

## FOR A NEW AND BRIGHT FUTURE: PROPAGANDA IN HUNGARIAN NEWSREELS BETWEEN 1945 AND 1954

*Por un futuro nuevo y brillante: propaganda en los noticieros  
húngaros entre 1945 y 1954*


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**Abstract.** This study firstly emphasize the importance and relevance of analysing newsreels from a history of education aspect, which is a blind spot in the Hungarian research. The official Leninist ideology deeply influenced the genre, used as a channel of overall propaganda, during and after the communist takeover, between 1945 and 1954. Production and broadcasting depended on the political goals and turns of the Communist Party, combined simple messages with easily understandable narrative forms, to support campaigns, spread intended knowledge and so on. The footages has now digitized and open to access for everyone (<https://filmhiradokonline.hu/>): using the webpage, through a three-step data collecting and selection process, a database made, with 205 items to analyse. Three archetypes, basic storytelling forms are detected, I called them metaphorically *One from the many*, *Occupying space* and *Learning society*. The development and progression of the country after WW2 always represented in individual life-stories and personal backgrounds to get close these stories to the audience, trying to make Soviets and communists more popular. At the same time, more and more spaces are occupied by the new power, both physically and symbolically, for example the former castles became schools, training sites, etc., which signed the expropriation the past, too. Definition and scope of education extended in the discourses, because every member of the society would learn repeatedly the language of the new establishment. Propaganda and persuasion was overall in this process, one could not avoid interacting and reflecting somehow to this.

**Keywords:** Newsreels; Propaganda; Communist education; Indoctrination.

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**Resumen.** *Este estudio destaca, en primer lugar, la importancia y relevancia de analizar los noticiarios desde el punto de vista de la historia de la educación, que es un punto ciego en la investigación húngara. La ideología oficial leninista influyó profundamente en el género, utilizado como canal de propaganda general, durante y después de la toma del poder comunista, entre 1945 y 1954. La producción y la emisión dependían de los objetivos y giros políticos del Partido Comunista, combinando mensajes sencillos con formas narrativas fácilmente comprensibles, para apoyar campañas, difundir conocimientos previstos, etc. En la actualidad, estas filmaciones están digitalizadas y disponibles en acceso abierto (<https://filmhiradokonline.hu/>). A partir de esta página web, mediante un proceso de recogida y selección de datos en tres fases, se ha elaborado una base de datos con 205 elementos para analizar. Se detectaron tres arquetipos, formas básicas de narración, que denominé metafóricamente Uno de los muchos, Ocupar el espacio y Aprender la sociedad. El desarrollo y la progresión del país después de la Segunda Guerra Mundial siempre se representó en historias de vida individuales y antecedentes personales para acercar estas historias a la audiencia, tratando de hacer más populares a los soviéticos y a los comunistas. Al mismo tiempo, cada vez más espacios fueron ocupados por el nuevo poder, tanto física como simbólicamente, por ejemplo los antiguos castillos se convirtieron en escuelas, lugares de entrenamiento, etc., lo que sancionaba la expropiación el pasado, también. La definición y el alcance de la educación se vieron ampliados en los discursos, porque cada miembro de la sociedad aprendería repetidamente el lenguaje del nuevo establecimiento. La propaganda y la persuasión eran globales en este proceso, no se podía evitar interactuar y reflexionar de alguna manera a esto.*

**Palabras clave:** *Noticiarios; Propaganda; Educación Comunista; Adoctrinamiento.*

## INTRODUCTION: WHY NEWSREELS?

In February 1922, Lunacharsky, the head of Narkompros (People's Commissariat for Education) had a conversation with Lenin, in which Vladimir Ilich stated that the new Soviet film should started with newsreels:

If you have a good newsreel, serious and enlightening pictures, it doesn't really matter if you show some worthless film with them of a more or less usual type to attract the public. A censorship, of course, will be needed (...) As you find your feet, what with proper handling of the business, and receive certain loans to carry on, depending on the general improvement in the country's position, you will have to expand production and particularly make headway

with useful films among the masses in the cities, and still more in the countryside... You must remember always that all of the arts the most important for us is the cinema.<sup>1</sup>

The film industry and production of newsreels developed hand in hand from the 1920s and not just in Soviet-Russia: the educative role of this new genre noticed in Western Europe too, with a possible potential of disseminating scientific knowledge and strengthening international understanding.<sup>2</sup> Despite its widespread influence, newsreels excluded for a long time from the historiography, even from film history, perhaps because of the sensitivity of how to represent and show political issues for a mass audience, and every kind of control over the screening.<sup>3</sup> These aspects seemed problematic for liberal democracies such as the United Kingdom, but emerged as a possibility for authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, like fascist Italy or Nazi Germany, by showing different faces of the system outwards and to the internal public, organizing propaganda activities intentionally, manipulating common beliefs and opinions, characterizing enemies, and so on.<sup>4</sup>

In newsreels, cultural, educational and political dimensions intertwined inherently, forming our memories and identities often in an unreflect way – if we belong to the generation who knows, what is a newsreel. Before total forgetting, it is a crucial task of historians to demonstrate how the complex phenomena of newsreels and moving pictures combined entertainment with ideological indoctrination, mobilizing masses with emotional effects in a context of community experience. These were characteristic features of the Soviet-type system, from its birth, supporting every campaign and turn of the Party: propaganda was a fundamental, constituting part of the state, infiltrated society on every

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 42 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 590–591.

