided by Soviet troops in the reconstruction of Budapest. The core material to be displayed consisted of flyers, Soviet printed media, uniforms of prominent military figures, photos and maps of important battles and honours and insignia of the units that took part in the siege of Budapest, including photos of soldiers who had been appointed 'Hero of the Soviet Union'. However, this Soviet focus exhibition was eventually accompanied by another exhibition featuring 'the general development of Budapest', propped up with models, photos, maps, plans, graphic figures and industrial products.[228] The three main thematic units present Budapest in ruins, reconstruction, and urban planning and development. Eventually, this two-fold exhibition structure was incorporated into one exhibition under the title "The liberation and 30-year-development of Budapest". Thus, apart from the new viewpoint represented by the Soviet soldiers, the overall exhibition turned out to be a rather traditional liberation exhibition, reciting a variety of modern housing-blocks, and public buildings ranging from the party headquarters to the National Theatre and Circus. This is how the 30th jubilee exhibition was made into yet another variation of the "achievements of socialism" theme, broken down into thematic blocks of tourism, sports and leisure, industry, commerce, traffic, healthcare and public services but also the preservation of monuments.

The first part of the exhibition is designated to commemorate the liberation of Budapest, through the evocation of the city in ruins. The heroic fighting of the Soviet troops also had international importance, as it speeded up the withdrawal of the fascist German troops from Yugoslavia. The introductory series of images shows the decisive moments of the battle in October and November of 1944, when the Ukrainian forces were able to break through the line of resistance between the Danube and the Tiszsa River. Following this decisive turn, the Soviet forces progressed towards the capital city. At this point, there were still hopes that the Soviet troops would soon occupy Budapest but the Germans constantly reinforced their defence, thus prolonging the siege, which evolved into one of the fiercest street battles of the Second World War. The enemy took advantage of the 'underground infrastructure' of Budapest, including the sewage system and basements. The Ukrainian commanders did all in their power to prevent unnecessary blood-shed and save the historical monuments of Budapest. This is why they demanded the surrender of the enemy, but the Germans rejected the humane conditions proposed by the Soviets. The German command rejected the ultimatum and shot both truce bearers, Ostapeko and Steinmetz. "The exhibition enshrines Captain Steinmetz's coat, in which he heroically died for the sake of the Hungarians"[229] In addition, the exhibition commemorates the heroic Soviet soldiers by displaying the flag of the four combat units that fought in Budapest and were awarded the honour "Buda-

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228 BTM M.100-79 'Budapest 30 éve" című kiállítás tématerve /Budapest általános fejlődése/'

229 Horváth 1975: 4.

pest". The Russian posters, documents, photos by Soviet correspondents and the drawings attached to the front-line journals evoke these historical events.

The second part of the exhibition shows the changes in and development of the city and its physical appearance. The immense damage required arduous work: of the 300 000 flats, 15 000 were totally destroyed and 70 000 severely damaged. All seven bridges over the Danube had been broken, and 75 per cent of the city's industrial establishments were damaged. "As far as the clearing up of the ruins is concerned, *it is enough to remember* the volume of refuse that filled up the 3-5m deep, one kilometer long and 100-200 meters wide area in Vérmező, as the Castle was cleared from the discarded matter.[230] Photos and statistics of broken and reconstructed bridges are shown as the 'miraculous achievement' of reconstruction "the building of which first took a century for our predecessors to make."[231]

In pace with reconstruction, the Communist Party introduced the concept of the planned economy in the autumn of 1946, with the aim of creating 'a modern socialist capital city' and to deal with the 'cumbersome legacy of the past', the heterogeneous development of the city in terms of housing standards, public utilities and visual impact. A city can become a real home and not merely a place for living, only if the needs of the inhabitants are seen to in a complex manner on a day-to-day basis. Daycare, primary schools and universities and polytechnics are briefly mentioned. Of the cultural institutions, the 'museum complexes' of Buda Castle and the construction of the National Theatre in the Vajdahunyadi Castle area are mentioned, the last of which is to be realized "in the course of the forthcoming five-year plans". In addition, the preservation and conservation of numerous 'valuable but in the past less valued' monuments of the capital is mentioned as a 'cultural task'. The network of grocery stores and supermarkets is an important factor in catering to the daily needs of housing block dwellers. The modernization of health care is the most important task among the various social and political changes – and it is to be dealt with in the forthcoming five-year plans. Interestingly enough, environmental protection is mentioned for the first time in the liberation exhibitions as "inseparable from health care today"[232], and it is discussed in relation to city planning and the establishment of green areas and playgrounds. The Népstádion and other sports facilities are to be regarded as "the creations of our era"[233]. The last memories of war are being eradicated from the streets by the 'gap tooth constructions' that strongly affect the city's image. The exhibition includes a host of statistics and figures, from the coverage of public utilities, electrification and transport to housing, health care and employment in industry. There is very little that would refer to culture or life-style: the development of museums, theatres and libraries are mentioned, while the growth of consumption reflecting a higher standard of living is hinted at by presenting figures on such items as vacuum-

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230 Horváth 1975:8.
231 ibid.
232 Horváth 1975: 20.
233 Horváth 1975: 21.

cleaners, refrigerators, record players and cars. Also, the growth of trade is demonstrated with numbers and percentages. The three categories chosen are groceries, clothing and catering, which all show growth of at least 150 percent between 1960 and 1974. In the exhibition, models of almost 30 public monuments are put on display. Their display was seen as necessary, not only because they were considered significant works of art and occupied central spots in the capital, but also because through them it was possible to gain a view at the way public monuments shaped the city and were part of the 'art-politics'[234]. Half of the models could be found in the collections of the museum and another half was to be purchased from the artists.

The second part of the exhibition manifests a clear future orientation: the plan-driven development encompasses perspectives stretching to the turn of the century. The pace and volume of development is bench-marked from one five-year plan to the next. The visitor may acquaint himself with the future development of green areas, parks, playgrounds and sports facilities. As the leaflet points out, the exhibition provides an opportunity to evoke the memories of Budapest thirty years ago but at the same time it gives an overview of the achievements sofar and glimpses of development to come. The exhibition displays a large, wood-carved model that shows Budapest at the turn of the millennium, while cultural establishments are being built 'for the next century'. Housing policy is given a great deal of attention, and the exhibition catalogue gives the impression that the exhibition is an expo for the popularization of the five-year plans. Most of the scale models displayed in the exhibition are loans from IPARTERV (The Industrial Buildings Consulting Co.), a company founded by the state in 1948 to care for the design and realization of establishments related to the country's industrialization. Of the total of 17 models by IPARTERV, 14 represent projects that have been realized while three "have *not yet* been realized"[235]. What is characteristic of the exhibition as a whole is its emphasis on the controllability of development. Planned economy, planned culture and planned social policy results in controllable development that in visual displays appears as visual controllability.

Beyond this visual controllability, however, lies the familiar tension between the coming-of-age story and the recitation of achievements that uses the 'then and now' approach. According to the exhibition catalogue, the main message of the exhibition is the way the 'fighting and creating' Soviet artists saw the people of Budapest during the battles for liberation and immediately after them. While the exhibition catalogue undoubtedly reflects the focal point of the historical moment of liberation – all the images (drawings and photos) included in the catalogue are from the years 1944-1945 – the wealth of scale models, monuments and photos as establishments of the city's 30-year-development seems to be in contradiction in relation to the declared focus of the exhibition. The exhibition is thus grounded upon the tension of its two parts: the immediacy of Budapest in ruins during the war and right after liberation, and an ac-

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234 ibid.

235 BTM M100-79 A list of models to be borrowed from firms, compiled by Imre Tóth

count of what we have come to witness ever since, in the form of a multitude of buildings, projects and monuments that testify to the dynamic development of the city. The emphasis is on the image and visual impact of Budapest, first the broken silhouette of the city amidst smoke and fog, then the vast changes due to the comprehensive and controlled plan-based construction, and closing with the vision of Budapest as a modern metropolis around 2000, that is, as far as the plans can 'see'. Everything seems to be about physical surroundings that hint at growing welfare, but in the focus on the controllability of plan-based development very little in presented about people and their day-to-day lives in these surroundings. Of all the six exhibitions discussed, this one is closest to being a pure 'achievement exhibition' in a sense that it appears as a list of concrete, material projects with hardly any reference to life-style or culture.

With hindsight, what appears as baffling for me as a reader-visitor is the tension of the monumental military display and the striving for immediacy and intimacy represented by the Soviet 'soldier-artists'. The images of Soviet soldiers painting or drawing details of Budapest, fixing their gaze at certain spots and measuring distances, run like motif through the large, gloomy images of a city in ruins. Upon entering, the visitor is greeted by the figure of Captain Steinmetz, who is running and holding up both hands and telling the fascist troops to surrender. With the large images of the ruins behind his back, he seems to be escaping the war scene, approaching the visitor. Next to him, there is a slogan on the wall declaring that the liberation on the 4th of April, 1945 equals a new national independence and a new homecoming for the Hungarian people. The arms and uniforms displayed in X-shaped glass-cases contribute to the rigid atmosphere, along with the stiff and heavy Soviet military flags made of velvet. Indeed, this display shows in concrete terms that in war-ravaged Budapest, a new life began under the flags of the Red Army. Despite its stiffness, the display aquires rhythm through the short walls it deploys that stretch towards the centre of the hall. Another tension again: being surrounded by so many monuments (or copies of them) from public squares, the visitor may easily be assailed by a feeling of being out in the open, or part of a panopticon rather, but at the same time, the walls form shelters in which the visitor can hide from the panoptic vision (maybe captain Steinmetz is heading for one of these shelters, too). Broken bridges are followed by reconstructed ones that arch over Buda and Pest. A large image of Brezsnev and Kádár talking to each other is placed in between large images of crowds, so that it seems as if these two leaders were backed up and standing in front of masses. There are buildings as images on the walls and models in showcases, there are housing blocks with an endless number of windows. There are huge photos of public works: the city has been re-connected through thousands of channels, pipelines and cables.

In the row of exhibitions, especially after the rich, innovative and at times humorous 1970 exhibition, the 1975 exhibition appears grave and dogmatic. It would be tempting to look for possible reasons for this in the tenser political climate of the early 1970s: the deteriorating economy, the reintroduction of centralization, the spirit of pessimism created by the oil crisis, the cautiousness

which led to the slowing down of the new economic mechanism. Although the overall political context undoubtedly affected the exhibition, a more likely explanation is simply that the exhibition was created by another group of curators and that the area of expertise of the author of the script, Miklós Horváth, was military history. While sharing fewer features with the other exhibitions, the 1975 exhibition nevertheless appears as a variation of the same narrative of liberation, manifesting the duality of a coming-of-age story and an show of achievements.

Although the Museum of Labour Movement did not contribute to the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the liberation, it may be a good idea to take a quick look at the new permanent exhibition, since it discusses the same post-liberation period as the temporary liberation exhibition. The third part of the new permanent exhibition of the Museum of Labour Movement, opened in 1977, mostly treated national history and the history of the labour movement as an almost inseparable entity. The exhibition lays great emphasis on the achievements of socialism, but at the same time is careful to point out the distortions within the Party and the government line in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As with the temporary jubilee exhibitions, thematic chunking is favoured instead of a rigid chronological presentation. This choice is greeted by one of the auditors of the exhibitions, since it appears as reassuring: this is a way to highlight earlier achievements despite the mistakes that were made. Thematic chunking was thus applied to emphasize progress and continuity, to point to aspects or moments which subsequent development could build on.[236]

3.5 "Art and society 1945-1980"

The fifth central liberation exhibition was opened by Cultural Minister Imre Pozsgay on March 19 at noon in the Kunsthalle. The exhibition was designed to be a double commemoration, since apart from the liberation, it celebrated the 12th Party Congress of the MSZMP. Originally, the exhibition was scheduled to be closed down on the 20th of April, but due to its popularity the display was extended by two weeks until May 3, 1980.[237] The exhibition divided the period of socialism into four sub-periods so that the first room focused on the years 1944-1948, the second on 1949-1962, the third on 1962 –1975 and the fourth on the years 1975-1980. As a whole, the mode of display was an unconventional one, not only in the context of liberation exhibitions but in the context of Hungarian museology, owing to the extent to which it realized 'the principle of complexity' in etching the display of historical documents and elements of visual culture[238] (Figure 11.). The basic idea was to create a 'unified image' of

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236 TAD-I—1071-77 Habuda Miklós: 'Lektori vélemény a Magyar Munkásmozgalmi Múzeum állandó kiállítasa'

237 MTI i/kp/rj/ dg di April 18, 1980 'raádás két hét a művészet és társadalom kiállításon'

238 Fodor 1980.

history and art that the visitor receives as a 'visual experience of the past 35 years'.[239] This was achieved by dividing the exhibition space into three vertical zones each of which featured different kinds of display material: the uppermost zone was made up of posters, photos and texts, while the middle zone consisted of paintings, graphics, ceramics and textiles and the like, whereas the lowest zone was reserved for different kinds of artefacts, ranging from industrial products and household appliances to sculpture (cf. Figure 9.).

If the 1975 exhibition drew on the power of the five-year plans and planned economy, this exhibition is flooded by party congress decrees all the way through. The first room opens with a quote from the MKP proposal about the prospects for a 'new Hungarian resurrection', provided that each and every honest Hungarian joins the Hungarian National Independence Front[240]. Frequently, mere indications are given, for instance in the form of dates. One of these is the day the "liberating" Soviet troops crossed the Hungarian border, 23 September, 1944. Photos of the Soviet troops on the Great Plain are shown in the company of photos of the Temporary National Assembly in Debrecen and the first congress of the KMP in newly liberated Budapest. Obviously, this is the visual equivalent of the recurring sentence: "Battles were still going on in the country, while the democratic forces, led by the communists, began to build a new people's Hungary in the liberated parts of the country". The damages caused by the war is evoked through a photomontage of Budapest in ruins; the dire straits of the national economy is evoked through photos of inflated money being swept out, a broom and old bank notes. As the photo of a demonstration at Heroes' Square testifies, the people gave their support to the Leftist Bloc's demands. The year 1948 is highlighted: this is when the two workers' parties merged, which marked the victory of the socialist revolution. The year 1948 is also the year of the socialist constitution, on the basis of which the Party included the demanded rights in its social policy: equal wages, a 48-hour working week, and the protection of women and children as members of the labour force. What is noteworthy is how the re-structuring of the economy and nationalisation are merely indicated by a display of newspaper articles, certificates and telegrams in a showcase, next to the unification congress material. Through the window of the interior evoking the years 1947-48 opens up a view of the city in ruins.

The second room opens with industrial growth driven by the five-year plan with its power plant and heavy industry. Collective farms, with images of irrigation and tractors, follow suit, including statistics on the changes in land ownership. Interestingly enough, the visual display of '56 focuses solely on the consolidation of socialist rule, signified by the renewed party (MSZMP), the Communist Youth League and the Workers' Militia and a gathering on the First of May. The revolt is present only in the form of the term 'victory over the

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239 Fodor 1980: 45.

240 The Hungarian National Independece Front was an alliance of five parties whose goal was to enhance the political change-over in the post-war situation.

counter-revolutionary attack", quoted from a party programme declaration. As proclaimed by the 7th Party Congress, Hungary has laid down the foundation of socialism, has re-structured its agricultural production and is ready to step in into the 'era of the full construction of socialism'. To show the 'achievements of our people's creative work' are images of the new Elisabeth Bridge, the Attila József housing block and the self-service system that has been introduced into canteens. However, the main precondition for a developed socialist economy is the educated, self-conscious worker, who not only takes his or her share in production but also actively participates in the steering of the course of society. While the socialist brigades stand for this steering and organization, the nuclear reactor of the technical university and the museum centre in Buda Castle have been included as educational items. The interior with its module-based and versitile "Varia" furniture looks over a modern housing block. This is what Hungary looks like inside; outside, in the arenas of international politics, Hungary is a state with vast diplomatic relations and numerous trade partners, and it carries on its international politics in a spirit of 'peaceful co-existence' and proletarian internationalism (Figure 12.). What is more, Hungary is a Central-European nation boasting a 1000-year history, as declared by János Kádár at the Helsinki Summit in 1975.[241] With this reference to the Helsinki Conference, the exhibition takes a quantum leap from the years 1949-1962 to 1975. This technique is characteristic of the exhibition as a whole: quotes from Congress Decrees are used as the authoritative voice that comments on the progress of the country. From this it follows that primacy is given to the phenomena commented on, not the actual event of evaluation. Occasionally, using the congress declarations as a legitimating authoritative voice results in curious cross-referencing and self-legitimation, as in the case of the quote from the 11th Party Congress, according to which the Congress as the 'highest forum of the Party' approves and affirms the Party's policy, which is accompanied by images of representatives at the Party Congress.

The welfare thematic of the exhibition is concentrated in the third room, that is, the period 1962 –1975. The room opens with a quote from the 9th Party Congress, according to which "Our people eat better , dress more beautifully and live in a more cultivated way than even before". This means items related to recreation and consumption, such as restaurants, fashion, stores and shops. Apart from consumption, welfare means enhanced social security, and equally importantly, a differentiated social policy for special groups such as women[242] and youth. With youth, political socialization and a Marxist-Leninist outlook on life is emphasized, with a special emphasis on the role of the socialist brigades.

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241 János Kádár was in charge of the Hungarian delegation for the signing of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Helsinki on 1 August 1975. In his speech at the closing session he rather unexpectedly emphasized the history and Central-European roots of the Hungarian people and made a reference to the Trianon Peace Treaty – something that was out of line with the spirit of proletarian internationalism. For an evaluation of the impact of Kádár's speech, see Gough 2006:195-205.

242 Questions related to women's representation and the construction of gender, including the gendering of space, is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.3.

In line with Kádár's speech in Helsinki, the rights of ethnic minorities appear as one image in a photomontage that thematizes aspects of education and social policy. A new welfare photomontage follows suit, including images of city and village, interiors of homes, department stores, roads, transport and markets, accompanied by a Congress decree on the importance of furthering the socialist relations of distribution in order to gain a higher standard of living. Finally, the growing mobility of people is addressed: the display unit shows the pages of the completely filled passport of a Hungarian citizen. Congress quotes emphasize the importance of tourism both for Hungarians travelling abroad and for tourists arriving from capitalist countries, who should obtain a realistic image of the country. Hotels, camping areas, border stations and tourists are shown at famous spots in the capital city.

The fourth room opens with a quote from the MSZMP guidelines announcing that the construction of a developed socialist society has become a 'national program'. Despite the difficulties of the past five years for the people and the Party alike, there have been notable achievements. What is more, these achievements are about to continue: the standard of living, net income and consumption will also rise in the course of the 5th five-year plan, and the supply and range of goods shall widen, as declared by the 12th Party Congress. Marketplaces, old people's homes, leisure facilities and sports centres are under construction. Along with the harmonization of the main sectors of the domestic economy, cooperation, alliances and friendship between the countries of the 'socialist community' is highlighted: the new power-line in Albertirsa is realized as a joint project and Polish workers build a sugar factory on the Great Plain. Well functioning economic relations are a joint responsibility of the socialist bloc: Leonid Brezhnev is shown on his visit to Budapest.[243] While emphasizing freedom and independence as a socialist country, the display applies visual reminders, such as the image of Brezhnev, to express loyalty towards the Soviet Union and the entire socialist bloc. This is how the exhibition works to *show one's place:* on the level of textual rhetoric it emphasizes freedom and choice but includes visual markers that hint at restrictions and compromise. A similar ambivalence is manifested in a Party Congress quote addressing the more consistent application of cultural policy. While the freedom of artistic creation is highlighted, the priority of works that address topical social issues or 'reflect reality' leaves no doubts about what kind of artistic expression is wanted and supported. Finally, the exhibition takes the visitor to the beginning. Or rather, not to the moment of liberation itself, but the zest of reconstruction, embodied by a large-sized image of the Kossuth Bridge, the first permanent bridge arching over the Danube.

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[243] The inclusion of the image of Brezhnev may be seen as a reference to the Brezhnev Doctrine, the Soviet foreign policy that emphasized sovereignty and the international obligations among socialist countries. Outlined in the autumn of 1968, one of its tasks was retrospectively to justify the former Soviet military interventions, most importantly the invasion of Czechoslovakia earlier that year, but also of Hungary in 1956.

In the 1980 exhibition, the road to socialism does not require the prelude of the anti-Fascist struggle during the Horthy era. Neither does it need martyrs or the display of enemy aggression. The narrative of liberation begins at the moment of liberation (or the Soviet troops entering the country). Sacrifices are primarily economic in nature, and instead of losses, the dynamic spirit of reconstruction is highlighted. The road to socialism is the road to welfare in a modern and independent socialist state. However, independence in socialism also means interdependence and solidarity within the socialist bloc; but in return, this community provides economic stability and security. At the same time, this is the first liberation exhibition that uses the words ′national′ and ′citizenship′ – and both of them several times. As might be expected in a commemorative exhibition of this kind, the exhibition lays emphasis on communality but does it by drawing attention to the way the exhibition addresses the individual as part of a community. While retaining the view of differentiated social goups already present in the 1970 exhibition, the 1980 exhibition addresses the invidual in a new way, especially in its use of countless portraits, close-ups of ordinary people that hang from the ceiling in each exhibition room, accompanied by numbers, shown in large print, pertaining to the division of the era into shorter periods. As pointed out by one commentator, the portraits "look for their partners in the visitor"[244]. At the same time, the faces and numbers celebrate the particularity of the era that is being commemorated.[245] This particularity forms a tension in relation to the faceless and impersonal quotes from Party degrees that the exhibition is flooded with.

As has already become apparent from the discussion above, the 1980 exhibition treats time much more losely than the earlier exhibitions and occasionally favours thematic chunking at the expense of chronology. While the unconventional nature of the synchronic presence of works of art and historical documents is emphasized, the spatial arrangement resorts to a parallel structure that mostly keeps ′art′ and ′history′ apart. Although the idea behind this arrangement is that the artifacts ′facing′ each other could mutually change places, the fact that this possibility has not been realized in the exhibition has an effect of emphasizing the inherently different interpretative contexts of historical specimens and works of art. This impression is enforced by Horváth's remark on the prospects of coming across an object ′on the street′ as opposed to interpreting it as a work of art. This is to say that history is, apart from being ′out there′ easily interpreted as belonging to the realm of ′life′, while art as such is already something detached, then several times removed. Yet, in their written accounts the curators emphasize the ′inherent togetherness′ of the two types of objects, that it is important to make the connections between them evident in the display, in the ′evocation of their era.′[246] However, I believe the

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244 Fodor 1980: 43.

245 In fact, the working title of the exhibitions was ″Generations", which already hints at the dynamic of individuals and community as one of the underlying themes of the exhibition.

246 Horváth 1980.

curators are right in emphasizing the importance of the parallel presence of historical documents and works of art (in part *as* historical documents). Although in their spatial arrangement these two categories of objects and their interpretive contexts do not merge, in the performative act of the visit, the synchronicity – the fact of seeing it all simultaneuously – may well be more significant than the parallel arrangement. Horváth also draws attention to this aspect when pondering over the role of written accompaniments or guides to the exhibition. He contends that due to the character of the exhibition, there is simply no form of catalogue that would prove satisfactory in helping to interpret the exhibition, since it would reduce the exhibition to a list of names and descriptions, to naming one item after the other. He stresses that standing in the exhibitionary space and witnessing the visible synchronicity of its material objects is a visible step that potentially leads to the exploration of interconnections that the aforementioned 'one-after-anotherness' approach cannot convey[247]. At the same time, Horváth's comment can be read as an argument against the overriding chronological principle within the exhibition. Although the overall frame of production and interpretation is a narrative one in which a story of the progress of the socialist Hungary unfolds in the act of organized walking through the exhibition, the very instance of evocation relies more on the hightened synchronic presence of different kinds of material than its arrangement into a narrative. Further, he points out that this arrangement of layered and carefully selected co-presence does not prevent a work of art from being, at the same time, a mnemonic entity and a relic.[248] However, no matter what we make out of the dynamic of simultaneous evocation and chronological narrativization, one thing remains clear: the exhibition affirms the idea of social progress and by so doing, meets with the ideological objective by laying down proof of the development and achievements of society. Once again, Hungary has come a long way. This aspect is also reflected in the criticism of the exhibition: it is *read as a road*. For György Szabó, for instance, the exhibition is a testament to the tremendous development of the country that dynamically proceeded from ruins towards the present and a hopeful future. Progress has led into a world in which the modern, well-designed labels on the hospital walls lead the way[249] (cf. Figure 13.).

However, seeing and mileposting the 'road' in the midst of multiple evocations seems difficult enough. Since the rooms are not given titles or a general thematic, the grounds for the chosen periodisation remain obscure. As also emphasized by the curators in the exhibition guide, the exhibition is deliberately built upon a technique of simultaneous display of different kinds of artefacts, and in this, works of art are positioned as typical items of their time. Works of art appear thus primarily as historical documents. In general, there is a curious tension in the exhibition between its historiographic and evocative elements. While the accentuated presence of dates and years suggests a chronological ap-

[247] ibid.
[248] ibid.
[249] Szabó 1980.

proach, the exhibition in fact seems to rely much more on evocation than narrativization. At the same time, however, the exhibition falls into the coming-of-age category typical of liberation exhibition. What is more, this time what is at stake is not only the coming-of-age of Hungarian socialism but also the coming-of-age of the Party, since the exhibition marks a double jubilee of both the liberation and the establishing of the Communist party. It is striking how the written exhibition text - with the exception of photo captions and object labels - consists entirely of party declarations and guidelines. In a sense, then, the party declarations are the sole voice of the exhibition, while the different montages and groupings of objects appear as specific chronological points, which in themselves are not organized into a narrative. Therefore, the mode of display may best be described as a 'coming-of-age evocation', which, of course, is a contradiction in terms. This is to say that while the overall frame of the exhibition may be recognized as belonging to the (by now established) 'liberation genre', it differs from its predecessors in its tendency to offer simultaneous imprints of an era, employing artefacts as vehicles of progress rather than constructing a narrative of progress.

3.6 "Our road, our life: Life-style changes in Hungary 1944-1985"

The sixth and last central liberation exhibition, "Our road, our life: Life-style changes in Hungary 1944-1985", was opened in the Museum of Ethnography on April 1, 1985, by Kálmán Kulcsár, the Deputy General Secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Apart from the Museum of Ethnography, the other major organizer of the exhibition was the Museum of the History of the Labour Movement. In addition, numerous museums nationwide contributed to the exhibition. Due to the exhibition's heavy investment in the display of lifestyle, numerous objects and display material were borrowed from other museums or cultural institutions, companies or from private persons. Especially for the contemporary interiors, curators brought objects straight from their own homes. Curiously enough, a suitable Trabant was difficult to come by but eventually one was borrowed from a Budapest car dealer.[250] The 40th anniversary of liberation in 1985 was commemorated by two other major museums Budapest as well. The National Gallery launched a nation-wide collaboration to bring together the most outstanding works of art since liberation under the title "The fine arts of the forty years".[251] Also the Budapest History Museum organized an exhibition "to evoke the most important moments of liberation and reconstruction, along with the stations of development of the years that followed."[252] In addition to being a major

250 "I have inquired in many places but there are very few Trabants available", lamented one of the curators in a memo. EAD 230/85.

251 Reported in several newspapers based on a MTI press release, e.g. "Kiállítások a felszabadulás 40. évfordulójára" Hajdú-Bihari Napló 18.9.1984

252 ibid.

organizer of the "Our road, our life" exhibition, the Museum of the Hungarian Labour Movement 'greeted' the liberation with three separate displays featuring political posters, money and stamps from the years 1944-1945.[253]

The exhibition consists of eight rooms, accompanied by a poster exhibition in the corridor. The exhibition presents the forty-year history of Hungary from two perspectives: political history and the history of lifestyle. The proposal for guided tours also points out that while the former feeds mainly on texts and images, lifestyle is shown mostly in the form of interiors. The main message of the exhibition is summarized in the guide for guided tours as follows: The economic, social and political changes of the last forty years have had a profound impact on the lifestyle of every section of the population. At the same time, these changes have provided new opportunities. It has been worthwhile to take this road, including the struggles it has involved.

As expressed in its title, the exhibition lays unprecedented emphasis on aspects of lifestyle and also provides the visitor with a conceptual frame in the very beginning of the exhibition. The first room opens with an introductory text titled "The Hungarian everyday 1945-1985" beginning with the observation that not only lifestyle but the related value orientation is changing. "While the reasons for change are undoubtedly material in nature, it is justified to pay attention to the role of ideological and cultural aspects", the introduction contends. What is readily noticeable is the focus on the individual: the exhibition attempts to detect the ways the observed changes shape the life-worlds of individuals.

The first room opens with an evocation of 'the last days of Fascism in Hungary'. Stepping into the exhibition, the visitor enters the streets of Budapest in the autumn of 1944 and may peek into an air-raid shelter with a stove, a few dishes and preserves, a helmet, gas mask and first-aid kit. The fear of bombing turns into the fear of Fascist terror in October, as the Arrow Cross takes power under the leadership of Szálasi. "The last months of the 25-year inglorious career of the counter-revolutionary system culminated in the frantic terror of German fascists and their Hungarian henchmen". This means persecution of every 'progressive force', mass deportations for the Jewish population: a photo of German soldiers in the Buda Castle district is accompanied by a copy of a telegram on the deportation of 437 402 persons from Hungary by July 9, 1944. This also means martyrs' deaths for the communists whose images are seen on the wall. The liberating Red Army entered the country on the 23rd of September, 1944. The visitor standing among the German weapons that lie about on the cindered ground may see a row of images of the procession of the Red Army towards the centre of the country and eventually reaching the Castle of Buda (Figure 14.). Among the broken bridges and ruined houses, the eastern part of the country is already beginning to re-organize itself. The Soviet command calls for the beginning of a new life; a newspaper stand boasts freshly printed issues of Népszava and Szabadság. A burned down shop-window is a combination of luxury (perfumes) and every-day (soap, cigarette paper, stockings) items.

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253 ibid.

"While the war was still raging in large territories of the country, the democratic re-organization was already begun in the liberated areas". Land reform is declared. Different popular organs and factory committees play an important role in the launching of reconstruction, the Communist Party being the first party to reorganize itself and coordinate the reconstruction of the country.

The second room presents the political struggle for people's democracy immediately after the liberation and shows four interiors from the same period. The end of the war meant a steepening social conflict, in which the bourgeoisie aimed to stop the progress initiated by the progressive forces (Figure 15.). The struggle, which lasts almost three years, ends with the victory of the progressive forces, strengthened by the unification of the progressive parties that form the MDP. Inflation is defeated and the economy stabilized; mines and factories with more than a hundred employees are nationalized. The achievements of the 3-year plan show growth in standard of living and industrial production. The first interiors of the exhibition reflect the situation immediately after liberation. The interiors reveal the differentiated use of domestic space: There is the bedroom of a rural house, room belonging to the "noble middle-class", a bourgeois room and a proletarian kitchen-livingroom. A proposal for guided tours of the exhibition directly addresses the question of the restructuring of domestic space following the Communist take-over.[254]

The third room presents the beginnings of the construction of socialism. Thematically, the display begins with the passing of the socialist constitution, the introduction of the council system and the unprecedented study opportunities for workers and peasants. Electricity is brought into villages, schools are nationalized and daycare centres are being built. As the previous room, this also is divided into a political history section and a lifestyle section. This division is not clear-cut, though, since much of the political history is displayed through two interiors relating to the profound structural changes within the society: the massive industrialization and the nationalization of agriculture. The interior on the right evokes the modest living conditions of those industrial workers who have come to work from elsewhere (Figure 16.). Therefore, it shows the impact of the first five-year-plan on the immediate life-world of the worker. The interior on the left evokes the office of a collective farm with a desk, cupboard and a variety of certificates, posters of the sports movement of the 1950s and a work competition flag. The authentic "logbook" of a collective farm from Szabolcs-Szatmár county shows the amounts of compulsory delivery by the peasants. The lifestyle interior, in turn, shows an example of a joint tenement ('társbérlet'), housing several families from different social backgrounds. It is realized as an interior of an entire flat consisting of three rooms with shared bathroom and kitchen. The visitor can step into the hall of the flat, from where a view can be gained and look into the different rooms.

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[254] EAD 17/1985 Tárlatvezetési terv p. 5-6.

The fourth room focuses on the distortions that took place in the building of socialism. While there were noteworthy achievements in the development of socialism, Mátyás Rákosi and his group repeatedly offended and ignored the Leninist principles of the party. The most painful result of this ′paralyzing atmosphere of mistrust′ was that the legitimacy of socialism was offended. As a whole, the display for 1956 means ′going by the book′[255]. In addition to the sentences quoted from official documents almost word for word, the events in the Republic Square are evoked by a few photos of counter-revolutionaries and the ′massacre′ at the Party headquarters. After a difficult period of 3-4 months, it was possible to normalize the situation and begin consolidation. On the 21st of March, 1957, a crowd of tens of thousands gathered at the Republic Square, where the massacre had taken place. Images of gatherings on squares and a First of May procession testify to the re-won trust of the people.

The fifth room presents the socialist re-structuring of agriculture. In June 1957, the Central Committee of the Party declared that increased agrarian production was inseparable from socialist re-structuring. Due to vast investments by the state, the socialist means of production became dominant by 1962. "The Hungarian people reaped a new victory of historical significance, and stepped further into the era of the full construction of socialism". These structural changes have shaped the image of the country side. The caption of a photo reads: ″The road sign on the edge of the village tells that the people of Balatonszabad have stepped onto the road of collective production″. The interior of a modest agrarian ′kitchen-room′ (′lakókonyha′), compressing all the functions in a single space, stands in contrast to the large back-drop photo showing a wealthy agrarian district with two-storey houses. Machines characteristic of intensive agriculture are displayed, including the tyres of a Rába-Steiger tractor and objects that hint at the usage of synthetic fertilizers. This is accompanied by objects relating to small-scale, extensive production (háztáji gazdálkodás) that accomodates to local resources and needs.

The last three rooms focus on ′the solidification of the grounds of socialism′ and′ the building of a developed socialist society′. After a summarizing evaluation of the development, four ′mimetic fragments′ follow, of which two are flats, the third a street scene with newspaper stands and shop windows, and the fourth a scene presenting the use of spare-time. Here, the exhibition sets out to show this *solidification* through the commodities the ′developed socialist society′ has produced and the kind of things the socialist individual surrounds himself or herself with. The political history version of this development is – once more – the familiar coming-of-age story, this time the focus being on the *quarter of a century* construction of a *developed* socialist society. The foundations were laid *back then*, which in this current era of developed socialism appears as almost pre-historic. However, hardships have not been completely left behind: the structure affirms to the same *per*

[255] Pun intended: the cautiousness in the representation of the events of 1956 resulted in the 'copying off' of passages from the 'White Book of Communism', the official account of the events. See chapter 4.1.

aspera ad astra pattern. The era of developed socialism has not been an easy phase either, nor has it been free from contradictions. It is development through the overcoming of obstacles, inseparable from international relations and circumstances: the pace of development is not only up to us. This swift development is characteristic especially of the period from the 1960s to mid-1970s, which is when Hungary transformed from an agrarian-industrial country into an industrial country with developed agriculture. Economic incentives were incorporated into the planned economy and the vested interest of workers was increased. When 'progression and peace characterized the international situation', not only was this favourable to economic development, but there were also positive changes in domestic politics and social policy. The developed socialist society appears as a socialist consensus society, based on the incorporation of experts and broad social debate in decision-making, for instance concerning minorities and special interest groups such as women and youth. This tendency appears already in the 1980 exhibition, but it is more clearly spelled out in the exhibition five years later. Along with consensus decision-making, the *democratic* and *scientific* methods of state and party leadership are emphasized but here, too, contradictions are brought up. However, there is a flipside to this development, greatly influenced by external factors. The new objectives of imperialism, the rise in the prices of raw materials and fuels, the deterioration of trade, the prolonged crisis of the capitalist economies, and the problems that appeared in the different COMECON countries all had an effect on the 'construction work' in Hungary. However, the fact that we are able to retain our achievements also in times of trouble testifies to the solidity of our social and economic system. Even in harder times, we have been able to move forward. The inclusion of photos of power plants imply self-sufficiency and undisturbed supply as the foundation of all production and consumption. An interior characteristic of the mid-1960s marks the beginning of the mass construction of element housing blocks. From the window, a view opens onto the Attila József housing block. The shop windows include a host of foreign products. Photos present modern diagnostic equipment, a car repair shop and a carpet cleaner in a laundry.

The second interior is a fully furnished flat with two larger rooms and one small room, housing an educated married couple and their two young children (Figure 17.). The visitors proceed through this 52 square-meter-sized flat whose interior consists of fashionable mass produced furniture of the 1980s, designed "with good taste", and combined with a couple of old 'Biedermeier' pieces. The plan for guided tours is careful to point out the changed function of the wooden chest - an 'ethnographic relic' - acquired as family heritage and the 'Western cosmetics' in the bathroom. What is also pointed out is that the fifty-two square meters is crowded with objects as it is, and there is no space for the further accumulation of goods.[256]

The last room opens with a Party Congress quote emphasizing the importance of the 'meaningful use of spare time in the maintenance of

[256] EAD 5/A 'Tárlatvezetési terv' p. 14

intellectual abilities'.[257] Obviously, the images of pioneer villages and the construction camps for youth back up the notion of socially useful free time and the idea of political socialism permeating all spheres of life. After this ideological frame has been set, however, there is a strong sense of a compromise. As the proposal for the guided tour aptly summarizes, "this room presents things that belong to the realm of free time but at the same time they take our free time away"[258]. The second economy is presented as a "compensating source of our development". The second economy – the work that the citizens do in their free time, ranging from the growing of vegetables to construction work – appears as a necessary phenomenon that improves the life quality of the individual and the national economy and facilitates the *fulfilling of quickly changing needs.* One of the mimetic fragments, a fragment of a wooden weekend home with a garden, is in part related to this private sector ('maszek') production (Figure 18.). It includes a host of objects related to hobbies such as fishing, gardening and crafts but the statistics on average working hours implies that much of the increased amount of free time is not *time off* but is spent working *elsewhere*. At the same time, the landscape from Lake Balaton serving as a back-drop suggests recreation and the well-deserved holiday provided by the trade unions.[259] Along with the increase in spare time, increased mobility is highlighted: against the backrop of a succession of cars proceeding on the highway, a Trabant - status and mobility symbol - occupies its due place in the exhibition (Figure 19.). The photo of a borderstation and the statistics of the volume of tourism between 1960 and 1984 underline this increased movement in and out, back and forth. Within this dynamic of mobility and compromise, questions of social mobility are also touched upon, which in turn draws attention to several social problems such as alcoholism, the high rate of divorce and gender inequality. Without questioning the legitimacy of the political system, questions of social justice and a worthy human life are brought to the forefront. What the exhibition leaves the visitor with is a message which could be summarized thus: "We have come this far through numerous hardships and contradictions. Taking this road has been worthwhile but we have problems to solve."

The 1985 liberation exhibition – four years before the change in the system – is a self-reflexive coming-of-age story of socialism aimed at tracing and displaying the changes within Hungarian culture. All in all, it is differentiation and detail that are characteristic of this exhibition. Whereas the liberation exhibitions manifest a steady shift in focus from the predominance of political history to the display of lifestyle, the exhibitions of the 1980s lay the emphasis on the representation of the household in the form of displaying an extensive series of

[257] The will to organize the free time of people and turning pastimes into organized useful activity may be regarded as characteristic of totalitarian systems, see e.g. Gyáni 2007: 45.

[258] EAD 5/A 'Tárlatvezetési terv' p. 14.

[259] A major organization involved in the state-based recreation of citizens was the Party-controlled, monopolistic National Council of Trade Unions (SZOT), whose members were entitled to state-sponsored holidays, most typically in the Balaton region.

interiors. At the same time, although exhibition material itself manifests a political history – lifestyle dichotomy, it would be far too simplistic to view this perceptible shift merely in these terms. Moreover, the ambitiousness of the last exhibition appears in the very attempt to communicate political changes through the display of material objects, and, more importantly, through displaying mimetic fragments that are only indirectly related to the political changes. Consequently, the extensive display of household interiors is inseparable from ideology and politics. While in a sense this is stating the obvious, it yet has important implications. For instance, one concrete outcome of extended state control into spaces deemed private was due to the radically reformed housing policy after the Communist take-over. The Second World War had damaged a great amount of houses and flats, and – partly as a response to this situation – a great number of rental houses, bigger flats and family houses were nationalized, which led to radical restructuring of ownership.[260] Despite these changes, the three major life-forms of bourgeois, proletarian and peasant homes continued their co-existence, with modifications, after 1945. Therefore, the detailed display of interiors is at the same time a display of the outcomes of state intervention on the micro-level.

The extensive use of interiors as mimetic fragments opens up the prospect for the use of emotive impact[261]: in the details of the interiors of ’imagined anyones’, along with the ceremonious or fierce sense of belonging, there is also a quieter tone – that of longing. In a sense, this is not suprising since the interiors, especially, house a wealth of material from the every-day domestic sphere that bear a resemblance to the souvenirs that people include in their private collections. In the words of Susan Pearce, “Souvenirs, then, are lost youth, lost friends, lost past happiness; they are the tears of things.”[262] Some of these items are also pointed out in the proposals, such as the photograph of a young soldier on a table of a young woman train conductor (Figure 20). In the proposal for guided tours he is referred to as her ’loved one’ who is in the army in the town of Nagykanizsa. Above the bed is a wall hanging with a motif of Alpine scenery, which is said to symbolize the longing of the young woman for the peace and quiet of nature.[263] At the same time, the interiors contain objects that appear as symbolic condensations of their time, such as the lighter made from old bullets on the table of a proletarian family: the war has been over for some years and the objects of warfare have been turned into everyday utilities, yet the group (or collection) of objects in the room – a volume of the History of the Soviet Communist Party, the small Lenin and Stalin busts on the top of the shelf, and an issue of *Ludas Matyi* resonate a spirit of political awareness and class struggle. In effect, the incorporation of political objects was in part a conscious strategy in bourgeois households to indicate that there is something below the bourgeois surface. The row of Stalin’s works placed on the top of the

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260 Valuch 2006: 23-45.
261 Display that appeals to the emotions is taken up also by Pál Miklós in his critique.
262 Pearce 1994: 196.
263 EAD 17/1985 Tárlatvezetési terv p. 8.

cupboard by the radio could be a reassuring sign to an authority paying a visit.[264]

The writings of several journalists and critics frequently address the dynamic of evocation and sense of temporality within the over-all commemorative frame of liberation. What appears as reassuring to several critics is the very coming-of-age aspect of time passing; the inner differentiation of time since the liberation; its settling down into phases that may be perceived in the exhibition. It is these shorter phases, then, that the visitors may either reject or identify themselves with. While even the contradictory and painful elements are easily identifiable (and many of them *are* identified and endorsed in the act of viewing), they may be enclosed in their own segments. The years of the Stalinist regime, the era of compulsory delivery evoked by the interior of a collective farm office, is enclosed in this interior and stays *there*: it is ′closed history′, as Kálmán Kulcsár remarks in his opening speech.[265] This suggests the working of a segregating membrane: the contradictory and often painful elements of the past are present and near but separated by a membrane so that they do not provide a threat to those who remember. At the same time, such reference to an inclusive memory is also an ideological message: we do not reject the Stalinist period – it is there but it is (in) a ′closed case′. The exhibition seems to have provided numerous opportunities for close, yet safe examination. While this ′closed past′ pertained exclusively to the early years of state socialism, the entire commemorative framework was soon to become a thing of the past.

3.7 The didactic narrative disperses

In all their variations, as explored in this study, the liberation exhibitions were instances of modern master narratives *par excellence*, in which the accumulating material culture of the socialist period was selectively used to authenticate and verify this narrative. They were master narratives also in the sense that they worked to eliminate contradictory details and to emphasize the unity of the ′people′, and by attempting to exclude alternative frames of interpretation by projecting the narrative as confident and readily apparent.[266] Thus, the story of the labour movement and the proletariat appears as well-documented, verifiable knowledge. This aspect is echoed in several guest book entries: “Through its documents, the exhibition convincingly presents the history of the past 25 years.”[267] Further, this master narrative was constructed as a linear, chronological and uninterrupted narrative. As the narrative was first and

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264 Pál, Gábor ‘Rendhagyó tárlatvezetés’ Kossuth Radio 23.6.1985

265 EAD 17/1985 Opening speech of the exhibition given by Kálmán Kulcsár, April 1, 1985

266 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:24-25.

267 “Meggyőzően dokumentumokba tárja elénk a 25 év történetét”, Guest book of the 1970 exhibition. TAD-I-133-75

foremost a narrative of progress, the possibility of picturing the past through an open-ended exploration containing contradictory histories was within this framework inconceivable. However, there are several aspects that threaten the overriding principle of linearity. In this concluding chapter on narrativity, I discuss the liberation exhibitions as discursive spaces where the didactic, strictly linear narrative manifests some degree of dispersal. I first draw on examples of the production and consumption of the exhibitions that show that the exhibitions were mainly conceived of as linear narrative constructs. Second, I discuss two inherently different aspects that challenge the linearity of the exhibition narratives: the revolution of 1956 and the emerging paradigm shift from the modernist museum towards the 'post-museum'.