<sup>2</sup> Joyce Goodman, “Concentric Circles and Magnetic Currents: Moral Disarmament at the League of Nations International Institute of Educational Cinematography, 1931–34”, in *Folds of Past, Present and Future: Reconfiguring Contemporary Histories of Education*, eds. Sarah Van Ruyskensvelde, Geert Thyssen, Angelo Van Gorp and Pieter Verstraete (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2021), 81–102.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Pronay, “British Newsreels in the 1930s. 2. Their Policies and Impact”, *History* 57, no. 189 (1972): 63–72.

<sup>4</sup> Roel Vande Winkel, “Nazi Newsreels in Europe, 1939–1945: the many faces of Ufa’s foreign weekly newsreel (*Auslandstonwoche*) versus German’s weekly newsreel (*Deutsche Wochenschau*)”, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 24, no. 1 (2004): 5–34. Federico Caprotti, “Information Management and Fascist Identity: newsreels in fascist Italy”, *Media History* 11, no. 3 (2005): 177–191.

level (personal agitation, meetings in the workplace and home, books, pamphlets, films, seminars, marching, protests, celebrations etc.).<sup>5</sup> Hungary met the communist newsreel (and other activities, related to shared doctrines) only after 1945, but the deep structure of propaganda could be familiar in these countries, comparing to the mental warfare of WW2.

## THE PARALLEL UNIVERSE OF PROPAGANDA

I have four strong statements (or basic presuppositions) related to my topic, at the very beginning of introducing the research:

1. Newsreels created a special knowledge about everyday life in late 40s, early 50s Hungary: this field has been widely unknown until now.
2. These footages had special educational purposes in the communist era, by distributing information, telling narratives, teaching the whole society – scholars from media history, history of education, cultural history and other disciplines may take advantages from the same sources.
3. Producing and broadcasting newsreels depended closely on actual political/Party wills and ideological requirements, which were constantly changed and varied.
4. Newsreels did not reflect on the socio-historical reality of contemporary years, so there is no meaning to contrast the two worlds: propaganda exhibited an imagined environment, a utopia (a bright and new future already forming in everyday living), came true by the ruling proletariat and its Party.

Analysing images and (moving or still) pictures always raise a long-standing philosophical question about reality and representation.<sup>6</sup> In this case, our sources offer typical narratives and a parallel universe to explore, which express precisely what the realized communism

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>6</sup> Paul Warmington, Angelo van Gorp and Ian Grosvenor, "Education in motion: uses of documentary film in educational research", *Paedagogica Historica: International Journal of the History of Education* 47, no. 4 (2011): 458.

should have been like. Double speaking created a special civilization of Stalinism,<sup>7</sup> with official directives and very different life conditions, voluntarist plans and their failures (but failures were always the consequences of the work of enemy and not else), public statements and private whispers: describing and typifying the official communist language is our main goal in this study.

After 1945, one of the biggest challenge of the communist propaganda in the occupied countries (like Hungary) was to present an ideal image through movie screens, namely the New Soviet Man (and Woman).<sup>8</sup> This process was clearly educational, so according to some German scholars we can define communism as educating dictatorship, as these historians did in the context of GDR.<sup>9</sup> We can say this mechanism as a re-education or indoctrination, too; which always confronted and intertwined with private sphere and family socialisation – at least, in the early years of communism. Propaganda and persuasion took a great part in every modern political system;<sup>10</sup> but the communists raised it on a higher level, because they had a (magical) belief, if they control mass media and public, continuously repeated words became true after a while. This enormous effort always reinforced by different narratives of newsreels, with mixing fictional and non-fictional modes differently, like quasi-documentaries; but the rhetorical tone was obvious in various types.<sup>11</sup>

Kovács András Bálint, a Hungarian philosopher, researcher in aesthetics and film historian described this development definitely after the regime changes:

<sup>7</sup> Stephen K. Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Iveta Keštere and Manuel Joaquín Fernández González, “Educating the New Soviet Man: Propagated Image and Hidden Resistance in Soviet Latvia”, *Historia scholastica* 7, no. 1 (2021): 11-32. Iveta Keštere, Irena Stonkuvienė and Zanda Rubenė, “The New Soviet Man With a Female Body: Mother, Teacher, Tractor Driver...”, *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia* 45 (2020): 97-109.

<sup>9</sup> Simone Barck, Christoph Classen and Thomas Heimann, “The Fettered Media: Controlling Public Debate”, in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch (New York – Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 213-239, especially 230.

<sup>10</sup> Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: SAGE, 2015), 389-399.

<sup>11</sup> Josetxo Cerdán and Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, “Newsreels, Documentary, Experimental Film, Shorts, and Animation”, in *A Companion to Spanish Cinema*, eds. Jo Labanyi and Tatjana Pavlović (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 521-542, especially 522.

The Stalinist newsreel is unique, because of its total independence from reality: these schemes constitute a total world on their own and its aesthetic values can perfectly replace the need for any reality. It is not a falsification of reality, but a utopian vision, a “documentary” image about a non-existing world of hope. In this world, everyone is happy and satisfied, nobody suffering; there is a total agreement, only the enemies do not participate in this, but they punished immediately. In this world sport and work is everything, the worker only needs ideological instruction, which gets frequently in big rallies.<sup>12</sup>

These tales/narratives were tools of teaching people (which fits into the framework of the socialist state as a parent of its citizens),<sup>13</sup> and newsreels were channels of transmitting this knowledge. Facts of the news were ideological-political constructions, embedded in easily acceptable stories, which are our second research target: the official communist language for everyday people realized in these.

## SOURCES AND METHODOLOGIES

One may define newsreel as an old form of social media, which linked news with entertainment, provided a community feeling, variety of emotions, participation, and made a tremendous influence on public opinion – a main difference is about individual reception (nowadays) vs. group viewing (then).<sup>14</sup> The format has some similarities too: short, focusing reports, mostly without inter-connections, trying to make a giant impact in seconds. For instance, a “newsfeed” from the 40s and 50s meant 6-10 pieces (each of them with a length from 30 seconds to 2 minutes usually) before the main movie in a newsreel, altogether it lasted 8 to 12 minutes, except big events with only one section. The topics

<sup>12</sup> Kovács András Bálint, “Adalékok az ötvenes évek magyar filmhíradójának ikonográfiájához [Comments on the iconography of Hungarian newsreels in the 50s]”, in *A művészet katonái. Sztálinizmus és kultúra* [Soldiers of the arts. Stalinism and culture], eds. György Péter and Turai Hedvig (Budapest: Corvina, 1992), 91.

<sup>13</sup> Debbie Pinfold, “‘Das Mündel will Vormund sein’: The GDR State as Child”, *German Life and Letters* 64, no. 2 (2011): 283-304.

<sup>14</sup> John Corner, “Foreword”, in *Researching Newsreels: Local, National and Transnational Case Studies*, eds. Ciara Chambers, Mats Jönsson and Roel Vande Winkel (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), VI-VII.

performed a great variety too (like on every media platform in our time), issues of politics, sport, culture and economy, or different scandals followed each other, with sudden changes.

Luckily, more and more archival sources digitalized by governmental bodies, non-profit or for-profit organizations, even moving pictures, and these available databases facilitate historians' work a lot. For example, the Hungarian Film Archives (Nemzeti Filmintézet Magyarország Filmarchívum) has renovated newsreels and made them accessible on the internet since 2009 on, from the collections of NAVA (National Audiovisual Archive of Hungary). On the webpage (<https://filmhiradokonline.hu/>) everyone can search, based on topics, people, or localities, according to the text, said on the records, because they are attached to the videos. The collection and selection of Hungarian newsreels meant a three-step research process:

1. Using the keywords of “school”, “schooling”, “student”, “education”, “teach”, “educate”, “teacher” and “pioneer”, the first version of a dataset was ready.
2. In the second stage, I made a data cleaning, purging the videos, which use these keywords only metaphorically, but not focusing on education, teaching and so on.
3. At the final phase, I linked a series of descriptors to the remaining videos: date, title, position in the newsreel, the number of newsreel, creator(s), length of the concrete video and the complete broadcast, narrative elements and figures.