Viewed from the visitors' perspective, it seems that the persistent metaphor of the road and the conventions of history displays in general were adequate to ensure that the exhibitions were interpreted as linear narratives – as projections of the story of Hungarian state socialism that unfolds in time, despite the apparent gaps or leaps. The 1970 exhibition, for instance, is frequently commented on in the guest book as 'an exhibition that leads us through the events of the last 25 years.'[268] At this point it needs to be emphasized that perceived linearity is quite different depending on whether we are discussing written narratives or museum exhibition narratives that mainly draw on visuality. This is to say that an exhibition narrative requires active narrativization also on the visitors' part. Strictly speaking, exhibitions rarely offer continuous sequences of events as such: the question is, rather, whether the exhibition provides cues for narrative contextualization.[269] In addition to reading the exhibitions as linear narratives, they were frequently read autobiographically; that is, the visitor related the narrative to his or her life-story, which often resulted in the visitor taking on the role of a character in the story. In numerous guest book entries, visitors reflect upon the role and meaning of the depicted events to their own lives, and this process of sense-making is deep down a narrative one. Representatives of the older generations often 'read themselves into' the exhibition by remarking that they experienced the war ('the fascist devastation') or that they also took part in laying the bricks of reconstruction. In a similar fashion, the young people remark that they did not live in the time of the liberation or that

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268 "A kiállítás végigvezet bennünket az elmúlt 25 év eseményein" TAD-I-133-75

269 This line of argument is developed further by Daniel Fulda (2005) by using the '*Wehrmacht* exhibition' as an example. Created by the Institute for Social Research in Hamburg, the exhibition was displayed in 33 cities in Germany and Austria between 1995 and 1999. The exhibition stirred lively debates, and, as a case of public history, bears much resemblance to the Enola Gay dispute: it was *the* debate in the historical culture of the 1990s, drawing a great amount of media publicity and governmental involvement, resulting in profound revisions suggested by a group of historians. In Fulda's view, the first public version of the exhibition suffered from its lack of a 'narrative core', a narrative deep-structure that would have guided the visitors in interpreting its meanings. This, coupled with the dramatic emotional impact of the 'reconstructed crimes', contends Fulda, easily left the visitors in confusion and a sense of one-sidedness. In Fulda's view, the main problem with the first exhibition was its exclusively instrumental use of narrative elements: in its quest to argue for a specific version for history, it forgot to narrate, that is, provide the differentiating and associating historical contexts. See Fulda 2005:173-194.

they are fortunate to know these times exclusively from history books or from the accounts of the older generations. However, they often continue by stating that even so, these events are part of their past, too. In several visitors, the exhibition evokes the need to voice one's conviction ("Let us build our country further!") or gratitude to the 'liberators'. Therefore, the perceived narrative continuity and identification of autobiographical elements in the exhibitions often intertwine in visitors' comments. Despite the brevity of the guest book entries, they are not merely accounts of memories evoked but frequently also narrative accounts that position the visitor as a historical subject in relation to the sequence of events; they locate themselves 'on the road'.[270]

However, even though the exhibitions were constructed and interpreted mainly as continuous, linear narratives of progress, there is one major historical event that appears as a rupture throughout the exhibitions, namely the revolution of 1956. It appears as a rupture on several levels, in spite of the tendency of the public discourse of the Kádár era to avoid conflicts and emphasize continuities.[271] Occasionally, this rupture may appear in as subtle forms as graphic positioning on paper. In the press release on the 1965 exhibition, ′56 has a paragraph on its own, despite the fact that in the exhibition, it is displayed in the thematically most crowded hall along with several other themes and events. In contrast, in the press release that summarizes the thematic of the exhibition, ′56 has been graphically secluded from the row of chronological exhibition halls. Interestingly enough, the numbering of the halls stops at this disruption of ′56. Up until this ′moment′, the halls are presented through ordinal numbers. After the mention of ′56, however, the thematic of the rest of the halls is given without a reference to their order. In a similar fashion, the proposal for the guided tour of the 1985 exhibition manifests a similar graphic disruption in relation to the revolution. This is when the otherwise display unit-based presentation suddenly breaks into into fragments of text joined by dashes, when we arrive at ′56.

By the same token, the 1970 exhibition treats 1956 with a similar sense of exclusion, but now not only on paper but within the materialized space of the exhibition. The eight-page preliminary information sheet on the exhibition points out how the ′attempt at a counter-revolutionary coup′ is placed in a separate space that opens between the first and the second room to show that the events did not result from ′democratic development′ but from the evocation

[270] In his analysis of the first '*Wehrmacht* exhibition', Fulda argues that it was primarily a sense of narrativity that the skeptical visitor was lacking and that the evidence for this is that visitors responded to the questions posed by the interviewer by telling autobiographical stories (2005:187). While I agree with Fulda in that the autobiographical element may be identified with the reclaiming of a wholeness at the level of personal experience, which is aligned with the modern, narratively generated concept of history, I argue against his claim that the autobiographical response would necessarily be a reaction to the lack of narrativity. In effect, the guestbook entries of the liberation exhibitions show that the tendency for autobiographical positioning is facilitated by the visitor's recognition of the exhibition as a narrative construct.

[271] According to Gerő and Pető (1997: 10), changes in the course of politics were made in a way they would be left unnoticed, and if change was unavoidable, continuities were to be emphasized.

of a past event, that is, the doings of the reactionary forces. The exclusion of ’56 from the progressive line of events is enforced by using colour and form symbolism similar to the display on the Horthy era.[272] In the light of this, the double title ”The country belongs to the people – the changing face of our home country” appears more than symptomatic from the viewpoint of a continuous narrative. While its first part is a clear reference to the radical reorganization of political power and ownership, the second part implies an inevitable, organic development as part of a natural life-cycle. Spatially, this double title extends into the second and the third room, including the ’cavity’ in between, in which 1956 is displayed. This spatial lay-out of the coming-of-age narrative shows that the dramatic events of 1956 could by no means be fitted into the idea of organic development, and this is the most likely reason for its exclusion.[273]

In the 1985 exhibition, the problem posed by ’56 is connected to the problem of finding a suitable place for representing something disruptive within the exhibition’s narrative. In an exhibition that draws on the extensive use of interiors – especially of private households – finding a place for visualizing ’rupture’ or ’distortion’ may appear problematic. What appears as symptomatic of this in the exhibition room that displays the ’distortions’ is that there are no interiors: the display of private places does not seem compatible with the notion of distortion. Instead, the room features a street scene with dummies dressed in the fashion of the 1950s, a bookstore window and a grocery store window. Of course, the absence of interiors is easily explained by the fact that the previous room already featured the joint tenement of the 1950s. However, it is hardly a coincidence that the room that deals with the early construction of socialism features interiors and the room displaying distortions restricts itself to the display of public spaces. Through linking the distortions to the display of street scenes, it is implied that the real threat posed to the communist system did not come from the inside, the homes and hearths of the people, but was something based on imperialist propaganda and hear-say that confused the people. The only internal threat came from the political leadership and the Party’s violation of Leninist rule. By associating the home interiors with construction, they remain intact.[274]

As argued above, the exhibitions were mainly interpreted as continuous narratives, in spite of their possible gaps and ruptures that often were related to the problems of visual display or the visualization of problematic historical events. However, the liberation exhibitions point to the problematic of the linear narrative, raised from time to time in professional writings and criticism of the exhibitions. Often the discussion of linearity involved a discussion of the temporal dimension of the exhibitions, especially the sequencing and inner periodisation of the socialist era. The most fervent debates around linearity relate to the 1980 exhibition. In the contemporary reception of ”Art and society”,

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272 TAD 269-75. Esti, Béla [n.a.] ’Tájékoztató a felszabadulás 25. évfordulóján megrendezésre kerülő központi kiállítás tervéről’

273 The display techniques of inclusion and exclusion pertaining to ’56 shall be examined in more detail in chapter 4.1.

274 The issue of the private/public dichotomy is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.3.

linearity seems to be understood in contradictory ways), that is, commentators[275] disagree on the extent to which the exhibition may be regarded as forming a linear, chronological narrative. While the exhibition is said to document a row of events[276], the changes in life-style draw on the simultaneuous display of different manifestations of visual culture. According to one curatorial account, the exhibition was about the way the different branches of art caught up with and were integrated into the man-made social environment. This simultaneous presence of different elements and levels, according to the curators, was to provide the possibility for comparison that helps to gain a glimpse of the state of visual culture and taste.[277] In the eyes of the commentators, however, the exhibition concept seems to manifest a fair amount of ambiguity in its relation to linearity. For instance, the exhibition is seen to emphasize both the objects in themselves and their chronology: this is ensured by the inclusion of large-print numbers to indicate the year in which the objects were made.[278] This is how emphathetic numbers attach the object in a chronological chain, thus highlighting the historical context of their production. In the eyes of several critics, this seems to lead to some sort of confusion regarding the ultimate objective of the exhibition. A good example of this is the discussion of the periodization of the 35 years. The period between 1962 and 1975 is characterized by the curators as ′the search for direction′ which is visible also in the mode of display as a kind of dispersal.[279] For many commentators, the overall problem is that artistic processes – and indeed, the *progress* of artistic forms – do not coincide with historical dates and periods.[280] While some see the sub-divisions as unrealistic, others find them interesting in the sense that they draw attention to important questions. For some, the division is seen as not corresponding to reality; the periods merely reflect the curators′ vision about the development and intersection of art and society.[281] In particular, the second period from 1948 to 1962 is seen as unrealistic, since it ignores the ′counter-revolution′ of 1956 as a crucial re-thinking of the developments of the early years of socialism.[282] This criticism manifests an interesting tension: on the one hand, it attacks the curatorial concept of the interdependence of art and society, and on the other, it rejects a chronology inspired by material culture itself. As pointed out by many other commentators,

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275 By ′commentators′, I mean persons that have reviewed or commented on the exhibitions by virtue of their profession, which can be either as an expert appointed by the Ministry of Education (mostly a historian), a journalist or critic (with varying knowledge of the academic disciplines involved) or a fellow curator/museologist either attending a "workshop debate" or writing in a professional journal.

276 "Kulturális magazín", Kossuth Radio 13.4.1980, 9 a.m.

277 " ibid.

278 Fehér B. 1980. "Művészet és társadalom. Kiállítás a Műcsarnokban", *Magyar Nemzet* March, 23, 1980.

279 Kossuth Rádió "Esti magazín" March 18, 1980 6.30 p.m

280 Aradi, N. 1980. "Társadalom, művészet, átlag. Jubileumi kiállítás a Műcsarnokban", *Magyar Hírlap* April 4, 1980.

281 Harangozó, M. 1980. ″Plakátok, tárgyak, festmények. Művészet és társadalom 1945-1980″, *Esti Hírlap* March 19, 1980.

282 Harangozó ibid.

social impulses often appear after a delay or as foretellers of what is to come. One commentator, however, sees the 1945-1948 period as the aftermath of the war, the 1948-1962 period as the contradictory establishing of socialism, the period 1962-1975 as wealth construction, and the last five years as the construction of 'developed socialism.'[283] Others wonder why the 1960s and 1970s have not been dealt with together as the period of 'the construction of developed socialism.'[284] Although the exhibition uses 'clever' periodization, it at the same time treats it 'mechanically', with no space dedicated to analyzing those conflict-filled periods.[285]

The necessity to produce a narrative that would show not only the progress of society but also the progress of the arts appears as symptomatic of the attempt to create a didactic master narrative all the aspects of which would manifest modern progress. Within this didactic narrative, open-ended exploration of meaning was to be minimized and, instead, the meanings were to be fixed and disseminated in the form of 'expert-to-novice transmission.'[286] This approach to the transmission of education is apparent in the frequent discourse on the 'intellectual' or 'emotive impact' of the exhibitions and their prospects of 'shaping taste' or shaping consciousness. The exhibitions were thus designed as vehicles for self-elevation and self-improvement.[287] Further, the idea of the exhibitions as performed itineraries was based on the double function of the exhibition as both a commemorative (and thus evocative) and disciplined walk through the displayed material. Accordingly, the 1980 exhibition was seen as an excellent *pro memoria* exhibition because it provided a road that has to be taken, not only in a spiritual sense but also re-walked physically.[288] This *pro memoria* walk was not designed for commemoration only, but it included a strong didactic dimension that would indicate the 'good' and 'proper' from the 'bad' and 'improper' during the walk. Under the imperative of the Marxist 'shaping of consciousness', such attachment of value judgements could be considered the norm throughout the state-socialist period.[289] What the discourse of the 1980 exhibition manifests, however, is not only the prospect for a loosening of narrative linearity, but also the partial dispersion of its didactic nature. It seems, therefore, that the 'exhibition's program' is not *necessarily* connected to a program of linearity, and thus manifests a shift away from the transmission type of communication of

283 Tandi, L. 1980. "Kölcsönhatásban. Művészet és társadalom 1945-1980", *Dél-Magyarország* April 4, 1980.
284 Tasnádi, A. 1980. "Műalkotás és történelem. Egy különleges kiállítás margójára", *Népszava* March 30, 1980.
285 Szabó 1980.
286 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:126-127.
287 Hooper-Greenhill ibid.
288 Szabó 1980.
289 In his article on historical museology, Károly Vörös (1965:890) points out that while an exhibition on industrial design could leave aside the fact that a sizeable part of the society lives in an unaesthetic environment, a historical exhibition does have to take a stand. At the same time, however, he remarks that beauty is not the only way to affect people: the spectacular may have the same effect.

meanings characteristic of the ′modernist museum′. As one commentator remarks, whether it is the question of the ′air of the past era striking the visitor′ or the whole era being evoked for the visitor through a single object, the best way to go about the exhibition is to wander in it with no destination, and come back to certain objects; going through the past thirty-five years is exploration.[290]

The ′search for direction′ in terms of artistic expression and the ambiguity in periodization thus become symptomatic of the partial dispersial of the overall narrative of progress: the incongruent abundance of material underlines the uncertainty as regards the right direction. On the one hand, the criticism can be seen as a reaction to the inner tensions of the exhibition: of the attempt to give an equal amount of emphasis to the chronological line of history and the multiplicity of the visual culture, which cannot be neatly embedded in this chronology. On the other hand, the criticism can be seen as a reaction to the obvious uncertainty embodied in the display. It seems that the critics who criticize the lack of ′important′ works of art and the over-representation of average works, are in fact criticizing a display of mediocre works in the absence of a didactic narrative. As Hayden White argues, narrativity ″is intimately related to the impulse to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine.“[291] This lack of a moralizing narrative worries several critics. If the failures and set-backs are not marked clearly as such in the exhibition, they may serve as an enticing example for the younger generation and, therefore, the style of the early 1950s should be explicitly condemned.[292] As one critic points out, an exhibition with a didactic mission cannot do without a guiding text.[293] At the same time, the same critic points out that the virtue of the exhibition, if any, is that it does not lie but it shows things as they are: this is who we are, this is who we were.[294] In other words, if we are to exhibit mediocre works that fall out of the artistic canon, then we should at least have a congruent narrative that would guide us in deciphering which works are good and which are bad. While this attitude has been and still is characteristic of the display of art – to provoke admiration[295] – another aspect may be detected here that relates to the more general conception of museums. From this viewpoint, this debate is at the same time a debate over the ′modernist museum′ and the ′post-museum′: of whether it is necessary to cling to the modern, didactic, linear narrative of progress or whether we can let this narrative disperse, revealing the uncertanties of knowledge and identity and the speculative nature of what we call knowledge.[296] Such a conception of the museum and exhibition promotes the idea of an active audience made up of

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290 Fehér B. 1980. “Művészet és társadalom. Kiállítás a Műcsarnokban”, *Magyar Nemzet* March, 23, 1980.

291 White 1987: 14.

292 Székely, A. 1980. “Művészet és társadalom”, *Új tükör* April 27, 1980.

293 Iván Bojár in “Láttuk, hallottuk…” Kossuth Rádió, March 21, 1980.

294 Bojár ibid.

295 This is echoing Susan Pearce’s insights on the different modes of display that provoke different attitudes and readings

296 Hooper-Greenhill 2002:124-162.

different individuals who, during their museum *experience*, actively negotiate meanings[297]. Thus, for the visitor, the museum experience is not about absorbing ready-made answers in the form of a didactic narrative. However, this does not mean that the curators should abandon their didactic aims and the resulting narrative as such. Rather, it is a question of trusting a multivocal and less certain narrative to carry out this task. The curators of the 1980 exhibition talk about the 'not easy seeing at once' ("a nem könnyű együttlátás"). This synchronizing mode of display that the exhibition operates with implications for another aspect of 'not easy together-seeing', or what might better be called 'uneasy together-seeing' that relates to the question of periodization. As pointed out earlier, several critics were doubtful about the way the 35 years had been divided into periods, which in concrete terms meant the division of the material into four exhibition halls. It seems that in several instances, it may have not been the periodization as such that was at stake but the (emotive) effect of seeing a different kind of material that in the mind of the visitor belonged to completely different realms. According to one objection, having show trials and amnesty crammed in one hall was simply too much of a roller-coaster ride.[298] In other words, seeing and sensing the Stalinist terror and the tokens of the conciliatory spirit of the early 1960s *together* proved to be too big a contradiction.

As the title of chapter three, 'From ruins to weekend houses' suggests, all the exhibitions discussed show and tell the story of the progress of Hungarian state socialism from the liberation to the then present moment. While they vary in the extent to which they incorporate elements prior to the liberation and the ways they include the anticipated future in their projections of the present, all the exhibitions can be seen as visualizations of the 'road to socialism'. The progress on this road is marked with very similar benchmarks: the road is taken from a city in ruins through re-built bridges and new land boundaries to a multi-lane highway. The beginning of reconstruction led by the Communists is symbolized by the new Danube bridges, often so that one bridge is singled out as *the* verification of the zeal of the people. Reconstruction is followed by land-reform, the tools of which are displayed to symbolize the entire restructuring of ownership in the form of collectivization. However, while the bridges retain their role as the major symbols of reconstruction, the land boundaries as the symbol of re-distributed means of production become marginalized by the 1980s, and instead, a range of consumer goods as the fruits of socialism take their place. Thus, the tools of measurement shift from political history and history of the labour movement towards the economy, production and consumption. As time passes, goods accumulate and the road itself widens: it is made into highways that indicate not only modernization and investment in development but also increased mobility. What earlier were faceless masses on the road, turns into differentiated groups of people: youth, industrial trainees (ipari

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[297] See e.g. Keen 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 1994:67-72; In a sense, this debate contains echoes of Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's insights of 'the modernist museum' and the 'post-museum' (see Hooper-Greenhill 2000:151-153).

[298] Székely, A. 1980. "Művészet és társadalom", *Új tükör* April 27, 1980.

tanuló). The pillows with the names of communist martyrs embroidered on them are left behind and hybrid corn and halogen lamps are taken on board. The road is a meandering one but the biggest hardships have been permanently left behind as oppression no longer exists. Yet, every stretch of the road is a struggle but with firm conviction and hard work, any difficulties shall be overcome.

It seems, therefore, that the accumulating material culture of socialism that appears in the later exhibitions as richness in (mimetic) detail enhances the experience of complexity, synchronicity and contradiction, rather than fills in the potential gaps in the narrative of progress that was the original task of these exhibitions. This seems to be true especially for the last two liberation exhibitions. Along with this multiplicity and synchronicity, there is a shift toward private objects as benchmarks on the road to socialism. ”The visitor feels that in between the great moments of fate, she is flipping through her own diary. She encounters more intimate and simple objects of daily use in the exhibition”, remarks one commentator on the 1980 exhibition.[299] The the road being traversed is increasingly a private road. One newspaper article concludes its review of the 1985 exhibition thus: ”In the course of forty years, we traversed this road in our personal possessions.”[300] Accordingly, the benchmarks also seem to be private objects: the road may be envisioned as ”from Flóra soap to a Trabant”[301], or, alternatively, “from ruins to a weekend house”[302], the latter implies a movement from the *collective* sense of loss after the war to the personal achievements embodied by *private* belongings. Or, as Pál Gábor remarks when observing the contemporary interior of the home of the young intelligentsia in the 1985 exhibition, ’This room in which we are standing now, no longer shows the adoption of the compulsory faith but seeking one’s individual road is already a fact. So there is an unfolding of a kind. A credo.’ [303]

By the 1980s, the road to socialism is being opened up into multiple, alternative paths, while the road’s predestined nature becomes somewhat relativized: it is opened up for moderate exploration. At the same time, the road is primarily affirmative, based on the repetitive use of the by now familiar concept. Indeed, one commentator compares the experience of the 1980 exhibition to the re-exploration of a familiar city.[304] This remark is telling in terms of the nature of re-visiting the recent past: though the narration is based on the display of the familiar, the last two exhibitions seem to manifest a shift towards exploration in addition to mere repetition. This relative openness to the new and a sense of reflexivity coincide with the insights of Péter György, who contends that “up to the 1980s, the museums were *not* scenes for postmodern ambiguity, explicit irony, deliberate counterfeits, appropriation art and cultural

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299 “Kulturális magazín”, Kossuth Radio 13.4.1980, 9 a.m.
300 *Budapest Közlekedési Hírlap,* “Flóra szappantól a Trabantig”, 12.9.1985
301 ibid.
302 *Magyar Nemzet,* “A romoktól a nyaralókig. Életmódkiállítás a Néprajzi Múzeumban”, 25.3. 1985.
303 “Rendhagyó tárlatvezetés” Kossuth Radio 23.6.1985
304 *Lakásépítő,* “Művészet és társadalom”, April 4, 1980.

relativism."[305] This, of course, implies that from the 1980s onwards, such elements permeated the museum scene, and it seems that the liberation exhibitions, despite their ultimately dogmatic frame, were no exception. More precisely, the narratives of the liberation exhibitions manifest a tension between the modernist museum's master narrative and the didactic aims of the efficient transfer of ideas and the post-museum's open-endedness, fragmentation, indeterminacy and provisional positions offered for knowledge.[306] It would be too bold a claim to contend that the six exhibitions discussed here would manifest this shift as such; a corpus of six exhibitions is not large enough to make such a claim. Further, it needs to be kept in mind that the collections the last two exhibitions primarily drew on – those of fine arts and ethnography – are likely to tend towards a looser treatment of chronological linearity than material collected as 'history'. Yet, viewed as discursive spaces, the exhibitions do contain evidence of a certain loosening of didacticism that goes hand in hand with a more a less rigorous treatment of linearity. Although the liberation exhibitions do not cease to be moral tales of Hungarian state socialism, their narratives gain a reflexivity that unavoidably undermines this didactic narrative. In a sense, then, the liberation exhibitions show a partial dispersal of the linear narrative characteristic of colonialism and entail a shift towards the 'ecomuseum', characterized by the conception of the museum as a metaphor for a new kind of a heritage action unit[307]. According to Poulot, "the inscription of heritage can only have meaning when it is situated within a theoretically informed effort to reconstruct the practices that make everyday life meaningful"[308]. It is enough to look at the working titles of the exhibitions of 1980 and 1985 – "Generations" and "the Hungarian everyday" – to notice the emphasis on the mundane and on heritage-thinking: of retaining values from the past and passing them on. Although the narratives of the liberation exhibitions are a far cry from the "regulatory mechanism of the inevitable processes of change in which identity is an unstable, fragile coherence dependent upon a catalyst and corrective action"[309], it is clear that by 1985 the road to socialism could include several diversions. The road is not only a meandering but also an unstable one: the Trabant that takes the family away from the distressing everyday is at the same time a vehicle of displacement that helps to get 'off the road'.

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305 György 2003:54.
306 Hooper-Greenhill 2000:140-145.
307 Davis 1999.
308 Poulot 1994:78, György 2003: 18-19.
309 Šola 1997:72.

4 'FAITHFUL REFLECTIONS': VISUAL STATEMENTS AND EXHIBITED FRAGMENTS

4.1 Exhibiting polemics: bracketed violence, annihilation, subordination

In his discussion of what he considers a 'romantic' and 'realist' conception of museums, the American museum theorist and curator Stephen E. Weil draws on his memory of the history museums of Eastern Europe in the state-socialist era. According to Weil, " [t]he Marxist-Leninist version of history encountered in those museums appeared, at least from the perspective of Western visitors, to be not only at variance with the truth but to be deliberately calculated to arouse in museum visitors a deep hostility toward the West and its most deeply held values."[310] What is symptomatic here is Weil's selective attention as a 'Western visitor': he readily positions himself along the lines of the Cold War polemic and is inclined to rest on the hostility of the 'Other', the Eastern Marxist-Leninist, and not deal with the prospects of hostile representation of the East by the West. Another issue that Weil's remark raises is the display and legitimation of *our* aggression within an exhibition. As several commentators have pointed out, this was one of the key issues also in the Enola Gay debate.[311] It was not only a question of discussing the role of the U.S. in the Second World War along the lines of 'Western imperialism' but even more crucially about motivating the use of violence in the narrative of the war and thus legitimizing American aggression. It is not my intention here to argue against Weil's insights. Indeed, viewing the liberation exhibitions from the perspective of representing 'Us' and 'Them', there is a fair amount of hostility. Rather, my aim is to discuss the construction of Self and Other in the liberation exhibitions, with special attention to the polemics of display. Here, I understand 'polemic' in its original

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310 Weil 2002: 104.
311 Hasian and Hubbard 1998: 503; Linenthal 1995:64; Wallace 1995.

Greek meaning of ’warlike’, ’hostile’, coupled with Foucault’s understanding of polemics as something that

> “defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears.”[312]

Foucault’s conception of polemics entails mimicking war, battles, annihilations or unconditional surrenders: it is a mobilization of one’s killer instinct.[313] This account resonates well with the presence of polemics in the liberation exhibitions. In this chapter, I set out to discuss the ways in which ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ are constructed within the exhibitions in terms of exhibiting aggression or hostility. This means looking into the different modes of display that have been used in the liberation exhibitions either to mark off the polar divide or to signify aggression, annihilation or rivalry. I identify several ‘polemic modes of display’ in the exhibitions which are related to annihilation and emulation. Further, I argue that the liberation exhibitions occasionally resort to the visual rhetoric of ‘peace fight’ (békeharc), in order to distinguish the aggression applied by ‘Us’ from the aggression used by ‘Them’. Hence, the focus is on the techniques of visual display rather than gaining an overview of how the display of aggression changed over time.

Finally, I suggest that within this Cold War frame of reference, a process can be detected in the exhibitions in which overt hostility and the impulse to annihilation is tuned down into a kind of “trench warfare” of the two competing systems and into more subtle emulation of the Other, which highlights reciprocity and interdependence, but also subordination.

The Cold War context is frequently conceived as a world-scale East-West competition and conflict, characterized by mutual perceptions of hostile intentions between military-political alliances. In a similar fashion to Foucault’s conception of polemics as being essentially about mimicking war and annihilations, René Girard’s understanding of mimesis is strongly organized around the notion of mimesis as rivalry and acquisitive desire. What makes Girard’s notion of mimesis particularly interesting when discussing a display informed by the politics of the Cold War is the underlying ambiguity between the rivals: “When imitation leads to outright competition, each rival is at once a model and obstacle, someone to emulate and someone to loathe”, as Daniel Barbiero has aptly paraphrased Girard’s insights[314]. Girard thus identifies reciprocal action with the mimetic principle, arguing that violent imitation makes adversaries all the more alike.[315] In effect, some neo-Marxist theorists assert that the Soviet project failed at least in part because it mimicked Western development too faithfully[316]. This idea of the fear of becoming more and more alike is interesting from the

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312 Foucault 1997.
313 Foucault ibid.
314 Barbiero 1996:216.
315 Girard 2009:10.
316 Buck-Morss 2002: 68.

point of view of the visual display of aggression in the exhibitions. Caught between the rival as a model and an obstacle, the exhibitions resorted to visual rhetoric that may be identified as 'peace fight rhetoric'. As a term, 'peace fight' (békeharc) belongs to the predominant communist rhetoric which was used in order to differentiate between the aggression of the Western and Eastern blocs. In this rhetoric, the West is envisioned as a constant aggressor and threat to world peace, which stands in strong contrast to the 'peace-loving politics' of the communist states. In effect, the excessive emphasis on the rhetoric of peace worked to subvert or counter-balance the communist states' own aggressiveness.[317] Part of this rhetoric was to present 'the progressive world' as always on the side of defence, in a quest to defend world peace. Consequently, any act of aggression on the progressive part would be presented as a *response* to imperialist aggression. This positioning follows Girard's argument that "The aggressor has always already been attacked"[318]. This ambiguous interdependence and mutuality – not only among the communist allies but also in relation to the Other as an indispensable part of constructing the Self - is articulated in the exhibitions in several ways.

4.1.1 Creating and visualizing polemics

After liberation, the dominant communist historiography identified two major forces of history: the 'progressive' and the 'reactionary'. Especially after 1956, the narration of history was based on depicting the constant struggle between revolution and counterrevolution. The liberation exhibitions can thus be viewed as materialized spaces for distributing the post-1956 version of history as a constant struggle between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries. This polemics can be divided into the global war scene of the Cold War, the 'external adversary' of western imperialists, and the 'internal adversary', the reactionary, bourgeois forces that work to undermine the progressive cause of communism. In practice, these two forces become connected, especially in the display of 1956. Consequently, the exhibitions sought to mark and display important symbolic sites of the oppression and resistance of the revolutionary, progressive forces (Figures 21. and 22.). This merging of historical agents and factors into such a bipolar framework helped to create the historical continuity that was needed for political legitimation. Consequently, pre-1945 history was deemed 'counter-revolutionary' and the Horthy era preceding the Soviet takeover was labeled as 'the darkest era of our history'. The oppression and inequality of the Horthy era and the havoc and casualties of the Second World War are merged into a single big evil identified with 'reactionary forces'. Thus, within this narrative, the liberation brought about by the Soviet troops is simultaneously liberation from all past oppression and terror: Horthy's regime, the Second World War, the extreme right-wing rule of the Arrow Cross Party and the Nazi German occupation. The idea of the continuous threat of fascism merged the white

317 Burget 2008: 40.
318 Girard 2009: 18.

terror of 1919 and the Arrow-Cross take-over in 1944: they were the doings of the same fascist forces (Figure 24.). According to this logic, the reconstruction of the country and the normalization of production and daily life is solely the achievement and merit of the 'progressive forces' led by the communists. Within the narrative, the only active agent to take the initiative and bring about change is constituted by the communists led by the Party. Or rather, the only thing the imperialist, bourgeois reactionary forces are active about is undermining and sabotaging the work of the progressive forces, with in an attempt to win back their previous privileges.

The revolt of 1956 was a delicate point in the communist version of the struggle of the progressive and reactionary forces: after all, condemnation of the inherently *anti*-Stalinist uprising and labelling it as a 'counterrevolution' demanded justification.[319] Also from the point of view of a continuous narrative of progress, the events of 1956 were problematic, since they would readily appear as a break or a rupture in the line of progress, as discussed in 3.7. In the years following the revolution up to the early 1960s, the spirit of 1956 appears as 'universal evil', which can be beaten down only with the help of 'good'.[320]Accordingly, while the early Kádár regime took pains to distance itself from the 'dogmatic mistakes' of the preceding Rákosi regime, it at the same time emphasized the parallel between the counterrevolutionary forces that led to the revolt in 1956 and the white terror and turmoil of 1919 following the Soviet Republic of Hungary. Further, the early Kádár regime sought to emphasize the connection between the events of 1919 and 1944 as two major instances of white terror practised by the counter-revolutionaries. Accordingly, the end result was a communist version of the continuous struggle of the revolutionary forces against the counterrevolutionary forces that began in 1919 and ended with the defeat of the 'counter-revolution' in 1956.[321] Apart from the fact that the events of 1956 meant a partial re-interpretation of *all* history, from the point of view of a visual display they appeared as a problem in itself. The issue of the material presence of the revolution will be discussed later in this chapter.

In general, the rhetoric of the exhibitions may be characterized as a dynamic of the Cold War and détente. In the exhibition of 1960, several events are displayed against the back-drop of a global war scene. Both the aggressors and the victims are positioned on an international scale: fascists are waging a total war against the nations of Europe, and Japan invades Shanghai. The Soviet Union is portrayed as a victim of the international wave of fascist aggresion, with images of "Fascist man-hunters in a Soviet village". Eventually, Hungary

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319 Apor 2009:2-3.

320 Bohár 2001.

321 As shown by Péter Apor (2009), the 'counterhistory writing' practised by communist historians after 1956 drew heavily on the conception of the interconnectedness of 1919 and 1956. More importantly, Apor's study emphasizes the difference in the communist historiography before and after the revolt of 1956. In the post-1956 version of history, 1919 was to be seen as a prelude to the latter communist regime (Apor 2009:11). In a sense, then, the post-1956 historiography needed 1919 to prove the constant presence of the 'counterrevolution' that began in 1919 and could be reinforced by the evocation of white terror in 1944.

is portrayed as stepping into the war on the side of the Axis Powers, the 'merciless aggressors'. This is shown also in photographs that present the Hungarian troops as merciless killers.

In addition to the Cold War frame, a great deal of the polemics in the exhibitions is concentrated on the history of the labour movement, the display of which relies on a similar bipolar signification. Within this scheme, the 'progressive forces' as 'Us' are constructed as distinct from the 'reactionary forces'. Especially in the first three exhibitions, much attention is paid to the display of the sites of oppression and resistance that the working class or the communists as progressive forces fought against the reactionary forces. These include several images and personal objects of communists imprisoned during the years of illegality under Horthy's regime. Major emblematic sites of oppression and resistance are the prisons of Mária Nosztra and Margit street and the Arrow Cross headquarters at Andrássy street.[322] These display units include handcuffs, keys and scale models of prisons but also items of armed resistance. While counter-revolutionaries are frequently portrayed as villains with dubious nicknames, the revolutionary heroes are portrayed not only as brave and just fighters but as intellectuals. Among the personal belongings of the communists of Margit Street prison are volumes of The *Iliad*, Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The inclusion of these books may be seen as an attempt to historicize the heroic battle of the communists through creating analogies with these fictional worlds. The third volume displayed is a booklet titled *Petőfi útján* (On the road of Petőfi), which is a reference to the communists' attempt to create historical continuity between 'liberation' and the revolution of 1848-1849.

In the exhibitions texts, the linguistic marker of the polemic is 'while' (*'míg', 'miközben'*). This highlights the sense of having simultaneous contrasts. In effect, one of the sub-texts of the 1965 exhibition is that "*While* the Cold War is raging, *We* are building socialism". The same formulation is frequently used to emphasize the communists' power and will to reorganize the leadership of the country and stabilize it even *during* the events that led to the 'liberation'. A recurring phrase with minor changes in all of the exhibitions goes as follows: "Battles were still going on in the country, while the democratic forces, led by the communists, began to build a new people's Hungary in the liberated parts of the country". Also the use of statistics, maps and graphic visualizations in the exhibitions is revealing in terms of creating or highlighting the polemic. Maps and statistics frequently divide the world into two. While all the exhibitions

322 While all these sites were used to signify White Terror and the inhumaine treatment of communists and Jews oppressed by the representatives of the Horthy regime, the sites had complex and entangled histories, with elements less favourable to the 'progressive forces'. For the exhibition to work, it had to "forget" how the Mária Nosztra prison, originally built as a monastery that had served as a penitentiary for women prisoners since the 1848-49 freedom fights, was taken over by the secret police (ÁVH) in 1950 to house political prisoners. The number of political prisoners was especially high after the revolt in 1956. By the same token, the representation of the villa at 60 Andrássy Street had to be similarily selective: the fact that the site had served as the headquarters of both the Arrow-Cross Party and the secret police was here beside the point.It was only the interrogation and torture of the communists that was to be included.

draw attention to figures onthe economic damage of the war, the 1960 exhibition also includes a comparison of daily bread portions in Hungary and Germany at the end of World War II. The fact that the portion of the Germans is twice as much is commented on as a 'faithful reflection of the poor standard of living'. While this was undeniably true, the choice of Nazi Germany as a point of comparison was hardly a coincidence, considering Hungary's increased economic dependence on Germany from the mid-1930s.[323] The 1960 exhibition includes a map of post-1956 aid with a division into capitalist and socialist countries, and the first three exhibitions feature a map of Hungarian partisans in Europe fighting international fascism. The photos included captions such as "This is how the capitalist world saw us". These elements give an impression of a constant global war scene. Even in cases where overt hostility is subdued, the persistent marking of the polar divide prevails[324]. The 1985 exhibition includes statistics of the development of the social structure. It shows that while in 1949 five percent of the population could be filed under "exploiters", by 1962 this social class has been eradicated. In other words, by drawing attention to the vast changes in the ownership of the means of production, the exhibition at the same time underlines the defeat and eventual disappearence – indeed, annihilation – of the 'class enemy'.

Judging by its visual display, it is the events of the liberation that are staged as the major drama of aggression. The mode of display highlights the devastations of World War II and the Nazi occupation. However, while the written exhibition text tells the story of how the fascists got what they deserved, the visual rhetoric draws rather on victimization. Here, the victims are not only the soldiers and the civilians but also the 'liberator' itself. This figure of the 'liberator' united the Red Army and the all-time freedom fighter envisioned as a communist. For this, the liberation exhibitions draw on the mythical figure of a communist martyr, a truce-bearer, who is killed by merciless aggressors. The birth of this figure is connected to the siege of Budapest in 1944, when two Soviet parley delegates Ostapenko and Steinmetz were killed. According to the communist version of history, they were brutally shot by the Germans, despite their peaceful message. More recently, several scholars have argued that even though both parley delegates were killed, their deaths were not the result of deliberate Nazi atrocities.[325] Nevertheless, the mythic figure of a truce bearer with a white flag was an important element in the construction of the communist martyr. The statues of Ostapenko and Steinmetz, both holding up a flag, were placed on highly frequented traffic interchanges in Budapest, forming im-

323 Romsics 2005:170-172.

324 In his analysis of the transformation of the ideologically constructed traditions during the state-socialist period in Hungary, András Bohár (2001) looks into the interactions between the ideological-political expectations as they have been articulated in party decrees and the artistic forms that were produced. Although he analyses artistic presentation in the form of literature and the fine arts, his findings are illuminating also in terms of the changes that may be detected in the symbolic forms of museum displays.

325 Rév 2005: 248-249; Ungváry 2002: 116-123.

portant landmarks for those entering and exiting the city.[326] The 1975 exhibition uses a copy of the statue of Steinmetz. Entering the first hall, the visitor is faced with the running figure of Captain Steinmetz, with large images of a city in ruins behind his back. In the viewer, this is likely to give the impression that he is fleeing into the arms of the viewer. It is as if the truce bearer with his white flag was seeking refuge from the mindless havoc of the war. This positioning forces the viewer to take sides at the moment of entering the first hall: she is no longer a mere visitor but immediately drawn into the events of the siege. Through this singled-out figure, the 'liberator' is heavily victimized. Further, the exhibitions operate with the evocation of fear: it is from this dreadful war scene from which the Red Army liberated the Hungarians. The display that draws on the mimetic mode the most is the 1985 exhibition, in its attempt to bring to life the fearful war scene in Budapest, with its air-raid shelters and the sound and feel of the broken tiles under the visitor's feet.

Viewed as a whole, the material put on display forms networks of signification, in which the ′progressive forces as ′Us′ are signified by the communist partisan fighters and martyrs, political leaders (some of whom were active in the time of the Soviet Republic), illegal press machines, radio transmitters, flyers and counterfeit stamps, masses of people, the Warsaw Pact and worker Esperantists[327]. This all appears as resistance through aggression and "networking", that is, by emphasizing the transmitting, distributive and interconnected nature of the progressive forces. In contrast, the ′reactionary forces′ are signified by Miklós Horthy and his regime, Radio Free Europe, Cardinal Mindszenty, snails, handcuffs, flyers, spy balloons, foreign weapons, Imre Nagy, "imperialists" and "fascists" as broad categories but also as representatives of the ′inner adversary′. However, the visual demarcation of difference has its limitations. Below, I identify three instances of dedifferentiating 'Us' from 'Them', which all relate to the visual control of aggression.

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326 In 1991, the statue of Captain Steinmetz (by Sándor Mikus, 1958) and the statue of Captain Ostapenko (Jenő Kerényi, 1951) were taken to the Memento Park (formerly Statue Park) on the outskirts of Budapest.

327 The 'worker esperantists' refers to the organization of esperantists in Hungary (Magyarországi Eszperantista Munkások Egyesülete), one of the labour movement-related cultural organizations that grew active in the mid-1920s. The field of leftist cultural movements was characterized by rivalry between the Social Democrats and KMP-affiliated organizations. In addition to the obvious symbolic of the Esperantists acting in the spirit of proletarian internationalism, the tensions between the social democratic and communist forces were not characteristic of the Esperantists on an international level. This unitary front of international Esperantists (SAT) was active in smuggling and distributing illegal international labour movement- related material in Hungary. Thus, in the exhibitions, the Esperantists stand for the solidification of the illegal communist forces on an international scale. See Serfőző, Lajos *Világszabadság* 9. http://vilagszabadsag.hu/html2pdf/frg2pdf.php?d=./frgs/&f=838.frg

4.1.2 Bracketing aggression: the 'peace fight' rhetoric

While in the written narrative of liberation the struggle between good and evil can be highlighted with well-crafted characters as heroes and villains, the visual or material representation of 'Them' and 'Us' may be problematic in the sense that much of the exhibited material signifying the progressive and reactionary forces are similar in their appearance. From the point of view of ideological legitimation, this may result in a threatening resemblance between the two rivals. When the representation of both draw on the display of flyers, weapons and the like, there is a fair risk of creating visual statements that in the spirit of emulation appear as menacingly similar. To overcome the problem of confusing visual similarity, the exhibitions make use of what I call the 'peace fight' rhetoric. Applied as a mode of display, the peace fight rhetoric works to mark the difference between Us and Them by bracketing off the aggression of the progressive forces. The practical techniques of the peace fight rhetoric are what I term material outshining, the politics of labelling, and peaceful intervention. Although I call them techniques, I do not want to argue that they would have been a deliberate curatorial choice but rather a result of the attempt visually to de-differentiate the two major historical forces that the communist view of history relied on.

As already pointed out, the material signifying resistance and struggle of the illegal communist movement includes printed matter such as books and flyers and also means of printing in the form of printing machines and stamps. While the displays do not shy away from exhibiting violence also on the progressive side, the display units are frequently built in a way that the peaceful material of resistance "outshines" the volume or visual impact of objects that signify aggression. This is most obvious in cases where the display units include either an authentic printing machine or its large-sized photo as an installation (Figure 23.). The display of a large-sized printing machine at a site of oppression and resistance relies on what I call the 'Enola Gay effect': the visual and material impact that is achieved through the mere *physical presence* of a visually dominant artefact[328]. The display of heroic resistance is rendered more enticing to look at when it is done in the aura of a large-sized relic that dominates the exhibition space. Whereas the physical presence of Enola Gay was inclined to result in the celebration of American aggression, the use of the printing machines had the opposite impact in the display units. The inclusion of a visually dominant artefact which is static in its appearance worked to bracket off the violence of the progressive forces.

Another technique of bracketing off aggression is connected to the politics of labelling by which I mean the practices of naming and exposition in relation to an object. Michael Baxandall has discussed the role of labels in relation to

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[328] In effect, much of Linenthal's (1995) discussion of the Enola Gay exhibition revolves around the impact of the material presence of the airplane. Linenthal (1995: 1095-1097) shows how the presence of the Enola Gay was a key issue among curators and historians discussing the exhibition. Several commentators were of the opinion that the presence of the airplane would make the exhibition too celebratory.

objects as one of directing connotations and signification. He emphasizes the explanatory role of the label in communicating the object's value to the viewer. For Baxandall, in the process of viewing, an 'intellectual space' is formed between the object and the label in which the exhibited culture, the exhibition designers and the viewer interact to make meanings.[329] Linenthal also discusses 'truth in labelling' as the dynamic between the caption and an object of aggression.[330] With the liberation exhibitions, what is noteworthy in relation to the displayed objects that carry marks of aggression is the differences in labelling, depending on whether these objects belong to the realm of the progressive or the reactionary forces. While bombs and weapons used by both sides are displayed, those used by the adversary are frequently labelled as 'foreign' or 'stolen'. This negative labelling reflects the curatorial intention to deem the objects of the adversary as evil or as having been possessed by illegimate means. This politics of labelling thus works to accent possible marks of alterity and threat embodied by the objects. It is as if saying: "Look closely, because the similarity you see is just a sham. These objects belonged to wrong-doers and that is why they are evil objects".