Analysing a newsreel meant here describing narratives of videos separately, because we have not found an inner logic in the sequences (different videos, which constitutes a newsreel), so every film is individual, no stories or connections emerged from 6-10 items, appeared as one footage before movies. Narration and narrative is an essential part of every newsreel, in my research I focus on this, following a broad theoretical framework of historical discourse-analysis by Landwehr.<sup>15</sup> In his summary, the German historian started with fixing a thematic context, in which the discursive nature of socio-historical reality recognized

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<sup>15</sup> Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008).

through specific characteristics – in our case, moving pictures as a channel of communist messages and propaganda provides this background. The next stage in this procedure, is defining a research corpus (educational newsreels) and its development (nationalization of film industry and the political dimension, see the next chapter in a nutshell). The main part is highlighting continuously repeated and functional statements/sentences: discourses and statements mutually influenced and constituted to each other. Accents, silences and absences created together this structure, a social construction of reality, as an influential book-title suggests us too.<sup>16</sup> In this concrete analysis, this procedure was to look newsreels through several times and detecting new heroes, activities, signs of the Soviet influence in a table. I have to keep the insert texts (which are available in written form) and moving images together, to reflect verbal and visual dimension to each other, repeatedly.

Very simple narratives emerged after this work: messages of communist propaganda introduced a black and white logic of dichotomy (friends and enemies, progression vs. reaction);<sup>17</sup> and the narrative structures were in accordance with this. Uncomplicated storytelling, emplotment typified the newsreels between 1945 and 1954: in Hayden White's definition,<sup>18</sup> they are mostly romances, celebrating heroes and the triumph of good (namely the Soviet power) over evil (previous regimes before communist takeover and the outside capitalist world). The footages display three narrative archetypes here; the metaphoric language tries to speak their essence:

One from the many – a face and life-story rise up from the mass, giving a concrete name and face to the progression. This narrative structured 20 newsreels as a main motive, characterised by the years between 1950 and 1954 (before that period this type was unknown).

<sup>16</sup> Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Penguin Books, 1966).

<sup>17</sup> Reaction used as an umbrella term in these years: it might be a metaphor of former bourgeoisie, the so-called fascists, or the Western capitalists. Using always depended on the actual political intention of the Communist Party.

<sup>18</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 8-9.

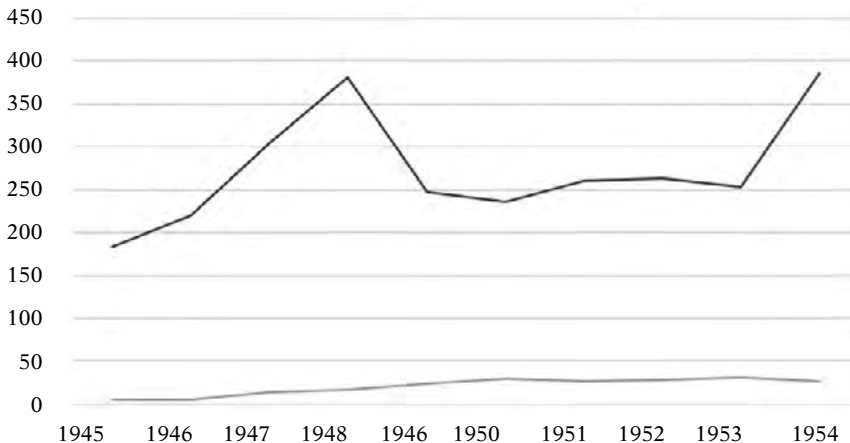


Occupying space – the new world and its representatives took the place of old structures in 27 footages, appeared year by year, from 1947 to 1954, distributed in balance.

Learning society – everyone could learn from the Soviet Union (adults, youngsters and children), the definition of learning was re-defined and extended related to 16 newsreels, only disseminated after the nationalisation of schools (1948).

All of three based on the controversy of demolishing the past and a quasi-religious creation of a bright, new future immediately: sacralisation of politics set the messianic goal of making a new socialist (or communist, the phrases depended on the adequate situation) type of man for the whole society.<sup>19</sup> That is why; education became so important in the existing communist systems: everyone would constantly learn and re-learn what already knew to get the right worldview and perspective (an impossible mission to achieve). Education, propaganda, transmitting the political goals to the lower levels, organizing society had the same goal in this aspect: follow the doctrine of Party, with every change. Data of the newsreels (changing numbers) gives a good illustration to political dependence of the genre.

**Figure 1. The ratio of educational newsreel-footages amongst total newsreel-footages. Hungary, 1945-1954**



<sup>19</sup> Emilio Gentile, "Die Sakralisierung der Politik – Einige Definitionen, Interpretationen und Reflexionen", in *Wege in die Gewalt – Die modernen politischen Religionen*, ed. Hans Maier (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2000), 166-182.