There is an intriguing tension between this negative labelling and the rhetoric of the heroic resistance of the progressive forces, especially the illegal communist movement. While the 'reactionary objects' are labelled as wrong, foreign and evil, the printing machines and stamps of the progressive forces are not just printing machines and stamps but *illegal* printing machines and *counterfeit* stamps. The rhetoric of constant resistance creates a legitimacy of its own, in which 'illegal' and 'counterfeit' became virtues. Within this legitimacy, deceiving the adversary is not a crime as long as it serves the heroic fight of communism. According to the visual statements of this struggle, a *counterfeit* rubber stamp of the illegal Communist Party turns out to be stronger than a bundle of *foreign* weapons used by the adversary. The communist party, "forced into illegality" as the frequently used phrase goes, and thus to the use of *counterfeit* stamps, derives its very legitimacy from its being counterfeit. Within this unjust illegality, counterfeit becomes the only true authenticity.

In addition to drawing on the 'Enola Gay effect' and politics of labelling, there is yet one more technique that has been used for bracketing off aggression. This is what I call a 'peaceful intervention'. It bears close resemblance to the politics of labelling in its use of written text in orienting signification, but it is done in a way that places the text inside the installation itself. Whereas a label comments on the objects by explaining or describing it, an intervention enters the set of objects put on display, *altering* its visual statement. A good example can be found in the 1965 exhibition, in the display of the partisan battles prior to liberation (Figure 27.) Among the weapons of the revolutionaries – firearms,

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[329] Baxandall 1990.

[330] Linenthal (1995: 1096) points out, how part of the uproar around the planned Enola Gay exhibited was due to the different light that the new captions shed on a V-2 rocket in the National Air and Space Museum. The question was, whether an object that was capable of mass destruction should be commented on rather in terms of technological progress or the possible suffering it caused.

bombs and instruments of propaganda – there is a relatively large-sized printed text in the show-case that reads "Béke" (Peace). The text turns the entire show-case into a visual statement of a 'peace fight'. According to this statement, all the warfare material displayed in this show-case is in the service of peace. This is how the violence used by the partisans in their quest to liberate Budapest is visually connected to the claims for peace, embodied by the communist propaganda text of the time. Therefore, the visual statement of the showcase reads: "With these measures, the partisans fought to achieve peace". Attached to the inbuilt showcase is a bronze relief depicting the symbol of the Hungarian Communist Party (KMP). What this proximity signifies is that these fighters are part of the same progressive forces that reorganized the Communist Party of Hungary into the Hungarian Communist Party in 1945, when it was no longer forced to work underground.

4.1.3 Annihilating the 'reaction'

In visualizing the heroic narrative of the struggle and victory of the progressive forces, it was not enough to accent the difference between the two forces but there were also events or figures that needed to be symbolically destroyed. The narrative of true revolutionaries overcoming the obstacles set by the counter-revolutionaries needed visualization of the counter-revolutionaries' attempts at annihilating 'Us', to which the progressive forces responded with symbolic annihilation. With symbolic annihilation, I mean the total destruction of the other by using symbolic means, without imagery of concrete acts of violence.

If the liberation brought about by the Soviet Army could be envisioned as liberation from all past oppression, as pointed out earlier, then an effective means of reenacting this liberation is the symbolic annihilation of Horthy's regime, the twenty-five years that preceded the 'liberation'. The visual display of the Horthy era drew heavily on striking contrasts. In the first hall of the 1970 exhibition, an image of a banquet in the Buda Castle is placed next to an image of a worker slicing bread. These two can be seen as the dynamics of class struggle at the time of 'liberation'. Obviously, the exhibitions were right in drawing attention to the vast socio-economic problems and the striking differences in living circumstances of pre-1945 Hungary. In the 1930s, more than half of the population earned its livelihood from agriculture. Despite the land reform in 1920, the historical privileges of the aristocracy and landed gentry continued to prevail. The structure of land tenure at the time was characterized by extremities: while the highest strata possessed huge estates, nearly 75 per cent of land owners owned less than five acres each.[331] In other words, while the gentry enjoyed a high standard of living, the small-holders and the landless lived in poverty, and the well-to-do peasantry in between was relatively small. The franchise was very restricted, and virtually excluded the poor peasantry from the

[331] Romsics 2008: 61-66.

election process.[332] The situation was further impaired by the worldwide economic crisis and hyperinflation. Thus, life circumstances were greatly affected by the world economy and post-war politics, especially the Treaty of Trianon, which meant major losses to Hungary, not only in terms of population and territory but also economically. However, the exhibitions do not acknowledge the impact of the international context and leave any positive development or gradual modernization unnoticed. With the Horthy era, the post-liberation logic of *per aspera ad astra* is not applied, but the entire era is depicted in solely negative terms.

While all the exhibitions clearly stigmatize the Horthy era as one of inequality and oppression, the 1970 exhibition contains an installation that works to symbolically annihilate the entire Horthy regime (Figure 25.). While the progressive forces that are taking a stand against fascism are embodied by the large-sized printing machine of the illegal Communist Party, the opposite side of the hall is dedicated to an installation that symbolizes the cowardice of Horthy's politicians. On the wall, there is a large-sized copy of Prime Minister Pál Teleki's letter of farewell to Regent Miklós Horthy. Teleki, who wanted to keep Hungary unaligned and who had recently signed a Treaty of Eternal Friendship with Yugoslavia, was opposed to Germany's invasion of Yugoslavia, which had a considerable Hungarian minority. As a response, Germany started its invasion of Hungary, and Teleki committed suicide. An excerpt from his suicide note reads: "We have become breakers of our word... I have allowed our nation's honor to be lost. The Yugoslav nation was our friend... But now, out of cowardice, we have allied ourselves with scoundrels. We will become body-snatchers! A nation of trash. I did not hold you back. I am guilty". Below the suicide note, there is a plotting board, which according to the script is "cut to imitate the borders of Hungary, objects and documents from the 25 years of Horthy's regime scattered all over, as if to symbolize fleeing." On this map of Hungary, there are images of Horthy, Hitler and Mussolini, armbands with Nazi and Arrow Cross symbols and police and gendarmerie uniforms, all on top of each other. While the script suggests a stronger act of annihilation on the part of the exhibition designers' ('Us'), as it describes the images and documents as "torn up", the photo from the exhibition shows them to be intact. Hence, 'the objects and documents of Horthy's regime' have not been mutilated (iconoclasm as an act of symbolic annihilation); instead, their chaotic placing on the plotting-board makes it clear that Horthy's regime from the viewpoint of com-

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[332] In addition to the striking differences in income and living circumstances, the dominant Marxist historiography preferred to emphasize the oppressive character of the political system, frequently deeming it 'fascist' and 'dictatorial'. By mid-1970s this was gradually moderated into 'authoritarian-dictatorial' (see e.g. Lackó 1975:298-316), and by the late 1980s, 'authoritarian and hegemonic, restricted parliamentarism' (Romsics 2004:228; Püski 2006: 279). Also the prevailing image of the social structure of the era as being cast-like with no mobility has more recently been refined (see e.g. Gyáni and Kövér 1998). Despite this relative consensus among historians, the debates about the nature of the Horthy era are on-going and often ideologically laden. Accordingly, Ignác Romsics (2008: 65) has called for the more extensive use of 'quantitative and narrative historical sources' for tenable characterizations of the era.

munist historiography was to be characterized as cowardice and villainy, with several political forces melted into an undifferentiated group of reactionaries. What is more, the map itself under the objects seems to be torn into pieces, first divided by the rivers Danube and Tisza, then sliced into rectangle-like parts. While this slicing most probably stands for the counties, it gives the impression of the country having fallen to pieces. Within Hungarian historiography, Teleki is seen as a rather contradictory figure, under whose term strict anti-Jewish laws were passed and the Arrow Cross leader Szálasi was given an amnesty but who nonetheless was opposed to Nazi Germany.[333] However, while the post-1956 communist historiography generally acknowledged Teleki's attempts to oppose Nazi Germany[334], the liberation exhibitions present him as a coward and a traitor in the service of the utterly corrupt Horthy regime. What the exhibition narrative needs is not musings on whether Teleki could be considered a martyr who recognized his failure among the conflicting interests of the different parties of the war, but Teleki's dramatic confession of his guilt due to which he *fled* by committing suicide. In the visualization of the narrative of the counter-revolutionary system, Teleki's suicide becomes a symbolic event that on its own is enough to foretell the fall of Horthy's regime. In this way the Horthy regime was retroactively annihilated in order to reinforce the liberation. In fact, in this installation, the adversary annihilates itself, paving the way for the liberation of the country that is about to come. In Foucault's terms, this is a staged scene of the unconditional surrender of the Horthy regime. This is surrender as cowardice.

A persistent element of symbolic annihilation in the exhibitions is the destruction of the statue of Gyula Gömbös, the radical right-wing politician and conservative prime minister of Hungary from 1932 to 1936. The marble statue erected in 1942 on Döbrentei square in Budapest was blown up by a communist action group on the 6th of October, 1944. This act was taken to mark the beginning of armed resistance against Nazi Germany.[335] The destruction of the statue is included in the exhibitions of 1960, 1965, 1970 and 1985, all of which lay emphasis on the history of the labour movement. The images of the blown up statue are presented as part of the fight against fascist aggressors as a brave act of sabotage. In the exhibition of 1965 and 1970, the blown up statue appears in the proximity of the illegal press machines of the communists, thus reinforcing the connection between 'the progressive forces' and their motivated aggression. Interestingly enough, on the 6th of October in 1966, a piece of the statue was placed on the spot where the statue once stood to commemorate the

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333 For a historiographic overview, see Ablonczy 2005:7-20.

334 Despite his ambiguity, from the 1960s Teleki was frequently regarded as an anti-fascist figure, as Balázs Ablonczy (2005:12) has pointed out. As stressed by András Mink (2004), the post-1956 image of Teleki is closely connected to the image of the entire Horthy regime. Although there was a tendency among communist historians to partially strip the Horthy regime of the strong fascist stigma it had during the years of Stalinism, this tendency cannot be seen in the exhibitions, and especially not in the 1970 exhibition.

335 Pótó 2003: 35; Boros 2010.

explosion itself and thus to mark 'the deliberate absence of a monument'[336]. In other words, then, this new block of marble carved from the statue was taken back to the square to *commemorate the annihilation of a monument* that in the eyes of the communists symbolized not only fascism and white terror but also the repression of the entire Horthy era.

4.1.4 Carefully portioned presence: the display of '56

In the communist version of history, the revolt was deemed 'counter-revolution', or a 'severe counter-revolutionary attack' which endangered not only national sovereignty but was an attack against the socialist bloc, Europe and all humanity. While this basic narrative of 1956 can be found in all the exhibitions, there are differences in the extent to which they dramatized the events, the way they portrayed the representatives of the revolutionary and the counter-revolutionary forces and how they visualized the power struggles and rivalry between the two forces. The exhibitions also differ in the distance they put between the Kádár and Rákosi regimes and in the extent to which they resort to written text, graphics, images, authentic objects and installations as tools of narration. In short, the exhibitions vary in the extent to which the world is divided between 'Us' and 'Them'. There are also differences in the role the narration ascribes to the Soviet Union or other socialist countries in the defeat of the counter-revolutionaries.

In the exhibition narratives, the revolt is positioned to mark the defeat of the counter-revolutionary forces. Within this narrative, the sense of rupture embodied by the events of 1956 is muffled in several ways. Firstly, the narrative takes pains to emphasize that on a closer look, 1956 was not such a big break in the development of socialism after all: with the death of Stalin in 1953, the political doctrine had been put under the spotlight and "healthy forces" were already at work, years before the revolt. Secondly, by discussing the revolt by referring to it as "the changing face of our country", the events are positioned as an unfortunate but inevitable phase on the road to socialism: a chain of events that despite its casualties led to the defeat of the reactionary forces and the restitution of the Leninist norms in the leadership of János Kádár. Consequently, the narrative of 1956 is as much a narrative of consolidation: the return to order after chaos but now on a renewed basis that is more faithful to the authentic cause of communism. Therefore, the narrative seeks to distance itself from the Stalinist leadership of Rákosi – in other words distance itself from the 'sect-like, dogmatic mistakes' of Rákosi's rule and thus make the Stalinist era a distorted mirror, an 'Other' of true communism. Rákosi's dictatorship works thus on the one hand as a warning of what may result if development gets off the track, and on the other, as proof of communism's capability for renewal and self-correction. Now that the counter-revolutionary forces had been defeated and the distorted elements cleaned out of the leadership, the trust of the masses was won back and the people joined forces with renewed enthusiasm.

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[336] Szűcs 1994.

All in all, the display of '56 is treated with great caution. Often the texts were copied from party congress declarations almost word for word. In 1965, the curators felt it was necessary for the 1956-related display to be reviewed once more by a representative of the Institute of the History of the Party[337]. This is not surprising, since the mode of display of 1956 underwent radical changes between the first and the final version of the script. In the original plan, the display of 1956 was to include a dramatic visualization of the personality cult of Mátyás Rákosi in the form of red drapery and portraits of three victims of the Stalinist reign, illuminated with torches. In other words, this installation would have drawn on the way the portraits of political leaders were put on display but by replacing them with their victims. The most important figure among the victims was László Rajk, a politician, who was arrested by the political police (AVH) in the May of 1949, and sentenced to death as a result of a show trial based on trumped-up charges. [338] This visually powerful installation is most probably connected to the decree the party issued in 1962 calling for stigmatization of the Rákosi personality cult and the rehabilitation of the 'fighters of the labour movement' , who had been condemned before 1956.[339] There is no mention why this conception was later abandoned, but the reasons probably lie in the possible emotional effects of producing a visual display depicting the personality cult, even if done in a spirit of condemnation. Although the inner logic of the narration demanded the condemnation of the Stalinist regime, of which the personality cult was an inherent part, it may have been too risky to allow for the material presence of illuminated portraits against a red drapery, which may have reminded the visitor of the compulsory 'red corners' of offices and other public buildings, where the great three: Lenin, Stalin and Rákosi, "our beloved leader" (szeretett vezérünk) were to be placed side by side.[340] Although these three great leaders would have been replaced by the portraits of four major victims of Rákosi's dictatorship, the mode of display would have born a *threatening resemblance* to the display of the 'Holy Trinity' during the years of Stalinism. Then again, the display of the personality cult was not a visual display issue for Kádár's regime alone, since Rajk's case remained a delicate issue and a source of mistrust in the post-1956 years[341], despite the great pains taken by the political leadership to convince the people that the ones to blame

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337 TAD-269-75 Memo of a meeting held at undersecretary comrade János Molnár, Jan 30, 1965

338 László Rajk was a member of the Politburo and Organisational Bureau of the Hungarian Workers' Party, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Secretary-General of the People's Front, and member of parliament, whom Rákosi considered his rival. His case was followed by a series of illegal trials between 1949 and 1951 against a number of Party members. After 1956, these trials, especially that of Rajk, came to be known as one of 'the most tragic distortions of the Leninist norms', and closely associated with Rákosi's personality cult.

339 Romsics 2005: 421-422.

340 The dominance of the images of Lenin, Stalin and Rákosi is characteristic of the pre-1956 displays of the history of the labour movement, which may be regarded as the predecessors of the liberation exhibitions during the Stalinist period.

341 See The Radio Free Europe report from 1969 "The Laszlo Rajk Trial: A Lesson in Political and Moral Responsibility", Open Society Archives http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/34-4-188.shtml

were ‘Them’, the Rákosi’s clique, and not ‘Us’, the renewed branch of communist rule under the name Kádár. Therefore, a dramatic display of the personality cult is left out in 1965 and in its place there is more emphasis on the victims of the counter-revolution, along with expressions of gratitude to the heroes (see the discussion of Éva Kállai as a communist martyr in chapter 4.3).

For communist historiography, the event of key symbolic importance was the siege of the party headquarters in Republic Square (Köztársasági tér) on the 30th of October 1956, when counter-revolutionaries killed 24 of those who were assigned to safeguard the building.[342] Also in the exhibitions, the drama culminates around the party headquarters. All the exhibitions that visualize the uprising (1960, 1965, 1970 and 1985)[343] include at least one image of the killings, accompanied with captions that highlight the brutality of the counter-revolutionaries. In the struggle waged by the progressive forces, this event is made the point of unconditional surrender. Of key importance in this event is the image of ‘revolutionaries’ coming out of the party headquarters, holding up a white flag (handkerchief) as a sign of surrender. This is when the counter-revolutionaries commit a double crime: they kill revolutionaries who have already surrendered. This symbolic of the white flag of surrender connects the events in Republic Square to those of liberation, through the iconic figures of the Soviet truce bearers, Ostapenko and Steinmetz.[344]

Of all the exhibitions, the 1970 exhibition gives the most detailed account of the drama at the Party headquarters. The exhibition presents a diorama on the events in Republic Square, combining maps, sound recordings and authentic objects. The diorama makes the same claim as the official narrative of ’56 outlined above: the ‘counter-revolutionary attack’ was a joint manoeuver of the inner adversary, the bourgeois remnants, and the outer adversary, the imperialist, capitalist West. According to the description given in the script, the exhibition unit opens with a map of Europe, showing the broadcast network of Radio

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342 Apor 2009:2-3, 54-69.

343 The archive material of the 1975 exhibition does not show any traces of the thematization of 1956, though some caution should be exercised, since the actual script of the exhibition has not been available. However, based on the available material it is safe enough to say that if the question of 1956 appeared in the exhibition, its discussion was marginal and visually modest. Nor does the 23-page illustrated exhibition catalogue mention the revolt. Although this evident absence can be in part explained by the dual focus of the exhibition – the events of liberation and the (mainly economic) development of Budapest - it does raise some questions. Whatever the reason for this marginality or omission, the tenser political climate of the early 1970s may well have played a role. After all, this was the time when the recently introduced economic mechanisms were withdrawn, philosophers were denied party membership due to their “right-wing revisionism” and more rigorous measures of censorship were practised. In contrast, the exhibition of 1980 does briefly mention the revolt but merely as a reference to the MSZMP declaration that mentioned the victory over the counter-revolutionary attack along with the restitution of the party’s ’Leninist norms’. However, the exhibition does not include any visualisations or artefacts relating to the revolt, while it includes a large photo of an attack by the Red Army in 1944. What is more, the periodization of the exhibition smoothly overrides 1956 by dividing the socialist era into four periods, of which the second includes the years 1949-1962.

344 For an analysis of the communist truce-bearer symbolism, see Rév 2005:246-249.

Free Europe. Beneath the map, there are earphones through which a short recording is played, a "revealing fragment" from the program "Reflektor". After the recording has been played, the Republic Square diorama is lit up. On the wall, next to the map, there is a photo of the "spy-balloons" launched from West Germany and on the floor there is an authentic piece of a balloon (Figure 26.). The balloon is accompanied by a table showcase with authentic weapons used by counter-revolutionaries. A series of five large-sized photos shows the "murder of the protectors of the party headquarters". In a show-case on the wall, there are authentic pieces of smashed and burnt books, records and national and red flags, accompanied by photos of counter-revolutionaries burning books and mutilating communist monuments and symbols. Several counter-revolutionaries have their photos on the wall. They are presented as "characters of the underworld". The caption on the wall states that the main Hungarian counter-revolutionary force was the former privileged class, and next to the text, there are photos of British and U.S. diplomats and Cardinal Mindszenty giving an interview to Western journalists. This is followed by a photomontage of the events of the counter-revolution and a portrait of Mihály Korbély, commissioner of the Hungarian Red Army, who protected the party headquarters.

This is how the drama - or indeed, tragedy – of the revolt is organized around the events of Republic Square, and what is more, it is done in a way that locates the outer sphere (of enemies, the western imperialists, at the very centre of the action. Communist historiography considered the siege of the party headquarters the day that the 'true face' of the counter-revolutionaries was unmasked.[345] This is how, according to István Rév, Republic Square was made into the Archimedean point of the Communist interpretation of history.[346] It seems that since 1970, there has been no particular need for such detailed visualization of these events – either of the fear of the enemy or the portrayal of his defeat. The exhibition of 1985 features only one photo of the killings. Then again, what has to be kept in mind is that the liberation exhibitions were primarily repetitive exhibitions, each being a re-issue in the same commemorative genre. Viewed from this perspective, the visual representations of the earlier exhibitions were implicitly present in this cumulative narrative of the progressive forces. Thus, the narration could rely on mere signs to refer to the events, on the assumption that visitors would recognize these references. The use of indications is frequent in the exhibition scripts, as they mark instances where it is enough to merely indicate without going into a detailed presentation. Even more importantly, it may be considered a risky business to invest in a rich and dramatic display of the revolt, since there was no possible visual display that would change the fact that the memory of the revolt was inherently a divided one. In contrast, the drama of 'liberation' could be staged as a joint victory over the Second World War and the beginning of peaceful construction and modernization. Although the liberation had its losses, these could be faded out by laying visual emphasis on the casualties of the war or by placing a lone fig-

345 Hollós and Lajtai 1974:76, quoted in Rév 2005:151.
346 Rév 2005:275.

ure of a 'liberator' in a war scene. The reasons for the greater investment in the drama of liberation lie in the fact that despite the fact that 'liberation' signaled the beginning of Soviet occupation - naturally a taboo subject during the years of socialism – it nevertheless meant the end of the war and the beginning of reconstruction, and this was something that united the 'progressive' and the 'reactionary' forces. In contrast, the legitimacy of the crushing of an anti-Stalinist revolt with the intervention of the Red Army was much more complicated. Thus, the visual representation of 1956 was highly problematic: it could not be totally left out since it would have appeared as an obvious gap. Besides, the Kádárian version of 1956 needed to distance itself from the Stalinist dictatorship of Rákosi. The problem is, of course, that forceful visual distancing through visual representation is a paradox that results in 1956 being an intensive presence in the exhibition space, which in turn most probably also leads to the evocation of counter-memories of the revolt. Therefore, what was at stake was finding a balance between representation and non-representation. In any case, the drama of Republic Square was the only event that could be visually singled out, since its visual statements were clear: the counter-revolutionaries used unmotivated violence against helpless victims.

Eventually, the display of '56 is a question of annihilation. On the part of communist historiography, it is an attempt to visualize the entire revolt through a single symbolic event as an act of annihilation. However, the important difference in the visualization of annihilation between the progressive and the reactionary forces is that while the representation of 'Us' as annihilators is restricted to symbolic annihilation, 'They' as annihilators are depicted through both symbolic and concrete annihilation. Further, when it is 'Us' that fall victim to their annihilation, the modes of display seem to seek a sense of visual or material closure. In other words, 'Us' as victims of annihilation need to be visually redeemed. This is particularly noticeable with the display of '56 which frequently draws on the imagery of symbolic mutilation and iconoclasm. Among the images of armed counter-revolutionaries, the exhibition of 1965 includes a photo of people crushing the red stars that have been torn down from public buildings. Later, when the restitution of the socialist order is displayed mainly by showing several photos of Party meetings and gathered crowds in March 1957, the series of images closes with an image of the parliament building with the red star back in place. The caption reads: "The red star shines again over the parliament building". After the disorder and the book bonfires that "evoked the gloomy years of fascism", the red star has resumed its due place. The drama hanging over the 23rd of October, 1956 and March 1957 is marked with the annihilation and restoration of the red star. These two images enclose the siege of the party headquarters, the heroic resistance of the revolutionaries, the imperialist forces assisting the counterrevolutionaries presented in the form of the image of a car containing British diplomats, Cardinal Mindszenty, the *foreign* and *stolen* weapons used by counter-revolutionaries, the revolving rubber stamp as a *weapon* in the fight against counter-revolution, the remains of burned books,

images of mutilated flags, portraits of the martyrs of the counter-revolution and statistics on the economic losses of the counter-revolution.

A somewhat similar case of redemption can be found in the display of ’56 in the 1970 exhibition. On the wall, next to a show-case displaying the internal and external enemy as reactionary forces, is a pioneer flag bearing the name of Endre Ságvári (Figure 26.). Ságvári, a member of the then illegal Communist party and also one of the leaders of the Social Democratic party, was shot in a fight in 1944 when gendarmes tried to arrest him. Communist historiography turned him into an iconic figure and a martyr of the illegal anti-fascist movement. Thus, his name was popular in the names of socialist brigades and pioneer teams. What makes this particular flag interesting, however, is its metonymic link to the events of ’56. The caption of the flag states that this pioneer flag had been thrown away in the turmoil of the events in October and was later picked up by someone. (His or her name is to be included in the exhibition, though it is yet missing from the script.) This may be viewed as an instance of redemption par excellence: a valuable, symbolic object that is discarded as rubbish is redeemed and later displayed as a valuable object testifying to the victory of the revolutionary forces. This rescued and redeemed *authentic* object is placed next to the photos of the burning of books and mutilation of flags: this is the fire the flag survived. The flag’s authenticity does not lie in its functional use as a pioneer flag but in the faith of its *having been there* at the time it all happened. The act of being put on display is in itself a testimony to the persistence of communism. Positioning the flag above the boxes in which ‘counter-revolutionary’ propaganda was launched from West Germany suggests that the cause of communism is superior to the false propaganda of the imperialists. Therefore, what has been discarded by ‘Them’ is now put on display by ‘Us’ as a trophy.[347]

4.1.5 Mutuality and subordination: the ‘COMECON mode’ of display

The colonial impulse that permeates the Cold War frame is inherent not only in the political structures of the bi-polar division between the super-powers into spheres of interest but also in the material and visual representations of

[347] Péter Apor has discussed the similarities and differences between the communist reinterpretations of the history of 1956 and the historical revisionism related to the history of the Holocaust. Apor sees the major difference between the pro-Nazi and Communist types of revisionism in their radically different use of material traces of historical events. The deniers of the Holocaust base their arguments on the logic that since no-one has eye-witnessed the gas chambers from inside, there is no sufficient proof of their existence. Therefore, whereas the Holocaust revisionists rely on the repression of certain histories, the communists took great efforts to base their arguments on a carefully selected set of material traces, including real atrocities, persons, photographs and documents. Apor regards this careful fabrication based on material evidence a more dangerous form of reshaping history, since it appears as convincing. By the same token, the memory of 1956 was repressed without its being denied. (See Apor 2009: 4-6.) The liberation exhibitions as arrays of visual and material evidence of the socialist past are a concrete case of the problematic outlined by Apor. After all, the narration of a museum exhibition draws on material traces for immediate evidence.

subordination along with mutual dependence and interest. The irony, of course, is that while the liberation exhibitions represented the West as an imperialist, aggressive colonizer, they are silent about the Soviet occupation of the countries of the eastern bloc and their asymmetrical power-structures. The hegemony of the Soviet Union over Hungary frequently appears as the visual representation of subordination. This tendency is visible in the use of maps and other graphic representations, which due to their level of abstraction and generalization appear as visual statements of dependence and subordination. The map of the 'Friendship Pipeline', from 1965, serves as a text-book case of such 'mapping' (Figure 28.). The 'Friendship Pipeline', the trunk crude oil pipeline from the USSR into the 'fraternal states' of the eastern bloc, was a joint effort of COMECON. The decision to build the line was passed in 1958, and the line was opened fully in 1964. Since the line reached Hungary in 1963, its inclusion into the 1965 exhibition appears as more than timely. This pipeline, also known as the Comecon pipeline and 'Druzhba pipeline' (with its Russian name pertaining to friendship), was designated to feed the energy-hungry states of COMECON, with the "ultimate aim to create an integrated chemical industry throughout the Communist world"[348]. At the same time, the pipeline worked as an important politico-economic link for the Soviet Union in its attempt to push toward the west.[349] The map of COMECON draws on the technique of 'calibration', which Terry Smith has identified as a major aspect of the visual regimes of colonization. Calibration involves the mapping of oceans and landmasses and the measurement of distances and governmental and property boundaries as a way of fixing position, exacting control and maintaining order.[350] What makes the map particularly interesting is its selection of depicted elements, which leads to the impression that Moscow (Kremlin) is the centre where the branches of the pipeline connect and from where they are physically controlled, whereas in reality, the distance between Moscow and the connecting point of the pipe is more than three hundred kilometers (Figure 28). The use of the symbols on the map is not explained, but we can assume that the capital cities are marked with drawings of parliament buildings or other iconic buildings of political power, while the circles stand for the major refineries in each country. The refineries are depicted in close proximity to the capital cities of the five countries, again enforcing the idea of the refineries being operated from the loci of the decision-makers. This vast territory stretches from the Black Sea to the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian Sea and north to the Baltic Sea. It appears as an immense empire, with fleets and fish in the sea, a random windmill in the north, a skier in the Tatra Mountains and a few people in their folk costumes, all depicted with a mixture of abstraction and air of naivistic folklorism. Within this larger scale, the five countries connected by the pipeline appear as a privileged inner sphere

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348 "The COMECON Pipeline: Background research," Retrieved from the Open Society Archives: http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/122-1-92.shtml March 31, 2011.

349 ibid.

350 Smith 1998: 483.

with a hotline straight to Moscow, while the southern parts of the empire by the Black Sea are remote and detached. At the same time, this hotline appears as a vehicle of enhanced surveillance and influence: the mutuality of the proclaimed mutual economic assistance is of an asymmetric type. ¨

By the same token, the 1970 exhibition uses a similar colonizing display to depict the mutual cooperation between the 'fraternal countries'. In the exhibition hall, there is a pillar which is described in the script as an 'accentuated pillar' (kiemelt oszlop), which combines party congress resolutions, photos, documents of the COMECON and a series of anti-Fascist posters from several countries. What the script stresses, however, is that the majority of these posters are to be Soviet. This is how the Soviet Union is placed in the centre to show the dominance of this communist super-power while the other members of the eastern bloc are dispersed to the margin.

Another instance of a colonizing display is the use of foreign symbols in a visually dominant way. In the exhibition of 1975, for instance, all of the displayed material is positioned under a series of Red Army flags. Even though it is unlikely that this positioning was applied as a deliberate technique to symbolize the subordinate position of Hungary in relation to the Soviet Union, it nevertheless gives the impression that anything that happened, happened under the Soviet flag. Intentional or not, it works as a visual statement, as if to reveal the true nature of the liberation; of liberation in fact marking the beginning of a new occupation. At the same time, it can be interpreted as a visual representation of subordination.

In the same exhibition, there is another display technique that has colonial undertones. The viewpoint of the Soviet soldier has been incorporated into the display of the 'liberation'. This is related to the original concept of the exhibition, which would have concentrated on presenting the liberation solely through the eyes of Soviet soldiers. In concrete terms, this has been realized as a series of sketches and drawings by the soldiers of the Red Army, which run like a thread through the first exhibition hall. This insertion of the common soldier's viewpoint is related to the subtext of the Soviet soldier as a coequal and a friend who gave bread to the civilians in Budapest.[351] Therefore, without erasing the 'Hungarian viewpoint' (of course, a construct and adapted to the communist views of the events), the viewpoint of the ordinary Soviet soldier was incorporated, in order to give the 'liberators'a human face. Indeed, a poster that frequently appears in connection with the events of liberation is the one that addresses the citizens of Budapest, reassuring them that the Red Army has not arrived as a conqueror but as a liberator.

Part of the display of subordination is the display of the mutual trust and benevolence between Hungary and the Soviet Union. The representation of Hungarian-Soviet relations in the exhibitions include expressions (or rather, declarations) of mutual benevolence, with an emphasis on the display of the goodwill of the Soviet Union. The exhibition of 1965 includes a large-sized text,

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351 This subtext was circulated for instance in the form of short stories in the jubilee issues of newspapers and magazines that commemorated the liberation.

stating: "The way to prosperity: friendly alliance with the Soviet Union". In a similar fashion, the 1970 exhibition includes a big colour photograph accompanied by the exclamation: "Long live the Hungarian-Soviet friendship!" In the exhibition section depicting liberation, the uniforms of a Hungarian soldier and a Red Army soldier are duly placed side by side, as a statement of a joint battle for common goals. An expression of Soviet goodwill that has been singled out in the exhibitions of 1960-1970 is the return of the flags of the Hungarian battalions connected with the freedom fight of 1848 against the Habsburgs. A number of flags had been taken to the Soviet Union as loot. In fact, some of these flags had been taken and returned twice: first in 1941, and for the second time for the centenary of the battle in 1948, when they were put on display in the National Museum. The return of the flags is thus a friendly gesture, and in the exhibitions they symbolize the mutual trust and friendship between the two countries. The exhibition of 1960 does not include any of the flags in their material form but photos of their ceremonious return. The exhibition five years later includes not only the photos of the ceremony but a show-case with several of the returned flags. In the exhibition of 1970, however, the use of the flags has been reduced to a sign: one flag has been placed on the wall in the section that displays the struggle of the illegal communist movement. There is no commentary, no photos of the act of return. Here, the flag, placed next to the portraits of communist heroes and in the proximity of the printing machine, implicitly contains the idea of the benevolence and fraternity of the communists, but this meaning is only secondary. Here the presence of the 1848 flag reads as a statement of the historical continuity of the struggle of the progressive forces against reaction and oppression. According to the communist teleological logic, the same desire for freedom and the same true patriotism led to the events of 1848 as to those of liberation. According to this logic, Petőfi could easily be envisioned as a pre-Marxist communist[352], while the whole of 1848 was seen as one of the most glorious events in Hungarian history, the communists frequently calling themselves 'the heirs of '48'.[353] In a sense, therefore, the inclusion of 1848 in the 1970 exhibition combines the two meanings: the flag appears as an indication of historical continuity on the road towards freedom and justice but at the same time the very presence of the flag in the exhibition is due to the benevolence of the Soviet Union. Through the joint efforts of international communism, we have brought back the spirit of 1848; yet it is more than mere spirit since 1848 is materially present in the form of the flag, whose nature as a relic proclaims: "1848 really happened". Interestingly enough, there are very few similar instances in the liberation exhibitions that evoke 1848, despite the strong tendency to historicize the communist system as an heir of the 19th century freedom fight. It seems that the Kádárian version of the story of liberation did not need or want strong visual references to 1848. It is possible that this relative absence of 1848 is due to the role that was given to the freedom fight during the

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[352] Gaspar, Edmund 1969: 5. OSA http://files.osa.ceu.hu/holdings/300/8/3/text/34-4-255.shtml ; Gerő 2003.

[353] Gerő 2003.

1956 uprising. The ‘counter-revolutionaries’, who cut out the communist coat of arms from the Hungarian flag, assumed the Kossuth coat of arms, dating back to 1849, as their symbol of struggle and resistance. Therefore, strong reference to 1848 and its iconic figure Petőfi may have been easily associated with the ‘counter-revolutionaries, the ‘reactionaries’ who also claimed their share of Kossuth’s heritage. Consequently, in the liberation exhibitions, the symbols and iconic figures of 1848-9 appear mainly in the names of collective farms and socialist brigades. Even in those cases where 1848 is present (the book “On Petőfi’s Road” in 1960 and 1965), it is incorporated in the form of minor signs with little visual impact.

The display of mutuality and interdependence takes on a different form in the exhibition of 1985, due to the precision and elaborate detail in which the material culture of socialism is presented. The street scene from the 1950s is incredibly rich in details of clothing, containing references to the impact of other ’fraternal’ countries. It shows the effect of the ’socialist market’ on everyday consumption and appearance: the dummies wear silk garments that have been made in China and shoes from Czechslovakia, and the shop windows of the 1980s show a notable number of imported products. Much of the displayed material is characteristically ”COMECON material”, that is, the material culture of the eastern bloc.

4.1.6 Tracing tendencies: from aggression to vigilance

In this chapter, I have discussed the display and presence of polemic in the liberation exhibitions with an attempt to identify different modes of display that have been used to visually construct these polemic representations. In this discussion, the focus has been on the techniques of visual display. However, I shall indicate here some of the differences in the display of aggression between the exhibitions, some of which appear as changing tendencies over time. Viewing the exhibitions in a row (as beads on a thread), it seems that overt hostility and annihilation are deflated into a display of symbolic aggression in an atmosphere of constant vigilance. This is mainly due to the changing inner proportions of things and thematic put on display. While struggle and battle prevail throughout the exhibitions in relation to the presentation of political history, the overall polemic is diluted as the proportion of space devoted to the representation of culture and lifestyle becomes increasingly central. Obviously, one of the reasons for this is that the last two exhibitions have a clearly different focus: in 1980, it is the interrelationship of art and society, with political history present mainly through congress decrees and posters, whereas the 1985 exhibitions lays heavy emphasis on aspects of lifestyle. Above all, the exhibitions manifest a shift in the coming-of-age story of socialist Hungary from the sphere of politics towards the sphere of culture.

In terms of visual polemics, the 1970 exhibition appears as the most complex and contradictory one. On the one hand, it manifests the above-mentioned shift in focus towards culture from politics and does not apply the overtly hostile language or the more brutal objects of torture characteristic of

the exhibitions of the 1960s, although it retains the rather detailed representation of the history of the labour movement. At the same time, in terms of visual display, the exhibition of 1970 appears as the culmination of annihilation. Along with the symbolic annihilation of the Horthy era, this exhibition stages the siege of the party headquarters in 1956 as the ultimate contest between good and evil. Although the outcome of this fight is the crushing of the 'counter-revolution' by the Red Army (that is 'Us', the progressive forces), this is not thematised in the visual display. Visually, what is at stake is display of the mindless and irrational violence of the counter-revolutionaries: the showing of the unmotivated killing by 'Them' in order to motivate our violence.

The over-all reduction in polemic as visual impact is connected to the diminishing role of the history of the labour movement in the exhibitions, which shows a marked decline after 1970. In terms of visual display, the 1960 exhibition is most detailed one in its display of the different types of bombs used by communist partisan groups in Budapest. Also, the history of the Communist Party is given the most attention in the first exhibition, with an explicit attempt to emphasize its continuities over eras and regimes. Its origins are traced to the short-lived Communist regime of the Soviet Republic of Hungary established after the First World War. The communist martyrs of the period of illegality are given much more attention in the 1960s exhibitions than in the later exhibitions. Consequently, the communist martyr memorabilia feature less in the exhibitions over the course of time: the embroided pillows with the names of martyrs appear only in the 1960 exhibition. The same is true for a key relic of the anti-Fascist struggle, the silver coin of Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, a prominent figure in 'the Hungarian antifascist resistance'[354]. The 'journey' of this single object through the liberation exhibitions to the current temporary exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum manifests a shift from being a symbol of providence to mere curiosity. In the liberation exhibitions, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky is portrayed as a martyr of the Arrow-Cross terror and he appears in the company of the illegal press-machine, documents of the KMP, flyers, stamps, images and weapons of communist partisans and prison memorabilia. Together these elements signify the progressive forces aligned against fascism. Along with photographs, he is embodied in the displays by a metonymic sign: a silver coin. Following the German occupation in 1944, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was wounded in an attack by the Gestapo due to ricochet but he survived because of a silver coin he had in his pocket. This coin, bearing the marks of the bullet and thus the fight itself on it, is displayed in the exhibitions of 1965 and 1970 as an important relic of the anti-fascist struggle. What makes the coin particularly powerful is its

[354] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was a politician and journalist and a leading figure in organizing oppositional groups against Nazi-Germany and the Arrow-Cross Party. He was attacked in his flat by the Gestapo, and was arrested following an armed fight, in which he was wounded. Shortly after his release, he was taken to the Margit Street prison along with other oppositional figures, and tortured brutally. Eventually he was executed on December 24th, 1944. Despite his being a nationalist politician, his opposition to National Socialism made him a prominent, though ambiguous figure in the labour movement aligned coming-of-age story of anti-fascist resistance.

multiple levels of signification. In addition to the inherent metonymic link to its subject as an anti-fascist hero and to the dramatic event in which this heroism was tested, the coin and its physical presence symbolize the providence the cause of communism had been blessed with. Since the fight culminated in a momentum in which the adversary literally bounces off, the coin signifies the invincibility of communism. This it does despite the fact that Bajcsy-Zsilinszky was in fact far from being a communist: he was a radical right-wing politician whose courageous opposition to fascism nevertheless made him a martyr of the 'progressive forces'. Indeed, it is quite remarkable how right-wing radicalism and 'progress' can be reconciled in the exhibition narratives with the help of alignment and selection. Especially in the early exhibitions, the image of Bajcsy-Zsilinszky appears in the context of the *Communist Party's* struggle for a free and independent Hungary.[355] This reconciliation is based on the premise that "[T]he organizers, leaders and front-line fighters of this antifascist resistance in Hungary were the communists."[356] This alignment follows the logic of the post-World War I history as "a history of constant, ongoing struggle between the Forces of Communism and of Fascism."[357] Within this frame, anti-Fascism could be envisioned as an auxiliary to the cause of communism.[358]

The persistence of the coin as a powerful historical relic is proven by the fact that the coin is still considered worth exhibiting. It occupies its due place in the current permanent exhibition of the Hungarian National Museum entitled "History of Hungary from the foundation of the state to 1990" in the section depicting the German and Soviet occupation. The coin appears as a curiosity on the home page of the museum presenting the current permanent exhibition. It is placed next to the objects and documents signifying the Jewish victims of World War II and the attempts by foreign groups to save them. The brief description of the object on the home page reads: "After the German occupation, the Gestapo arrested the well known anti-Nazi politicians and public figures. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky also got involved in a fire fight with the undercover agents who wanted to arrest him. When he was shot on the left side of his chest, his life was saved by the 'five-pengő' coin displayed here."[359] While the coin has retained its

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355 The 1960 and 1965 exhibitions manifest a deliberate attempt to dovetail the figure of Bajcsy-Zsilinsky with the coming-of-age story of the Party. See e.g. TAD 192-75 "A magyar nép a szocializmus útján 1945-1960 c. kiállítás forgatókönyve", A KMP harca a független, szabad, demokratikus Magyarországért, pp. 21-25 .

356 Kerekes 1968:29. Although the quote derives from the English resumé of an exhibition leaflet from 1968 for a permanent exhibition realized by the Museum of Military History and cannot thus be compared to the series of temporary, commemorative exhibitions that form the subject of this study, it nevertheless serves as a testimony to the tendency to align anti-Fascist struggle with that of Communism.

357 Rév 2005: 223. Not without irony, István Rév has remarked that "In Europe's eastern half only Communists were allowed to be anti-Fascists in histories that could only be written by Communists" (Rév 2005:226).

358 Also József Kiss has drawn attention to the attempts within Marxist historiography to reconcile Bajcsy-Zsilinszky's figure with the 'progressive cause' by emphasizing the later years of his life and his apparent breaking away from his earlier anti-Semite views. This was interpreted as his growing more sympathetic to leftist politics and the social and political significance of the working class. See Kiss 2007: 28-38.

359 http://www.hnm.hu/en/kiall/kia_allando2_10.html Accessed on 8.4.2010.

value as a powerful relic, its meaning within the new exhibitionary complex has altered. Whereas within the body of the liberation exhibitions the coin signified the invincibility of communism, contributing to the over-all coming-of-age story of ‘progress’, the coin is now just one more curious item of the occupation among the objects relating to the victims of both occupations. This is how a symbol of providence is turned into a historical curiosity.

Yet, while the global scene of the Cold War and the constant struggle of the progressive forces is moderated, the logic of polemic prevails. Although the world is not *visually* divided into two to the same extent as in the early exhibitions, all exhibitions ‘strike down’ or ‘swipe out’ the bourgeois reactionaries all the same. In the 1985 exhibition, the bourgeoisie ‘comes out of its hiding places or leaks back into the country from the West’. While more attention is laid on peaceful construction work, there is also a reference to the ‘new pursuits of imperialism’. Further, the exhibitions contain persistent embodiments of symbolic aggression, the most visible of which are the propaganda posters and art works realised in a socialist realist spirit and frequently articulating physical power. In Foucault’s terms, rather than being the killer instinct mobilized, this is the killer-instinct halted, ready to be re-mobilized. Visually, this appears as traces of aggression in otherwise peaceful or static installations (Figure 29).

Coming back to Steven E. Weil’s musings about the the Marxist-Leninist exhibitions being ’at variance with the truth’, it may be concluded that the truth of the liberation exhibitions is a highly selective one. The mode of constructing truth and authenticity relies on evoking analogies and harnessing certain similarities between certain lines of events, and, at the same time, repressing dangerous analogies. From the point of view of legitimation, the advantage of using the broad and deliberately blurred categories of progressive and reactionary forces was their flexibility. With a bit of stretching, a nationalist politician could be incorporated into ’Us’, if it served the overall ’progressive’ cause of communism. Then again, many of the modes of display and the visual statements they convey may have not been deliberate choices but mere coincidence. Nonetheless. I argue that they provide interesting insights into the ways meanings were made in the exhibitionary complex. Moreover, the ’truthfulness’ of different modes of display and visual statements are often elsewhere than intended. The hegemony inscribed in the ’ COMECON mode’ of display is revealing in terms of visualizing voluntary subordination in relation to the colonizer. Further, the exhibitions are interesting in their visual rhetoric, downplaying their role as aggressors. In a sense, the image or idea of the partisan is extended over the entire crusade for the progressive cause. The image of the partisan is associated with courageous resistance and reaction to threat, rather than initiating aggression. The displayed violence of the progressive forces is frequently downplayed with the ”material outshining” of the ’Enola Gay effect, by the politics of naming or use of ’peaceful interventions’ in otherwise aggressive display units. In terms of visual polemics, while symbolic annihilation is shown on both sides, the imagery of crude acts of

violence are reserved to represent the adversary. It is *their* concrete acts of violence that are to be shown, whereas *our* acts of violence are to be told.

4.2 Resonance and wonder socialist style: the liberation exhibitions as dream space

This section discusses the liberation museum exhibitions as sites of desire. It argues that two kinds of separate but related dreams are provoked within the symbolic spaces of the exhibitions.[360] While the dream of possession is inherent to the museum display as such, it has different undertones in the context of state socialism. Whereas the dream of possession is located mostly in the realm of the individual, the dream of control draws on the utopian dimension of communism and appears in the form of collective dreaming. Further, in this section it is suggested that the provoking of these dreams feeds on the interplay of authentic objects and staged spectacles in the exhibitions. In addition to being celebratory showcases of the achievements of socialism, the liberation exhibitions embody criticism and several manifestations of desire, thus providing a window into the ways dominant representations are contested and subverted.

While this section adopts Sherman and Rogoff's assumption that 'museums can serve as a site for the construction of fictitious histories that respond to unconscious desires'[361], it aims to illuminate this dream space, weighed against the ideological premises and goals of the socialist museum. In this chapter, I discuss the dream of possession and consumption that — I argue — was a deliberate strategy used by the exhibition designers[362] to draw the visitors' attention to the welfare and social security provided by the state. Here, the museum, and especially the museum exhibition, is viewed as 'complex symbolic and material articulations of the imaginative and ideological structures of the society that produced them', as Stephen Greenblatt has put it.[363] Although it is not museums and exhibitions per se that Greenblatt is talking about but cultural expressions in broad terms, what needs attention here (and leaving aside the rather

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360 Along with the 'cognitive' and the 'social space', the 'dream space' has been identified as one form of symbolic space in the museum, as proposed by Sheldon Annis (1987) and elaborated by Gaynor Kavanagh (1996). Though not identical, my use of the term bears a resemblance to theirs; particularly in that "The dream space allows for lateral and creative thinking, for problemsolving and leaps of fantasy" (Kavanagh 1996:3-4.)

361 Sherman and Rogoff'1994: xii.

362 Here, exhibition designers is to be understood in a broad sense, as the collective responsible for the creation of the exhibitions. It thus encompasses not only the authors of the scripts, curators, museum technicians responsible for the visual display and technique but also the representatives of the party organs who monitored and audited the work throughout the process. While exhibition-making is generally characterized by teamwork and collective authorship, it should be kept in mind that the means of control and (self-)censorship influenced the (liberation?) exhibitions to a great extent.

363 Greenblatt 1990: 169.

arbitrary symbolic – material divide) is his understanding of the way articulations are produced in the interplay of the ideological and the imaginative. The aim of this section is to highlight the role of the imaginative at the core of the ideological, in terms of the 'potential inherent in having at one's disposal the means of symbolic expression', as outlined by Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf.[364] Further, the potential of the imaginative is explored both in relation to the ways it is (or may be) used in the make-up of the exhibition but also in reading it.

4.2.1 What resonates and why?

According to Greenblatt's understanding of 'wonder' in exhibitions, communication must rely on 'the power of the object displayed to stop the viewer in his tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention'. 'Resonance', in turn, for Greenblatt, is 'the power of the object displayed to reach beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged'.[365] Greenblatt argues that both wonder and resonance are needed for an exhibition to have an impact, more precisely, to have wonder as the initial appeal, leading to the 'desire for resonance'.[366] Although Greenblatt does not take up the issue of authenticity, his discussion of the power of the object, 'restoration of tangibility' and 'wounded artifacts' implies that to him, wonder and resonance are inherently connected to the power of the material object.

Despite the priority that the museum (and museology as its theoretical guideline) grants to material objects as tangible evidence, museum displays are not merely about looking at authentic objects. However, since the museum display draws heavily on visuality, it follows that exhibitions need to be visually compelling for them to be interesting. Eventually, the museum experience is based on finding one's way through the complex whole of the exhibition elements, including authentic objects or their copies, perhaps embedded in dioramas or other visually compelling backdrops. No matter how, but the visitor has to be grabbed, then touched and moved. Ideally, this touching and moving is done by drawing on the power of the authentic, but if this is not possible, then the exhibition designers have to resort to copies that simulate authenticity, or to staged spectacles which more often than not draw on the realm of the hyperreal. Authentic or not, one of the major driving forces of the museum enterprise is the desire to get hold of things or possess them in one way or another. Greenblatt argues that modern museums evoke the dream of possession, partly with their effect of 'boutique lighting', which is characterized as a pool of light with a surreal effect in order to heighten wonder. As Greenblatt argues, the linking of wonder with acquisition and possession, shows an evident associa-

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364 Gebauer and Wulf 1995: 9.
365 Greenblatt 1990: 170.
366 Greenblatt 1990: 181.

tion with commerce, 'yet the experience in museums is about *not* touching, *not* carrying home, *not* owning the marvelous objects'.[367]

Sherman and Rogoff put it aptly when they say that 'the concept of the museum emerges as a field of interplay between the social histories of collecting, classifying, displaying, entertaining, and legitimizing'.[368] Judging by the socialist museum's objective to commemorate, legitimize and educate, it is unfortunate that much of the museum liberation-related material relating to the time after the ideological milepost of 1945 was not visually very enticing. From the point of view of its use in a museum display, the material suffered from an essential paradox: the objects selected to testify to the ideological changes that socialism brought about were of the kind that could hardly be shown through material culture. The early exhibitions in particular suffered from this problem, wittily summarized by the archaeologist and curator Gyula László: 'Do we really eat with a different kind of spoon since '45 than we did before?'[369] Further, much of the political history-related material consisted of paper documents, stamps, banners and flyers – things to do with the history of the Party and the labour movement. In other words, the resonance and wonder potential of party congress flags was not very high. What may have been even more unfortunate from a museum worker's viewpoint than the relatively poor resonance and wonder potential of the post-45 material was that she did not have much choice: the exhibitions had to be made, and moreover, everything had to be displayed according to the guidelines set by Party functionaries and in a celebratory spirit of commemoration. The liberation exhibitions were part of the official celebration of the liberation, and the more noteworthy anniversaries were recorded in the five-year plans relating to the museum field. From this it followed that every five years the curators faced the task of putting together the coming-of-age story of socialism in Hungary. In other words, the challenge was to tell more or less the same story without boring themselves or the visitors to death. This is when the curators had two choices: either to resort to displaying visually compelling objects and to staging multimodal spectacles, in order to impress the visitor by offering sustenance for all the senses. The other possibility was to shift the focus of narration from political history to aspects of lifestyle, consumption and the achievements of 'socialist culture and science'.

4.2.2 Dreams of possession

As representations of Hungarian society since 1945, the exhibitions lay a strong emphasis on welfare and a high standard of living and consumption. This is hardly a surprise, if we consider the over-all strategies of legitimation applied in the Kádár era. After the revolution of 1956, politics were pulled out of everyday life and moderate consumer values were allowed to take the place of politics.[370] This is how questions of politics and ideology could be re-worked to

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[367] Greenblatt 1990: 177.
[368] Sherman and Rogoff 1994: x.
[369] László 1968: 109.
[370] See e.g. Dessewffy 1998; Einhorn 1993:58; Valuch 2005.

foreground the economic processes that often related to questions of well-being through consumption. The use of this strategy is especially noticeable in relation to the discussion of the revolution of '56. In the exhibition in 1960, it was emphasized that 'Despite the decrease in 1951-53, there has been notable growth in the standard of living during the last ten years. Despite the damage of 1956, the instabilities in the standard of living were eliminated.'[371] Another strategy for downplaying the ideological-political meanings of the revolution is to draw attention to the costs of the damage that the uprising brought in its train. The exhibition of 1965 posed the question: 'What could have we built with the money spent repairing the damage done by the counter-revolution?' The four examples are given: 160 000 two-room flats, 34 chemical factories, 380 Árpád bridges[372], or 146 'People's stadiums' (referring to the Népstádion in Budapest).[373] In other words, had there been no (counter-)revolution, even more people would have got a roof of their own over their heads, more welfare could have been provided for an even greater number of people, more monumental landmarks binding Buda and Pest together could have been built, and more sites developed for spectator sports with which to fill people's leisure time.

The swift growth in industry meant ultimately prosperity and a better life for the individual. Next to the statistics on industrial output and productivity in 1938-1970 are retail sales figures and statistics showing the decrease in the number of working hours. In other words: we produce more, from which it follows that 'Our people eat better, dress more beautifully and live in a more cultivated manner than ever before', as one text on an illuminated glass plate has it in the room titled 'The changing face of our home country' of the 1970 exhibition. Images of industrial establishments (power plants and factories) are accompanied with images of housing blocks under construction and photomontages of the use of spare time: tourism, housework, reading, rest, gardening, and studying. The presenttion of economic plans was closely tied up with attempts to prove with statistics and figures how the standard of living had risen, and when new and on-going plans were introduced, the same emphasis continued. For instance, the 1960 exhibition contains a quote from the 7th Congress decree of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSzMP), stating that one of main aims of the second five-year plan is to constantly increase the standard of living through output and productivity. This statement is backed up by statistics about the income of workers and peasants, consumption per capita and decreases in working-hours. A quote from the proceedings of the 8th Party Congress puts it in the following way: 'In the period of the second five-year plan, the living circumstances of our people is further im-

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371 TAD 192-75

372 The bridge serves as a short diversion into the politics of naming. Its construction began in 1939, but it was interrupted by the Second World War. The original intention was to name the bridge after Árpád, a great Magyar leader under whose rule the Magyars settled in the Carpathian basin. Thus, Árpád's name has a strong resonance relating to the foundational myths of the Hungarian nation. The construction of the bridge was finished in 1950, but the bridge was named after Stalin. In 1958, the original name was restored.

373 TAD-194-75/1

proving --- the standard of living is rising and as a consequence, the population consumes groceries of higher nutritional value and dresses in a better and more beautiful way, while they decorate their homes more comfortably.'[374]

However, the display strategy was not restricted to highlighting welfare, but also incorporated luxury items, or elements that hinted at conspicuous consumption. The visitors encounter photo images of 'quick delicatessen shops', a tailor's studio, a *modern* perfume shop, the Gellért Hotel, the Kékacél Restaurant in Ózd[375], Herz salami[376], vintage wines and champagne, bananas arriving at the Western railway station in Budapest, espresso machines to be exported to Poland. There must have been bananas in Budapest in 1960 (after all, seeing is believing), but it was evident that at that time the banana surely was one of the luxury items that an ordinary citizen could only dream about. András Gerő talks about the eroticization of desired goods: the awareness of something being attainable but not for everyone.[377] The tension in the core of the dream of possession appears even stronger if we consider socialist property relations, including the limitations on private ownership in state socialism. While the exhibitions hint at the comforts of personal consumption and embody a wealth of commodities, many visitors step into the exhibition with memories of compulsory delivery[378] still fresh in their minds. As András Gerő points out, during the early years of socialism Hungarian society got used to the fact that the state could take away one's sewing-machine or bicycle, if this was deemed necessary. Whether we use the term fetishist collecting and consumption or talk about eroticized objects, the underlying driving force is the very idea of the object resisting our desire to posses it.

As a means of political legitimation during the Kádár era, society was allowed to undergo petit-bourgeoisation.[379] This process that András Gerő calls, somewhat polemically, 'the Great Hungarian petit-bourgeoisation', was both a prominent social process of post-56 Hungary and a deliberate strategy on behalf of the power holders to de-politicize the system and bring stability through laying an emphasis on consumption. Paradoxically, 'petit-bourgeois' was officially

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374 TAD-194-75/1

375 Hung. 'kékacél', 'blue steel'. During socialism, the city of Ózd in Northern Hungary was developed into a major centre of heavy industry. The restaurant building, built in 1958, is a representative example of socialist realist architecture. While the main role of the restaurant was to serve as a canteen for factory workers, it also functioned as a coffee-house with music. Thus, within the exhibition, the image of the restaurant is at the same time a place where the basic needs of the workers are catered for and an allusion to the flourishing coffee-house culture of 19th century Budapest.

376 A world-known brand, hungaricum par excellence, made since 1888. Apart from being a source of national pride on international platforms and reaping prizes at World Exhibitions, Herz salami became a weapon in the private sphere during the rise of tourism in the 1960s. As can be read on the homepage of the company, 'Herz salami became an indispensable item at a time when hard currency was difficult to come by, as it was a popular 'private export item' with an enthusiastic demand in both Vienna and Bratislava'. http://www.herz.hu/eng/index.html Last visited 4.5.2009

377 Gerő 2006: 99.

378 Between the years 1949-1956, in the era of Stalinism, peasants were forced to either give or sell their products to the state.

379 Dessewffy 1998.

a non-existent category in state socialism, since, as Gerő remarks, the system measured its success against the non-existence of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois.[380] However, the subject addressed in the liberation exhibitions was more often than not the officially non-existent and thus invisible petit-bourgeois, who did not have the possibility to become bourgeois proper but who could adopt consumer attitudes and patterns resembling those of the petit-bourgeoisie. What is more, the visitor was in many instances addressed as an individual, whose individual (private) dreams were being fired by the exhibition's dream machine.

One potential group of desired objects can be found among 'The Forum of Excellent Goods' (Kíváló Áruk Fóruma). The term refers to the quality assurance policy launched in 1967 for the domestic market. The liberation exhibition of 1970 presents a collection of products that have been awarded the label. In the exhibition hall, in a separate booth, on the wall behind a shelf containing various products the well-known triangular emblem is shown. However, next to this collection of 'excellent goods', the exhibition contains another forum: 'The Forum of Missing Goods' (Hiányzó Áruk Fóruma)[381]. Technically, this has been realized in the form of a photomontage, with the text: 'We would have wanted to show these, too, in their authentic form'. This is something that we could call a 'Welfare minus1' element. This is to say that we live well, though we all know something is missing and our hands are tied in this relative welfare and freedom. This is a powerful critical intervention in the sense that it is framing what is missing: the absent objects become the objects of attention. By reworking the well-known symbol of commodity quality, a new symbol signifying absence is created to concretize shortage or lack. At first glance, this appears as a striking strategy. It seems to be underlining the compromise of living in the social reality of 'goulash communism' that characterizes Kádár's regime.[382] However, rather than being an attack on the ideological premises of the system, it is an indication of the possibilities for the deliberate incorporation of criticism from *within* that alternatively may be read in favour of the system. Alternatively, this ironic play with the logo of excellence highlighting the realities of the 'shortage economy' can also be read as a means of legitimation. It amounts to saying that: we are confident enough about our cause to laugh at ourselves. At the same time, it makes the point that we are well-off enough to laugh, which means that the system we live in is working, despite its flaws.

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[380] Gerő 2006: 98.

[381] Here, the Hungarian word 'hiányzó' is easily associated with 'hiány', pertaining to shortage, which was a constant issue during socialism – to the extent that it has been seen as a major characteristic of the economy of the era. In 1980, the Hungarian economist János Kornai coined the term 'shortage economy', with which he criticized the centrally planned economies of the Eastern Bloc.

[382] As pointed out by Tibor Valuch, the term 'gulash communism' is not a term used in the social sciences but a public expression that spread in the Kremlin-informed and Western press alike to denote a circumstance where the supply of goods was remarkably better than the Eastern European average even though it did not reach Western standards (see Valuch 2005:364). For a more elaborate discussion of the Kádár era in terms of income, characteristics of consumption and the changing material and technical conditions, see the entire article.

No matter what the intention of the exhibition designers was, numerous display units can be read as an invitation to celebrate the fetish value of isolated objects in a relative property vacuum. This is when the resonance brought to life by the exhibition does in fact bring up the 'only half-visible relationships and questions'[383] that Greenblatt calls for, but does it in a way that subverts the official ideological reading of the exhibition. By playing around with the absent objects, the display draws attention to the cultural and material conditions that make the unrestricted consumption of the artifacts impossible or extremely difficult.

Greenblatt discusses the museum gift shop as an instance of having dreams transferred, and further, about the conventional museum-gaze as inverting the fantasy of possession in the sense that it is not the object that seems to be a possession but rather the possessor of something that is considered valuable and enduring.[384] Against this backdrop, it seems curious that in some cases, the inversion of the fantasy of possession did not succeed in the case of the liberation exhibitions: several objects were reported to be missing from the exhibition, and, curiously enough, they derived from the 'Forum of Excellent Goods'.[385] Another potential 'forum of excellent goods' may be expressed in the form of materialized desire. As one visitor remarks, 'The exhibition appealed to me because I was there with a woman. Otherwise it didn't'.[386] For this particular visitor, the museum experience may well have been about taking home his desired object afterwards. The same attitude is reflected by the following entry: 'The exhibition appealed to me. It reflects the 15-year progress of our home country. What especially appealed to me was the second last hall which featured a sexy woman photographed in a fashion show'[387] While the entries above can be read as manifestations of a strategy to subvert the representations put forth in the exhibition through trivializing them, there is also another possible reading that points at the commodity value of objects of desire in a consumer society. This is when a sexy woman in a fashion show, on which we can project our desires, *is* in fact a faithful reflection of the progress.

According to several commentators in the press, the exhibition of 1985 does not measure time merely with images of major historical events used as backdrop: it also offers a range of benchmarks that the visitor can use to weigh her lifestyle against the comtemporary interiors represented in such rich detail. "There is a TV and radio already is almost every home, and a record player, a tape recorder and a car can be found in many a home", one writer remarks with content, but goes on to lament that there still are young couples without a home and that the curious shared tenements are not totally extinct

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383 Greenblatt 1990: 172-3.

384 1990: 178.

385 TAD-I-367-75 museum custodian's report

386 The translations are my own. With the guest book entries, I have retained the originals to allow the individual voices to come through. 'A kiállítás tetszett, mert nővel voltam. Különben nem' TAD 3039-3043-83

387 'A kiállítás nagyon tetszett. Tükrözi hazánk 15 éves fejlődésének útját. Különösen az utolsó előtti terem tetszett, ahol egy divatbemutatón egy nagyon jó nő volt lefényképezve.' TAD 3039-3043-83

either [388] . In other words, for the visitor, spotting something in the contemporary interiors he or she does not have may in itself be a source for discontent.

4.2.3 Dream of control

As already pointed out, dreams of possession and control are interrelated and in many senses, facets of the same desire. Here the dream of control is strongly connected to the (modern) dream of control through science. In other words, with the help of science and modern technology, it is possible to control the future. Further, the dream of control manifests itself as a strategy of display, relating to the attempt at creating a (more or less) linear narrative of progress and to control it (mainly) visually.

'The art of our era is science', as the slogan had it, in relation to the cultural policy of the late 1950s. The guideline on cultural policy issued by the Central Committee of the Party, published in August 1958, paved the way for the changes that were implemented in the years to come, and reflected also in the public representations of culture and science, including the liberation exhibitions. This resulted in new rankings within the field of science: the formerly privileged field of literature and literary studies was taken over by the social sciences, of which the most important was philosophy, followed by history and economics, and finally, as a unit, aesthetics, linguistics, literature and music. Within the study of history, emphasis was laid on the history of the labour movement and the Communist Party, including the over-all emphasis on the 'newest era'. However, to moderate the dangers of the 'counter-revolution' of 1956, the initial emphasis, in the immediate aftermath of the uprising, had been on the natural sciences. This all was done in the spirit of 'the battle for peaceful coexistence' of the two opposed systems of capitalism and socialism. To rationalize these objectives, Hungarian science was to focus on those areas of culture and science in which there was already had a strong national tradition and that could be developed further, drawing on the 'mental and material resources' available, to reach the international level. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the prioritized areas of nuclear physics and the industrial applications of organic and inorganic chemistry were placed in the foreground, while technology-related research favoured, for instance, the vehicle and machine industry, electronics and lighting. All in all, the new guideline aimed at more pragmatic, rationalized and immediately applicable research.[389]

To a great extent, the dream of control can be equated with the dream of possessing the future. Optimism, indeed, euphoria, about the future is derived mainly from the ideology of communism. The series of liberation exhibitions can be viewed as the coming-of-age story of state socialism in Hungary, the ultimate goal of which was communism. Consequently, the representations in the exhibitions were mostly oriented towards the present or the future: their role

388 "Utunk, életünk", *Pesti Műsor* 19.06.1985

389 Kalmár 1998: 168-177.

was to bring in the brand new and make it (almost) touchable, as an element of creating future perspectives. Ideally, the coming-of-age of state socialism was seen as a linear progress, often referred to as the 'road of socialism' both in the exhibitions and their readings by the visitors. A typical way of laying the ground for commemoration is reflected in the opening sentence of the introduction to the exhibition of 1965: 'It has been 20 years since Hungary started building a new social order, *the social order of the future*.' (my italics). This strong future orientation entails playing around with the speculative that museums are full of and that feed the utopian dimension. However, what is characteristic of museum display is that this speculative knowledge, propped up by material evidence, easily reads as known and authoritative, as Gaby Porter has argued.[390] This aspect of 'reading as known' appears all the more interesting when this knowing pertains to the future. In the museum, this future knowing has to be staged or projected in one way or another: this future knowing cannot be embodied and communicated by single authentic objects, since they are not material evidence *from* the future. Consequently, the liberation exhibition designers resorted to creating simulations, spectacles, and projections that also encompassed the future. The short introduction (probably to be used as a press release) to the exhibition of 1965 remarked that 'In contrast to the previous practice – and so that the visitors could *sense what has happened* in a more *plastic form* – the display makes use of dioramas.' (my italics). Here the technical novelties of the display are highlighted, presented in accordance to the ideology-driven museum pedagogical aims of making the visitor *sense the past*. What is especially interesting is the reference to 'plastic form': it seems to refer to something the visitors could almost lay their hands on, something that has a spatial dimension. In this same text, there is a reference to the presenting of the reconstruction of Hungary and the establishing of the socialist state with *authentic documents*. This gives cues to the interplay between using visually impressive material and staging spectacles along with the use of authentic objects as material evidence in validating the exhibition narrative. The first goal is to give the visitor something interesting to attend to. But beyond this attention-catching lies the potential for altering the way things are perceived, which leads to the shaping of consciousness. This, of course, was the ultimate goal of the exhibitions.

Perhaps the best manifestation of evoking dreams of control can be found in the 'Science and technology' hall of the 1970 exhibition. It presents the achievements of science and technology, from nuclear energy to plastic, halogen lamps and hybrid corn. In the centre of the hall there is a group of molecules hanging from the ceiling, illuminated dimly. Another instant attention-catcher of this hall is an 8-minute film, projected on three screens. According to the script, this is done to optimize the intellectual and emotional impact. The film is shown in sequences, parallel to the separate display units. The futuristic atmosphere of the hall is emphasized with a line from József Attila's poem, placed above the screen in big letters: 'My friends, can you feel the 25th Centu-

390 Porter 1996: 111.

ry?'[391] What is symptomatic here is the appeal to the sensuous – the feeling of the atmosphere – rather than merely the visual, which in Annis' (1987) categories is predominantly connected to the realm of the cognitive. However, apart from being 'rich in evidence and insightful interpretation' this hall aims at nothing less than a spectacle, as becomes evident from the script. The display is not to be restricted to visual impacts alone but to incorporate several modes to create 'a complex audio-visual effect'. A central element of the hall is the screening of the 8-minute long film 'Science – technology', especially made for the exhibition. The role of the film is to work as a 'guide', directing the viewer's attention together with the changing lighting. The role of the film is varied so that at times it is 'the main character' of the hall, then withdrawing 'modestly' into the background. The lights in the hall are to illuminate certain display units at a given time, accompanied by the voice of the film's narrator'. The idea of using the film is to create a tone and an atmosphere, and in this atmosphere, the viewer is to be 'brought in to the most frequently discussed sphere of science'[392].

The film touches upon the major themes and scientific applications presented in the hall, from the application of the isotope in nuclear power to diagnostics, then moving on to medicine and medicine industry. Tape recorders spin on all three screens and suddenly bring in the cry of a new-born baby, whose crying is recorded and analyzed in order to find patterns in it that will give cues to the illness the baby is suffering from. Hybrid corn, crystals and the circulation of fish and other organisms follow. The end of the film, the presentation of plastics, is a spectacular combination of colours and forms, and this is where the authentic objects of the display are made the 'main characters' of the show for the last 30-40 seconds of the film. The script depicts the climax of the film as follows: 'Green, yellow and red corrugated sheets, coating materials for furniture and walls, car-bodies in different colours, shoes and hats, chemical containers, electric cables, colourful lamps, bags for milk and other drinks – this colourful cavalcade grows in intensity, almost as if it were dancing to the melody of the music that is playing'.[393] The film ends with a colourful curtain drawn on the screen, while all the lights are made brighter in the hall for the visitor to take a closer look at whatever she pleases. Indeed, it seems that the 'hectically pulsing seductions' absent from the 'socialist market' appear in another context: they are transformed into material evidence of progress.

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391 Attila József (1905-1937) was one of the most outstanding poets of 20th century Hungarian literature. During socialism, he was celebrated as *the* socialist poet, and the majority of literary quotes in the liberation exhibitions are references to his poems. The title of the poem 'Érzitek-e?' (1924) translates as 'Can you feel it?'. The poem combines imagery of 'girls and women with flickering desire', 'warm fish gliding on our spines', all culminating in the question: 'Hey, elevators, could you lift such a great spirit?' If we regard the quote as an index or a sign referring to the entire poem – after all, the entire poem is implicitly brought into the symbolic space of the display for those who know and are able to recite it – its effect on the atmosphere of the hall is even more euphoristic, manifesting self-confidence and confidence in technology, interwoven with sexual desire and indulgence.

392 TAD-I 269-75 Script of the film 'Ember és munka' (Man and work) p. 2.

393 ibid. p. 8.

Material objects are in motion and their dynamism and versatile nature is to be enjoyed. Much of what is presented is to be enjoyed as it is: as an aesthetic experience, as an 'atmosphere' with no explanation. This is where music is used, so that 'visitors could even more intensively enter the atmosphere of this wonderful world.'[394] There are 'wonderful' compositions of crystals magnified with a microscope, which is essential in the quest for getting to know the invisible world. Colours and forms are varied for the viewer to admire, but, as is pointed out, this all is not play for its own sake since everything the viewer sees derives from the world of science. The 'witch's brew' of chemical flasks is taken over by the realm of plastic, 'the most typical realm of the last couple of decades'.[395] However, next to this sense of wonder and admiration, there is confidence in science: 'the modern equipment of the laboratory represents with scientific authority the process of polymerization, plastic coming into being'. This is wonderful, at hand and real - and controllable.

A curious object embodying the dream of control is a manipulator from the Central Research Institute of Physics. A manipulator is an object that by its appearance is likely to provoke curiosity and wonder, but its symbolic resonance is far-reaching. By its very being, a device used under human control to manipulate materials, it highlights the dream of control and confident future optimism of the entire exhibition. It is a central object of the scientific dream, celebrating human (and in this case, Hungarian) inventiveness and the ability of human beings to affect the material environment in a controlled and predictable way. Next to the manipulator is a sign made from enamel, with the text 'radiation hazard', which suggests that what we are dealing with here is not without its dangers but that with skill and caution everything can be kept under control. At the same time, somewhat ironically, the manipulator points at the complex mechanisms of manipulation applied in the museum exhibition to control the mind of the visitor. To put it bluntly, the visitor of an exhibition is a subject to be manipulated, which always entails issues of power and control, regardless of the dominant ideology under which the exhibition is erected. In this sense, the manipulator becomes a symbol of the dream of control the system imposes on the individual. What is characteristic of the manipulation in this particular exhibition, however, is that it is to be done in a seductive manner. Words frequently repeated in the script include 'seductive and 'suggestive' as opposed to 'ostentatious'. The message is clear: we are here to seduce, not to educate.

4.2.4 Subscribing to the dream: 'A faithful reflection of our happy future'[396]

The guest book entries of these exhibitions can be viewed as potentially providing clues as to visitors' dreams of possession. In the exhibition of 1970, separate displays had been dedicated to the books and stamps of the last 25 years, and it is mostly these frequently collected items that have been used to

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394 ibid. p. 5

395 TAD-I 269-75 Script of the film 'Ember és munka' (Man and work) p. 7

396 This is how the exhibition of 1960 is characterized by one visitor. TAD 3039-3043-83

trigger the dream in the exhibitions'visitors. Several visitors expressed their discontent at not being able to obtain the books on display; one visitor puts it boldly by stating that 'It's such a shame that the books on display are not for sale.'[397] For another visitor, the fetishistic and intellectual/aesthetic value of the books appeared together: 'The books!! I think it was a mistake to put them on display, because they are so wonderful that one's heart yearns for them and it is only then that one realizes what gaps there are in the field of reading. I want more exhibitions such as this!'[398] Several visitors express their urge to touch the books or at least get closer to the books and other display objects.[399] In 1960, two entries lamented that the kind of telephones and other objects displayed were still out of reach: 'Unfortunately, the telephones on display are not yet on the market'[400]. In a similar fashion, the second entry contains this same 'not yet' aspect: 'This was strikingly interesting but unfortunately there is a telephone and other things among the displayed objects which are not available in the stores. Or at least not yet'[401]. This highlights the future orientation of these exhibitions: What you see here and now is what you might get in the near future.

If a resonant exhibition is inclined to pull the viewer away from the celebration of isolated objects, as Greenblatt argues[402], then, in the light of the guestbook entries, it seems that the liberation exhibitions partially succeeded. While many of the entries focus on one or a few object or element that grabbed the visitor's attention the most, others point at a narrative reading of the entire exhibition as a coming-of-age story of socialism. Judging by the guestbook entries, in many instances, the exhibitions succeeded in evoking a sense of resonance and wonder. While many guestbook entries serve as a document of a ceremonious, protocol-like visit paid by groups of students, soldiers, or factory workers, or, even more typically, their socialist brigades, which formally validate the exhibition narrative as 'true' and an 'authentic reflection', many writings serve as documents of intimate, sensuous encounters. The exhibition may be characterized as 'enticing', 'compelling' or 'wonderfully talkative'. Some take up the 'fantastically monumental' nature of the exhibition or its being a spectacle, while others congratulate the makers on the exhibition technique, greeting its multimedia or interactive possibilities. Some say the most important virtues of the exhibition is its being modern, while others point to special features such as the models, film screenings or the opportunity to pick up the receiver of the phone placed next to a display unit and get words spoken by authentic voices,

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397 '---Kár, hogy e kiállított könyvek nem eladók' TAD 133-75

398 'A könyvek!! Szerintem kár volt őket kiállítani, mert olyan csodálatosak, hogy az embernek sajog a szíve utánuk és akkor veszi észre, mennyi hiányossága van még az olvasás terén. Még több ilyen kiállítást!' TAD 133-75

399 'Közelebb engedhetnének néhány kiállított tárgyhoz! (pl. Könyvek!)' TAD 133-75

400 'Sajnos olyan telefon még nincs forgalomban, mint ami ki van állítva'. TAD 3039-3043-83

401 'Megdöbbentően érdekes, de sajnos a kiállítási tárgyak között szerepel olyan telefon s más is amely üzletekben nem kapható. Vagy legalábbis egyenlőre.' TAD 3039-3043-83

402 Greenblatt 1990: 172-73.

often referred to as 'headphone history'. Some entries bear witness to emotive responses. According to one visitor, the exhibition of 1960 was 'shocking, elevating and reassuring at the same time'[403].

One visitor to the 1960 exhibition characterizes it as 'convincing and in accordance with reality'[404], while another calls it 'very beautiful, because it faithfully reflects the past and our life today'[405]. The idea of the exhibition providing 'faithful reflections' appears as central, both in the exhibition texts themselves, the related materials (e.g. press releases) and the guest books. This is not surprising, since the phrase echoes the predominant rhetoric of the time.[406] However, two caveats need to be made here. Firstly, the criticism included in the guestbook entries, which varies in subtlety and form, at times even expressing wholesale rejection of the exhibition, should not be disregarded. Laying emphasis on the 'faithful reflection' aspect of the exhibitions is not an attempt to homogenize the multiple voices inherent in the guest books. Secondly, it is not my attempt to claim that the visitors would have been under mass hypnosis of a kind that made them mistake a museum display for the real thing and made them literally believe that what they saw was in fact the future. Rather, I wish to point out that what is interesting here is the operation of a mutual pact between the visitors and the exhibition designers, according to which the visitors read representations as potentially real. However, this pact relies only partially on the material evidence of objects; it also relies on the visitor granting the memory makers the authority to position the material and textual evidence in a way that makes the representations real in the museum text. I call this the mimetic pact. Part of the mimetic pact of the exhibitions was that it enabled the projection of future perspectives, and moreover, made them authentic and real.

4.2.5 What you see is what you get – or is it?

In this chapter, I have argued that the exhibition designers of Hungarian state socialism were well aware of the wonder potential of the museum object, and as far as they had the money and other means to do it, they often deliberately aimed at creating spectacles that would move the visitor, or, in Šola's terms, 'touch their irrational selves'. Of course, this was done to serve the overall ideology and as an attempt to convince the visitor that the road of socialism was the place to be. Next to the tired quotes from Party congresses, there was the willingness to offer nourishment for all the senses in the liberation exhibitions.

Further, I have argued that the dream machine of liberation exhibitions was about an attempt to provoke awe and exaltation to feed the dreams of possession and control in the visitor. In order to provoke these dreams, both au-

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403 'A kiállítás megrendítő és felemelő egyben megnyugtató is' TAD 3039-3043-83

404 '--- Megnyerő és a valóságnak megfelel.' TAD 3039-3043-83

405 'Nagyon szép, mert hűen tükrözi a múltat és a mai életünket' TAD 3039-3043-83

406 It is enough to think about the centrality of realism in György Lukács's literary theory, or the doctrine of socialist realism and its requirement to depict the struggle towards socialism.

thenticity and simulation was used: the displays operated with the interplay of authentic objects on the one hand, and on the other, with the help of models and copies, simulations and spectacles. The dreams of possession were deployed to invoke ideas and images of Hungary as a modern socialist welfare state. Within this frame, and seemingly in the collectivist spirit of the working class, the individual and her desires were addressed. Then again, acquiring and possessing as such are vehicles of control: possessing something also means control through possession. Judging by the operability of the dream machine, the question of authenticity is secondary: the main objective is to provoke dreams and, ideally, affect the way the visitors perceive the social realities in which they live.

The dreams of possession address the individual, the potential consumer in each visitor, and draw on the principle of 'What you see is what you get', the dream of possession amounting to symbolic collecting from among the displayed objects – a form of window-shopping. Consequently, it is equally justified to say that the dream of possession followed the principle of 'What you see is what you don't get', or, perhaps, 'What you see is what you probably won't get' or possibly 'What you see is what you might get, if you are lucky and persistent enough and have the 'connections and slickness'[407] needed.' With dreams of possession, the mimetic pact entails settling for the museum as a 'vacuum of the unattainable'[408], with the only form of possession available being figurative collecting, the picking and choosing from the catalogue of dreams. Coming back once more to the role of the museum in entertaining and legitimizing, the provoking of dreams of possession may prove a risky business through its playing with the prospects of fulfilling desires. Showing images of banana shipments arriving at the Budapest Western Railway Station in 1960 could turn into a 'hot potato' for the legitimization of the entire political system. As pointed out by Tibor Dessewffy, although the 'socialist market' was capable of many things, it was not able to produce 'the real market's hectically pulsing seductions'[409]. It seems that the crucial question is whether the visitor *believed* in the prospect of possessing the objects displayed in the exhibition. In other words, believing that 'what you see is what you are going to get', against all odds, amounts to belief in the 'achievements of socialism' as the key to a good life. However, when it is not a question of displaying unique works of art and crafts but desired consumer goods, it is unlikely that the overriding aesthetic principle outlined by Greenblatt should operate: in such a framework, the fantasy of possession may prove more powerful than the pure pleasure of viewing.

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407 Among other sociologists, Tibor Dessewffy has drawn attention to the high rate of informal networks and interpersonal relations in ensuring success in post-communism. He refers to this tendency as 'connections and slickness', as opposed to resorting to knowledge and ability. Dessewffy, T. (1998) 'Postcommunism and Post/Modernity' Available at: http://www.newschool.edu/centers/tcds/tibor98.htm [Accessed 24 April 2009]

408 Šola 1991.

409 Dessewffy 1998.

While dreams of possession are mostly provoked in the private realm of the individual, the dream of scientific control is first and foremost a dream of the collective. In fact, the tensions in the dream space of the liberation exhibitions seem to manifest this very tension between individual and collective dreaming. The dreams of control draw heavily on the utopian dimension of communism. By giving into the visual perfection (as such, of course, a naturalized, social construction), the illusion created by the display, the pact promises with far less ambiguity that 'What you see is what you get'. Subscribing to the dream of control amounts to subscribing to the totalizing myth of communist future optimism. From the microscopic to the cosmic, everything has its place. With the help of socialist science and technology, all particles and organisms great and small are knowable, and therefore the course of our future can be controlled.

Of course, the approach adopted in this chapter can be criticized for mystification. Using terms such as 'socialist display politics' or even 'socialist museum' is rather obscure and misleading since the dialectics of resonance and wonder discussed here is by no means exclusive to these particular exhibitions or their immediate socio-political contexts. After all, the history of collecting and the museum is eventually about acquiring, arranging and displaying material as an act of possessing, controlling and explaining the universe, and through these, about manifesting power. Rather, it has been my aim to suggest that along with the age-old urge for possession and control, these dreams may be discussed against the backdrop of modernity, individualization and the emerging consumer society, also within the framework of state socialism. Such a spectacle-centred mode of display is hardly news in the current museum scene which, according to Andreas Huyssen, is a hybrid space somewhere between public fair and department store[410], but considering that it is temporary exhibitions from 1960 to 1985 that we are talking about, the hunger for such 'total exhibition' appears striking. Of course, this should not be surprising, since it was the legitimation of an entire ideology that was at stake in the exhibition: in a sense, both the contents and mode of display became a state-of-the-art showcase of both socialist development and museology in Hungary. What is surprising, however, is how this hybrid space of a technology expo, consumer goods, political history and life-style documentation was actually made to work through providing resonant contexts. Exploring liberation exhibitions as a dream space reveals complex mechanisms and processes of negotiation applied by the system to collect, classify, display, and legitimize the heritage of socialism, and through this, educate and entertain.

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410 Huyssen 1995: 15.

4.3 The gendered spaces of 'liberation'

In this subsection, I discuss the construction of gender in the liberation exhibitions. One of the key elements of the communist emancipation project was women's inclusion in paid work and the education system. As subjects in the collective, i.e. the proletariat, all workers were created equal, regardless of their sex or ethnicity and, consequently, gender did not need to be problematised. Against this backdrop, it is interesting to look at the construction of gender in the exhibitions: are men and women represented as equal subjects in the construction of socialism? If women and the feminine become, literally, the frontiers by which space and knowledge are defined, as Gaby Porter argues, how is this tendency reflected in this (seemingly) egalitarian frame? The objective of this chapter is two-fold: firstly, to examine gender relations in the 'liberation exhibitions', and secondly, look into the ways in which space was gendered in the exhibitions, with special attention to the private/public dichotomy, much discussed by feminist criticism.

Feminist scholarship has been at the forefront in the debates on the construction of gender in museum exhibitions. I will not proceed to an overview of feminisms in museums or ponder over the usefulness of such concepts as 'feminist museology'[411]. Suffice it to say here that, as Jordanna Bailkin has pointed out, feminist scholarship has often treated the museum as an agent of exclusion and oppression. Taking the art museum scene of the 1980s as an example, she argues that feminism seemed to exist in relation to the museum only as a position for opposition, as a reminder of what the museum was not. This positioning points to an apparent dichotomy between 'institution' and 'critique' that has dominated museum studies scholarship.[412] Her remarks seem to accord with those of Ben Dibley, who has argued that several analysts have become seduced by the museum institution's own rhetoric, and in their critique and analysis commentators in fact produce redemptive narratives in the optimistic hope of overcoming the imperial, bourgeois and phallocentric social order embodied in the museum.[413] While such overriding emancipatory principles and 'self-consciously democratizing' objectives that characterise feminist criticism often go hand in hand with approaches informed by cultural studies, it can result in schematic studies and commonplace criticism. Further, what is characteristic of the discussion of gender in museum exhibitions is that it tends to be connected to contemporary museum settings[414]; gender-sensitive analyses that apply a historical perspective are often connected to the gendered implications of col-

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411 Such a term has been suggested by Jordanna Bailkin (2004), in her discussion of the efforts of prewar feminists to construct museum practices that would promote feminism.

412 Bailkin 2004:260-261.

413 Dibley 2005.

414 See e.g. Glaser, Jane R. and Artemis A Zenetou, eds. 1994. *Gender Perspectives: Essays on Women in Museums.* Apart from a focus on practical, contemporary approaches, this collection of articles includes reflections on gender and the role of women in the museum professions.

lecting and classification, or to gender-based assumptions in the classification and display of natural history[415]. Therefore, my endeavour to construct the gender of exhibitions 'with hind-sight' based on archival sources, appears, if not unique, rather isolated. In part due to the explicit historical framework of my analysis, it is *not* my purpose to come up with a redemptive narrative for the 'socialist woman'. Rather, drawing on a feminist criticism-informed approach, I discuss aspects of gender construction in state-socialist Hungary, with the aim of drawing attention to features that may be interpreted as symptomatic.

The literature on gender in Eastern European state socialism is by and large identical with the discussion of the role of women. Much attention has been paid to the double burden of the emancipated woman struggling with her double role in between the public sphere of production and the private or domestic sphere of re-production (child-care and the household). While the historical impact of the early socialist constitutions on the role of women should not be underestimated, there is nevertheless ample evidence suggesting that granting women equal rights did not lead to the recognition of broader gender issues, such as the unequal domestic division of labour and sexual discrimination[416]. Male discrimination took also a discursive form: based on her review of Party documents, Éva Fodor contends that although the discursive foundations of male domination were transformed, they were never eliminated under state socialism. Beyond its genderless surface, the ideal communist subject was distinctly male, and women deferred from this ideal.[417] Several studies have concluded that the low value attributed to the private sphere in state-socialist countries both strengthened the public/private divide and solidified practices within the private sphere.[418] Therefore, the question that becomes relevant from the viewpoint of gender construction in museums is the ways in which the exhibition space is gendered. If we assume that the socialist emancipation of women meant a radical break away from the private sphere and an entrance into the public sphere, can this break be detected in the exhibitions? With these questions in mind, I set out to discuss my findings on the construction of gender in the liberation exhibitions.

4.3.1 The woman and the feminine of the liberation exhibitions

The liberation exhibitions are typical 'jubilee' exhibitions in the sense that, having been built around a political anniversary commemorating a historical event, their life-span was rather brief. They were made as temporary exhibitions that lasted for a few months, after which the material was returned to the collections they belonged to. From this it follows that the exhibitions are accessible only through their textual remains. It is fortunate, however, that the work phases are fairly well documented: there are memos of 'work-shop debates' (műhelyi vita), in which museum curators gathered to discuss the

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415 E.g. Bennett 1995: 201-208; Haraway 2002; Machin 2008.
416 See e.g. Einhorn 1993; Burucs 2008; Fodor 2002.
417 Fodor 2002.
418 Einhorn 1993; Magyari et al. 2001:146.

exhibition in the process of making and reviews (lektori vélemény) by specialists in the field. Both the scripts and the exhibitions were usually reviewed by Party functionaries as well, and the archive material may contain their remarks. So, on the basis of this heterogeneous and scattered material, I set out to construct the exhibition spaces, with an attempt to take account of 'the museum's own specific materiality.'[419] Tony Bennett has drawn attention to "the necessarily embodied nature of the visitor's activity". Following his suggestion, I regarded 'the narrative machinery of the museum' as "providing a context for a performance that is simultaneously bodily and mental."[420] Therefore, in addition to rather straight-forward reading of the material, I resorted to envisioning the displays and *stepping into* my envisioned constructs. I believe this is crucial, since the exhibitions are, first and foremost, symbolic spaces that apply multimodal communication. Studying commemorative political exhibitions of a past regime entails re-creating a dynamic complex of material, textual, symbolic and imaginary dimensions. As important as what the exhibitions contain is how the contents are displayed: how artifacts, images, graphics and texts are combined and contextualized. This means that the researcher has to become a visitor: a 'virtual witness' to scenes that have since vanished[421]. However, while the historian attempts a virtual witnessing of past realities, the researcher attempts to become a virtual witness of the transmission and mediation of symbolic forms in specific social contexts, grounded upon specific 'institutional concerns.'[422] I call my enterprise 'visiting the scripts'. I use this apparent contradiction in terms so as to highlight my quest of experiencing the exhibitions while remaining conscious of not being able to bridge the gap between the exhibitions that were and their textual remains. Roaming this discursive space of the archival material, I found six different but overlapping ways in which gender 'appears' in the exhibitions. Alternatively, these six categories may be regarded as modes of gendering the exhibition space and making gender visible. In the following, I will discuss my findings. The order in which the categories are presented is unimportant: it does not indicate proportions or changes in tendencies over the course of time.