I choose a period of 10 years after 1945, to see the development of communist political indoctrination through newsreels in the Stalinist years and the beginning of a post-Stalin Era after March 1953. April 4, 1945 was the official date (Day of Liberation in the communist terminology), when the Soviet soldiers ousted the last Nazi soldiers from Hungary,<sup>20</sup> and the country preserved a formal sovereignty after this, with a growing Soviet influence, called euphemistically a helping hand from a friend in the great work of reconstruction. The communists took over the political control gradually, 1948 was “the year of turn”, when the Party built up its monopolistic ruling system totally: we can see a first peak in the numbers of newsreels in 1948 (see Figure 1), showing the overall propaganda dominance, supporting the new direction. Before and after the regime change, newsreel-production reached a lower level (somewhere between 200 and 300 newsreels/year vs. 381 newsreels year), the next culmination point was in 1954 (385 pieces of news), but further researches needed to see, if it was a beginning of a tendency or just another exclusive maximum of broadcasting (see the numbers: Table 1).

**Table 1. The number of total newsreel-footages and educational newsreel-footages. Hungary, 1945-1954**

Year	Total	Educational
1945	183	5
1946	220	5
1947	304	14
1948	381	17
1949	248	23
1950	236	29
1951	260	26
1952	263	28
1953	253	31
1954	385	27

<sup>20</sup> Liberation Day meant officially, that the Soviet Union and the Red Army gave real liberty to the Hungarian nation, by destroying the former fascist/Nazi establishment – this national Remembrance Day became one basic point of the new communist regime, meanwhile many Hungarians felt this development on contrary, as occupation and losing independence.

Altogether 205 footages has real educational content through 10 years, but the beginning year was not an entire one, because after a 5 months' break, newsreels re-started in June 1945. The total number of production was 2733 footages between June 1945 and 1954, an average year 52 newsreels came out (each week a new one), so a typical newsreel contained about 4-7 different footages. The distribution of short films and newsreels showed a great variety in real: a great event (like national election or Liberation Day) meant only one footage and created a 10-12 minutes single newsreel, and there were 10-12 pieces broadcasts too, with very tiny stories. 7,5 percentage of the total production was educational: from these, 197 motion pictures only focused the issues of schools and schooling, 8 films included students and teachers just as part of state celebrations, with many other actors. In a centralised and nationalised film industry every issues organised precisely: we do not know the proportion of different fields of news (like international and internal affairs, sports, culture or economy), but there is a likely assumption, that there were detailed plans about which topics to (re)present and the certain emphasis.

## THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Production and reception of newsreels closely related to the political power, the initial years (1945-1948) were key to the total success of the Hungarian Communist Party to achieve total control over the industry. From the 1930s, the Hungarian Newsreel Company (Magyar Filmhíradó Rt.) played a monopolistic rule in this field and it was obligatory to screen these footages before the movie, so the great overcome of newsreels lasted for decades, regardless to the political regimes and changing elites. Until 1948, different parties existed in Hungary, in this period; the production of short news was under a control of a coalition legally, by different party representatives. The communist hegemony was clear even then,<sup>21</sup> because the MAFIRT Krónika (MAFIRT Chronicle, the name of newsreel from June 1945 to March 1948) was manufactured by the Hungarian Filmmaker Company (Magyar Filmgyártó Rt, MAFIRT),

<sup>21</sup> Bene Márton and Sükösd Miklós, "A többiek is próbáltak híradót csinálni, de nem tudtak'. Filmhíradók a koalíciós korszak médiamezőjében Magyarországon, 1945-1948 'The others tried to produce news, but they could not'". Newsreels in the coalition period media, Hungary, 1945-1948]», *Politikatudományi Szemle* 29, no. 3 (2020): 75-104.

a subsidiary of the Communist Party.<sup>22</sup> After the 1948 turn into a one-party dictatorship, the name of this weekly format changed (New Hungarian Newsreel, Új Magyar Filmhíradó) and again in 1949 (Hungarian Newsreel, Magyar Filmhíradó): these different titles didn't mean anything, the communist rule was thorough and explicit from 1947-1948.

During the second half of communist takeover (1947-1948),<sup>23</sup> more and more tasks were allocated to propaganda. Gyula Ortutay on February 14, 1947, commented the budget of the Information Ministry (Tájékoztatási Minisztérium) in the Hungarian Parliament, articulated the roles of newsreels, as follows:

I want to highlight here, that the Information Ministry has find connections to the Hungarian film-industry in propagating results and tasks of the Hungarian's democracy. I declare, that one of the most effective tool to introduce our daily development is the radio and the well-organized newsreel service – our next mission is to create films, educating for democracy...<sup>24</sup>

Ortutay was formally a member of the Small Farmers' Party (Kisgazdapárt), but a quasi-communist, held different positions, as the head of the Central Hungarian News (1945-1947), mostly responsible for radio broadcasts and news service, and the educational minister between 1947 and 1950. From his quotation, we can see the handle of newsreels as tools in propaganda, the need of state control and the intentions of the new Hungarian democracy. The last aspect was a perfect example to the communist double speaking, because democracy meant here people's democracy, in its true form (if we follow the official terminology), the power of ruling classes, workers, farmers and the allied intellectuals.