1. Woman as the face of new professionalism. Contrary to Porter's contention that the feminine is generally represented as vague and idealized[423], the women of the liberation exhibitions show women of precision. In many instances, the new face of professionalism is a feminine one. This becomes evident from the imagery of the 4-minute documentary film entitled "People and work", included in the exhibition of 1970. The film features the cooperation of older experts and young professionals, most of whom are women. They are positioned as

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419 Bennett 1995: 179.
420 Bennett ibid.
421 Here, I borrow Martin Rudwick's notion, (1992:1, quoted in Bennett 1995), which he uses somewhat differently, to discuss the visualizing capacities of the modern discipline of prehistory.
422 This echoes Thompson's insights about discussing ideology in the context of mass communication and against the 'mediazation of modern culture'. Thompson 2006 (1990):2-4.
423 Porter 1996.

active and knowing subjects, wearing goggles and working next to conveyer belts. This professionalism of women is emphatically present in relation to the intensive development of agriculture and food industry (Figures 30. and 31.). With specific themes, sculpture and statues (either authentic or their scale models) have been used in gendering the exhibition space. The statues "Agronomist girl" and "Girl with bread" by Árpád Somogyi strongly feminize the subsequent displays. However, the case of the "Agronomist girl" is especially interesting in terms of its positioning within the display units. In the exhibition of 1960, the statue is featured in a section entitled "Laying the ground for socialism in the countryside". Her figure stands among a series of photos depicting agriculture, with images of irrigation, harvest and paprika, and next to a map showing the division of socialist municipalities. The authentic documents displayed consist of collective farm agreements. There is also a model of the "Szabó type of plough" included in the display unit. Thus, the figure of the young, professional woman appears as signifying the changes in technology and government: she embodies the collective farms. However, the exhibition of 1965 is more refined and detailed in the sense that it includes not only the figure of the female agronomist but also that of a young man, "Boy with scythe" by the same artist. Compared to the earlier exhibition, the elements on display have been repositioned: the young woman has retained her connection to the emergence of the collective farms but her figure has been coupled with a photo image of peasant women in the Parliament building, being awarded for their hard work. In contrast, the figure of the young man has been displayed next to glass-cases in the centre of the hall, including a scythe and models of modern tools such as a combine harvester. The caption reads: "automated harvesting almost superseded the use of scythe". This positioning offers ambiguous readings. Both the male figure and the text attached to the show case seem to suggest that what he represents is something that has been out-dated by the professionalism of the young female agronomist; yet it is the young man who is standing on the side of the glass-case that displays the technical innovations. Therefore, whereas in the earlier exhibition, the lone female figure embodies both the cultivated land and the new professionalism, the exhibition of 1965 featuring both the man and the woman shows interesting sub-divisions. The woman, who is the new face of the 'socialist countryside', is the one redeemed for her hard work (Figure 32). Although the new technology overrides the young man's scythe, it is nevertheless the man who is positioned on the side of technology.

2. Social policy: woman as the celebrated worker-mother protected by the state. When social policy and 'socialist healthcare' of the 1960s and 1970s is discussed, woman appears as a subject to be protected by the state *but* celebrated as a working mother, for whom the state takes on the responsibility of care for her child "in a modern way", while she is at work. Although the communist emancipation of women did not result in any considerable re-division of domestic work, a generous social policy was introduced, which did reduce women's workload. Maternity leave was extensive, meals and laundry services were sub-

sidized and there were free nursery and day-care centres, though their capacity often proved insufficient[424]. Indeed, all the exhibitions include a comment that that day-care centres are there to facilitate the lives of working *mothers*. Women are presented in the course of their daily duties: there are mothers and children in a playground, statistics on maternity allowances, a photo of children at a day-care centre, and statistics of day-care services.

3. Women as a special social group to be integrated/segregated. In the opening of the exhibition of 1965, where the formation of a council-based form of government is discussed, there is a poster that urges the workers to work even harder in order to celebrate the birth of the councils. What is interesting on the poster is that it reads: "Munkások és munkásnők!"[425], that is workers and worker-women. While 'munkás' does not necessarily denote male worker in Hungarian, it could be argued that the word is strongly associated with men, or it may be interpreted as referring to the entire social class of workers, including both men and women. The fact that both variants of the noun are included implies that both genders are equally addressed as subjects among the working class. However, if 'workers' in Hungarian can be interpreted as gender neutral, in which case it would include also women, why is it necessary to address men and women workers as distinct categories? This poster dating back to 1950 reflects the idea of women being liberated as equal and productive members of the workforce in the construction of socialism. At the same time, it articulates the concept of both men and women as subjects of the state through their memberships in social groups[426]. It has been argued that in Eastern Europe, the concept of citizenship characteristic of liberal democracy was replaced by subject status, and accordingly, both men and women were subject to the state but on different terms. This meant that women were viewed as a corporate group, an identifiable building block of communism.[427] Then again, what appears as a reference to the equal status of the emancipated socialist woman, is at the same time a reference to the strictly regulated and centrally controlled integration that 'women' as a social group went through. The swift pace of the country's industrialization following the communist takeover in 1949 required all the workforce it could possibly get, including women. Given that by the mid-1970s nearly all working age women were engaged in full-time work, it is not surprising that in a poster made in 1950 there was a specific need to address women workers separately, to emphasize that the contribution of women is also needed.

This 'singling out' as a measure of the forceful integration of women into productive work and politics led to quotas and positive discrimination, which

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[424] Burucs 2008; Fodor 2002: 245.

[425] Compared to the Germanic languages, Hungarian is relatively neutral in terms of gender, e.g. it does not contain gendered personal pronouns. However, the seemingly neutral pronouns and nouns are more inclined to be interpreted as masculine, and in this respect the noun denoting man ('ember') is not as explicitly gender-bound but still may denote man in general. Pronouns that denote occupations frequently use the same differentiation as 'actor' and 'actress' in English.

[426] Fodor 2002: 242-244.

[427] Fodor 2002: 248.

meant special treatment but also continuous statistical attention[428]. This also had a segregating effect. In the exhibition of 1965, there is a photo of peasant girls from Abony who are playing Bach on the violin. The image is positioned as one element in the display unit embodying the introduction of the council system and thus belongs to the frequently applied technique of highlighting the strong presence of women in the political organizations of the early years of socialism. The photo is placed in close proximity to the constitution, passed in 1949, and to an overview of international politics in the early 1950s. While the image could be regarded as containing a hint of folklorism, it is more likely a reference to the quota policy applied for the inclusion of women in work or politics in the pre-1956 period. As one member of the Politburo had commented on the Stalinist, pre-1956 years of policy-making: "We were only interested in having the right number of women in folk costumes in the Parliament."[429] As Éva Fodor points out, it was rather the representation of women as women that was at stake, and not achieving equality as such. What is clear is that in the exhibitions, 'women' are not only a special social group but a highly organized one. This is to say that apart from their role as paid workers, women are mostly present through their membership in the Women's Council. This is hardly surprising, since this centralized, party-controlled women's organization was the only one in the country during the years of socialism. The council was encouraged by Party leaders to practice "unified gender politics" (egységes nőpolitika), which meant that the focus of their activities included all social strata of women. The task of the Women's Council was to provide a uniform political education and representation for all women. The council also provided a base from which women members could be selected for party organs.[430] Indeed, all exhibitions include at least one photo image of the council's congresses or activities. Therefore, the Women's Council appears in the exhibition as a concrete gateway to political membership and visibility.

4. Women as active agents demanding and working for equality, social justice and world peace. As mentioned above, posters and photos of the women's movement and the Women's Council (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, MNOT)[431] appear in all the exhibitions. What is noteworthy, however, is that in the exhibitions, the women's movement, by and large "sucked up" and incorporated into the general labour movement directed by the Party, is coupled with elements signifying the 'peace fight' (békeharc). In the exhibition of 1970, a poster demanding: "Hands off Korea!" is accompanied by a poster of the international women's day. In other words, the women's movement during the early years of socialism is presented in the light of one of the movement's missions to promote international solidarity and work for world peace. While this may reflect the spirit of

428 Fodor 2002: 250.

429 Marosán, György, archives of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party [PIA 288/5/24], quoted in Fodor 2002: 250.

430 Fodor 2002: 249.

431 Here, I retain Éva Fodor's use of the term Women's Council, for the simple reason that even though its name and practices were moderated during the socialist period, it nevertheless remained the only organization directed at women's political education and representation.

radical gender reorganization of the Stalinist period, it seems to be inconsistent with the widely held views among the policy makers that local politics was the primary field of politics for women.[432] Éva Fodor argues that "[j]ust as in liberal capitalist societies, women's assumed inferiority was tied to their reproductive duties under state socialism too."[433] However, while in the liberal political ideology, childbearing was seen to impair women's rationality and individuality, in state socialism it was political devotion to the Party that was at stake. Consequently, Fodor argues, women's interests and knowledge were tied to local rather than national and international issues.[434] This local involvement, however, can hardly be detected in the exhibitions. Then again, the strong emphasis on the significance of the early emancipation of Hungarian women may be interpreted as a propagandistic gesture, resonating with communism's optimism about the future. As pointed out by Éva Fodor, the Hungarian party leadership regarded women's disadvantage as temporary, resulting from traditional attitudes and lack of sufficient organization. Developed to its full potential, communism would solve these problems.[435] However, there was a contradiction between the set goals and the low priority given to issues related to the 'woman question' as part of political action.

5. Feminine borders, masculine border guards? In the context of international power politics, women are not always positioned as freedom fighters: women may also be the victims and the object of aggression. In the exhibition of 1965, the display unit presenting the international situation around the beginning of the 1950s combines maps of the socialist camp, photo montages of bilateral agreements and a statue by Aladár Farkas entitled "Korean mother". Her figure gives a female face to the suffering caused by the 'imperialist aggressors'. The same exhibition features images of the victims of the 'counterrevolution'. While eight images out of the total of nine are men, Éva Kállai, a party functionary, is the only victim who is present in the exhibition not only through her photo but also in the form of a high relief made by the artist Viktor Kalló. It seems that a female martyr with a past as an activist in the illegal communist movement is a suitable figure to be elevated from among the male victims to highlight the sacrifices and losses of the revolution. However, when the restoration of socialist rule after the uprising is thematised, women are 'tellingly absent'. The displays seem to suggest that the protection of the socialist order is the realm of the male, with its alignment of images of the Workers' Militia, the police, military procession on the 4th of April and statue of a border guard, and as the utmost guarantee of security, the Warsaw Pact. However, in the 1980s, the exhibitions no longer embody display units that would underline the link between Cold War power politics and the feminine, neither as victims nor as agents demanding equality and world peace. Returning to Porter's argument about the feminine as the literal frontier of space and knowledge, I am tempted to say that in several

[432] Fodor 2002: 257
[433] Fodor 2002: 244.
[434] Fodor ibid.
[435] Fodor 2002: 255.

displays, the feminine came to symbolize land or territory, while the borders themselves appeared as feminine, guarded by masculine border guards.

6. Woman as an object of masculine gaze. In addition to being represented as a knowing subject and an object to be cared for by the state, there are also instances where the woman is positioned as an object of male gaze. While only one such instance can be found in the exhibition scripts, several guest book entries hint at readings that subsume the woman or the female body as an object of desire. The case in which the female body is explicitly put on display can be found in the section entitled "Our youth" in the exhibition of 1970. The hall features a collection of caricatures that illustrate changes in fashion, modes of dressing and hair styles. The caricatures are coupled with two photos of the same woman, the first image showing a young girl and the second a woman in her mid-thirties, wearing a mini skirt. The caption reads: "These are both her!" For a researcher visiting the script, the fact that she is reported to be wearing a mini skirt positions her in a curious tension between desirability and potential out-datedness – this is left for the actual viewer to decide. Either way, it is safe enough to claim that within this display unit, the female body becomes a tool against which it is possible to measure time. The exhibition of 1960 features a series of photos in the "Domestic trade and export" section, where an image of a fashion show is placed among images of consumable items or sites of consumption such as wine and perfume shop. The cluster of images and the overall thematic of trade and export seems to suggest that while it is the garment the woman is wearing that is filed under consumable goods, remarks made by visitors prove that the women of the exhibition have also been objects for visual consumption.

4.3.2 The pros and cons of 'visiting the script' vs. visiting the exhibition

Looking at the categories discussed above, it is evident that analyzing gender in this case more or less equals analyzing the representation of women. Of course, this dissonance haunts not only this particular study but is characteristic of the exploration of gender in general. When male is the norm and female its Other, gender difference often becomes apparent in the woman/female/feminine, and the exhibitions discussed here are no exception. Rather, I would argue that this condensation of the meaningfulness of gender is even more apparent when exploring gender in historical contexts. When discussing the construction of gender in historical exhibitions, we have to admit that much of this information remains inaccessible and is thus knowable only to the first-hand eye-witnesses. For instance, in numerous cases it is impossible to tell in relation to sports, arts or education how the question of gender was thematised since there may be very few traces of this in the scripts or in the archive material of the exhibitions. The script only gives clues as to the imagery through its descriptions and captions, but this information does not show what exactly the images were. Without seeing the photo of a sports event or of a lecture at the medical school, there is no way of telling what kind of place (or space) gender occupies on these platforms or in the audience. Further, visiting the exhibition scripts rather than

visiting the actual exhibitions affirms the idea of 'state feminism' proposed by Andrea Pető. The notion of 'state feminism' refers to the tendency in state socialism, especially the early phase, of using women's policy as an ideological construct rather than an integral part of decision-making[436]. State feminism thus appears in the exhibitions through the ways 'woman' is thematised and also spatially positioned in relation to the ultimate symbols of the state, particularly the socialist coat of arms and different visualization of the constitution (Figure 34.). The socialist female subject is shown close to the centre of power, implying that she, too, is powerful. At the same time, such positioning reflects the shelter the state provides to those of its subjects who that belong to its specialized corporate groups. In other words, woman is a powerful subject protected by those in power.

Visiting the script as opposed to visiting the actual exhibition is revealing also in the sense that the very themes that are *not* presented in the scripts as gender-relevant are equally telling. It seems that in those passages, gender is not so heavily ideologically encoded. In particular, in the parts of the exhibition that deal with political history and the laying of the foundation of the system, great care has been taken to embed the idea of the liberated, equal woman in the very beginning of the narrative of Hungarian socialism. In this narrative, the beginning equals the emergence of the 'proletarian dictatorship', symbolically marked by the constitution and the coat of arms. The exhibition of 1960 announces: "Working women were liberated and are equal." This declaration is backed up by images of a women's conference, and women representatives in parliament. While images from parliament act as testimony to the presence of women in politics, the different visualizations of the coat of arms of the Socialist Republic of Hungary (e.g. as a bronze relief) work to authorize the equalitarian claims about the working woman. Visually, what is interesting is the recurrent montage display technique that could be called 'empowering projection', in which images of people merge with images of parliament or documents or objects embodying or symbolizing the constitution. In the exhibition of 1970, there are 10 portraits of people born in 1945, 'boys and girls' 25 years of age, as the script states, and these images are positioned in close proximity to the image of Parliament, including a quote from the constitution. This is followed by photos of the youngest members of Parliament, also featuring images of their lives outside work. Curiously enough, the same technique was applied in the exhibition of 1980. Portraits of ordinary people – old, young, men, women – hang from the ceiling. Seen from a specific angle, these images intermingle with the national coat of arms and the large image of Parliament. This is an interesting mode of visualizing the idea at the core of people's democracy: the country belongs to its people. In the particularity and singularity embodied in the concrete images of individuals, it seems to echo the slogan of the Communist Party: "The country is yours, you build it for yourself". While in 1970 the people who are positioned as the "owners" of the country are young adults in their mid-twenties, in 1980 they are men, women, and children of all ages.

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436 Pető and Szapor 2007: 160-161. See also Burucs 2008.

However, visiting the scripts does not provide clues to such gendered practices as the use of household appliances – unless photos of the specific displays are available. Since the complete reorganization and socialization of household chores did not take place, the household displayed as interiors retained its connection to the domestic sphere of housework mostly associated with women. Then again, the domestic was not equated with the feminine sphere the same way as in the bourgeois discursive pattern, as will be discussed below. This is why it would have been interesting to know if the ideology of the woman being liberated into the field of productivity outside the home was somehow reflected in the spatial organization of the interiors. As one Politburo member had remarked, "Women do not judge the technological development of the Soviet Union through rockets, but through the availability of labor-saving devices."[437] Indeed, statistics about the number of washing-machines or refrigerators per household were frequently applied in the exhibitions as a reflection of the growing standard of living. From a gender perspective, however, these statistics can be interpreted as an indication of the continuous freeing of women from their domestic workload. In light of the nature of the interiors – domestic spaces displayed *without* their occupants or dwellers – it may well be that statistics about the volume of production and spread of household appliances are a better way of indicating changes in the quality of housework. However, statistics and other graphically presented information in the exhibition lack the visual power of material mis-en-scene and may only indirectly be connected to the construction of gender as part of the visual display.

All in all, up to the 1980s, the displayed elements signifying the presence of women are strongly arranged around the early years of socialism. Most frequently women appear in relation to the socialist constitution or to the amalgamation of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party into the Hungarian Working People's Party, which symbolized the solidification of communist rule. In contrast, the exhibitions of 1980 and 1985 lay more emphasis on pointing to the *social impact* of women's emancipation and equality. The exhibition of 1980 takes even greater care to emphasize the social impact of the socialist type of government. In 1980, there is an explicit note on the reforms achieved in the people's democracy, one of which was equal pay for children and women. In other words, the exhibitions of the 1980s seem to suggest a more direct link between the beginnings of socialism in Hungary and its consistent social policy. What is more, the exhibition of 1980 included on the wall of one of its exhibition halls a large-sized text which is a quote from a decree of the Central Committee of the Party concerning the political, economic and social circumstances of women. This highlighting seems to suggest that the further development of the entire socialist society is interconnected with the situation of women. The text is accompanied by a photomontage of images from the parallel life-worlds of women: a woman is portrayed with children, in Parliament, in the office, at a 'planner's desk', and in a Women's Council congress. This refashioning of interest in contemporary gender issues is in line with the redirected

[437] PIA 288/21/7, quoted in Fodor 2002: 255.

attention to ‘the woman question’ in the 1980s, in part due to the growing concern about declining birth rates. Indeed, if Éva Fodor is right in her contention that it was only in the mid-1980s that gender questions were re-introduced onto the political agenda[438], then the new emphasis on women as a key social group may be regarded as a symptom of this growing interest.

4.3.3 Making visible the ‘public’ within the ‘private’

I shall now move on to look into the problematic of the public/private dichotomy in the museum display. It would exceed the scope of this chapter to go into the relations of gender ideology and separate spheres. Suffice it to say that since the emergence of the conception of ‘separate spheres’ in the nineteenth century, the public has been implicitly a male construction, whereas the private sphere has remained conceptually feminine.[439] Consequently, women are mostly associated with interiors, and these museum exhibitions are no exception. Paradoxically, several analyses and reviews that discuss the construction of gender in museum settings seem to affirm the clear-cut conception of the private/public dichotomy that they seek to criticize. In her discussion on the representation of gender in museums, Gaby Porter argues that women are identified almost entirely with home and family, while they are absent from the public and workplace (arenas). She goes on to claim that “museums operate a fundamental divide between work and home, work and personal life, work and pleasure”[440]. However, Porter refers to the “curious reticence” that surrounds those aspects and places that cannot be divided in such terms. In a similar vein, Tamar Katriel’s refined analysis of the representations of gender in Israeli settlement museums[441] raises several questions relevant for the discussion of the private/public divide. Her analysis involves contemporary museum contexts of exhibitions depicting Israel’s pre-state era affected by the Zionist nation-building ethos, with a special interest in these representations in the light of the prevalent myth of gender equality stemming from a socialist, egalitarian ideology in the spirit of which the communal settlements came about. One focus in Katriel’s analysis is on women’s work roles and participation in the male-dominated public sphere of productivity. What is noteworthy in Katriel’s account of the use of space in settlement museums is the way space has been arranged into outer and inner circles, of which the latter is for the representation of the domestic space, where the communal dining-hall occupies central position. Interestingly enough, as Katriel discusses the domestic sphere and women’s place, she relativises the privacy of the private sphere by stating that “[T]he domestic sphere, as depicted in settlement museums, is itself polarized between the private sphere of conjugal and family relations and the *semi-public sphere* of communal dining, communal recreation, the communal shower, the communal nursery, and so

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438 Fodor 2002: 246.
439 Gal 2002: 77; Hein 2006: 30-34.
440 Porter 1988:118.
441 Katriel 1997.

on."[442] (my italics) Katriel's analysis is illuminating also in the sense that it points out how "[w]ithin a master-narrative that valorizes cooperative endeavors and communal values, it is women who represent the relentless pull of individual wills and personal desires, that is, the irrational and the private interpreted as anti-social."[443] This is to say that woman is metaphorically and discursively extended to signify the private and the irrational in contrast to the rationality and public action of the masculine sphere.

While Porter's insights may be apt in discussing the construction of gender in the British museum scene, they do not seem to hold in the context of Hungarian museums under socialism. Indeed, similar findings have prompted the anthropologist and linguist Susan Gal to pose the question: "How is it that public and private are so different in state-socialist societies and in capitalist parliamentary democracies, yet also eerily familiar?"[444] Drawing on a Peircean semiotics and keeping an eye on the feminist critique of the public/private distinction, she seeks a framework for a semiotic analysis to find out how the dichotomy operates in categorizing and differentiating cultural 'objects'. In Gal's conception, 'public' and 'private' are not particular places, domains or spheres of activity but co-constitutive cultural and ideological categories that should be thought of in terms of fractal distinctions rather than shifting boundaries. This is to say that the categories are indexical signs and therefore always relative: they can be repeatedly reproduced by varying the contexts on which they are projected. Fractal divisions may thus be envisioned as 'multiple nestings' that may be embedded within broader contexts. From this it follows that redefinitions may create a public inside a private or a private inside a public and these nestings may vary in their durability and forcefulness. Alternatively, a place regarded as public can be turned into a private one with indexical gestures or recalibrations that result in new contrast sets. Further, Gal emphasizes that both gender and the private/public distinction are of fractal nature, which makes their interplay even more complex. Gal argues that while the private/public distinction is primarily a discursive resource, it can be turned into institutional structures.[445] One obvious site of such institutionalization can be found in political systems. Gal illustrates her conceptions with interesting examples from East Central Europe. She emphasizes how the public/private distinction was directly targeted by communist theories, with the aim to eliminate the 'private' through extended state control into spaces and activities that were deemed private. From the gender perspective it is crucial that one aim was to shift the conceptual and discursive linkage of women's work into the private and men's into the public sphere.[446] From this perspective, the communist emancipation of women that emphasized women's right to work and to the equal construction of socialism entailed women's liberation into the public sphere. Therefore, while the standard bourgeois discursive pattern in Europe associated women

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[442] Katriel 1997:679.
[443] Katriel 1997:682.
[444] Gal 2000: 80.
[445] Gal 2002:90.
[446] Gal 2002:86.

with the private and men with the public realm, socialism reversed this in many respects. As Susan Gal and Gail Kligman have argued, this reversal can be seen in the way "that women came to be seen as *allied* with the state", that is, the public (my italics).[447] This aspect of being allied seems rather apt when looking at the display units about the socialist constitution or the early phases of the construction of socialism. As discussed above, the liberation exhibitions applied images of women that were frequently placed in the proximity of the national coat of arms or the constitution. These images include photographs of women in parliament, and women are frequently portrayed in the company of prominent political leaders such as the Party Secretary and de-factor leader of the state, János Kádár.

While refraining from overgeneralizations about the nature of state socialism – after all, Hungary can hardly be labeled as a typical state-socialist society – it should be noted that the socialist era in Hungary was by no means homogeneous. Not surprisingly, the most radical changes in the political agenda are connected to the Revolution of 1956. It gave rise to a development in which the state allowed the citizens more freedom in what was deemed the private sphere. As long as people took care of their public duties, they were allowed relatively more freedom in their spare time, which also included their households.[448] It is the relation between the household, gender and the private/public distinction in particular that appears revealing. Gal contends that by the 1980s, activities deemed 'public' were all the more embedded in private life. This means that the private can be regarded as divisible into a private of family life and a 'public-inside-private' that drew on the same resources for production and politics. By the 1980s, apart from economic 'domestic' production, the household (or certain fractal parts of it) was also the site for dissident political activism: groups and organizations, including *samizdat* publication.[449] Part of Gal's provocative argument of the modification of the semiotics of the private and public in the final years of socialism goes that "men were associated not with the private in general, but with the antipolitics that was occurring within private spaces."[450]

In the light of the exhibitions, Gal's argument has important implications. Looking at the liberation exhibitions from the perspective of displaying the private and public spheres, it is evident that in the course of time, the role and presence of what has traditionally been deemed private grows in scope and significance. This is mainly due to the growing application of interiors through which the changes in lifestyle could best be noticed in the ways they were reflected in the changing material environment. Obviously, the shift from the presentation of political history towards aspects of lifestyle was not merely an ideological one: it was equally due to the passing of time which amounted to the accumulation of the material objects of the new era. In other words, with the coming-of-age of socialism, it was becoming possible to show more of the

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447 See e.g. Gal and Kligman 2000.
448 Gal 2002:88.
449 Gal 2002:88.
450 Gal 2002: 90.

changes with the help of material objects. Whatever the reasons for the growing presence of the domestic sphere were, the outcome of it was that an increasing amount of artifacts displayed in the exhibitions embodied the immediate living surroundings of people. In the context of the standard bourgeois discursive pattern, this could readily be interpreted as an indication of the growing visibility of the female or woman's sphere. For instance, Gaby Porter argues that in British museums, the over-representation of the 'Victorian parlour' type of interiors works to highlight the domestic as the primary sphere of the woman, in which women are separated from public life[451]. While Porter's observations may apply to the 'Western European museum scene', this fact has different implications in the context of Eastern European state socialism. In the case of state-socialist Hungary, the growing presence of the 'private' in museum displays also implied the growing visibility of the locus of dissident politics and social movements that shaped the society from the bottom up. This is not to say that these interiors would not simultaneously signify the realm of household work that, despite the numerous social political tools introduced, was still primarily ranked among women's duties and thus in the feminine sphere. What deserves more attention, however, is the growing influence of the 'public' by the 'private'. Essentially, this configuration seems to assert Gal's assumptions on the differences between the fractal nature of private/public distinction in the bourgeois and state socialist discursive structure. Further, if the interiors of the exhibitions are identified as the private spaces of antipolitics, then this 'private' is first and foremost the male private sphere. Viewed from this perspective, the growth in the representation of domestic space does not amount to the growing representation of the feminine sphere but the private sphere of resistance predominantly associated with the male. Considering that the exhibitions were accepted by representatives of Party organs and were thus in line with the official views of the political leadership, this meant, at least indirectly, that the political leaders gave their silent consent to the growing presence of the *potential loci* of dissident political activism. Indeed, a visitor to the permanent exhibition of the National Museum of Hungary today can witness the presence of *samizdat* publications, though taken out of their original context of production, which more often than not was someone's private household. In the co-presence of demonstration posters from around the turn of 1980s and 1990s, these illegal publications signify the change in the political system and transition to liberal democracy.

Susan Gal's argument about the changing semiotics of gender in the wake of this transition resonates surprisingly well with the newly found interest in the more nuanced representation of the socialist woman in the 1980s. According to Gal, "[d]uring the final years of socialism, women were associated not with the state in general but its redistributive, social support aspects" [452]. Gal's insights are in line with the growing emphasis on the social dimensions of women's position, in contrast to the earlier emphasis on showing the politically equal woman, well represented by her organization.

451 Porter 1988: 107-109.
452 Gal 2002: 90.

4.3.4 Conclusion

It becomes clear from my discussion of the construction of gender in the liberation exhibitions that women are present and visible as subjects in a variety of ways and on several levels. Women are celebrated as working mothers, who due to their double role, comprising productive and reproductive duties, are also major beneficiaries of specialized state policies. 'Women' appear as a politically active and socially conscious group in the construction of socialism but are occasionally used to signify vulnerability and victimhood. There are also instances where women are positioned as objects of the male gaze. In line with Gaby Porter's aforementioned argument, women do indeed become the frontiers by which space and knowledge are defined. However, more often than not these divisions and definitions do not follow the patterns and structuring principles that dominate the literature of feminist criticism, cultural studies and museum studies alike. Therefore, I argue that the construction of gender needs to be read 'for difference' in two ways: Firstly, against the idealized equal communist subject, and secondly, against understandings of the private/public dichotomy informed by the standard bourgeois discursive pattern.

Acknowledging that my observations are based on heterogeneous archive material and my figurative stepping into the material means that my findings should be treated with caution. The display units discussed here are fragments in a multi-layered whole, the scattered nature of which we have to accept. While a museum object is, inherently, a fragment of its alternative contexts and life-worlds, an object or display unit of an exhibition that longer exists is doubly so. No matter how much epistemological care we would like to take, the possibility of misinterpretation is even greater when dealing with such double fragments. Further, though my discussion is structured around the context of state socialism, these findings cannot be generalized due to the differences in the 'social engineering' between the East Central European states. Viewed in this light, the exhibitions reveal several tendencies that may be regarded as characteristic of the construction of the communist subject in state-socialist Hungary. The exhibitions manifest modes of display and material visualizations that reflect 'state feminism'. This strong bond between the radical re-structuring of gender relations characteristic of the Stalinist, pre-1956 period is retained throughout the exhibitions from 1960 to 1985. While the developments of the early years of socialism are reinforced in the exhibition of 1980, the exhibitions of the 1980s manifest a more nuanced image of the different life-worlds of the socialist woman. While retaining this strong link as a key moment in the birth of a new social order, the more recent exhibitions embody aspects that touch upon the woman with contemporary, up-to-date interest. Although the more recent exhibitions still treat women as a special social group, as one 'minority' among the others, the exhibitions convey the message that there is no real development in the society if the questions of these special groups of 'women', 'youth' and the like are neglected.

Further, the gendering of space in the liberation exhibitions implies a private/public division that is not clear-cut and may appear as multiple nestings of private within public and public within private, as emphasized by Susan Gal. Therefore, what in a museum display may first appear as a display of the private and thus feminine sphere, may in fact have several, simultaneous gendered subdivisions. The living room of an interior as a potential locus of dissident politics belongs primarily to the masculine sphere, since it was men rather than women who were engaged in such activities. If we consider the liberation exhibitions as articulations of political ideology and party directives attended for public consumption, then it is worthwhile to examine their mediated symbolic forms also in the light of gender. The liberation exhibitions show that the emancipated communist subject had a variety of faces that, rather than going through abrupt changes, cumulated over time. Visiting the scripts is a way to witness the co-existence of these different faces.

4.4 Liberation mimesis: faithful reflections, colonial strategies and tangible metonyms

Chapter 4 has focused on exhibited fragments and the visual statements these fragments propose, which have then been discussed in terms of their mimetic mechanisms and effects. In doing this, mimesis is understood primarily in three senses: firstly, as a general issue of the representatativity of symbolic forms, secondly, as the mimetic strategies used in and manifested by colonial contexts, and thirdly, as the metonymy embodied by material objects, including their truth claims and mimetic effects in the exhibition. In its most general meaning, mimesis may appear as a general sense of truthfulness, so that what is shown and told in the exhibitions appears as truthful and real. If an exhibition is deemed as truthful representation, then this truthfulness may be seen as an indication of mimesis working. In its fullest form, then, mimesis is both intended as a faithful reflection and interpreted as such. Instances of ’liberation mimesis’ working are the guestbook entries that greet the exhibitions as ’faithful reflections’ of the past, or of society, or of the ’bright future’. Remarks such as “The exhibition really reflects our life today”[453] draw attention to the apparent adequacy, accuracy, and fidelity of the act of representation. Commenting on the exhibitions this way may be regarded as an act of signing the ’mimetic pact’, as discussed in 4.2. They are an indication that the exhibitions as cultural objects were appreciated for their ability to evoke mimesis. Put down in the guest book, such phrases may serve as acts of legitimation, and not only of the exhibition at hand, but also in the sense of affirming ’the road to socialism’. Then again, such appraisal may be a mere act of ’paying one’s respects’ within the commemorative ritual: manifesting behavior deemed expected and ’worthy of the occasion’. All in all, the ’the road

453 TAD-I-133-75 “25 éves a szabad Magyarország” vendégkönyve I-II.

to socialism', as projected by the exhibitions, may be located in the realm of the modern utopia, which tried to 'say everything about everything, in order to model the future in its entirety", as has been said of the Paris World Expo.[454] The heyday of this utopian mimesis was the 1970 exhibition, which attempted to cover everything from the tiniest particles to the macro-level, especially through its spectacular display of science and technology.

However, the reflections may also be far from being faithful: in remarks such as "Supreme forgery of history!"[455], mimesis appears as deceptive make-believe and downright manipulation. While commentaries in the press, unsurprisingly, did not contain criticism that would have called into question the exhibitions' ability to reflect the realities of the country, guest book entries occasionally did.

In the context of the present study, it is impossible to say whether the sense of faithful reflections is due rather to mimetic narration or to the mimetic power of the displayed objects. However, what can be said with certainty is that the degree of mimetic detail increases in the liberation exhibitions over the course of time, as argued in chapter 3.6. On the one hand, this is due to the overall accumulation of material culture since the beginnings of state socialism, and, on the other, the shift in focus from political history towars lifestyle. Objects are increasingly placed *in situ*, that is, displayed as elements in interiors, thereby creating an 'authenticity effect', an 'aura of realness'. In the case of the 1985 exhibition, the majority of the commentaries touch upon the wealth of everyday objects relating to lifestyle: the interiors are perceived as reflecting well the differences between the different social strata; how they were equipped and how their tastes differed.[456] The exhibition is seen as rich and comprehensive: it contains all that characterizes the past forty years of life in Hungary[457]. It seems that the rich material details have created a density that lends itself to the mimetic mode: the exhibition is 'very everyday-like, the way life itself is.'[458] The mode of display is perceived to reflect the life-worlds of individuals and this is acknowledged and greeted with enthusiasm. As the art historian and critic András Kenessei points out, the power of the exhibition is in the way it highlights the characteristic momentum of the everyday that would otherwise unjustly be doomed to oblivion[459]. According to Kenessei, the exhibition is right in making the significant moments of the 'socialist road' merely a back-drop created with photos and documents, since these live in the memory anyway[460]. This is how Kenessei insists that the visitor's attention should be focused on the small things that are often forgotten but which,

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454 Ory 1982: 22, quoted in Barth 2008:25.

455 "Mesteri történelemhamísítás!", TAD 133-75 '25 éves a szabad Magyarország vendégkönyve'

456 *Pesti Műsor,* "Utunk, életünk" 19.06.1985

457 Kenessei, András 1985. "A Néprajzi Múzeum életmód-kiállítása. Így éltünk itthon", *Magyar Hírlap* 7.12.1985

458 Bátyai, Jenő 1986. "Utunk, életünk", *Dél-Magyarország* 3.1.1986

459 Kenessei ibid.

460 Kenessei ibid.

nonetheless, can be revealing.[461] Further, a newspaper article contained a list of artifacts from the early years of socialism that the writer had seen in the exhibition. More than a mere list, however, it appears as an account of a vivid vision (memory) of the proletarian dictatorship that is taking shape through material objects:

> Compulsory deliveries, the room of the Beszkárt female conductor, the works of Stalin and Rákosi in the flats, the pipe furniture, a Zündapp 500 with a sidecar, the fashion of the ’50s with the ’lóden’ coat on the forefront; crocheted bags, Szikra publications everywhere, etc.[462]

The author makes it clear that nothing is lacking: this texture is more than enough for the evocation and animation of memories. What is noticable is the way objects signifying the everyday and prominant historical figures intertwine. The felt omnipresence of Szikra books and leaflets, publications of the publishing house formed by the Hungarian Communist Party in 1944, works to create a sense of the all-permeable cultural policy and strict control of the early 1950s.

As discussed in chapter 4.1, mimesis often emerges in overlapping roles in colonial contexts. The ’politics of mimesis’, as outlined by Graham Huggan, is related to ”the ways in which mimesis operates strategically in colonial contexts, as a means both of relating the self to others and of usurping others' power.” [463] Many of these strategies relate to mimetic rivalry, or, in Theodor Adorno’s terms, organized mimesis, manifested in the attempt to project one's own aggression onto the Other. [464] This projection is often coupled with the simulation of ”an imagined savagery in order to dominate or destroy it."[465] In the context of representing violence and aggression, mimesis may involve an act of undoing, a reversed mimicry of sorts, to eradicate undesirable resemblances between ’us’ and ’them’. That is, ’Self’ and ’Other’ need to be made visually dissimilar in order to condemn their aggression and legitimate ours. A concrete instance of this is what I identified as the visual rhetoric of the ’peace-fight’, which contained visual statements of ’us fighting for a noble cause’. Especially with the exhibiting of polemics, the dynamics between visual appearance and the politics of labelling manifested interesting tensions. Further, in the discourses around the exhibitions, there also emerges a slightly different kind of mimesis that may be characterized along the lines of Homi Bhabha’s colonial mimicry, which serves the role of cultural survival. In this meaning, mimesis may be conceived of as camouflage, an active mimicry of the colonizer to perform conformity. This sense may be detected in the discussions of the representation of the Stalinist period in the 1980s exhibitions. In a radio

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461 This is in part an unintended echo of James Deetz’s argument for the importance of the study of everyday material objects and using them as historical evidence. See Deetz 1977.
462 Bátyai ibid.
463 Huggan 1998:93.
464 Huggan 1998:95.
465 Taussig 1993:87; Huggan 1998:95.

commentary, the acclaimed film director Pál Gábor visits the 1985 exhibition and reflects upon his thoughts and feelings in the following way: ”Passing through these halls one gets a feeling that the history has cosied up to us with its material world. I did not choose the iron bunk bed or the eiderdown flung on the coal heap in the air-raid shelter – these were laid on us by history”[466]. He goes on to remark about the way ’material objects oblige us in the course of history and become our binds’. He points out that, in times of trouble, people tend to behave in a certain way: they accept the material world as it is, resorting to an instinct of mimicry. In Gábor's view, this is a way of showing commitment and conformity. This ’commitment’, however, should not be understood as commitment to the colonizer but to the immediate surroundings and life-worlds of the individuals, the community. As pointed out by Mihai Spariosu in his reading of Adorno's mimesis, ”Survival, the attempt to guarantee life, is thus dependent upon the identification with something external and other, with ‘dead, lifeless material'"[467]. Therefore, if we consider the functioning of the mimetic mode in the way people may take refuge in objects, not to hide but to perform conformity, then this act of accepting the objects of our life-worlds as they are becomes an act of active mimesis: of subjects miming the uniformity embodied in objects. This is how the enforced comformity of Stalinism gains a symbolic dimension in the uniformity of the displayed objects. In effect, whereas the exhibtion narratives lay emphasis on the constant struggle of the ’progressive forces’, in the commentaries that contain accounts of the ways memories, thoughts and feelings have been evoked, a central theme is survival. It is as if encounters with certain objects included the realization: ”We have lived through this”. The same idea is put slightly differently in the following commentary about the 1980 exhibition: ”It seems that it is possible to live through the kind of contradictions we find hard to conceptualize.”[468]

The representation of gender may also be seen in terms of colonial strategies. With gender, mimesis emerges as ‘empowering projections’ that may be regarded as characteristic of the construction of the ‘communist subject’. The modes of display and material visualizations may be viewed as manifesting ‘state feminism’. Primarily, the ‘state feminist subject’ appears in the ways ‘the woman’ is spatially positioned in relation to the ultimate symbols of the state. This subject is ambiguous in terms of agency: ‘the woman’ is a powerful subject but, at the same time, protected by those in power. Another manifestation of an empowering display is present in the recurrent montages in which images of people merge with images of parliament or documents or objects symbolizing the constitution. These subjects, who have been ‘given a face’ close to the symbols of power, are to be understood as each and every citizen of the socialist state – the people the country belongs to.

As emphasized in 2.3, the sense of the real in an exhibition does not necessarily derive from the way objects have been displayed in the exhibition.

466 “Rendhagyó tárlatvezetés” Kossuth Radio 23.6.1985
467 Spariosu 1984: 33.
468 *Lakásépítő*, Művészet és társadalom” April 4, 1980.

Objects as tangible metonyms that are placed in the exhibition primarily to stand for their realness, that is, by virtue of being ′real things′ and not symbols of something, may provide a sense of realness that may have little to do with their exhibitional positioning or contextualization. The mere presence of something apprehended as ′real′ may also be a source of mimesis: the presence of certain objects is deemed significant, their being ″visible in accessible distance.″[469] It is the tangible metonyms that are inclined to render ′the Enola Gay effect′: a ′charged′ display that is instable owing to the mere presence of particular artefacts. In the commentaries of the 1980 exhibition, there are references to ′intertwined textures′ of materials, through which the complex, historical interconnections gain visibility in the exhibition.[470] Interestingly enough, while memories are evoked *through* objects, history is seen to lie *in between* the objects: in between the ′Varia furniture′, the ′seashell armchair′ and the briefcase[471]. In other words, whereas memories appear mostly as embodied, history is that something invisible in-between that becomes perceivable through the interconnection of mnemonic embodiments. Accounts of such ′textures′ may be the closest we can get to the commemorative membrane.

Also the ′dreams of possession′, discussed in 4.2, are an instance of tangible metonyms. Whereas the exhibition narrative positions the objects as milestones on the road of socialism, suggesting that they are attainable by those who stay ′on the road′, visitors were more concerned with realizing their private fantasies through the same objects. These objects of desire may thus be viewed as mimetic appropriation and subversion. In this sense, my conclusions are similar to those of Volker Barth, who draws attention to the generative capacity of the mimetic in exhibitions. His contention that ″the exhibitions reveal themselves as events that were not judged in the first place for their capacity to represent but for their ability to create″ also applies to the dream machine of the liberation exhibitions, with which, much the same way as in Barth's case, the visitors "develop pleasing mental images according to their individual and hedonistic motivations."[472]

Curiously enough, viewing certain tangible metonyms as they appear in the exhibitions in a chronological order, they in fact suggest that exhibition by exhibition, the visitor comes closer to the major symbol of Hungarian petit-bourgeoisation: the car.[473] Whereas in the exhibitions of the 1960s, there is – literally – *no sign* of the car, in the 1970 exhibition it appears in the section dedicated to traffic, in the form of a few scale models. These models, as the script of the exhibition points out, are of the types of cars which are currently available in Hungary. The same is shown on a large-sized photo of the newly built M7 motorway: there are multiple lanes, but the variety of cars is rather small. When it comes to the display of authentic objects (not images or models),

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469 *Textílélet,* "Művészet és társadalom 1945-1980″ March 29, 1980.
470 *Csepeli posztó,* "Tárlatról tárlatra″ June 11, 1980.
471 Fehér, Béla 1980. "Művészet és társadalom. Kiállítás a Műcsarnokban″, *Magyar Nemzet* March, 23, 1980.
472 Barth 2004:22.
473 Gerő 2006:106.

however, all the visitor gets at this stage is fragments: tangible metonyms. In the room that displays the achievements of science and technology, there are car lamps, embedded in a contour of a car made out of a wooden board. In other words, what the visitor gets remains on the level of a promise: a scale model, an image and authentic fragments that possibly prompt 'mimetic evocations of what was left behind.'[474] Compared to the 1970 exhibition, the one organized in 1980 contained more than mere promises and fragments. Moreover, it hinted at the presence of a real car, even though it had been framed out of sight in the exhibitions. In the interior displaying a 1970s household, there are several objects – car keys, car wax etc. – in the hall that suggest the dwellers possess a car. This presence, even if it was invisible, was reasonable enough on the exhibition designers' part, since by 1980, every fourth Hungarian family had a car. Finally, in the last exhibition, there was a Trabant, parked in front of a weekend cottage. This petit-bourgeois dream-come-true was, as discussed earlier, also a scene of escape. This is how, through images, models, contextualized and in-situ fragments, the car is finally attained.

Looking at the recurring commemorative rituals of liberation from the viewpoint of mimesis, they unavoidably contain an element of parodic repetition, even if this parodic element was not intended. Complex exhibitions every five years as variations on the same theme and with slightly shifting topics and focal points, provide a terrain for subversive mimicry. It is possible that at least in part the cordial visualizations of benevolence and subordination in relation to the Soviet Union was intended or interpreted as 'mock-deference'[475], but this is a question to which the research material does not give answers. It is certain, however, that several of the visual statements discussed in this chapter were deliberately created to symbolize lack or compromise. This, given the celebratory context of liberation, appears, if not parodic, at least ironic.[476] It would be misguided, however, to dismiss *the entire* 'socialist display politics' as mere 'performative acts of simulated obedience.'[477] The reasons for this are discussed in the following chapter.

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474 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1990:389.
475 Huggan 1998:96.
476 The issue of irony is discussed in chapter 5.2.
477 Huggan ibid.

5 INTERPLAY OF HISTORICAL MUSEOLOGY AND IDEOLOGY

5.1 The ’eastern’ museology discourse and the ’red tail of ideology’

It may not come as a surprise that the museology discourse of the Cold War period is permeated by the East—West, Socialist—Capitalist divide, but also a less charged European—American divide. A survey of the museological literature gives an impression of parallel and separate disciplinary developments, occasionally brought together by such international platforms as the International Council for Museums (ICOM). In this chapter, the liberation exhibitions are discussed against the backdrop of the international and Hungarian museology discourse, with special attention to the ideological tensions within this discourse. In doing this, the focus is on the ’eastern’ discourse, with an attempt to locate the development of the Hungarian discipline within this ’eastern’ discourse. Given the interconnectedness of ideological aims and disciplinary ambitions, I shall ponder the question whether it is worthwhile to discuss the museology of state socialism under the heading of ’socialist museology’, and if so, what implications this has for the way we interpret this discourse in our post-Cold War era.

In colloquial Hungarian, the textual practice of incorporating and merging ideological and other contents is occasionally called ’the red tail of ideology’.[478] The term was coined during the state-socialist period to denote ideology-related textual practices. The ’red tail’ of ideology is used to denote a textual technique to highlight – or indeed, create – an ideological connection to a given topic, and often appears as an attempt to draw didactic conclusions from what has been said.[479] Typically, it is applied in the introduction and the ending of the text, and it also serves the role of ‘camouflaging’ less presentable views as accepta-

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[478] Ráczkevi 2002:4.
[479] Ráczkevi ibid.

ble.[480] Pointing out instances where the red tail of ideology has been applied would require detailed textual analysis which is beyond the scope of this study. Rather, I wish to bring up this problematic in more general terms, as characteristic of the museum discourse of the period in general. In other words, the constant drawing on the rhetoric of Marxism-Leninism or the cultural political aims of the Party appears as an 'instability factor' as regards the 'museological meanings' of the texts, whether interpreted during their time of production or in what is referred as the 'post-socialist condition'[481]. In a sense, then, reading the 'eastern museology discourse' is at the same time chasing the 'red tail of ideology'.

Since the Second World War, there has been continuous debate over the role of museology as a discipline of its own. The discussion around museums was speeded up in the aftermath of the Second World War, when the ICOM was founded, in part to account for the devastation and threat to the cultural heritage posed by the war[482]. As its main objectives, it stated, apart from the dissemination of knowledge and raising public awareness of museums, the enhancing of professional cooperation and exchange.[483] One of the dominant topics in the museum field has been defining the complex role between museum theory and practice. Some of the most fervent disputes go back to the 1960s when the American museum worker Wilcomb E. Washburn wrote an ironical article in which he introduced 'grandmotherology' as an analogy to highlight the pretentious pursuits of positing theoretical grounds for museology.[484] Indeed, as emphasized by Ivo Maroević, this theory-practice divide has been predominant throughout the international museology discourse as it also reflects the divide between the Eastern and the Western views. While in the West, the focus was on the social relevance and the pedagogical role of the museum, mostly via practical approaches, the countries in the socialist world aimed at laying the theoretical and philosophical grounds of museology, drawing mainly on Marxism-Leninism. The different approaches were also reflected in terminology. Thus, for the most part, 'museology' was retained for 'Eastern usage', while in the West, the terms 'museum studies' and 'museumskunde' were preferred.[485] To some extent, this division still seems to prevail: the influential Anglo-American schools of museology, such as the Leicester school (informed by material culture studies) and the Smithsonian Institute are inclined to call the discipline 'museum studies', while scholars representing or influenced by the former Eastern branch talk mostly about 'museology'. At the same time, representatives of 'museum studies' have been less keen on providing historical

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480 In effect, such textual practices of incorporating instantly recognizable, dogmatic texts may be interpreted as a form of' mock-deference' or 'performative acts of simulated obedience' (cf. Huggan 1998:96).
481 Erjavec 2003 (see especially the foreword by Martin Jay); György 2009:15-21.
482 Maroević, 1998:80.
483 Retrieved from: http://icom.museum/mission.html Accessed 5.4.2009.
484 Washburn, W.E. 1967.
485 Maroević 1998:80-97.

overviews and syntheses on the development of the discipline but have rather concentrated on the historical overview of the museum institution.

Museology is conceived as both a theory and a practice[486], or, in Stránský's terms, a 'tendency of knowledge'[487]. Tomislav Šola, in turn, has called museology "a usable strategy for the totality of the care, protection and communication of the heritage"[488]. He has divided the development of museology into a three-stage system, the first being pre-scientific – something that has been called 'museumlore' by the Japanese museum theorist Tsuruta, the second the empirical-descriptive characteristic of museography, that is, the 'how' of the museum institution, while the third phase is the theoretical-synthetic from the 1970s onwards.[489] Rather than calling museology an autonomous discipline, Peter van Mensch talks about the rise of museology discourse that is apparent from the 1950s onwards. According to van Mensch, the history of museology can be regarded as a process of emancipation involving the breaking away of museology from the subject-matter disciplines and the profiling of its own cognitive orientation and methodology[490]. This view implies that, whether an autonomous discipline or not, there exist several museologies, partly due to their deriving from the traditions of different subject-matter disciplines. van Mensch's discussion of the different approaches and orientations within museology in fact problematise this question of several co-existing museologies.

Instead of going deeper into the dispute over the role of museology among the disciplines, it may be more useful for our purposes to look briefly at the branch of 'eastern' thought within museology. In the Soviet Union in the 1930s, a new orientation was developed that drew on dialectical-materialistic methodology while it used objects as primary sources of knowledge. Thus, the focus was on the cognitive basis of museology. In 1955, Soviet museologists issued the *Osnovy sovjetskogo muzejevedenija* (The Fundamentals of Soviet Museology) in which they proposed that museology was the science of museum work.[491] While it stressed the importance of scientific research, it considered the relevant subject-disciplines as the primary fields of study. Maroević sees this emphasis as characteristic of museology in the Soviet Union as a whole.[492] What can be taken as the common ground of this eastern branch is its feeding on Marxist-Leninist philosophy, while the emphasis was on theory in order objectively to determine the needs of the society.[493] van Mensch suggests that within museology, there are three, non-exclusive approaches to museology's 'purpose of understanding'. These are the empirical-theoretical, the praxeological and the philosophical-critical approach. While the empirical-theoretical approach aims at substantial rationality and is mainly descriptive, and the praxeological ap-

486 See e.g. van Mensch, Pouw & Schouten 1983; Vilkuna 2000: 8-11.
487 Stránský 1983.
488 Sola 1992:18.
489 Stránský 1980:71.
490 Van Mensch 1992. Chapter 2, "The Museology Discourse"
491 Stránský 1970a:16; Maroević 1998:81.
492 Maroević 1998:81.
493 van Mensch 1992. Chapter 4, "Object of knowledge"

proach focuses on applicability, the philosophical-critical approach manifests a critical social orientation. In van Mensch's view, Marxist-Leninist museology is one orientation among the philosophical-critical approaches, along with 'new museology' and 'critical museology'. These all manifest what the Czechoslovakian museum theorist Stránský would call 'program orientation' as opposed to 'cognitive orientation'[494].

The prospect of there being a uniform Marxist-Leninist museology was suggested by Stránský when he was compiling a dictionary of relevant terms for museology but his suggestion was strongly criticized. One possible factor that may support the idea of a more or less uniform Marxist-Leninist museology is the decisive role of the International Committee for Museology (ICOFOM), in discussing and disseminating ideas of museology on an international platform. ICOFOM, founded in 1976, is a sub-committee of the International Council of Museums, and a major discussion forum of museology on an international level. One of its objectives upon its foundation was to establish museology as a scientific discipline.[495] van Mensch has paid attention to the inner power struggles within ICOFOM, where, as far as museum theory was concerned, the 'eastern thought' was strongly represented. This caused tensions within ICOFOM, so much so that some regarded the international museology discourse and ICOFOM as its major forum as merely a tool to spread communist ideas.[496]

As van Mensch points out, it may be useful for some purposes to talk about 'Marxist-Leninist museology' as a separate branch of museology, but it can hardly be considered a uniform school of thought. Moreover, the emphases of different representatives of Marxist-Leninist museology (should we retain the term) pull in different directions, some being rather object-oriented, others function-oriented, while there are also museum-oriented ones that resort to narrow empiricism.

In his handbook on museum exhibitions, the Soviet museologist A.B. Zaks emphasizes that

> The methodological basis of exhibitions of museums of the Soviet Union is the Marx-Lenin doctrine about nature and the society. The ideological content of the exhibition must be expressed clearly. The selection and grouping of the presented material and its interpretation must be done in such a way that the exhibition might contribute to the formation of the Marx-Lenin world opinion, that it might reflect events and phenomena of the past or present from the viewpoint of the Party, that it might fulfill the tasks of communist education.[497]

It seems that while several scholars drawing on dialectical materialism emphasize the view of the museum as an ideological tool for propagating the Marxist-Leninist worldview, they differ in terms of the extent to which they see the Party as the major agent of control in the ideological struggle. For Schreiner, one of the most influential theorists in DGR, museology provides theories for practical

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494 Stránský 1988.
495 Van Mensch 1992, Ch 3.
496 See Burcaw 1983.
497 Zaks 1980:6, quoted in van Mensch 1992, Ch 5.

action, and its purpose is to contribute to the development of socialist culture and society. Further, museology is characterized by its class character, defined by the ideology of the class using it.[498]

Against this backdrop, it is an interesting question, whether we can – or whether it is worthwhile to – talk about Marxist-Leninist museology in the Hungarian context. During the years of socialism, the Marxist-Leninist grounds of curatorial practices were openly declared – at least on paper. The viewpoint presented by József Korek in his book *A muzeológia alapjai* (The Fundamentals of Museology), seems to a great extent echo the standpoint of Zaks presented earlier. According to Korek, the ultimate aim with both existing and newly acquired material is to increase 'socialist consciousness' through the message of the exhibition, thus gaining a deeper understanding. Further, this aim is something that should not be concealed. For Korek, a museum exhibition is a means to achieve cultural political ends. Exhibitions are a way of developing materialist thinking, taste and a means to further proletarian internationalism. [499]

While Razgon and several other Soviet museum theorists proclaimed that impartiality was a bourgeois fiction to be fought[500], the Hungarian literature on museology seems to highlight the scientific, objective ground of museum work provided by dialectical materialism. In this respect, the museological thinking in Hungary bears a resemblance to that of the USSR. However, these tendencies are by no means exclusive and here I take them up simply to point to the different emphases of the museological literature between different writers in different countries of the Eastern Bloc. It seems that rather than considering the various manifestations of Marxist-Leninist driven orientations a concrete branch of Marxist-Leninist, or for that matter, 'socialist museology', it might be more useful to discuss the similarities and differences of several influential representatives of museological thinking. It might be misleading to hold such theorists as *the* representatives of a domestic type of Marxist-Leninist museology *an sich*. If we can question the existence of the 'national types' of Marxist-Leninist museology, then we can equally call into question the existence of a Marxist-Leninist museology altogether. Later, following the democratic transition within the socialist bloc, Stránský denied the political implications of his theory, despite his earlier references to a 'Marxist-Leninist museology'. Cases such as this seem to suggest that in many cases, an ideological frame has been superimposed on the theory. A given scholar may have felt that (re)framing his or her theory in Marxist-Leninist terms was the price to be paid for an item of work to be published or seriously considered. Further, reference to central texts of Marxism-Leninism or resorting to such rhetoric may have also ensured more space to express one's views – they may have been mere tactics of 'the red tail'. However, whether these references to Marxism-Leninism are sincere on the writer's part or a bargaining (counter), the textual articulations remain the same. In other words, regardless of the way they are interpreted, there exists a body of texts

498 van Mensch 1992, Ch 5.
499 Korek 1987: 24
500 Razgon 1977.

that to a varying extent and with varying explicitness address the theory and practice of museum work within socialism that *does* form a discursive field in its own right. Many museum workers who have contributed to museum work during the years of socialism are likely to dismiss the 'ideological overload' of the museological writings of the time, pointing out that a person living and making his or her career within the system knew his or her way around: thecurator knew how to peel the ideological contents away the actual message of a scientific article, and while writing, knew where and to what extent she should draw on certain discourses to make things safe. However, the question is more complex than that. Reading these texts now, as articulations of the museological thinking of a given era, it is often difficult to decipher where the 'ideological' content ends and the '(f)actual' content begins. In a sense, it is as if the ideological yield of a text, once put down, would write itself further in the text, creating surplus meanings not thought of.

Several overviews of the development of museology written by Hungarian scholars manifest the same conventional division of development into the capitalist and the socialist world: they are mostly dealt with as parallel (and competing) lines of development that effect each other and may even borrow from each other, but eventually seem to belong to two different realms. However, it is likely that this division was a scholarly convention of the time rather than a more profound epistemological or ontological difference perceived to lie at the core of Western and Eastern approaches. Then again, it is equally justified to argue that the will to see the field of museology or museum studies as a uniform discipline without inherent ideological tensions, as propagated by Burcaw[501] is an equally ideological pursuit.

We can approach the development of historical museology from two directions. First, the professional development within museums gave rise to the need to reframe historical collections and hire historians as museum professionals. The subject matter discipline of historical museology (történeti muzeológia) had evolved into a sub-discipline of its own by the mid 20th century. This coincided with the upheavals of the first half of the century: the two world wars and revolutions that shattered whole nations. From the viewpoint of material culture, these historical events produced material traces of such kind that their collection and preservation for the generations to come was seen as necessary.[502] The most intensive period in the development of Hungarian historical museology was in the 1970s and 1980s. What gave a special flavour to the entire project, however, was the striving among the power holders (functionaries of the Party) to appropriate the museum profession as a whole so that it would exclusively concentrate on collecting and displaying labour movement-related material. This is to say that the museology dealing with the history of the end of the 19th century and the 20th century should have focused solely on the historical events, persons and material culture connected with the labour movement. While this exclusive focus was more or less achieved in several

501 Burcaw 1983.
502 Zombori 2001: 9.

countries of the Eastern Bloc, such as the GDR, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the USSR, it never succeeded in Hungary. Despite the new ideological-political framework, the collecting and caring for the existing collections of e.g. the Habsburg Monarchy-related material was carried on, even if it had to be done with a low profile, if not in secret[503]. Since the change of regime at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, this has been readily emphasized within the museum profession, sometimes to the extent that it appears a myth of continuity, adding to the general image of Hungary as a stubborn, disobedient disciple of the Eastern Bloc, propped up by a productive double vision. By calling it a myth is by no means an attempt to reject or de-value the importance of the comprehensive collection-policy in Hungarian museums during socialism. Rather, I wish to highlight the significance of the matter for the identity construction of museum professionals since the change of regime. In other words, while undoubtedly true, the multilayered politics of value behind the scenes has also been elevated to the level of a myth and frequently come up in discussions with museum professionals. According to this myth, or narrative of continuity, 'the disobedient disciple' collected not only objects belonging to the realm and life-form of the aristocracy or to forbidden youth movements such as the Scouts but also documents and memoirs of those taken to the Soviet Union by force during or after WW2, objects of those labelled "counter-revolutionaries" by the socialist regime, and from the 1980s onwards, the illegal samizdat publications. In the introduction to the first publication of the Society of Hungarian Museologist Historians (Magyar Múzeumi Történész Társulat, MAMUTT) in 2001, István Zombori is eager to emphasize that due to holding on to the complex, all-encompassing collection policy carried out throughout the socialist era, it was easy enough for the museum profession in Hungary to carry out its work after the change of the regime in 1989-1990, now that the 'compulsory lessons' of political anniversary exhibitions such as the October Revolution and liberation could be given up[504]. In a similar fashion, János Pintér reassures that no radical change in profile was necessary after the change of regime: it was only the dominant role of the labour movement that came to a close[505]. At the same time, the changes in the beginning of the 1990s were experienced as a kind of a catharsis by many museum professionals and museum audiences alike: through the mode of exhibition, it was possible to initiate public discourse on topics that had earlier been repressed. Moreover, it was possible to create visual displays of concrete physical objects pertaining to a wealth of topics that the writing of history was only beginning to reveal. At the same time, this meant that exhibitions were erected on topics that at the time lacked even a minimum consensus among historians and thus gave rise to heated discussions.[506]

It is symptomatic of the shifting values that, after the change of regime, the compulsory, heavily protocol-based jubilee exhibitions made for 'festive occa-

503 Zombori 2001:10.
504 Zombori 2001:10.
505 Pintér 2001: 23.
506 Marosvári 2001: 13-14.

sions' are frequently referred to as 'dumping'[507], the notion pertaining to flooding the market with goods at a price well below their world-market value. This language use seems to suggest that due to the prevailing cultural politics and within a specific commemorative framework, the political anniversary-related exhibitions were solely about "paying one's respects", and thus the value of both the exhibition culture and exhibited culture was artificially kept low.

There was an obvious gap between the 'theory' – the articles published in professional journals or by the central government – and the curatorial practices manifested behind the scenes at the museums. As István Zombori points out, everyone knew what the taboos were: there was no way the Red Terror that preceded the White Terror in 1919 could be mentioned, or the violence performed by the "liberating" Soviet troops, or by any means refer to the events of 1956 as a revolution instead of counter-revolution.[508] The awareness of the taboos and loaded thematic led to self-censorship, frequently referred to as "the wall" in the process of exhibition-making. What was regarded as exhibitable material was envisioned as being within the invisible walls of exhibitability, and the too loaded items as beyond it. In the course of exhibition-making, curators could remind each other: "That's beyond the wall"[509].

Another symptomatic aspect of the museology discourse after the changeover is the craving for continuity within the museum profession. On the one hand, there is emphasis on the continuities, the curatorial traditions that are and should be at work despite the prevailing ideology, and, on the other, emphasizing the compulsory protocol nature and black-and-whiteness of the earlier exhibitions: the 'anniversary classics' born in the spirit of 'messianistic belief'[510]. The truth, I believe, relies somewhere in between: despite the rigorous ideological framework, curators mostly succeeded in creating innovative exhibitions that could serve the audience some novelties, either in terms of thematic or their mode of display. From the viewpoint of the curators, the real challenge was to navigate in the relatively narrow space of expression in such a way that it was possible to have it both ways: meet the requirements dictated by the ideological state apparatus, and 'smuggle in' curatorial expertise and insight[511]. This meant putting together well-grounded exhibitions of high quality, both in terms of exhibition culture and exhibited culture, notwithstanding the compulsory emphases on the labour movement 'socialist shaping of consciousness' (propaganda) and legitimation. At the same time, it seems that within the museum profession, the re-evaluation of the museum culture of the socialist era has given rise to a narrative of Hungarian museums as the disobedient disciple of the Eastern Bloc. It seems that within the museum profession, there resides a

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[507] e.g. Pintér 2001:25.

[508] Zombori 2001:10.

[509] "Az már a fal", as expressed by one of my informants, who formerly worked at the Museum of Military History in my interview in September 2008. The same metaphor of 'the wall 'was taken up by several informants.

[510] Ihász 2001:37.

[511] Discussions and interviews with museum professionals: Anna Bartó, Sándor Tóth, Vera Peterdi, Krisztina Sedelmeyer, Ferenc Szíkossy, Péter Szuhay, Emese Szoleczky.

popular image of the Hungarian museum curator who succeeds in 'keeping up appearances' and convinces the Soviet Union that the country has a properly functioning museum of the labour movement while in practice, the changes have been rather cosmetic, including the name of the institution. This, in a sense, affirms the image of Hungary as the 'happiest barrack in the socialist camp': a deviant and privileged member within the Warsaw Pact. In light of this, it would be tempting to view the museological literature of the time 'mimicry-socialist museology'. However, this view would be simplistic and misleading, not the least due to the fact a considerable body of museological texts exist that have been written under the flag of Marxist-Leninism that carry surpluses of meaning despite curatorial intentions. This said, it is safe enough to say that 'socialist museology' did exist in Hungary, even if much of it remained on paper as manifestos or obscure references to the qualities of the 'socialist man'. Prompted by a political anniversary, the liberation exhibitions may in fact be viewed as a textbook case of the concrete outcomes of this socialist museology, with all their contradictions and investments in novelties.

5.2 Setting the tone: 'Liberation' as a commemorative genre

This chapter looks into the issue of genre in relation to liberation exhibitions. In addition to considering genre as related to the dynamics of form and content, genre may be seen as articulating a combination of moral, political and aesthetic imperatives.[512] In this chapter, genre is discussed mostly in terms of the tone of the exhibitions: the interrelations of solemnity, seriousness, humor and irony, and their possible moral and aesthetic implications. If a commemoration is bound to take solemn and serious forms, does this commemorative respect automatically close out humor or irony? Can an event perceived in tragic terms be represented or evoked with comic elements? How much ambiguity can be contained by the commemorative genre of liberation? May any changes in the genre be detected over time? These questions are addressed in the course of this chapter. First, I shall sketch out the general characteristics of commemorative genres, against which I shall analyze the tone of the exhibitions in terms of their seriousness and playfulness. With serious, I mean the attempt to control the meanings and taking oneself seriously – 'oneself' here referring to representations of the socialist regime and Hungarian society. Secondly, I shall reflect upon the possibilities of the realization of humor and irony within the commemorative genre of liberation. Finally, I shall argue that the liberation exhibitions entailed the invention of a specific commemorative genre that could be evoked to articulate meanings. While this commemorative genre was used in the articulation of power, it at the same time could be used as a tool for the deliberate 'breaking' away from the expected commemorative frame.

512 Wagner-Pacifici 1996:301-304.

5.2.1 Irony and humor – killers of solemn commemoration?

Historically speaking, museums are impregnated with meaning-making pertaining to the worshipping of cultural objects as relics which even the 'postmodern museum' cannot escape. The museum as cultural practice feeds on this veneration and enshrinement, and at the same time, the museum contributes to the (re)production of celebratory representations. In this respect, the liberation exhibitions can be approached as commemorative and thus celebratory representations of socialist Hungary. Further, the collective celebration of anniversaries can be seen as a ritual enacting of memory, while the commemorative practices manifested in the exhibitions can be seen as a ritual consumption of culturally meaningful artefacts, projected in a heritage-space which feeds on myths and carefully selected fragments of the past. This chapter aims at exploring the tone of this 'filtered sort of history' involved in the repetitive use of cultural texts that may be named 'compulsive anniversaryism'[513].

Considering that the notion of heritage pertains to a selection of items of a culture considered worthy of preservation, it will not come as a surprise that the commemoration of the socialist past is approached here as 'heritage narrative', prompted by 'bureaucratic heritage logic'[514]. Recalling Kevin Walsh's argument that all nations and societies aim to produce a collective memory which is "founded on an idea of age-old organic traditions" [515], we need to see that a past constructed according to heritage logic means that it is inherently celebratory in nature. Walsh goes on to claim that "This tradition demands that history is placed in a past-pluperfect, and is therefore beyond question".[516] This idea of a "past beyond question" bears resemblance to the notion of "doxa" in the Bourdieuan sense of the word as the experience by which "the natural and social world appears as self-evident", and thus denoting what is taken for granted in any particular society [517]. Thus, from a "past beyond question" and "compulsive anniversaryism" we do not need to take a giant leap to arrive at Gábor Gyáni's notion of the "tradition-cult" [518], by which he means the legitimization of political and cultural pursuits with a reference to the maintenance of traditions. Paradoxically, this results in the active (re-)creation of tradition,

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513 The notion of anniversaryism derives from Peter Fowler, and which he elaborates in the following manner: "We celebrate ourselves, organizations, our places, our heroes, sometimes our authentic, significant history; we even celebrate celebrations and commemorate disasters. That deemed worthy of official national celebration comes from a very filtered sort of history." See Fowler, Peter J., *The Past in Contemporary Society. Then, now.* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 40.

514 This term has been used by Michelle Tisdel Flikke in her study on heritage production in socialist Cuba. In Tisdel Flikke's view, 'bureaucratic heritage logic' is a doctrine used to exclude contradictory and complex aspects of heritage and includes 'the bureaucratic methods that create and protect the state's official heritage narrative'. See Tisdel Flikke 2005:5-6.

515 Walsh 1992:126-7.

516 Walsh ibid.

517 Bourdieu 1977 (1972):164.

518 Gyáni 1992: 3-6.

manifested also by the appearance of new celebrations in the calendar of the Socialist Hungary. The question is, then, does a mythologized 'past beyond question' allow for ambiguous playfulness?

Certain types of situations, such as public commemorations, usually evoke similar expectations in their audiences and thus call for certain kind of rhetoric.[519] As such, museums and public monuments serve both the collective memory and the very act of commemoration. In their generic criticism of the Enola Gay controversy, Hubbard and Hasian locate the clash in the blurring of two inherently different genres: the commemorative and the revisionist.[520] Whereas the commemorative genre "is based on stylistic elegance, the substance of tradition, and heroic situations", the revisionist genre often draws on "iconoclastic styles in an attempt to demystify sacred narratives in didactic situations"[521] What is noteworthy here is that in this view, 'commemorative' is identical with 'celebratory', while 'revisionist' is strongly connected with didactic approaches. This insight provides an intriguing frame for exploring the commemorative genre of liberation. All in all, the style and tone of the commemoration of liberation may be characterized as solemn and serious. The liberation exhibitions were often referred to as jubilee exhibitions or memorial exhibitions (*jubileum kiállítás*, *emlékkiállítás*), of which the former highlights the ceremonial and celebratory nature of the exhibition, the latter its commemorating function. The festivities to commemorate the milepost of the liberation were to be "worthy of the festive occasion" ("méltó az ünnephez"), as echoed in the opening speeches, exhibition plans and guestbook entries[522]. Jubilee exhibitions, besides their role of providing the counterpart for the everyday and the mundane, underline the present moment: we are *here*, it is *now* that we remember. In addition, the highlighted present serves the symbolic act of returning to the point of departure, and, while traversing again the road taken (cf. "Our road", "on the road" in the titles of the exhibitions), evaluating the achievements in the light of the present and the future. Therefore, apart from being celebratory and elevating, the commemorative genre of liberation needed a dynamic that would both convince and inspire its audiences to continue on the road of socialism. Also in terms of display aesthetics, the spirit of dynamism was required. This was to be achieved with the 'dynamic' display of flags. While the 'modern' visual impact of clear and reserved black-and-white was seen as acceptable, the use of strong colours was recommended for the display of liberation exhibitions. Furthermore, the exhibitions were to have a 'decorative, festive impact', for which different kinds of drapery and textiles were seen as suitable.[523]

Hubbard and Hasian's understanding of the commemorative genre as 'stylistic elegance' and 'heroic situations' implies that the genre does not leave room for playfulness. The dynamics of the form and content of commemoration has been problematised by Robin Wagner-Pacifici, prompting her to pose

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[519] Foss 1996:226, quoted in Hubbard and Hasian 1998:498.
[520] Hubbard and Hasian 1998.
[521] Hubbard and hasian 1998:499.
[522] On the ceremonial readings of the exhibitions, see Rautavuoma 2009a.
[523] Boreczky 1968: 29-30.

the question whether the seriousness of an event correlates with the seriousness of its generic form.[524] Obviously, it is a difficult task to locate the humor and irony in exhibitions that now exist only through their textual remains. Above, "serious" was defined as discourse which takes itself seriously and attempts to maintain control over its meanings. Along these lines, humor can be defined as a form of non-serious discourse[525] which to some extent is related to irony whose "meaning is always other than and more than the said[526]". Humorous is often identical with witty, which often provides for solidarity but which at the same time can be exclusive and expose to ridicule – that is to say dangerous, both in social and ideological terms. Irony may be even more dangerous, in the sense that it often bears trans-ideological functions towards or against something or someone. What is more, irony in its self-reflexive and self-critical mode may challenge the discursive hierarchies[527], which are all the more essential with regard to strongly controlled ideological constructions. Neither humor nor irony can be separated from its discursive context, without which the meanings are very difficult, if not impossible, to interpret[528]. Further, both discursive phenomena may be approached from the viewpoint that – despite the fact that their meanings cannot be interpreted "as such" – they nevertheless reveal a great deal about values and the possible ways of interpreting their social realities. Humor and irony can have similar effects, based as they are upon the incongruity between the usual and the unexpected, the said and the unsaid[529]. In ideological terms, humor and irony can manifest critical positions and function as a tool to oppose the dominant discourse.

Another question, however, is where exactly this humor or irony can be found – especially afterwards – in the multidimensional narrative of the exhibition. This question is difficult to pin down for three reasons. First of all, humor and irony entails two actors: they are created in a specific discourse between the author's intention and the individual readings of a certain text. In this sense, the only mode of finding out about the possible (implicit) ironising intentions of the exhibition curators is through their own accounts (e.g. Péter Szuhay's account of a liberation exhibition in The Museum of Ethnography[530]). Equally scarce is information concerning visitors' interpretations of these exhibitions. The second problem has to do with the fragmentary character of the research material. Since the exhibition scripts represent only one level of the multilayered exhibition narrative which consists of visual elements and use of space, the entire exhibition narratives are no longer available for inspection. The third problem is connected to the time lapse between the exhibition and its interpretation in the present. It is worthwhile to ponder over the question: do discourses born in a certain ideological and historical context inevitably become ironic as they are

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524 Wagner-Pacifici 1996:306.
525 Mulkay 1988: 22-38.
526 Hutcheon 1994: 12-13.
527 Siegle 1986: 390.
528 Mulkay 1988:57-92.
529 Hutcheon 1994:62.
530 Szuhay 2003:77-96.

interpreted in the present, when the control of the previous regime no longer has a hold over the meanings?[531] This question is especially relevant in the case of totalitarian regimes with regard to the symbolic order they maintain. After the collapse of the socialist regime, it is difficult *not* to put such terms as "liberation" or "counterrevolution" into quotation marks, but by so doing, we are not only referring to the language use of the former regime but also bringing in an element of irony[532].

5.2.2 Staging the tragedies and comedies of history

The "liberation" of 1945 was inevitably one of the most important dates in the political calendar under Hungarian socialism[533]. The exhibitions were first and foremost *jubilee* exhibitions, with the air of celebration encoded in their messages. According to the script, the aim of the exhibition curators in 1965 was to conclude the exhibition "with a festive atmosphere"[534] (Figure 35.), while in 1970, the aim was to create a "realistic, uplifting and inspiring effect"[535]. What was this festivity and ceremonial nature constructed of? Typically, descriptions of the losses of the Second World War, admiration of the laborious work of reconstruction and a look into the future, mostly with citations from major politicians or congresses of the Communist Party. However, when skimming through the exhibitions, it becomes evident that over the years their ceremonious character was modified in terms of style and content, so that the exhibitions aquired a lighter and far less grave tone. The exhibition of 1970 had an epilogue-like caricature exhibit entitled "This is how we live" (Figure 36.). According to the exhibition plan, the main idea behind this closing part of the exhibition was to give insights into the way the events of everyday life are rooted in the history of the past twenty-five years, along with problems that have been faced, are being faced at the moment and will have to be faced in the future.[536] At the same time, the caricature exhibition had been created in order to make sure the museum visitor leaves the museum in relaxed and cheerful spirits[537]. This can be interpreted as an attempt to "brush the museum visitor in" to the ideological message of the exhibition with the help of the relatively safe and politically correct humor of the caricature exhibition. Consequently,

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531 Also Gábor Gyáni takes up the question of irony in relation to the study of cults in his overview of the history the Hungarian study of cults which sprang up among literary historians in their attempt to pin down the phenomena and processes in the history of literature that – strictly speaking – extend the scope of the history of literature 'proper'. In part, this resulted in literary historians exchanging the dominant solemn academic tone for an ironic tone. See Gyáni 2007: 21-36.

532 Hutcheon., remarks that quotation marks can be used for the purpose of "framing with irony". See Hutcheon 1994:145.

533 On communist political holidays, see Szabó 2000: 104-109; Gyáni 2007: 96-97.

534 TAD-I-194-75/1 'Népi demokráciánk húsz esztendeje' c. kiállítás forgatókönyve'

535 TAD-I-367-75 'Tájékoztató felszabadulásunk 25. évfordulójára rendezett központi kiállításról'

536 TAD-I-387-75 "Tématerv a felszabadulás 25. évfordulójára készülő központi kiállításához"

537 ibid.

the humor applied in the exhibition was separated from the grave, ceremonious part of the exhibition, though there were counter-arguments against the inclusion of the caricatures in the exhibition, partly because the caricatures could endanger the seriousness of the exhibition as a whole.

A different kind of modification of the predominantly solemn tone appears in the exhibition invitation to the liberation exhibition of 1970. The back cover of the first version shows the Liberation Memorial[538] on top of Gellert Hill in Budapest. In the final version, however, this gloomy image was then replaced with the reproduction of Arnold Gross's copper engraving entitled "The City of Blue Dreams" (Kék álmok városa). The message is clear: let us rather celebrate the liberation with dream-like images than in the shadow of the Soviet soldier's machine-gun (Figures 37-40). Similar changes of tone seem to appear together with a more overt discussion on the role of humor in the exhibitions. In the memos of the exhibition of 1985, the absence of humor is criticized, along with the grave tones of the quotations from the congresses of the Socialist Party[539].

There seems to be an interesting parallel between the historical representations and the display politics[540] of the exhibition. According to contemporary exhibition criticism, the excessive reduction of "historical facts" led into "anemic" exhibitions[541]. As a result, national history was narrowed down to the history of the Party.[542] While the mode of display of political history is "separate from life"[543] and the focus of the entire exhibition is on political history, it seems that the mode of display is rather grave and ceremonious, which leaves little space for the emotions. Paradoxically, the aim was to achieve a ceremonious and festive effect, but on the level of the museum display this goal was not achieved. The same issue was brought up in a criticism by Károly Vörös[544] five years later, with a reference to the absence of conflicts and paradoxes[545] in the exhibition of 1970, though these are the elements a Marxist exhibition should draw on. Marxist political history, impregnated with an optimistic future-

538 The memorial, designed by Zsigmond Kisfaludy Strobl in 1947, consists of a female figure holding a palm leaf above her head, a Soviet solder and male figures killing a dragon. The memorial is still in place, though several elements have been removed, including the memorial plaque that spoke out the gratitude of the Hungarian nation to the liberators. The figure of the Soviet soldier is now in the Memento Park on the outskirts of Budapest, designed to house "the gigantic memorials from the communist dictatorship", as is stated on the homepage of the Statue Park (http://www.szoborpark.hu).

539 EAD 17/1985

540 Here, display politics is understood as the multiple consequences of displaying culturally significant artifacts, thus rendering them to the 'museum gaze', which in itself is a cultural artifact. For further discussion on the politics of display, see e.g. Karp & Lavin, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. (Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

541 Gerelyes 1965:12.

542 ibid.

543 Gerelyes 1965:11.

544 Historian and influential figure in Hungarian museology, who worked e.g. in the Budapest Museum of History, and later in the Ministry of Education and the Historical Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

545 Vörös 1970.

orientation, was set out to record and highlight the achievements on the road to the Paradise of Socialism.[546] Along these lines, the creation of binary oppositions between the sad past, the promising present and the glorious future was a widely-accepted tool for promoting ideological and cultural political goals. As Sallay Ditróiné points out, "From a cultural political viewpoint, it is good to keep in mind the past, since by contrasting the new and the old system we can prove our progress" [547].

An even greater problem according to Vörös is the omission of tragedy – and here Vörös means the personality cult of Mátyás Rákosi[548] that took place around the turn of 1940s and 1950s, which Vörös calls "the most tragic element of the time". Because of this omission, claims Vörös, the museum visitors are not able to experience the pathos embedded in those tragic events. If there is no tragedy, the "healthy forces" working behind the tragedy are left unnoticed. However, in Vörös's view, tragedy is not complete without comedy. Furthermore, Vörös calls for humor to be organically built into the exhibition; the caricature exhibition in the closing part of the exhibition is in itself insufficient. This is to say that, according to his line of thought, the over-all image of the era is incomplete without both tragedy and comedy. Interestingly enough, Vörös calls for the kind of narration and plot-structure of Hungarian recent history that echoes the metahistorical elements of historiography that Hayden White criticizes. As White points out, "to historicize any structure, to write its history, is to mythologize it"[549]. Even if we did not agree with White's extreme conceptions on the interrelatedness of fiction and historiography, we may for the moment turn to his famous categorization of 19th century history. White identified features in the nineteenth century writing of history that are reminiscent of elements in fictive texts. He claims that historiography in the nineteenth century is a plotted spiral beginning and ending with irony, and in between there is romance, tragedy and comedy, in this order.[550] Therefore, the parallels between White's categories and the elements that Vörös judged as missing from the exhibition may with further investigation prove telling. Whereas White's spiral begins and ends with irony, there is no mention of irony in Vörös's account. If we consider irony as being related to the notion of the "inadequacy of language to its full presentation of its object"[551], there are no doubts whatsoever expressed in Vörös's criticism that would hint at any uncertainties as regards the possibilities of "truthful" representation – to do so may have been perceived as a violation of the commemorative genre, since it could have called into question the legitimacy of liberation. While Vörös in effect has discussed the uncertain-

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546 See Halmesvirta 2003: 210.

547 Sallay Ditróiné 1972: 621.

548 Leading politician, head of the Council of Ministers, whose 60th birthday on the 9th of March, 1952, can be regarded as the heyday of his personality cult. After the death of Stalin, the cult was gradually eradicated and by the time of the "soft dictatorship" led by Kádár, the dogmatic interpretations of history had it that the "dogmatic errors" around the personality cult *had to be* judged.

549 White 1978 (1985): 104.

550 White 1973: 8-10.

551 White 1978:207.

ties of communicability elsewhere, in the context of the birth of historical museology as a discipline, the commemorative genre may have closed out such uncertainty. [552]

Another 'tragic element' the exhibition had given relatively little attention to was the tragic events of 1956. While the discussions of the 1970 exhibition and of '56 both show that the display of '56 was by no means omitted as such, its presence in the exhibition was felt insufficient by some visitors. A brief guestbook entry goes as follows: "1945 – 1970. 1956? [signature]"[553] This highlights the sense of injustice felt in relation to the traumatic events of the revolution. On the level of textuality, the brevity of the entry seems to imitate the dogmatic omission as a strategy to reject what has been perceived as the major failure of the exhibition. In effect, the entry states that disproportionate representation is non-representation. While the fragments of the 'spy balloons' and the image of the butchery at the Republic Square can hardly be left unnoticed, this remark may be interpreted as referring to the fact that while '56 has not been omitted as such, *its tragedy is located elsewhere* in the exhibition than has been perceived by many a viewer. While the exhibition includes the tragedy of the brutally killed communists, it remains silent about the suffering of those deemed 'reactionary', 'imperialist' or 'revisionist'[554]. It is obvious that the benefits of the contrast and comparison of a 'gloomy past' and victorious present may be applied only if these tragic elements are omitted from the historical era (1944/1945 – present) that is being celebrated in the exhibition, otherwise they will turn 'our progressive cause' into a tragedy', as discussed in 4.1.

As regards the aforementioned rhetorical tropes as modes of emplotment, it becomes apparent that the commemorative genre of liberation was not expected to fall into any neatly definable categories as such. After all, the key message of the anniversary was one of 'tough struggles and triumphant construction'[555]. In contrast, it was the anniversary of the Soviet Republic of Hungary that was ultimately to be perceived in terms of a 'tragic fall'.[556] As also pointed out by Zelizer and Tota respectively, the genre may work as a schema of perception, helping to sort out the competing representations of the past.[557] As already discussed, in the commemorative context of liberation, the predominant scheme is that of a coming-of-age, whose role is to show and tell "how a people struggling in a material and intellectual distress became a free, self-aware, self-educating community that strenuously builds its socialist future and wisely manages its resources."[558] This coming-of-age was then to be propped

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552 Vörös's influential article on the development of historical museology as a novel auxilary discipline in Hungary closes with rather tentative, if not doubtful comments corcerning the plausibility of creating a truly historical museology. See Vörös 1965.

553 TAD-I-133-75 'A "25 éves a szabad Magyarország" vendégkönyve I-II.'

554 Here, of course, 'revisionist' pertains to the revisionist views within the Communist Party that were seen as corrupt and destructive and is thus something quite contrary to the revisionist genre discussed by Hubbard and Hasian.

555 Boreczky 1968:30.

556 Boreczky ibid.

557 Zelizer 1995; Tota 2004: 132.

558 Szamosfalvi, Imre 1965: 32.

up with tragic and comic elements to enhance its communicative force and reach the expected emotional impact. But if playfulness and a lighter tone are called for, where is the line between the comical and the ironic?

5.2.3 Laughing with or laughing at?

In light of what has been said above, the ceremonious characteristic of institutional commemoration is primarily seriousness. In a heavily ideological context, which aims at control over meanings and which turns non-ideological phenomena into ideological phenomena through its mode of presentation, seriousness indeed seems to be a norm. The problem is that presenting ideological-political changes with the help of the museum toolkit results in an inconsistent narrative, since making use of the museum apparatus in showing and telling entails using artifacts, most of which are non-ideological in their essence, to manifest ideological changes[559]. Thus, if we read the meanings as their "primary" meanings in the exhibition, they easily acquire ironic tones. As Péter Szuhay[560] notes in his historical overview of the exhibitions in the Museum of Ethnography, the exhibition of 1985 can be read on two different levels. According to Szuhay, "the first level strives for a scientific guise. It is serious and takes itself seriously", i.e. holds on to the ideological expectations. The other level is "airy and playful, at times witty and prone to self-irony", and it is in this respect that Szuhay sees the novelty of the exhibition weighed against the history of exhibition-making in the Museum of Ethnography. According to Szuhay, the message of the exhibition can be summarized in the following manner:

> "[W]e were liberated, and survived countless setbacks such as compulsory delivery, the shared rental flat and the "counter-revolution" just to jump into our Trabants from our tiny housing estate flats and leave behind the worries of the society and escape into our weekend places. Could this be Canaan?"[561]

It is safe enough to say that this message is utterly ironic. Another question is what kind of reaction the irony arouses in the museum visitor, or whether it comes through in his or her reading. As Szuhay notes, the visitor is likely to read the messages put forth in the exhibition in a serious manner, applying the above-mentioned first level of interpretation[562]. In this reading, it is rather societal development and the rising standard of living that occupies the focal point of the exhibition.

The possibility of an ironic reading of the exhibition is not exclusive to the exhibition discussed above. Rather, all exhibitions can be read on either of the two levels, or possibly shifting between them. Irony can appear in an exhibition through the ironising intention of the museum curator(s), or on the visitor's behalf, or both of these. Moreover, ironic readings are possible even if the mu-

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559 On the issue of exhibitability, see Baxandall 1991.
560 Szuhay 2003:77-96.
561 Szuhay ibid. 84.
562 Szuhay ibid.

seum curators had no ironic intention. As objects and documents acquire their places in the multidimensional museum display, ironic montages may be created, also unintentionally.[563] The museum text can gain an ironic tone, for instance, due to some perceived contradiction or incongruity, although on this basis there is not much we can say about the intentions of the curator(s). Further, the visitor can also make up ironic montages through roaming around the exhibition and I the process creating links and connections originally not contained in the exhibition narrative. It is obvious, however, that in the case of the liberation exhibitions, the irony could only be covertly present on the curators' part and that no traces of it would be present in the exhibition scripts or opening speeches. Hence, the attribution of irony was left to the visitor[564] . Indeed, traces of ironic readings of the exhibitions can be found in the guestbook entries of the exhibitions. These include, for instance, referring to the exhibition as an impressive 'mausoleum' (with the entry signed by 'Lenin')[565]. In another entry, the undersigned congratulates the curators on creating an exhibition on such a high level that it remained beyond his reach, even if he used a ladder ("A kiállításnak olyan magas a színvonala, hogy létrával sem értem föl.")[566]. This latter remark can be read as an ironic re-reading of the typical guestbook entries that first congratulated or thanked the curators, then included appreciative comments on the success of the exhibition, for instance, the didactically and aesthetically 'high level' it had achieved.

Given the aim of the present chapter, viz. to pin down the interplay of the ceremonious, the grave, the humorous and the ironic in the liberation exhibitions, the discussion of irony may appear overrepresented. This is hardly surprising, given the fact that we are dealing with a phenomenon that draws heavily on an official ideology, or indeed can be seen as its reflection. Through the exhibitions, the regime attempted to propagate its own truth(s), and if someone was reluctant to accept them, one possible mode of opposition was the attribution of irony. Humor is often applied to achieve a feel-good effect (as in the case of the caricature exhibition in 1970), but at the same time it can be critical (as the same example shows, since the caricatures illustrated problems in Hungarian society). In a similar fashion, irony can take on many guises and functions, from an oppositional, trans-ideological function to distancing and mere playfulness.[567]

On the basis of the exhibition scripts, drafts, memos, and current museological writings[568], it seems that in 1960 and 1965 humor is not even mentioned, whereas in the exhibition of 1975, it became a theme both in the process of creating the display and in the exhibition proper, in the form of caricatures.