<sup>22</sup> The main goal of MAFIRT was to propagate Soviet films and fight against popular cinemas from Hollywood, see: Takács Róbert, "Tehenészgiccs a kultúra bölcsőjébe. Amerika-kép Hollywoodon innen és túl 1945 és 1948 között a koalíciós pártok napilapjainak tükrében [Trash and kitsch in the cradle of culture. Images of America through the lenses of Hollywood, on the pages of daily coalition newspapers, 1945-1948]", *Médiakutató* 15, no. 3 (2014): 65-78.

<sup>23</sup> There has been many debates in the Hungarian historiography about the process of Sovietization the country, but a consensus exists, that the years 1947-1948-1949 are fundamental in the communist turn/takeover and the before period (1945-1946) is a preparation time to that.

<sup>24</sup> Nemzetgyűlési napló [Diary of the National Assembly], 1945, Vol. 5. A nemzetgyűlés 96. ülése 1947. február hó 14-én, pénteken [96<sup>th</sup> session of the National Assembly, on 14 February, 1947, Friday], 567. Until 1947, the Hungarian Parliament called National Assembly.

Newsreels accomplished orders for different governmental bodies, to depict the reconstruction work after the war and the transformation of everyday life.<sup>25</sup> These footages circulated amongst block countries, based on exchanging contracts;<sup>26</sup> many Soviet and Polish news appeared in this way, in the Hungarian cinema theatres. The communist Party officials used motion pictures for different purposes: helping just started campaigns, promoting events, advertising good work, agitating Party education, and so on.<sup>27</sup> Newsreels usually counted as one element of the overall mobilization, with press, radio, cultural institutions, and mass organizations – one from the many form of intended political indoctrination.

However, this period cannot handle as one single unit, because there were major political turnouts in-between, signed as sub-periods: from 1945 to 1948 the increasing dominance of the Communist Party might observed; after the total takeover, the real Stalinist years followed (1948–1953);

<sup>25</sup> The first example is about re-building of the University of Technology in Budapest; the second told the new cultural life of rural areas, see: Újjáépítési Bizottság jegyzőkönyvei [Minutes of Re-building Committee], 1947. január 7., József Nádor Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi egyetem [7 January, 1947, József Nádor University of Technology and Economics], Budapesti Műszaki és Gazdaságtudományi Egyetem Levéltára, (BMEL) 4a, 4b [Budapest University of Technologies and Economics Archives]. Filmhíradó a traktorállomások kultúréletéről [The cultural life of tractor-stations - news-reel], 1949. február 12., MTI Belföldi hírek [12 February, 1949, Hungarian News Agency, Daily Bulletin, Internal Issues]

<sup>26</sup> See for example: “We mutually support producing and screening films (...) especially documentaries, newsreels, popular science films and more, in the other contracting country...” Törvényjavaslat a kulturális együttműködés tárgyában Budapesten 1947. október 29. napján aláírt magyar-bolgár egyezmény becikkelyezéséről [Ratification of law proposal about cultural cooperation between Hungary and Bulgaria, Budapest, 29 October, 1947], Országgyűlési irományok, 1947. I. kötet [Documents of the Parliament, 1947. Vol. 1.], 264.

<sup>27</sup> Javaslat a tervnapló kiosztásával kapcsolatban elvégzendő politikai és szervezeti tennivalókra [Proposal about political and organizational issues in distributing plan-diaries], 1949. július 12, Magyar Dolgozók Pártja (from here: MDP, Hungarian Workers Party) Budapesti Titkárságának ülése [12 July, 1949, Session of the Budapest Secretary of the Hungarian Workers’ Party], Budapest Főváros Levéltára [from here: BFL, Budapest Archive], XXXV.95.a, 199.

Javaslat a II. Országos Békekongresszus előkészítésére [Proposal for preparing the 2nd National Peace Congress], 1950. október 18, MDP Budapesti Pártbizottságának ülése [18 October, 1950, Session of the Budapest Party Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party], BFL, XXXV.95.a, 169.

Jelentés az 1950/51. oktatási év tapasztalatairól és javaslat az 1951/52. oktatási év munkájára [Report about the experiences of the academic year 1950/51. and proposal for the academic year 1951/52.], 1951. június 4. MDP Budapesti Pártválasztmányának ülése [4 June, 1951, Session of Budapest Caucus of the Hungarian Workers’ Party], BFL, XXXV.95.a, 101.

Jelentés az Agit. Prop. Osztály munkájáról és káderhelyzetéről [Report about the work and labour situation of the Agitational and Propaganda Department], 1954. július 27, MDP Budapesti Végrehajtó Bizottságának ülése [27 July, 1954, Session of the Budapest Executive Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party], BFL, XXXV.95.a, 176.

and the closing era is a short reform-communist interlude (1953–1954). A big challenge and future task to analyse newsreels from this point of view, at this time, I can make a possible hypothesis, that extending the influence of the ideology (occupying space) was a constant feature, but its expression varied (learning society and exemplary representatives of mobilized proletariat).

## ONE FROM THE MANY

The title refers to the first archetype of newsreel-narrations, which attempted to get the world of moving pictures closer to the audience, by personalisation, giving name, face, family background and a whole story in a mostly anonymous report. These everyday people and their introduction differs from politicians, well-known celebrities of those years, suggesting a “one of us”, familiar feeling, and these life-stories proved the success of the new system. Class-origin was the key aspect in these descriptions, which determinates the whole career (schooling, workplace, etc.) in the communism: in positive ways, if you have an appropriate background (worker or farmer), or negatively, in the case of non-preferred categories, like class alien people (e.g. former members of the gendarmerie, previous leaders).<sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, this element highlighted many times in newsreels, mostly staging the winners and beneficiaries of the new establishment. I choose two examples; the following quotations are from insert-texts of several footages, adding them cut images and interpretations:

### Example 1

Good learning is the real working competition amongst students. The teacher of Katona József Elementary School in Csepel warns her pupils, and the children of elite workers understand all at once, what to do (...) The pioneer guard of little Irén Bayer decide at a meeting to study together the lesson – working together is always better! Learning outcomes will summarize by

<sup>28</sup> According to Sheila Fitzpatrick, these categories ascribe social identities in Soviet Union, and the same process went through in Sovietized countries too. To the original practice, see: Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia”, *The Journal of Modern History* 65, no. 4 (1993): 745-770.

squads. Every child wants to win the best school award, the Rákosi-flag.<sup>29</sup>



Image 1. Little Irén Bayer explains to her pioneer guard, what to do.

This verbal and visual content is typical, related to the whole corpus: working campaigns are equal with learning in schools (both physically and symbolically), political goals easily translated into every sphere of living. The leaders pointed out the main directives; ruling classes (e.g. the children of stahanovists) follow them and spread the message through meetings, to less conscious people. The world of children imitates adult activities, Irén Bayer, a daughter of stahanovists, acts like a leading worker on the first image (standing back, in the central, focus point of the circle) – her family background provides naturally the

<sup>29</sup> Úttörök tanulási versenye [Learning competition of pioneers], 1949. április, Magyar Filmhíradó 15 [April, 1949, Hungarian Newsreel 15], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=9888> (accessed on 21 November, 2021)

required characteristic to achieve more and more high levels.<sup>30</sup> These students are in pioneer uniforms, represented unity in organized actions, in this current situation, good learning, which is the will of the communist leader Mátyás Rákosi. The learning process is very similar as a working campaign in factory: competition between squads, summaries, and planned numbers appear in schools as well. One of the many means here, that the collective and the person, people and their leaders are very closely tied; there is a real and close connection between Irén Bayer and Mátyás Rákosi (like a father and daughter), represented in a flag, the award of winners.

## Example 2

In the summer, thousands of pioneers enjoy the most beautiful resorts in the country. Mecsek, Bakony, Lake Balaton are theirs. The father of András Szabó was a poor farmer, without any plow-land, now he is a tractorist. András prepares to be a doctor. He was sent to the pioneer camp of Balatonzamárdi as a reward for his excellent academic results. The pioneers love the beauties of our homeland.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The special approach of Stalinist “genetics” is well known: “According to that doctrine, human consciousness is nonbiological, and is entirely determined by social conditions”. So, the individual personality directly refers to determining socio-economic status (expressed in social categories), see: Raissa L. Berg, *On the History of Genetics in the Soviet Union: Science and Politics. The Insight of a Witness* (Washington: National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1983), 85.

<sup>31</sup> Az MNDSZ gyermekvédelmi konferenciája Budapesten [Childcare conference of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women in Budapest], 1951. július, Magyar Filmhíradó 28 [July 1951, Hungarian Newsreel 28], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10870> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).





Image 2. András Szabó is saluting.

Even now, an idealistic assumption exists about the modernizing communist state, whose legitimation based on the higher living standards of workers, farmers (the proletariat), and welfare projects (like a pioneer camp).<sup>32</sup> The numbers from economy, everyday conditions disproved this thesis in many ways, but the official narrative from the 1950 has stated the same. Children and parents living better than in the inter-war period (poor farmer vs. tractorist, farmer's son became a doctor), in a form of a classic narration, when confronting different times and values. The pre-Soviet, pre-liberation period (before 1945) was a "fascist" oppression, characterized by weakness and struggle; progression and development are the keywords of the new, communist Era. Using national, patriotic topics and arguments had been usual in establishing and strengthen the people's democracy in late 40s, early 50s, which contradicts a widespread common idea about the international character of

<sup>32</sup> Paul Hollander, "Reflections on Communism. Twenty Years after the Fall of Berlin Wall", *Center for Global Liberty & Prosperity: Development Policy Analysis* 11 (2009): 1-25.

communism. Slogans, like “loving our beautiful homeland” and the symbols related to this heritage (like mountains of Mecsek, Bakony and Lake Balaton) took hand in hand with frequent appearances of the Big Brother Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> If we follow the insert text, from a broad perspective (our motherland) through one concrete illustration (the son of this land, András Szabó) we return to a general view (pioneers and their feelings).