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563 On ironic montages in museum exhibitions, see Hutcheon 1994: 176-178.

564 See Rautavuoma 2009a.

565 TAD-I-133-75

566 ibid.

567 On the functions of irony, see Hutcheon 1994:46-56.

568 Conference papers and exhibition criticism and other debate within the museum profession, mostly published in the yearbooks or publication series of museums or in the *Múzeumi Közlemények*, published by the ministries responsible for the museum sector.

In 1965, the curators are warned about the dangers of humor[569], in 1970 its absence is criticized in the exhibition criticism, in the memos, and in the audit statements (lektori vélemény). However, in 1980, humor is not brought up in discussions about the exhibition, and the exhibition criticism concentrates on the new concept of the simultaneous display of historical documents and elements of visual culture in order to evoke an era[570]. Then again, the exhibition continues the projection of societal change and lifestyle, which is made all the more explicit in the last exhibition in 1985. With the last exhibition, Szuhay's account hints at the curators' awareness of ironic readings and their possible implications for meanings but, at the same time, we have to ask to what extent this awareness is the product of hindsight, of looking back upon the exhibition from the framework of the present.

Whether a result of deliberate ironising or the product of the post-socialist context, the 1985 exhibition appears as the most overtly playful and even ironic of the series of exhibitions. One clearly ironic montage can be found in relation to the transformation of socialist agriculture, where objects characteristic of intensive agriculture are displayed against the wall-sized backdrop of a street-scene with one-storey houses that look suspiciously identical. (Figure 41.) The even row of poultry cages in front of the image of a row of houses highlights the curious uniformity brought by a uniform welfare policy. If not exactly animals in small cages, the subjects of this welfare policy appear as uniformised objects. As already discussed in chapter 3.6, the exhibition leaves the visitor to contemplate parallel structures of the system, which, in connection with the congress quote on the importance of gaining a realistic image of socialism, appears as ironic. If we go back to the first hall of the exhibition and look at the runaway horses at a street corner of Budapest fleeing *into* 'liberation', as the arrangement of the display units suggests, then the very event of liberation also becomes a moment of irony in the course of the nation's history. The way the German occupation is replaced by the Soviet occupation amounts to Hungary being a horse on the run between the two masters.

What then can be concluded about the appearance of humor and irony in the liberation exhibitions, or in more general terms, on the role of humor and irony with regard to the collective memory upheld in museums? One way of approaching the question is to claim that the realization, the "happening" of humor or irony in a museum exhibition works as a proof of the working of the collective memory. This is to say that the operability of collective memory is due to the amount and character of mutual knowledge a society has in its possession for the humor and the irony to function. Ceremonious commemorative exhibitions may contain ironic and humorous tones, and thus, on a more general level, they may have contributed to humorous or ironic representations of the recent past.

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569 In the overview of the 20th anniversary exhibitions, Gerelyes (1965:11) remarks on the potential "negative effect" of humor in the exhibitions, though does not explicate on the matter.

570 Fodor 1980.

5.2.4 Uses of the Commemorative genre: liberation with an edge

As one of the curators of the 1980 exhibition, György Horváth, points out, on festive occasions it feels good to look back on the road that has been taken, ”on the chain of days and years that reaches up to today”[571]. It is clear that this looking back also includes reviewing the setbacks and shortcomings there have been, which, of course, implies criticism. As discussed earlier, both in the exhibitions’ narratives, opening speeches and related discourses this meant carefully inscribed social criticism, avoiding the well-known dogmas relating to the ultimate legitimacy of the system. However, although the dogmas were left untouched, the exhibitions did incorporate criticism and social problems. Obviously, part of this may be seen as a mere rhetorical gesture, with the attempt to prove that the system is ready to face its problems and is equipped with the necessary self-criticism, but it nevertheless meant that problems were addressed and thus made present in the commemorative space of the museum. Consequently, it can be claimed that while the liberation exhibitions clearly fall into the commemorative genre, at the same time they contain revisionist elements. While they do not work to ’demystify the sacred narrative’ of socialism, they nonetheless contain components with an edge: elements that work to undermine the authority of the master narrative. Undeniably didactic in nature, the liberation exhibitions proclaimed socialism as a superior form of life, or alternatively, they functioned as political socialization disguised as commemoration. Either way, this combination of the commemorative and the revisionist in effect make up the didactic orientation of the genre. This said, we could call into question Hubbard and Hasian’s identification of the ’didactic’ as belonging primarily to the revisionist genre. In effect, in the light of the aforementioned, it seems somewhat misguided to include didactism as a characteristic of any particular genre. Although I agree with Hubbard and Hassian on their contention that ”The amalgamation of particular configurations of commemorative and didactic genres simply did not work [in the case of the Enola Gay]”[572], it is this very question of *particular configurations* that is at stake. While the Enola Gay dispute is identified as a clash between the commemorative and the revisionist genres, it would be simplistic to treat revisionist and didactic as identical categories. Moreover, the didactic character is related to the ideological pursuits of commemorative practices. In fact, the Enola Gay controversy is a text-book case of the *didactic pursuits of commemoration*. In other words, both the commemorationists and the revisionists pursued their ideological goals, the former to affirm and the latter to question the role of U.S. involvement in the ’Last Act’ of World War II.[573]

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571 Horváth 1980.

572 Hubbard and Hasian 1998:498.

573 Here, ‘Last Act’ refers to the first and controversial draft of the exhibition but at the same time to the timeframe in which the draft was set. Stretching over time-span from V-E day to the horrors of the Cold War, the exhibition concept could easily be seen as highlighting American aggression and the role of the U.S as the initiator of the nuclear age. Hubbard and Hasian 1998:504; Zolberg 1996; Linenthal 1995.

This said, the strictly controlled, totalitarian frame of the liberation becomes highly relativised when viewed in the light of the Enola Gay controversy. Judging by the Congressional involvement in the politics of the dispute, the state-controlled meaning-making around liberation does not appear any more ideological than its American counterpart.

While both are charged, ideological constructs with didactic aims, the merging of commemorative genres in the case of the liberation exhibitions and the Enola Gay manifest significant differences. While revisionist in the Enola Gay context pertains to revising the patrotic, heroic views of the national past, in the case of liberation such revisionism is, as it were, already inbuilt into the commemorative genre. In this sense, the major revision took place along with the communist takeover when Marxist historiography became the official view on history. Accordingly, as already discussed, the past preceeding the liberation was necessarily ′oppressive′ and ′reactionary′, and the ′newest era′ since the liberation ′democratic′ (in the sense of people′s democracy) and ′progressive′. This is to say that the commemorative genre of liberation inherently included the idea of the ′socialist man′ as a progressive subject, trained to discard kitsch and petti-bourgeois traits in the field of aesthetics and spot the oppressive structures of imperialist capitalism on a global scale. Obviously, this progressive subject was not trained to perceive the fundamental flaws and contradictions of the system but – and this is important – in the course of years, the borderline between healthy self-criticism and criticism of the system′s flaws became increasingly blurred. The 1985 exhibition devoted space to the second economy, alcoholism and other social problems. From the point of view of genre, this demonstrates the rather flexible nature of the commemorative genre of liberation: within the frame of commemorative respect, problems can and should be brought up.

Alternatively, we can regard the flexibility of the commemorative genre as a question of situational usage. In other words, while the commemorative genre of liberation generally calls for a rhetoric of veneration, the very existence and the knowledge of the genre may also be used as a resource. The opening speeches and reviews of the exhibitions contain several instances where the rhetor performs a deliberate break from the expected commemorative genre to introduce criticism or discuss social problems. This is marked by a reference to the commemorative context of the liberation, followed by a remark that this context will be suspended for a moment. In his opening speech of the exhibition on April 1, 1985, Kálmán Kulcsár digresses from the assumed commemorative frame and takes the opportunity to discuss social problems, too. After this Kulcsár returns to the ′commemorative frame′ of the event and apologizes for using the festive occasion for bringing up social problems.[574] In a similar fashion, László Dér, in his overview of liberation exhibition-related tasks, insists that it is not the occasion that is being critiqued but the realization of the commemoration.[575] While such remarks may be interpreted as a rhetorical guise

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[574] EAD 17/1985 Opening speech of the exhibition given by Kálmán Kulcsár, April 1, 1985.

[575] Dér 1980:6.

for the incorporation of criticism – a case of the 'red tail of ideology' working – frequent references to the supposed genre imply something else, too. The imperative to produce commemorations 'worthy of the festive occasion' does not prove very helpful in deciphering how this commemorative respect may be conveyed. Ironically, the commemorative genre is usually evoked at the very moment it is temporarily abandoned. Further, the references to the commemorative genre, as compared to the criticism of the exhibitions, manifest a far narrower conception of the proper commemorative genre than its concrete outcomes suggest. In the introductory material to the 1980 exhibition, the curators clearly state that they are aware that the exhibition does not conform to the conventions of "the pompousness of the anniversary programs": it may well be criticized for having lost its ceremoneous nature and for degrading works of art by turning them into documents and producing a display that is 'market-like' in its appearance[576]. A further aspect running against the tide of jubilee exhibitions may be traced in the exhibition's attempt to make visible the historical process of turning the relation between art and its audience into an 'everyday thing'. On such festive occasions, it is rather the retrospective "anthology exhibitions" of few sub-genres that usually come into question[577]. These instances show that a reference to non-specific, general expectations are useful in highlighting the novelty of the display, in addition to rhetorically binding the exhibition to the tradition of the commemorative genre.

Considering the liberation exhibitions' focus on the recent past, the present moment and even the future, they can rightly be viewed as instances of 'memories in the making', and as such inherently provisional. Due to their anniversary-related commemorative function, the exhibitions were doomed to temporariness: they were created to celebrate and commemorate one moment in time, and with the passing of the anniversary, the exhibitions were dismantled. Yet, due to their provisionality, there was certain openness as regards their genre. While they were conventional and thus recognizable displays to commemorate and thus celebrate, their re-occurring character at the same time incorporated an element of re-occuring novelty at each commemoration. Here, suffice it to recall the exhibitions' claims to include dioramas or apply a new kind of film screening for the first time. Thus, the exhibitions contained something that Robin Wagner-Pacifici has called 'genre-vibrating anomaly', an inbuilt tendency to break away from the conventional[578]. Despite their inherent temporariness, the exhibitions nevertheless had a potential to leave permanent imprints on the collective memory, and this potential was due to their repetitive nature. Thus, the established hybrid of a coming-of-age story and an achievements show was to be catered differently each time, which also allowed for a more intensive fluctuation of content.

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576 Bereczky Loránd 1980. "Dokumetumok a társadalmi, gazdasági és kulturális fejlődés egységéről" *Művészet* 1980/4.

577 Horváth, György 1980 "A korral szembesülve" [n.p.]

578 Wagner-Pacifici 1996: 309-310.

5.2.5 Concluding remarks

A more or less linear process can be traced in the liberation exhibitions over the years 1960-1985. The overtly controlled, ceremoniously grave political-history-driven representations evolve into more complex displays, which combine societal representation and elements of everyday living, occasionally deploying a lighter tone and humor. This change is reflected in the titles of the exhibitions. While in the 1960s and 1970s, titles such as "Free Hungary is 25 years old" were predominant, the working title of the exhibition of 1980 was "Generations" and the final title "Art and Society 1945-1980". The focus is clearly shifted towards the description of social processes. In a sense, this shift in focus seems inevitable: in 1980; there is much more "history" to choose from than there was in 1965, if the milepost of 1945 is the point of departure. Thus, it is hardly surprising that the earlier exhibitions had to restrict themselves to political-ideological changes, since societal processes (as reflected in the material culture) are much more gradual and rather invisible in the early years of socialism. These shifts in focus and style were not so clear-cut and linear, however. For instance, the exhibition of 1980 bears a great deal of inner tension, since it seems to be hovering between the ceremonious and the mundane. On the one hand, the exhibition contained a vast number of works of art borne in the spirit of "liberation", but on the other, there was an attempt to descend to the grass-roots level (see the kindergarten-interior, Figure 8.) or an attempt at creating surprising or humorous montages (Figure 7.). The exhibition of 1985 follows this path, and as its sub-heading "Change of lifestyles" states, the presentation of the ideological milestones is followed by the foregrounding of the everyday of Hungarian society. The exhibition memos reveal that the original title would have been "The Hungarian everyday" ("Magyar hétköznapok"), which manifests an intriguing tension in relation to the practice of celebrating political anniversaries.

Robin Wagner-Pacifici has pondered over the question whether collective memories can be simultaneously owned by individuals, the collectivity and the official representatives of the state.[579] The examples discussed above show that despite the dogmatic frame of the commemoration as a state-controlled, collective ritual, the exhibition practices do contain ingredients that hint at dynamics and the multiple voices of cultural memory. As Andreas Huyssen asserts, "No matter how much the museum, consciously or unconsciously, produces and affirms the symbolic order, there is always a surplus of meaning that exceeds set ideological boundaries, opening spaces for reflection and counter-hegemonic memory"[580]. Focusing on the issues of humor and irony reveals tensions of alternative views and multiple voices in the heritage narrative that belong to the dynamics of institutional memory and thus carry in them the potential for change. The ambiguities manifested by the commemorative genre of liberation are related to the ambiguities of the notion of 'heritage': they both

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579 Wagner-Pacifici 1996:308.
580 Huyssen 1995: 15.

appear as constantly moving between the poles of authenticity and fabrication. Beneath the unquestionable legitimacy of liberation as a true liberation, the commemorative genre incorporates an edge: ambiguity and an in-built awareness of its constructed character. Much of the realm of what is commonly called 'heritage', the ways history is used for different purposes, draws on this kind of mythologizing of the past, mobilized by the evocation of a specific commemorative genre. At the same time, this identifiable genre could be used to play with the genre expectations of the subjects involved. Thus, with a reference to the legitimacy of liberation (which at the same time is a reference to the existence of the genre), social criticism could be incorporated while still seemingly staying within the expected discursive frame.

Viewed as historical representations, the liberation exhibitions are interesting reflections of the official interpretations of history, which manifest a certain ambiguity. In effect, Hubbard and Hasian have identified ambiguity as a crucial element of 'the evocative power of memorialization'[581]. However, this ambiguous edge of the commemorative genre of liberation is not a truly critical edge, since it neither contests the fundamental premises, nor provides alternative future visions to the communist utopia. The genre of liberation is commemorative also in the sense that it is highly affirmative: it closes out the possibility of any major surprises. At the same time, the genre allows for smaller unpredictabilities and moderate re-contextualisations that in themselves may be revealing. According to one commentator, the 1980 exhibition did not let the visitor get too convenient, since the displayed material provided the visitor with "exploration, the excitement of remembering and a good feeling"[582]. If humour, tragedy, poetry and contradiction are called upon, this is done in an attempt to ensure feeling good in the present.

5.3 Liberation exhibitions as state-of-the-art

In a 1968 speech at meeting of the National Council of Museums (Országos Múzeumi Tanács), Gábor Ő. Pogány refers to the development of Hungarian museums of the past ten years or so[583] which, according to him, has been remarkably swift, even in international comparison. He goes on to assert that

> "In many leading capitalist countries, the museum is frequently used as a showcase of the prevailing social order, the economy and the high level of education --- Here,

581 Hubbard and Hasian 1998:510.

582 Fodor 1980:45.

583 More precisely, Pogány says ”the last ten or twelve years”, which, interestingly enough, takes us to the year 1956. Considering that the major changes in the museum administration) of post-1956 Hungary were carried out in early 1960s and not in 1956, measuring the development from the landmark of 1956 appears rather an 'exercise in piety': a gesture to discursively connect the modern museum form to the dawn of the Kádár era.

> within the socialist camp, the cultivation of museums is not showcase politics; that phase we passed a hundred years ago."[584]

Obviously, this is a rhetorical gesture on Pogány's behalf that should ultimately be read in the Cold War context, especially in Khrushchev's new motto, Dognaty i peregnaty', 'reaching and overhauling' the West, issued in 1961 at the 22nd Party Congress.[585] With this polemical argument Pogány wishes to highlight the modern, well-functioning museum of the socialist countries, a museum which is an organic part of society and collaborates with a pre-set nation-wide cultural policy.[586] Whether or not Pogány actually believed that the 'capitalist museum' lagged a hundred years behind is beside the point. What is more relevant is the negation of the idea of the museum as a showcase of socialism. Further, weighed against the back-drop of 'reaching and overhauling', Pogány's argument implies that no matter where the Eastern Bloc stands in its competition with the Capitalist World, it can feel confident in the museum field and bask in its professional pride. In this chapter, I set out to discuss the liberation exhibitions as articulations of the state-of-the-art, reiterating the argument I outlined in chapter 4.2 that the liberation exhibitions functioned as double showcases of both social and museological development. Therefore, this chapter discusses the interrelatedness of the development of historical museology as an emerging discipline and 'showing and telling the road to communism'.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the commemorative genre of liberation manifested a tension between the affirmative and repetitive nature of commemoration and the necessity of showing novelties. In other words, the liberation exhibitions and their discourses include the idea of presenting the 'cutting edge': they aimed to show and tell the best that society had to offer, but also in the best possible forms the museum could offer. Therefore, apart from the didactic aims of political socialization, the anniversary-related exhibitions provided a perfect opportunity for the museum profession to 'show off' what it knows and can do, and this new knowledge is primarily related to the development of historical museology, more precisely the 'history of the newest era'. Although it appears as an ideologically loaded argument to claim that one of the biggest achievements of the post-liberation development of Hungarian museology is the establishment of historical museology as a sub-discipline of museology[587], this is more or less the case. The new interest in the possibilities and limits of historical knowledge in the museum context was strongly related to the Marxist view of history, with its materialist theory and dialectical

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584 Pogány 1968: 6.

585 Prompted by the dynamic growth of Soviet science and technology in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Communist Party introduced long-term 'perspective planning' and passed several decrees that announced the 'reaching and overhauling' of the Capitalist World as its goals. Along with science and technology, the West was to be defeated also in the fields of industrial and agricultural production, standard of living and consumption. See Vörös 1997.

586 Pogány ibid.

587 Selmeczi 1986:252.

method.[588] The view of history as a constant struggle between opposing forces, which rendered historical processes as inherently complex and contradictory, required a review and revision of earlier views and methods. This brought the primary tool of the museum, the material object, into a new focus, prompting discussion on what a historical object is and what its possibilities are of expressing the historical processes they are designated to express in the museum.[589] Much attention was given to the communicability and exhibitionability of the object in the 'absence of visual interest'[590]. Despite the ideological-political focus, the new attention to the object was multi-layered, and extended to all social strata. Part of this multi-layeredness was ideology-based: in order to come up with ever more precise material accounts of the struggles and the life-worlds of the working class, their situation was to be embedded into the broader historical context, including other social classes. The view of the object as a complex source of historical information simultaneously both as a product of technical development and as a functional object used in specialized contexts[591] provided a more dynamic and, in a sense, problem-oriented approach to the museum object.

If we look at the displayed material in terms of the dialectic between the displays and the collections the objects are derived from, then it becomes apparent that the highly selective view on culture and politics that permeates the exhibitions is not as far-reaching in the collections. What this means is that although the focus of collecting changed, the augmenting of earlier collections was continued, in part for ideological purposes. By placing the old and the new side by side, the differences between the past and the present would become highlighted, and the superiority and the beauty of the present would be revealed.[592] Accordingly, the objects selected to serve as documents of the Horthy era gained a new kind of importance in the quest to show the superiority of the new system and the state of development, as everything was to be presented as embedded in historical processes and 'in their own historicity' as the frequently used phrase had it. In the exhibitions, then, it was crucial to show what kind of disciplinary means were used in schools prior to the liberation, what kinds of 'schematic methods' were applied in teaching, and how a ghetto was taken over by the modern Attila József housing block. These examples show how the earlier material was re-structured and re-contextualized within the new Marxism-Leninism-informed museology.

From the early 1950s onwards, the emphasis was placed on the collection of post-liberation objects. This meant, primarily, the collection of post-1945-related material on political history, and secondly, the collection of material related to the history of the labour movement. The main goal of collecting was

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588 Vörös 1965: 885; Pogány 1968:6.

589 Vörös 1965; Glatz 1978; Hetés, Tibor 1972: 'Az új- és legújabbkori muzeológia néhány kérdéséről és politikatudományi célkitűzéseiről'. Paper given at the National Conference of Museum Directors in Kecskemét, 29.-30.3.1972. TAD-1-1141-78.

590 See Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 2.

591 See Vörös 1965:887-889.

592 Sallay Ditróiné 1972:643.

thus the documentation of the construction of socialism that would "place the everyday of the past hundred years within museum walls."[593] While the new collection policy obviously favoured material related to the 'progressive tradition', it should be emphasized that, at the same time, the interest in the everyday, mundane and 'small things', informed by dialectical materialism, reshaped the museal gaze cast over the object and the collections. "Isn't a sewing-machine as good an expression of a period and social group as a harp is of another era and group? Harps appear in museum exhibitions and scholarly articles but there is no sign of sewing-machines (if not as personal relics)", contends Károly Vörös in his influential article on historical museology.[594] Mere coincidence or not, three years later Gyula László uses the sewing-machine as an example of the problematic of the attempt to show ideological changes with material objects. As already quoted in chapter 4.2, in the 1968 meeting of the National Museum Council he poses the question: 'Did we eat with a different kind of spoon after 45 than we did before? Did the shape of our penknives change, or our clothing perhaps? Does the revolutionary change show in our sewing-machines or in the components of our trams?'[595] With this, Gyula László draws attention to the fact that changes in form are primarily due to changes in technology: 'We can say that the object is indifferent to the great events of history, as the object is the indicator of the particular technical revolution'.[596] As time passes, however, things get more complex: 'It is possible, though, to tease out the revolutionary change, up to a point, so that the museum display would also be made suggestive.' Gyula László talks about maps on which light bulbs and television sets in refuse dumps could be indicated, their provenance of correlating with the post-1945 electrification. 'Up to a point, in the light of these archaeological finds it would be possible to make assumptions about broader, if not global, phenomena: there is a strong decline in Western commodities, while the as yet non-existent Soviet products and those made in other people's democracies pop up. Gradually, then, it would be possible to show the visitor, over the course of several centuries, what happened here. This could be done with museum material, not with mere text.'[597] This is how Gyula László, an archaeologist himself, envisioned the archaeology of an entire era when barely two decades had passed since the birth of that era. With hindsight, we can say that the revolutionary change did not permeate all of material culture. The year 1945, which became a watershed in politics and science alike, remained an ideological watershed whose impact on material culture showed a considerable delay and was rather indirect.

In the light of the museological discourse of the time it seems that several curators were exercised over this problematic. Ede Gerelyes criticizes the exhibitions pertaining to the 'newest era', stating that the country's history since

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593 Here, Gerelyes (1965:6) is referring to the 'birth' of the 'newest era' marked by the Russian revolution.

594 Vörös 1965:888.

595 László 1968:109.

596 László ibid.

597 László ibid.

the liberation simply cannot be shown with a *photocopy* of a few flyers (my italics).[598] In a similar fashion, Tibor Garai claims in 1964 that in recent years, the exhibition scripts written and accepted for display have drawn exclusively on photos, photocopies and two-dimensional documents written on paper, disregarding any considerations of visual display, spatial positioning or the anticipated impact. This he calls 'mere formelss, dense content.' [599] Here, Garai is not referring to the central, nation-wide liberation exhibitions that form the subject of this study but the 'newest era' exhibitions in general, especially in county and local museums outside the capital city. It is obvious that the major national museums in Budapest had more resources and curatorial expertise to overcome the problem of the display of ideological changes, but they, too, were faced with the same problem. Although it is the 'newest era' exhibitions of local museums that were frequently called 'paper exhibitions', the heavy focus on political history in general resulted in exhibitions crammed with different kinds of documents, posters, pins, plaquettes and flags. However, this problematic can be approached from an alternative angle. The 'document fever' characteristic of the era is symptomatic of the need to legitimize a given proposition within a given discipline. Alternatively, such instances show how objects may become ideas and ideas objects. The fact that the emphasis is on written documents underlines the legitimating function of a written document, most typically a certificate. In other words, in collections and exhibitions alike, a certificate is there to certify the (revolutionary) change, while an array of prizes shows what is rewarded within a given system. In fact, I am inclined to argue that these debates around the limits of communicability and the interrelations of 'ideology-based knowing' and 'material showing' manifest a high degree of sophistication as regards the role of the museum object. This discussion was especially lively from the mid-1960s to late 1970s. It should thus be emphasized that in the context of the European museum scene, the early phase of state-socialism in particular may be characterized as truly progressive and pioneering work, as it began already in the early 1950s.[600] However, leaving the possible international points of comparison aside (which could only arbitrarily be developed here), it is clear that the post-1949 cultural politics re-structured several aspects of museum-based knowledge, which was until then dominated by the art history, ethnology and, especially, archaeology disciplines, at history's expense.[601]

Coming back to the liberation exhibitions as tools for historical museology, the exhibitions undeniably provided an opportunity for enhanced disciplinary work. Now that there was an important political anniversary to be commemorated with an exhibition, and, given that the period to be covered was from the

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598 Gerelyes 1963.

599 Garai 1964: 61.

600 Considering that the contemporary documentation and collection program in Sweden, SAMDOK, was launched in 1977, it can be argued that the Hungarian initiatives to create a nation-wide, centrally coordinated, systemic collection policy for contemporary culture appear relatively early.

601 Glatz 1978:136.

liberation to the present, that is, the period of 'the newest era', then the curators might as well seize the moment and attempt to 'smuggle in' as much professionalism as possible. This professionalism, obviously, was related to considerations of historical museology. In the professional discourse of the time, the liberation exhibitions were frequently referred to as benchmarks of historical museology.[602] Within the frame of a political anniversary, however, the 'progressive', Marxist approach was highlighted. As Ede Gerelyes asserts in his nation-wide overview of the 1965 liberation exhibitions, the traditional solutions can no longer be put on display without the mould of the Marxist perspective.[603] While several writings criticize certain displays as 'static' or 'a-historical', they do not explicate in any concrete terms what the outcomes of a truly Marxist exhibition would be on the display level. More precisely, if a display is to be historical, in the meaning of manifesting historical processes in their inherent contradictoriness and play of opposites, and yet manifest change instead of showing glimpses of continuous presents, how should this historicity be achieved?

Looking at the exhibitions in terms of novelties relating to historical museology and taking the 1960 exhibition as the starting point, the 1965 exhibition manifests the accumulation of the material heritage of socialism through the ways in which it has turned concepts into objects. At the same time, crystallization takes place: the József Attila housing block stands for the housing policy of the entire Kádár era and one emblematic bridge is enough to evoke the early moments of reconstruction. Further, the 1965 exhibition is marketed as the first one to include political history-related dioramas. This is where the political and museological interests merge: it is not by coincidence that the in situ installations drawing on the mimetic mode are connected to the display of the heroic fight of the communists. This strong investment in visual impact is in line with the emphasis on the history of the labour movement that the exhibitions of the 1960s manifest.

Due to the topicality of the anniversary, the issues of historical museology were also made topical. In his review of the 1970 exhibition, Károly Vörös 'seizes the jubilee moment' to give an overview of the state of historical museology along with the historiography of the 'newest era', since the 1970 exhibition was extensive enough to act as a backdrop for discussing issues concerning the discipline as a whole.[604] Understandably, as it was the establishing of a new discipline that was at stake, Vörös seems to feel a constant need to emphasize factors that are characteristically historical in nature: he calls for a clearly historical perspective, even if there was very little distance between the present moment and the historical events, and even if the processes at hand were still open-ended. Even in these circumstances, argues Vörös, the historian mounting the exhibition should strive for a synthesis, a historical vision.[605] In this empha-

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[602] Vörös 1970; Dér 1986; Gerelyes 1963.
[603] Gerelyes 1965:16.
[604] Vörös 1970.
[605] Vörös 1970:77-80.

sis on a historical perspective, a fair amount of disciplinary jealousy can be sensed: a fear that through bringing the display up to the present moment and the phenomena of today, the enterprise is necessarily handed over to sociologists, ethnologists and art historians. Yet, the 'liberation concept' was inherently interdisciplinary despite its focus on the history of the labour movement. As argued in the previous chapter, the commemorative genre of liberation actually required a combination of the coming-of-age of political history and the then-and-now glimpses of the different fields of economic and cultural production. Viewed in this light, the historical exhibition - achievement exhibition – dichotomy coined by Vörös[606] is apt indeed: if the goal is to show how we have arrived here *and* to give an account of different achievements, then the outcome is necessarily a blend of a historical perspective and a science and product expo. Further, by drawing attention to the over-representation of certain periods and the non-representation of others, Vörös is unwittingly pointing to the ideological limitations of the liberation concept. While Vörös may be right in his concern about the way the 1960s appears as an atemporal, continuous present, it has to be admitted that from the point of view of legitimation, it is more important to show the visitor glimpses of the welfare of today and contrast these with the gloomy past, than to depict the process that has led to the present welfare (however relative it might be). Then again, leaving aside the ideological frame, Vörös tackled the disciplinary problem behind the exhibition concept: the question of how to create or retain a historical perspective when the entire discipline has come into existence due to the very negation of historical perspective in terms of distance. If change is to be shown with material objects, which are the primary source of information value for museology, then it is in a way 'natural' that Vörös suggests the more extensive use of everyday objects that manifest changes in lifestyle, which is precisely where drawing on the insights of ethnography would be relevant. Of course, it is understandable that Vörös is concerned that the inherently hybrid exhibition concept does not hold together but, at the same time, he seems concerned that the new exhibition technology draws too much attention to itself and undermines the historical character of the exhibition. In Vörös's view, it is unfortunate that the polyplan film technique was not introduced to Hungarian museology in a way that would have allowed it to serve the historical perspective. Interestingly enough, he points out how the impact made by simultaneous screening in fact 'follows the logic of the object' in providing an opportunity for close and multifocal inspection. With this, Vörös implies that the exhibition designers have not only been blinded by the new technologies but have been excessively drawn to the formal features of objects, as a result of which the actual message has been lost. For Vörös, the films lacked any connection not only to the 25 years of development but also to Hungary itself, that is, to a specific temporal and spatial locus. However, as the script emphasizes, the films have been made to be viewed together with the displayed objects, as part of the installation: the specificity is thus to be found in the objects. With hindsight, it is impossible to say whether the installation was

606 Vörös 1970 :81-83.

successful or not. Rather, what appears as an interesting tension is the contrast made by Vörös between the historically specific mode of presentation and one that follows the object's logic.[607] Following the object's logic would mean a shift towards the spectacular, which, for the sake of political legitimation, would be crucial. After all, if we take 'spectacle' to mean an event that is memorable for the appearance it creates, then this is exactly what a political commemoration would need. This is where the exhibition designer easily felt at a loss: there was the requirement to make a memorable event that would be worthy of the festive occasion, but at the same time, there was fear that the spectacles created would undermine the scientific (or disciplinary) credibility of the exhibition. This is what László Dér refers to as 'jubilee determinacy'[608], which, in effect, may be interpreted as a reference to the generic constraints on the act of commemoration.

Thus, while the 1970 exhibition retains the coming of age of communism prior to the liberation, that is, it starts its narrative from the Horthy years, it shifts its focus towards the concrete outcomes of the socialist system of production. The road to socialism is envisioned primarily in terms of economy and technology: the producers and products - the hybrid corn and halogen lamps - and not merely as re-structured ownership. The 1970 exhibition is far more multimodal in that it uses sound and film, not separately but as part of the installations and combined with objects. At the same time, it creates new signs and symbols for conveying concepts and complex social circumstances, as the play with the emblem of the 'Forum for Excellent Goods' shows. In comparison, the 1975 exhibition appears as reserved and even dogmatic: its novelties rely more on the incorporation of previously unseen Soviet material, which brings along the viewpoint of the Soviet soldier.

Museologically speaking, the 1980 exhibition was a remarkable moment in the history of the Kunsthalle in that it brought in the sub-discipline of historical museology. At the same time, considering that the exhibition was an exhibition of history, it paid unprecedented attention to visuality in its attempt to present a 'visual experience of the past 35 years'. The curators of the Art and Society exhibition were careful to emphasize that the exhibition adopts a historical perspective. Instead of being a traditional restrospection of certain sub-fields of art, e.g. graphic arts or design, the exhibition drew on a heavily social and historical perspective, of viewing works of art primarily in a historical context, as representatives of their era. According to the curators, this historicity entails refraining from imposing today's value judgements over the material of past decades but taking its reception at the timeas the starting point. In other words, although the exhibition is said to 'address today' and assumes 'drawing conclusions about tomorrow from today' as its task, this hightened sense of *being for the present* did not mean that the interpretations would have been made solely *in the light of the present*. Instead, 'historical measuring' was

[607] Vörös 1970:90-91.
[608] Dér 1980: 6.

emphasized.[609] At the same time, however, the commemorative framework is clearly visible in the attempt to reflect the state and achievements in different areas of art. The overriding message of the exhibition, according to György Horváth, is to make it clear that art in its own right has become a productive force that participates in the shaping of the future.[610]

This unaccustomed yoking of art exhibition and historical exhibition aroused some discussion over the balance between ’art’ and ’history’. At the time, the majority of the commentators agree that ’art’ and ’history’ appear in a harmonious balance in the exhibition. However, while some critics see that art has been placed in the centre, others are of the opinion that art has been subordinated to history: that is this the (high) price of offering history and art together, embedding them in social processes. The exhibition is said to ignore the conventional rankings of the art scene[611]. Some greet the curators’ decision to present ’the good average’ rather than ’the memorable peaks’, since art history cannot be written without the ’bad’, nor is the spirit of a particular time confined to masterpieces.[612] Moreover, art may be regarded as a progressive force paving the way for ’life’.[613] In their confined space, works of art are deprived of their air’ and ’swallowed by the disproportionate amount of photo documentation, which leads to the scattering of attention.[614]The overriding principle of society over art is aptly put by one critic, who wonders how it is that paintings depicting collective farm meetings and peaceful sea landscapes came into being at the same time.[615] Then again, most critiques manifest a *belief* in this complexity: the two strands of art and society are seen to belong together ’strictly and inseparably’.[616]

Further, the 1980 exhibition brings to the fore the prospect of applying an archaeological approach to the material culture of contemporary society, thus affirming Gyula László’s vision of the archaeology of socialism within socialism. In an interview, Ferenc Szíkossy, one of the curators of the exhibition, emphasizes the importance of the archaeological perspective, since the flow of material in contemporary society has significantly speeded up.[617] But whereas the archaeologist has to resort to examining objects ’yielded by the ground’, the curator of historical museology has the possibility of contemporary documentation and collection. Indeed, when Szíkossy highlights the importance of contemporary documentation as the backbone of historical museology, he is in fact drawing attention to the archaeological consciousness: the acknowledgement that material cycles have speeded up so that the curator

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609 Bereczky 1980.
610 Horváth 1980.
611 Fehér 1980.
612 Menyhárt 1980: 27.
613 Kenessei 1980.
614 Brestyánszky 1980.
615 Fehér Béla 1980.
616 Fehér ibid.
617 Ferenc Szíkossy in “Kulturális magazín”, Kossuth Radio 13.4.1980, 9 a.m.

will have to seize the moment to be able to capture a 'lóden' coat or a 'Tünde' scooter[618], typical objects of their time that may abruptly become rarities.

If the 1980 exhibition is first and foremost a visual synthesis of the past 35 years, then the 1985 exhibition is primarily a self-reflexive synthesis of the past 40 years. Although there is some duality in the way the exhibition manifests parallel strands of political history and lifestyle that mostly draw on different kinds of display material, the exhibition seems to comprise a coherent and multi-layered whole. In this, while it is mainly the documents and photos that embody and represent historical events and the interiors that evoke the lifestyles, this division is by no means clear-cut. Also, several political history related events and developments are displayed in the mimetic mode, so that the documents of the collective farm, for instance, are embedded in situ, in an office interior. In contrast to the earlier exhibitions, this one is permeated by the mimetic mode all the way through. Pál Miklós's criticism is apt as he calls the exhibition "an insightful and reflected image to those interested in our living past".[619] He sees it as a well compartmentalized representation of the changes in lifestyle, relying on well selected types of interiors and groups of objects that make these changes *palpable* (my italics). An element strongly connected to this palpability is the emphasis on experience and emotional impact. In his criticism, Pál Miklós points out the unusual tendency of the exhibition to play on the emotions, even to the extent of running the risk of an 'impact hunt'. One such effect is the cinder and construction waste through which the visitor walks when witnessing the devastation of the war, the sound of which evokes in those who have witnessed it "the atmosphere of the first decade".

In his criticism of the "Our road, our life" exhibition, Pál Miklós points out how natural a gesture it is on the behalf of the Museum of Ethnography and the Museum of Labour Movement to mount a joint exhibition *due to the topicality of an anniversary*[620]. Obviously, Miklós means the anniversary of liberation but for him that seems to be beside the point: in fact, in the four-page criticism there is not one word about liberation. The main thing is that a canonical political anniversary is an opportunity for two major museums to join their forces in exhibition making – all the more so since, according to a 'modern conception', various kinds of museum collections are seen as fit for the exploration of lifestyle, not merely ethnological and anthropological ones.[621]

Miklós calls for more courage on the part of the exhibition designers to make more explicit the period characterizations and syntheses that the museum is capable of creating with its tools. He regards the lifestyle research conducted in museums as ripe enough for bolder interpretations of material culture. For instance, he is inclined to call the furniture in the first interior[622] 'the first

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618 Szikossy ibid.

619 EAD 17/1985 Miklós Pál dated 29.4.1985

620 Miklós ibid.

621 Miklós ibid.

622 This furniture is referred to as 'típusbútor', which refers to the initial attempts at introducing inexpensive mass produced furniture for households, see Bánati, János

document of social homogenization', which he sees as corresponding to the 'housing block lifestyle'. The second type, 'the eclectic interior' characterizes the lifestyle of young intellectuals who, despite their striving for distinction show a high degree of uniformity. [623] These examples draw attention to the immediacy and unfinished syntheses characteristic of the museum in relation to the practice of e.g. scholarly history, which relies on the idea of a historical distance in order to gain a perspective on past events. It seems that the curators managed to create a well-functioning combination of the historical and ethnographical perspectives in order to come up with a dynamic display of the recent past that also in its visual appearance is coherent enough to appear as a whole, despite the inherent tension caused by the involvement of different museological disciplines. At the same time, this combination created a multiple framework that allowed for multiple readings. Apart from the affirmative and ceremonous, it deployed myths and clichés of communist historiography, which appeared as wittiness and self-irony. While a photo of policemen inspecting the depth of ploughing can be read as a mere document of the newly re-structured agricultural sector in the Stalinist period, it functions at the same time as an example of the absurdities of a totalitarian system in which even agricultural production easily becomes a matter for the police-state. Although the 1985 exhibition was primarily an exhibition of ethnography, as the word 'lifestyle' in the title suggests, it also contains the dual thematic of 'our road' and 'our life'. It might just be that the rich displays of the recent past were as successful as they were due to this disciplinary richness.

An inherent tension can be detected in the discourses surrounding the liberation exhibitions as a whole: on the one hand, the jubilee provided the emerging discipline with a perfect opportunity to present the best it can offer, while, on the other hand, the realization of the exhibition was constrained by the genre expectations of the jubilee, strongly influenced by the dominant power structures. At the same time, the discourse manifests a constant questioning of the limits of communicability and showability, both in terms of the museology discipline and the dominant ideology. Yet, the ideology-driven need for the progressive and the modern was inclined to push and challenge these limits exhibition by exhibition. Increasingly, attention was being paid to 'small things' as potential manifestations of the country's development instead of 'the big picture'. Such small things may be something as seemingly trivial as a coffee percolator. In a radio programme about the 1980 exhibition, the reporter points out how interesting it is that a coffee percolator as a material correlate should accompany all the periods in the exhibition. The art historian Iván Bojár remarks that, compared to elsewhere, the development of coffee percolators lagged behind in Hungary. Implicitly, Bojár is suggesting that the choice of following social development in the material form of the development of the coffee percolator is not a very successful one, since in Hungary it hardly shows

1994. "A típusbútor Magyarországon" *Ökotáj* 1994, vol. 7-8. Available also online: http://www.okotaj.hu/szamok/07-8/korny6.html link checked 26.11.2009.

623 Miklós 1985: 3. EAD 17/1985

any development at all.[624] In other words, if we are to present the development and the achievements of our socialist culture and society, why would we want to do it visually through an object that shows few changes? In a sense, therefore, the ′stagnating coffee percolator′ becomes an unintentional symbol (and a symptom) of the stagnation of social development. This example, however banal it may seem, is a good indication of the dual requirements set for the museum object in this exhibitionary complex: apart from being an expressive object capable of showing technological, cultural and social development, it was to manifest the state and development of socialist production, culture and society. Thus, every object was a potential benchmark of development of both the arsenal of historical museology and the ′socialist culture′.

In a sense, then, each exhibition poses the question: Is there enough representative power in these selected elements for them to represent their era?[625] While the former is primarily a question of historical museology, the exhibitions pose another, more ideology-based question: Is there enough legitimative power in these selected elements to convince the visitor of our development? Partly deriving from the latter question, the exhibitions pose a third question, related to the communist utopia: Is there enough suggestive power in these selected elements to help our communist future happen? This future orientation of the liberation exhibitions bears a resemblance to expos and world fairs, which, apart from functioning as showcases of new trends and anticipation of the future, at the same time work as national celebrations marking a specific point in time. As observed by Tony Bennett, the underlying rhetoric of exposition is one of progress.[626] For Bennett, the expo points to a future possibility to engage in an ′anticipatory futuring of the self′[627]. In effect, the parallel between an expo and the liberation exhibitions is taken up by the art historian Ilona Brestyánszky in her review of the 1980 exhibition ″Art and society″. She remarks that as such, the complex display of culture, history and art is by no means a novelty but is taken up by each generation. She contends that the Millenium Exhibition in Budapest in 1896 belonged to this category, too, as did the initiatives in the Hungarian museum scene in the 1950s, which she calls the ′blossoming era′ of Hungarian museums.[628] There are instances where art, especially art and crafts, is seen as a pioneering force that steps ahead of society showing the way. There is a need for aesthetically designed objects in individuals′ immediate environments, not only as prototypes in museum displays.[629] Here, Brestyánszky is not only referring to the spirit of progress of the liberation exhibitions but also creating a narrative of the progressive displays in Hungary, and the 1980 exhibition is the latest landmark in this development. Further, she is calling upon the museum′s utopian potential for affecting ways of seeing: that these prototypes displayed in the museum would

624 Bojár, Iván in "Láttuk, hallottuk…", Kossuth Rádió, March 21, 1980.
625 This question was posed by Péter Fodor (1980: 45) in relation to the 1980 exhibition.
626 Bennett 1995:213.
627 Bennett 1995:217.
628 Brestyánszky 1980.
629 Wehner 1980.

be figuratively taken out into the world by visitors and would cause the latter to demand the presence of these prototypes in their immediate environments. Indeed, this combination of the progressive spirit and future orientation led visitors greet exhibitions with remarks such as 'I'm happy to have the opportunity to see the past and the future of the Hungarian people' ('Örülök, hogy megnézhettem a magyar nép múltját és jövőjét')[630], or 'I especially liked the exhibition room where the future of Budapest could be seen' (Különösen az a terem tetszett, ahol Budapest jövőjét láttuk')[631]. Foucault distinguishes between evolutionary and evolutive time, the former of which relates to the 'discovery of evolution in terms of progress', while the latter has to do with the disciplinary methods of training that turn time into a series of stages to be passed. In Foucault's view, the two are inherently interconnected, or rather, their 'discovery' coincided within the project of modernity.[632] Drawing on Foucault, Bennett suggests that the expositionary arrangement of things should be viewed as "performative imperative in which the visitor exercising in the intersections of the evolutionary time of progress and the evolutive time of the discipline, is enlisted for the limitless project of modernity."[633] In the case of the liberation exhibitions, this 'discipline' can be interpreted as both a method of training a 'progressive subject' and the discipline of historical museology. Thus, the visitor, making his or her progress through the displays, may be seen as simultaneuously performing the evolutionary time of modernity and the evolutionary time of museology as an inherent part of it. In addition, the time of the exhibition is also evolutive in that the exhibition works as an itinerary along which the subjects are socialized. The coffee percolator that shows only very slight changes and which the visitor is faced with in every sub-era of socialism is an aesthetic object of evolutive time which is used as a tool for 'shaping taste'. It is also evolutionary in two senses: firstly, the progress of socialist production appears as a life-style related commodity and, secondly, as a document of the recent past whose museality and exhibitability is put to the test within the narrative of the exhibition.

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630 TAD 3039-3043-83 A "Magyarország a szocializmus útján" vendégkönyve
631 TAD 133-75 A "25 éves a szabad Magayrország" vendégkönyve
632 Foucault 1977:161, quoted in Bennett 1995:214.
633 Bennett 1995:214.

6 THROUGH THICK AND THIN: LIBERATION EXHIBITIONS AS A COMMEMORATIVE MEMBRANE

Needless to say, the commemorative framework in which the liberation exhibitions came into being, has since become obsolete. Walter Benjamin's contention that history breaks down into images, not stories[634], seems especially apt when substantial ideological ruptures are involved. Of course, in the case of the Eastern European 'velvet revolutions' and 'negotiating revolutions', a rupture is more than relative: as the case of the liberation exhibitions shows, change appears more in terms of continuous transition. Either way, it is clear that the narrative of liberation needs to be ideologically backed up, otherwise the narrative does not hold together. In this study, it has been my aim to discuss selected visual and material fragments of this narrative. The focus on the visual statements of the displays and the physical presence of objects relates to my attempt to show how meanings were produced and negotiated – also subverted and contested – during the state-socialist period, because of and despite the totalitarian framework. Harnessing the performative and embodied spaces of the museum, these fragments were mobilized in mimetic acts in which the narrative was reenacted. With hindsight, it is easy to see that many of these 'truthful reflections' were truthful and telling in spite of themselves: often their truthfulness was located *elsewhere* than intended – more often than not in the telling (and showing) details. The exhibitions contained numerous statements that visualized absence and compromise rather than the 'liberation' they were designated to stand for. Some of the ironic montages that were staged were due to curatorial inventiveness and wit, and – as several guestbook entries show – many of them were apparent to the visitor, while others may have been unintentional and more likely to be perceived by the researcher reading for such details. This is when the researcher easily becomes the 'back-teller', the retrospective prophet discussed by Tony Bennett, drawing selected objects into the sphere of visibility, in an attempt to affirm to the reader that, at

[634] Benjamin *Gesammelte Schriften,* vol. 5. p. 596, quoted in Weigel 1996:10.

a particular time and place, this and that was to be seen. While this (in part speculative) reconstruction of these visual regimes has undeniably been one of the goals of this study, such back-telling can turn into a self-serving enterprise. Then again, with hindsight, foretelling is useless, since we all know what became of the story of socialism (or rather, when and how the road to socialism came to an end). Rather than reading these fragments as mere ’writings on the wall’ that already contain the grains of collapse in them, I believe that it is worthwhile to look at them as symptoms of the constantly changing dynamic between the state as the ultimate exhibitor and the citizens as the exhibited subjects within a system that may be characterized as a ’soft dictatorship’. What added up to the dynamics of the exhibitions and appeared as a curatorial challenge was the blurred and constantly shifting boundaries – “the walls” – of exhibitability. Even if the ultimate taboos were left untouched by the exhibitions, occasional playfulness and (self-)irony nevertheless undermined the fundamentals of the system’s legitimacy. Thus, in the course of some forty years, the liberation exhibitions evolved into a recognizable genre, a special blend of ‘paying one’s respects’ in the form of solemn commemoration and incorporating elements of social criticism, all this propped up with the lures of commodity consumption. By re-taking the road sketched by the exhibitions, the visitor could mirror her own standard of living against the collective lines of progress. The displayed objects also worked as alluring showcases of the (almost) attainable but also as objects of affect, and with the more recent exhibitions, of nostalgia. The displayed objects were objects of attachment and detachment, with the help of which the visitor could position herself in temporal terms, draw on familiar and readily recognizable objects for mileposts *in* the socialist period. Although the overall narrative of the exhibitions lacked a sense of closure, as continuous stories of progress, stretching into the future, the exhibitions put their closure elsewhere, into the ways both historical characters and artefacts were redeemed. The red star is destroyed by ’Them’ but it is replaced by ’Us’, while the adversary draws back, disperses and disappears.

In this study, I have attempted to interpret the primarily visual material of the exhibitions in a way that is sensitive to the possible ’Enola Gay effects’ of commemoration-related practices, constantly warning myself against the ’Enola Gay pitfalls’, the danger of reducing the visual culture of a commemorative context into plain textuality. This means relating to material culture and exhibited objects with an awareness that any object may turn into an ’enola gay’ of sorts that may work to undermine the (didactic) narrative of the exhibition. However, this does not mean reading for a scandal. I readily admit that ’reading for the membrane’ does contain an element of fetishism: of celebrating the potential otherness of material objects as an instance of polysemy. Yet, I hope to have convinced my reader that even in historical settings, it is worthwhile to focus on the tension between narrativity and mimesis in the intepretation of visual narratives.

If we conceive of the museum as one instance of a utopian site where there are no places as such but which work to represent the society in a perfected form[635], then (the Hungarian) liberation exhibitions are well-suited to this conception. The museum, as a 'materialized space' 'engaged in worldmaking'[636] is where both nations and the international working class is envisioned. As argued by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the museum, despite its best efforts to create certainty, produces unpredictability through fragmentation, aggregation, juxtaposition and contrast, and it is through these means that the museum's utopian potential can be realized.[637] The liberation exhibitions as a particular type of utopian laboratory were designed to create certainty though visualizing and modelling the road to the communist future, but, despite their best efforts, they not only produced unpredictability but also reflected the uncertainties of the 'outer worlds' of which they had been made. These utopian worlds were, in many senses, highly selective and distorted in their selectivity. Yet, the courage with which the socialist museum tackled the recent past, the present and the future was unique in the history of Hungarian museology. If Tomislav Sola is right in his contention that the museum should be a heritage action unit that helps the future happen[638], then many aspects of this museological phase are worth revisiting. But re-visit how and for what ends?

Sites of 'negative heritage' are those conflictual sites that become the repository of negative memory in the collective imagery. However, negative heritage occupies a dual role: it may be mobilized for positive didactic purposes or it can be erased if the sites cannot be culturally rehabilitated.[639] Negative heritage thus operates between the poles of transformation and erasure.[640] The question is, then, what to cleanse and what to preserve critically. While the liberation exhibitions certainly belong to the realm of 'dissonant heritage', their negativity is a complex issue. Although much of 'the heritage of socialism' may be regarded as an oppressive and negative heritage in the collective imagery, rather than merely negative, it remains conflictual and contested in the post-socialist period. In post-socialist countries, numerous exhibitions, museums and heritage sites have been created to aid reflection on and re-working of the recent past. In Hungary, the most important of such establishments are the Memento Park, the House of Terror and, most recently, the Memory Point.[641] With such contested memories as those of socialism, these sites are easily turned into spectacular tourist attractions, sites of voyeurism or pillories for those deemed responsible for past crimes. This is when the display of the recent past may be-

635 Rogoff 1994:232, drawing on Foucault 1967.
636 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:1-3.
637 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004:4.
638 Sola 1992: 10-19.
639 Meskell 2002:558.
640 Meskell ibid. 570-571.
641 Also, a series of thematic exhibitions were produced, such as "Szoc reál", "Everyday communism" and "Lenin goes back to his grave?" in the summer of 2008 in MODEM, Debrecen. However, it has to be noted that in addition to such temporary exhibitions, there have been very few permanent exhibitions to date that have addressed the socialist period, the current permanent exhibition of the National Museum being a rare – and contested – example.

come banal and trivialized 'road shows' or repositories of material memories that remain divided, suspended in a trench warfare. In a post-totalitarian context there is the danger that one former 'normative memory regime' is replaced with another.[642] Since the liberation exhibitions – or, to my knowledge, any other exhibition made in Hungary during socialism about socialism – no longer exist, all the objects collected 'back then' come to us as already re-discovered, re-classified and re-contextualized. While this re-contextualization is an indispensable part of reinterpreting the socialist past, it should not be done ignorant or indifferent of the contexts, meanings and classifications these objects are a result of. In this study, it has been my aim to figuratively re-visit a set of exhibitions to explore their meaning-making mechanisms; an undertaking that as such has been fascinating but not an end in itself. It is clear that all involvement with institutionalized pasts include some degree of didacticism, and in this sense, every ruin field is potentially a didactic one. But to move beyond the mere display of these ruin fields requires explorations into *meanings made before*. Only through the inclusion of the earlier layers of meaning is critical preservation of the socialist heritage possible.

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642 Beattie 2010:45.

YHTEENVETO

Tämä väitöstutkimus tarkastelee nk. 'vapautuksen näyttelyitä' (felszabadulási kiállítások) Unkarin museoissa sosialismin aikana. Vapautus viittaa huhtikuun neljänteen päivään vuonna 1945, jolloin neuvostosotilaat vapauttivat maan fasistisen Saksan vallan alta. Tutkimuksessa keskitytään kuuden, Budapestin eri museoissa vuosina 1960–1985 järjestetyn näyttelyn analyysiin. Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan sitä, kuinka näyttelyiden avulla muisteltiin sosialismiin siirtymistä ja samalla luotiin katsaus maan kehitykseen vuoden 1945 jälkeen. Teoreettisesti tutkimus paikantuu ensisijassa museologisen tutkimuksen kenttään. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu pääasiassa unkarilaisten museoiden näyttelydokumentaatiosta: käsikirjoituksista, valokuvista, muistioista, puolue-elinten raporteista sekä museoammatillisista julkaisuista. Metodologisesti työni kiteytyy ’käsikirjoituksissa vierailun’ (visiting the scripts) käsitteen ympärille. Tarkoitan sillä lukutapaa, jonka keskiössä on pyrkimys ikään kuin luoda uudelleen näyttelyiden tila visuaalisine ja materiaalisine elementteineen käytettävissä olevan arkistoaineiston pohjalta, samalla tuotetun tiedon luonnetta reflektoiden.

Tarkastelen näyttelyitä muistikudoksen (commemorative membrane) käsitteen kautta. Sen avulla pyrin jäsentämään niitä lukuisia jännitteitä, joiden varaan muistonäyttelyiden merkityksenmuodostus rakentui. Käsite ei sinällään ole uusi, mutta kehittelen sitä työssäni pidemmälle. Vaikka menneisyyden julkisiin representaatioihin liittyy aina ideologisia jännitteitä, voidaan näiden jännitteiden olettaa olevan lähtökohtaisesti erityisen vahvoja totalitarististen järjestelmien kontekstissa. Näyttelyitä lähestytään kolmesta eri näkökulmasta: kertomuksina, mimeettisinä fragmentteina ja osana museoalan aikalaiskeskustelua. Tutkimusotettani voidaan täten luonnehtia narratiivis-mimeettis-diskursiiviseksi. Narratiivisuudella tarkoitetaan sitä, että museonäyttelyitä lähestytään kulttuuriperintökertomuksina, jotka rakentuivat autenttisten museoesineiden, kuvien, tekstien mutta myös mallien, kopioiden ja simulaatioiden varaan. Näistä elementeistä koostui kertomus, ”sosialismin tie”, jonka museokävijä näyttelyssä vieraillessaan samalla tuli kulkeneeksi läpi. Tältä osin museokäynnillä voidaan katsoa olleen selkeä muistifunktio. Näyttelyiden tehtävä oli paitsi aktivoida ”sosialismin ajan muistia”, myös luoda uusia, dominantin ideologian näkökulmasta sopivia muistoja. Mimeettisyys puolestaan liittyy ensisijaisesti näyttelyiden autenttisuuden ja totuuden vaateeseen: siihen kuinka yksittäisten esineiden ja installaatioiden avulla luodaan visuaalisia väittämiä, jotka suhteutuvat tavalla tai toisella siihen ulkopuoliseen todellisuuteen, jota näyttelyt kuvaavat. Lähestymistavan tarkoituksena ei ole kuitenkaan jyrkkien vastakkainasettelujen luominen näyttelyiden representaatioiden ja museon ulkopuolisten todellisuuksien välille; pikemminkin keskitytään tarkastelemaan sitä, millä tavoin näyttelyiden merkitykset ja niiden kannattelemat totuudet luodaan. Mimeettisyyden tarkastelussa keskitytään näyttelyihin poleemisena tilana, jossa visuaalisesti pyritään luomaan vastakkainasetteluja ”progressiivisten” ja ”reaktiivisten” voimien välille. Näyttelyitä tarkastellaan myös erinäisten unelmien ja halujen, lähinnä kulutusunelmien ja tieteisutopioiden, kenttänä.

Lisäksi eritellään sitä, kuinka sukupuoli tulee esiin näyttelyissä, ts. kuinka sukupuolta on niissä tematisoitu. Samalla hahmotetaan myös sitä, missä määrin näyttelyt heijastavat totuttuja käsityksiä yksityisen ja julkisen tilan sukupuolittuneisuudesta. Lopuksi näyttelyitä tarkastellaan diskursiivisina rakennelmina, jolloin keskiössä ovat laajemmat, ideologis-teoreettiset keskustelut museoiden ja kulttuuriperinnön merkityksestä. Vapautuksen näyttelyt pyritään siten sijoittamaan laajempiin museologiadiskurssin konteksteihin, jonka yhteydessä pohditaan sitä, onko (oliko) ylipäänsä olemassa 'sosialistista museologiaa', millaisen 'kommemoratiivisen genren' vapautuksennäyttelyt muodostavat, ja millä tavoin kyseiset näyttelyt ilmensivät edistystä ja kehityksen huippua niin museologisessa kuin yhteiskunnallisessa mielessä.

Tutkimuksessani osoitan, että vaikka näyttelyiden funktio ja ideologinen ydin pysyi muuttumattomana, niiden sisällössä tapahtui selvä muutos: poliittisen historian esittämisen osuus väheni, kun taas elämäntavan ja arjen kuvaaminen lisääntyi. Samalla näyttelyiden narratiiveista tuli löyhempiä: ne olivat vähemmän didaktisia ja "sietivät" paremmin monimerkityksisyyttä. Merkityksenmuodostumisen näkökulmasta on kiintoisaa, että ajan myötä tietty symboliikka vakiintui, ja merkitysten välittäminen tapahtui pikemminkin merkkien ja symbolien kuin kirjoitetun tekstin avulla. Kiinnostavaa on myös se, että dogmaattisesta kehikosta huolimatta näyttelyiden kaaressa voidaan havaita samansuuntaista kehitystä kuin näyttelykulttuurissa yleisesti: näyttelyt muuttuivat itsereflektiivisemmiksi: ne ikään kuin tulivat tietoisiksi omasta konstruoidusta luonteestaan ja leikittelivät merkitysten eri tasoilla. Toisaalta taas jo suhteellisen varhaiset näyttelyt sisälsivät yllättäväkin merkityksillä leikittelyä, joka hetkittäin näyttäytyy myös (itse-)ironiana. Samalla näyttelyissä tuotiin esiin yhteiskuntakritiikkiä, esimerkiksi kehittelemällä symboleja puutteelle ja niille kompromisseille, jotka vallitsevaa järjestelmää leimasivat. Esitänkin työssäni, että vapautuksen muistonäyttelyt toimivat kiinnostavalla tavalla 'pehmeän diktatuurin' peilinä.

Visuaaliselta ilmeeltään näyttelyt kävivät ajan myötä säyseämmiksi. Vaikka kylmälle sodalle tyypillinen vastakkainasettelu säilyi, se muuntui pikemminkin valppaudeksi avoimen vihamielisyyden tai aggression sijaan. Toisaalta näyttelyiden visuaaliset ratkaisut heijastelivat valtasuhteita suuren Neuvostoliiton ja pienen Unkarin välillä. Useat installaatiot ilmensivät alistumista suuremman tahtoon tai korostivat itäblokin sisäistä vastavuoroisuutta ja hyvää tahtoa. Tältä osin näyttelyissä on havaittavissa koloniaalisia esittämisen tapoja. Toisaalta vapautuksen näyttelyt vahvistavat kuvaa Unkarin sosialismista 'kulutussosialismina', jossa ihmiset pyrittiin pitämään tyytyväisinä korostamalla hyvinvointipolitiikkaa ja tarjoamalla kulutushyödykkeitä, joihin järjestelmän puitteissa ei olisi ollut varaa. Vaikka monelta osin painopisteet ja esittämisen tavat muuttuivat 35 vuoden ajanjaksona, sukupuoleen liittyvissä teemoissa ja erityisesti naisen esittämisessä tapahtui muutoksia verrattain vähän. Nainen näyttäytyy voittopuolisesti aktiivisena sosialismin rakentajana, mutta samalla sosiaalipolitiikan erityisen huomion kohteena. Näyttelyiden nainen olikin ambivalentti

subjekti: toisaalta kuvattu lähellä vallan symboleita ja siten valtaa omaavana, mutta toisaalta (valtio)vallan suojelemana.

Vapautuksen näyttelyiden tarkastelu museologisen aikalaiskeskustelun valossa osoittaa, että näyttelytyyppinä poliittisten vuosipäivien juhlistamiseen liittyviin näyttelyihin kohdistui monenlaisia ja keskenään ristiriitaisiakin odotuksia. Näyttelyiden piti olla todiste sosialistisen järjestelmän ylivertaisuudesta samalla kun niiden näyttelykulttuurin tuli ilmentää museologian huippusaavutuksia. Tästä johtuen päädynkin esittämään, että vapautuksen näyttelyitä voidaan pitää sosialistisen museologian paradigmaattisena tapauksena. Genren näkökulma avaa ikkunan niihin keskusteluihin, joita käytiin näyttelyiden tyylin ja ilmapiirin ympärillä. Keskustelut paljastavat, että samalla kun pyrittiin pitäytymään "juhlavuudessa", ei oltu yksimielisiä siitä, mitä juhlavuus kyseisten näyttelyiden yhteydessä lopulta tarkoittaa. Kommemoratiivisen genren näkökulmasta onkin kiinnostavaa, että jos ajatellaan muistonäyttelyiden olleen ennen kaikkea juhlanäyttelyitä, juhlavuuden sisältö muuttui: elämäntavan esittämisen korostuessa siitä tuli ennen muuta arjen juhlaa.

Tutkimus tuo monella tapaa esiin sen, kuinka sosialismin nimissä luotiin kuvaa Unkarista dynaamisesti kehittyvänä ja modernina yhteiskuntana ja sosialistisena hyvinvointivaltiona. Näyttelyissä yhdistyvät kiinnostavalla tavalla sosialismin saavutusten ylistys ja yhteiskuntakritiikki – joskin dominantin ideologian sallimissa puitteissa. Toisaalta yksittäisten esineiden tai installaatioiden voidaan katsoa haastavan näyttelyiden narratiivien totuuksia: nostamalla yksityiskohtia tarkastelun keskiöön representaatiot haastava vastakarvaan lukemisen mahdollisuus korostuu. Toisaalta taas tutkimusasetelma panee pohtimaan sitä, missä määrin nykyhetken konteksti ohjaa sosialismin kontekstissa luotujen merkitysten tulkintaa, ja saa tutkijan etsimään mahdollisia vastarinnan positioita.

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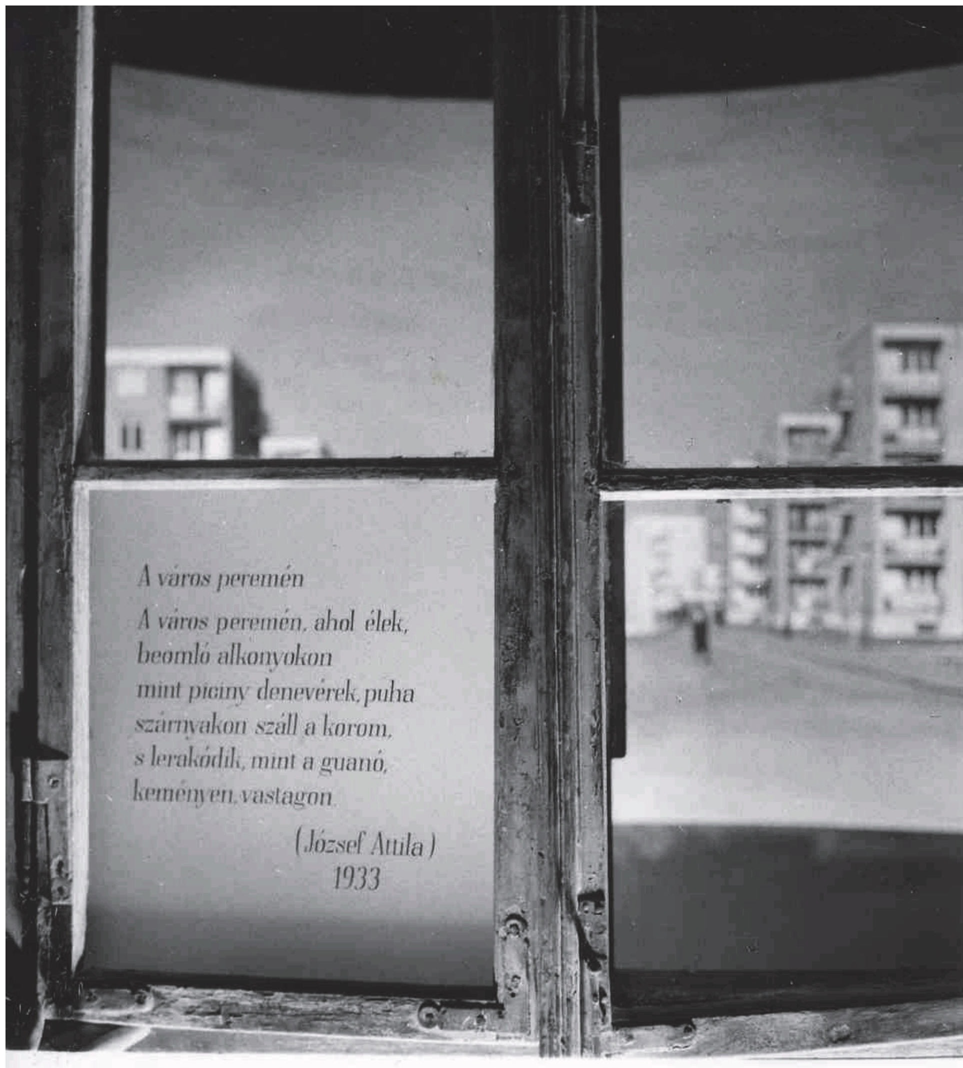
APPENDIX: FIGURES

Figure 1. Reconstruction and land-reform: early landmarks of the communist rule. (AD-I-1691-80)

Figure 2. Production then and now: volume of light industry and metalworking. (AD-I-1691-80)

EXPOSITION DU LIVRE HONGROIS



Figures 3. and 4. The Habsburg princess giving way to the new proletariat: the last window frame of the Mária Valéria houses. (AD-I-1691-80)

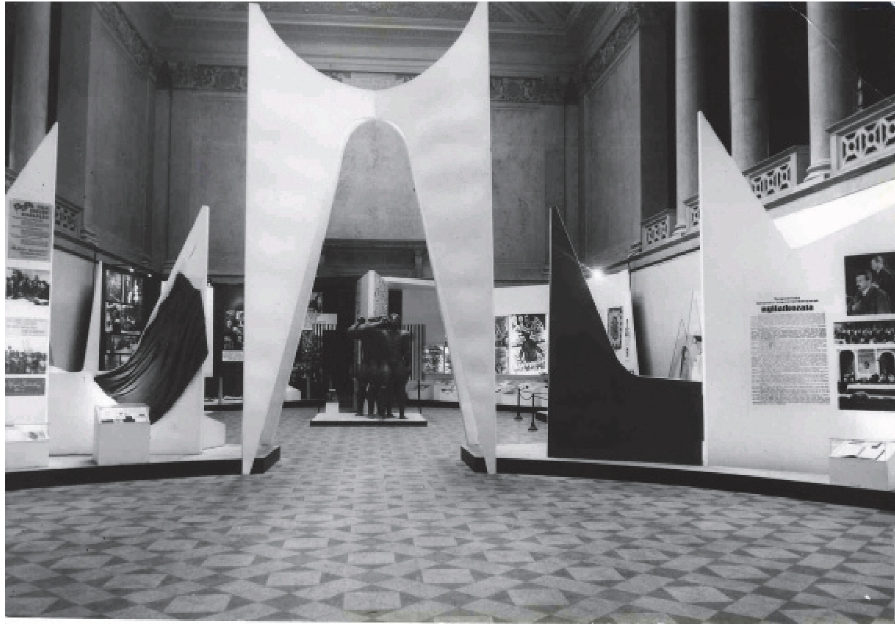


Figure 5. The 'edgy' atmosphere of the first two rooms. The International Brigade monument (Makrisz Agamemnon, 1970) dividing the space to 'reaction' and 'progression'. (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 6. The capital city fallen to pieces: the liberation of Budapest. (AD-I-1690-80)

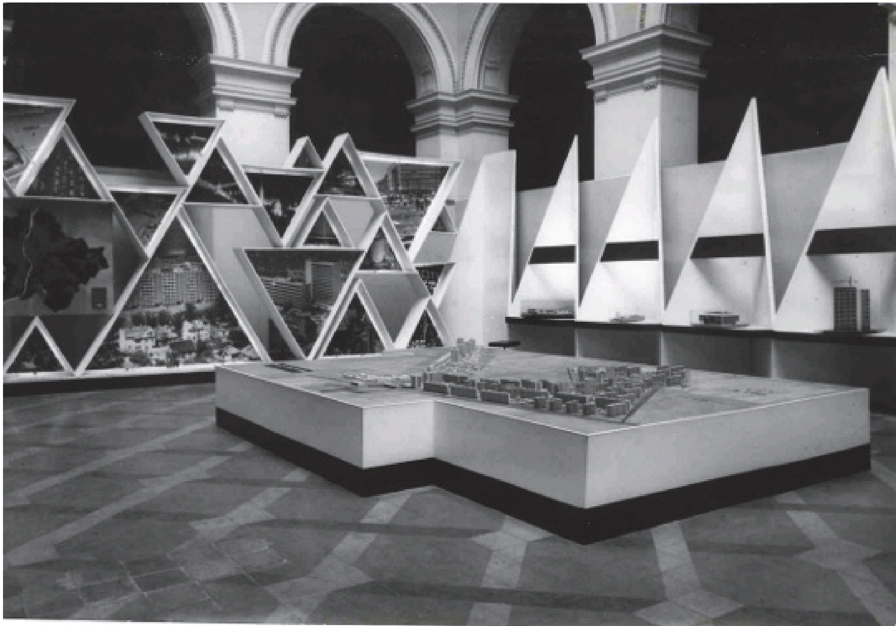


Figure 7. 'Plan-driven' development: "Our Capital Budapest" (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 8. "Our youth". Pioneer railway in the middle, pioneer uniforms in showcase. (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 9. Painting and design as historical documents and 'the good average of their time'. (AD-I-1727-80)

Figure 10. The 'liberated' way up high, *the* proletarian poet on the ground. (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 11. Detail of the "unaccustomed look" of the exhibition in 1980, which manifests "the power of evidence based on the parallel presence of separate collections" (Fodor 1980:43, 45).

Figure 12. Hungarians going places with the ‘Tünde’ scooter. (AD-I-1690-80)

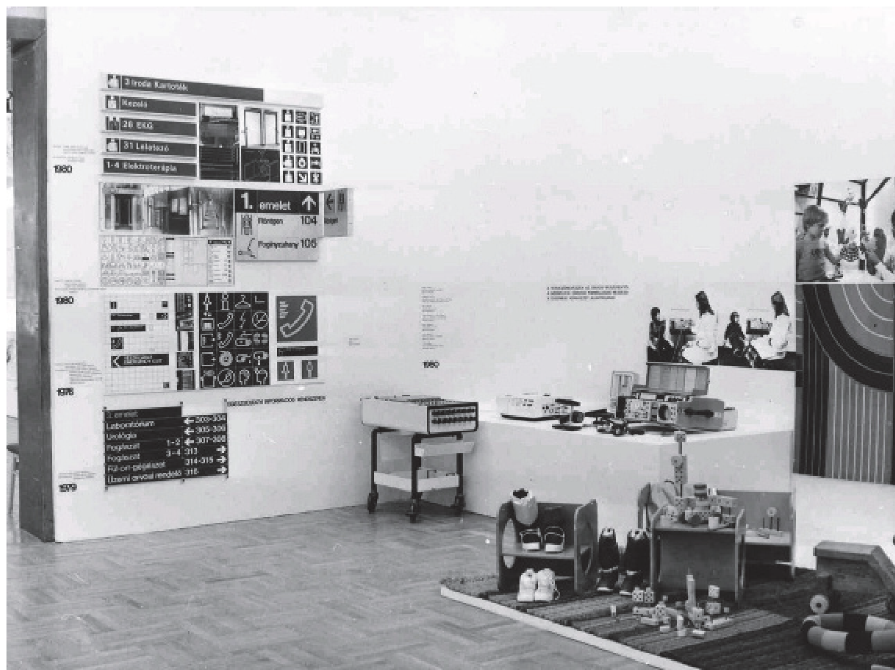


Figure 13. Sample of things modern: kindergarten, diagnostics and “modern, well-designed labels on the hospital walls”. (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 14. The state of devastation at the moment of liberation. (EAD19735)

Figure 15. Reconstruction led by the communists. “Down with the reaction!”, demand the posters. (EAD19741)

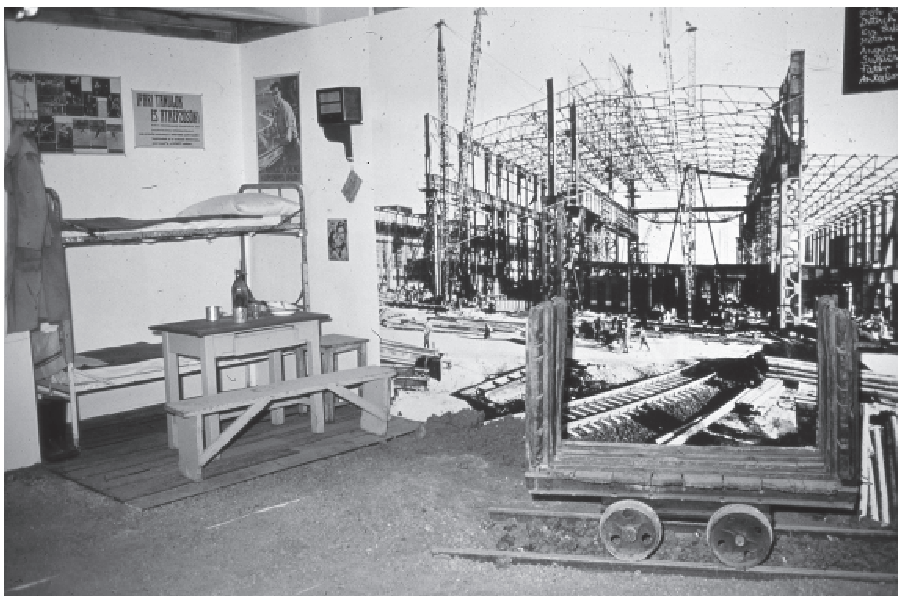


Figure 16. Construction prompted by the first 5-year plan: a workers’ dormitory. (EAD19751)

Figure 17. Housing block living, 1984. (EAD18256)

Figures 18. and 19. Out of town but working double shifts: increased mobility and prospects for additional sources of income. (EAD19792 and EAD18260)

Figure 20. Where the female tram conductor waits for her loved one and dreams of remote places (EAD19757)

Figure 21. Reaction illuminated, progression showcased: Propaganda posters and ‘material of resistance’ in the 1970 exhibition. The printing machine of the illegal communist party on the right.

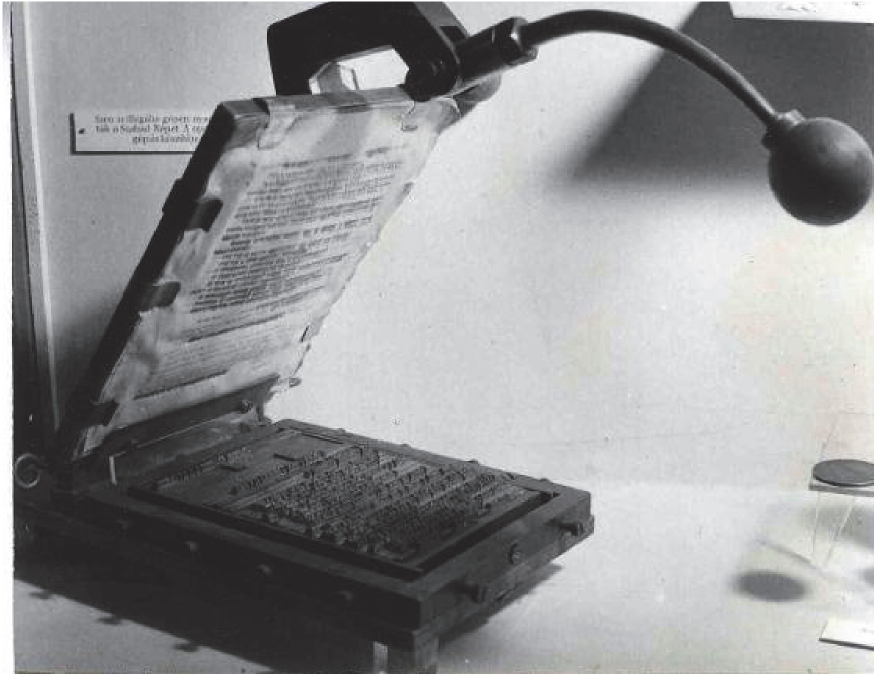


Figure 22. Fighting the reaction with the printed word, part I: the printing-machine of the communist party from the days of illegality (the 1965 exhibition)

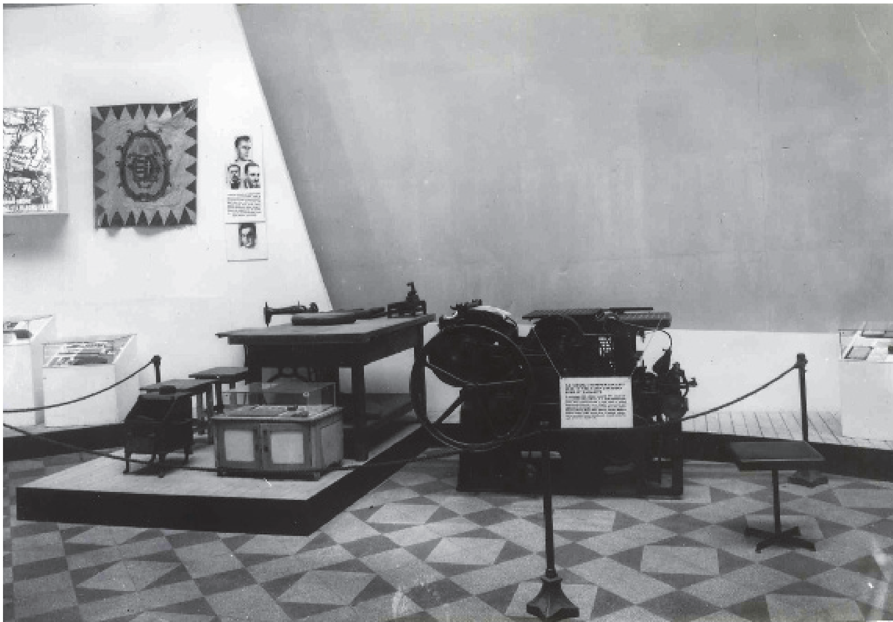


Figure 23. Fighting the reaction with the printed word, part II: "One of the printing machines of the illegal communist party used in the end of 1944" (The 1848 freedom fight flag in the upper left corner)

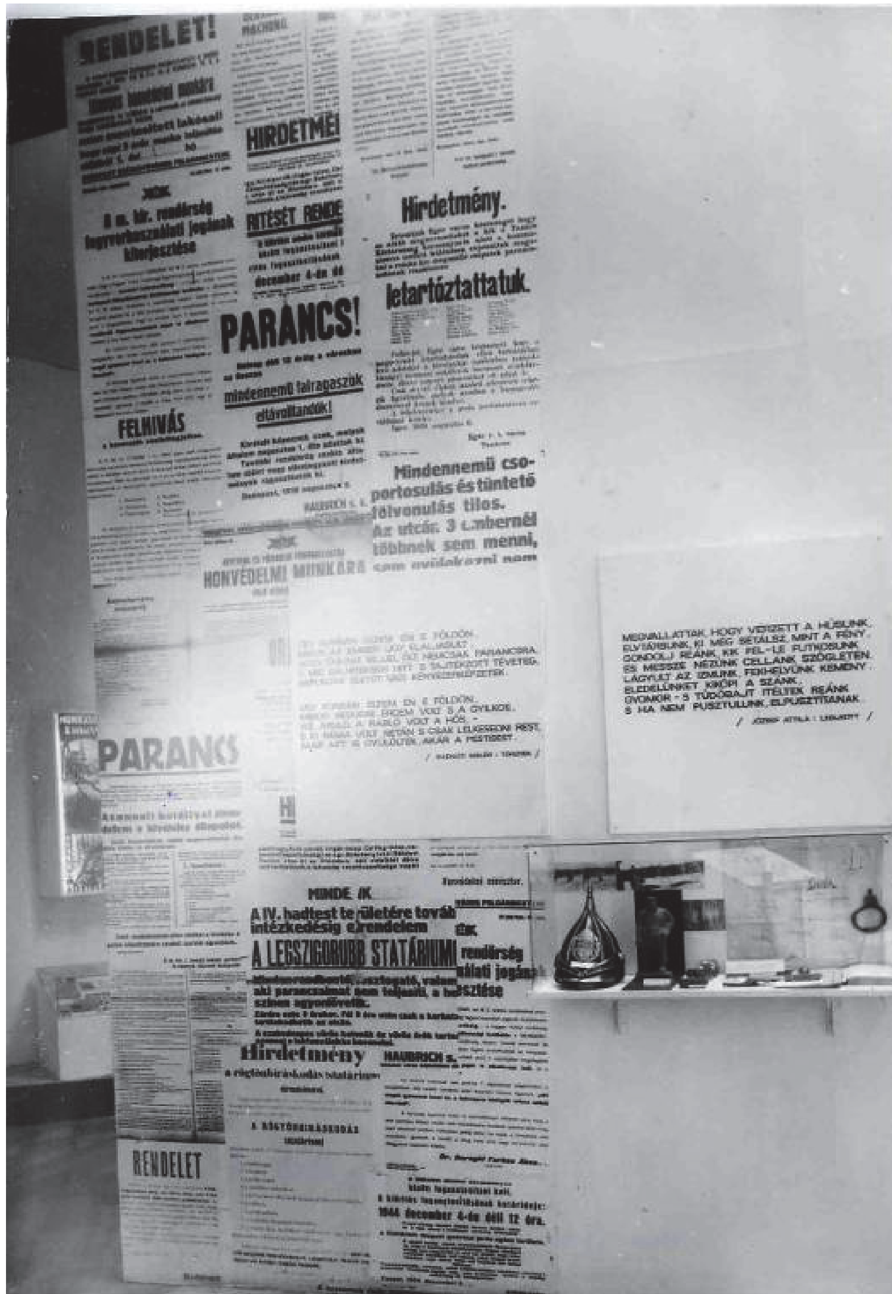


Figure 24. One long revolution: Communist prison memorabilia, items of oppression and a montage merging 1919 and 1944 (the 1970 exhibition)

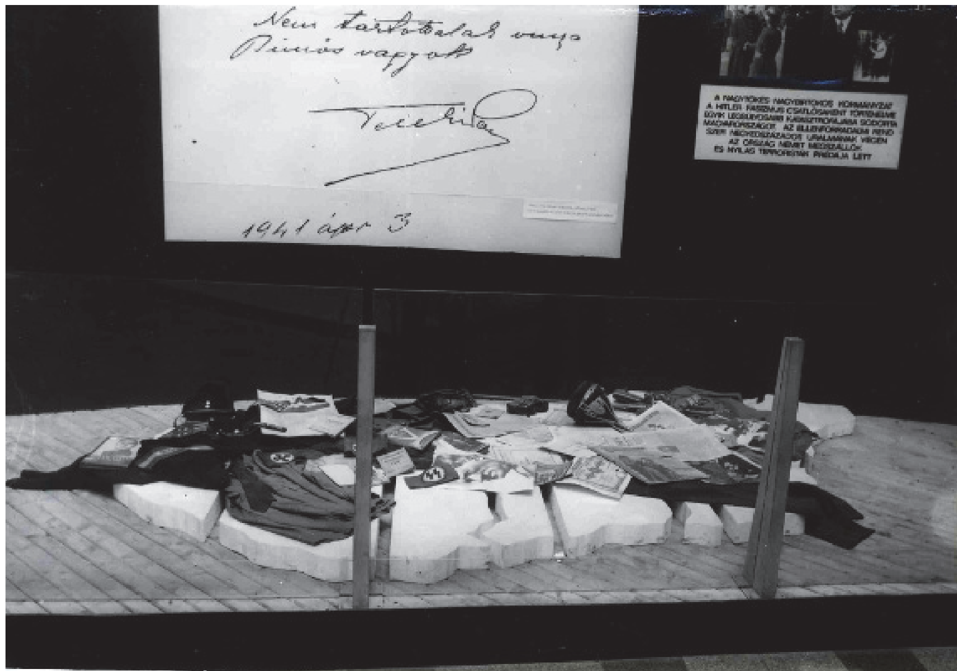


Figure 25. The regime of cowardice: the annihilation of Horthy era, the 1970 exhibition.

Figure 26. Ahead on the road to socialism, despite the violations of the inner and outer adversary. Pieces of the 'spy balloon' and images of the mutilation of the socialist flag in showcase, boxes of 'imperialist propaganda' flyers on the right. The pioneer flag leads the way.

Figure 27. Remember what we fought for: weapons of the ‘peace fight’, the 1965 exhibition

Figure 28. The ties that bind: the pipelines leading to Kremlin, the 1965 exhibition

Figure 29. Peacefully reframed aggression: “She is fighting for you, too. Budapest for Hanoi” (second poster from the right). Poster as a ‘document of the 1970s’ in the 1980 exhibition.

Figure 30. The women of agriculture (AD-I-1691-80)

Figure 31. Old peasant lady vacuuming, young woman working on a collective farm – figures of production on the rise. (AD-I-1691-80)

Figure 32. Men measuring, woman reaping. (AD-I-1690-80)

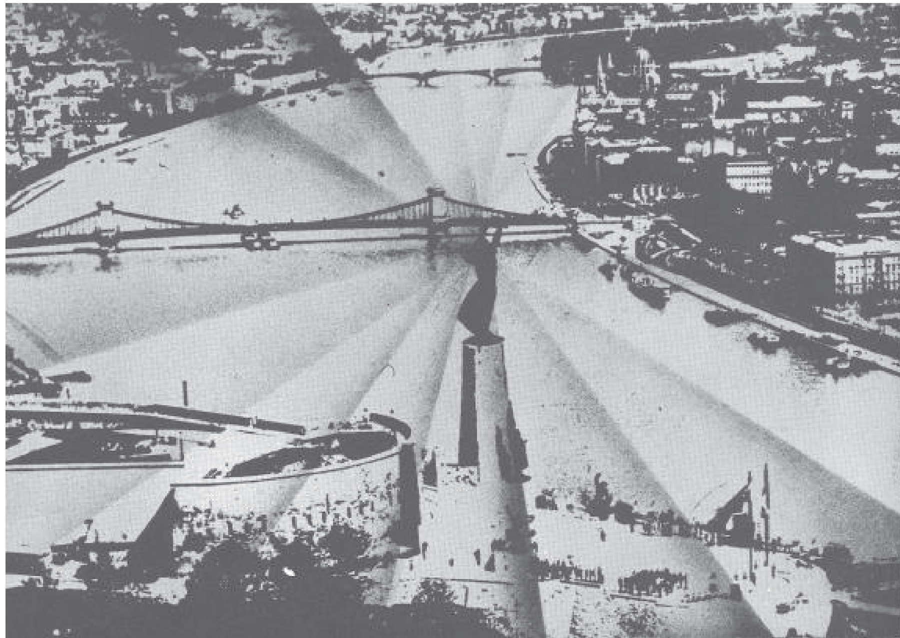
Figure 33. “Science and technology”, the 1970 exhibition. Woman using “electronic instruments” (AD-I-1690-80)

Figure 34. ‘State feminism’: Women positioned close to the symbols of power. Women agitating for the council based government: “Council. All power belongs to the working people!” (AD-I-1691-80)

Figure 35. Socialist perspectives in Budapest, Hungary and worldwide: the exhibition of 1960 is closed in a "festive atmosphere". (AD-I-1691-80)

Figure 36. Caricature exhibition for "relaxed and cheerful spirits". "This is how we live" as an epilogue to the exhibition proper in 1970. (AD-I-1690-80)

Figures 37 and 38. 1. and 2. version of the exhibition invitation in 1970. (AD-I.367-75)



Figures 39. and 40. Blue dreams instead of the memory of the Soviet soldier: 1. and 2. version of the back-cover of the invitation. (AD-I.367-75)

Figure 41. Cunning uniformity: housing poultry and people. (EAD19776)

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