## OCCUPYING SPACE

This is how the new world occupied Hungary, firstly by the Red Army, afterwards by Sovietisation of the country. Space is a key issue here: communist protests, masses, statues, new language and new street-names invaded public sites and streets, as community and private life combined in various ways, concluded in an extended version of political field.<sup>34</sup> It means that in a totalizing environment, an informal discussion, an ordinary family or workplace problem (actually everything) necessarily became a political issue<sup>35</sup> – many cases will show this aspect.

The editors of newsreels usually described the changes of possession, and the explicit communist control in a form of sharp contrast between the less valued past and a bright present (future) with full of hopes and promises. After WW2, rapid reconstruction was essential to restart the country: a typical symbol was the process of reopening educational institutions, like Ságvári Endre Student Hostel of Apprentices in May

<sup>33</sup> Stefano Bottoni, “Sovietization and Nationalism in Hungary”, *The Historical Journal* 52, no. 3 (2009): 789-797. We can mention here another good example, the Great Patriotic War between 1941 and 1945, and the mobilization force of traditional values – Stalin consciously utilized some deeply rooted feelings.

<sup>34</sup> For the spatial turn, see: Charles J. W. Withers, “Place and the ‘Spatial Turn’ in Geography and in History”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70, no. 4 (2009): 637-658. Another case studies: Bob Dent, *Painting the Town Red. Politics and the Arts During the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic*. (London: Pluto Press, 2018). David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, “Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc”, in *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, eds. David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (Oxford-New York: Bloomsbury, 2002), 1-22. Pótó János, *Az emlékeztetés helyei. Emlékművek és politika* [Sites of Remembrance. Statues and Politics]. (Budapest: Osiris, 2003). Graeme Gill, “Changing Symbols: The Renovation of Moscow Place Names”, *The Russian Review* 64 (July 2005): 480-503.

<sup>35</sup> Mark S. Johnson, “From delinquency to counterrevolution. Subcultures of Soviet youth and the emergence of Stalinist pedagogy in the 1930s”, *Paedagogica Historica*, 32, sup.1 (1996): 283-303.

1947.<sup>36</sup> The name of the institute (Ságvári) was a calling slogan, a flag of the growing communist movement in that time, as a symbol of antifascism, the most important legitimation power of the Party.<sup>37</sup> According to the narrator of the newsreel, the Soviet Red Army donated the building to establish, which was a misleading information because the Soviets only returned, what had been before Hungarian, but confiscated as war-time reparations (this aspect was hidden in the 1947 news, but it was well known for the audience). The official message ended in a moral statement: “From the former German imperial school, which spread fascist poison amongst the youth, has now become a model home for democratically educated working youth, ready for reconstructing the country”.

Nazi destroying vs. “democratic” building work was a topos, occurred in different forms: for instance, the new school for police officers in Kistarcsa functioned as a prison in the interwar Horthy Era, “where the patriots locked down, who fought for independence and liberty”.<sup>38</sup> Kistarcsa is an emblematic site in the Hungarian historical memory, because this place had been an internment/concentration camp before, during the World War, and in the brave new communist world too, proofing the deep similarities of different political systems.<sup>39</sup> Again, this aspect (the camp still existed and “worked” after 1945) covered an overall silence in late 40s, early 50s.

Nationalizing schools in 1948 meant a substantial occupation event in the post-war situation, when most of the religious/denominational

<sup>36</sup> A Ságvári Endre Tanoncotthon átadása [Opening ceremony of the Ságvári Endre Student Hostel of Apprentices], 1947. május, MAFIRT Krónika 69 [May 1947, MAFIRT Chronicle 69], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6416> I will introduce the narration from this news (accessed on 21 November 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Endre Ságvári was an illegal communist, actively organized and youth movement, died at the age of 30, in a shooting with gendarmes in 1944. After the war, the Communist Party created a cult around his person, but nowadays he is more like a forgotten historical actor, which is a clear sign how the social remembrance is working.

<sup>38</sup> Rajk Lászlóról kapta nevét a kistarcsai rendőriskola [The school for police officers in Kistarcsa named after Rajk László], 1947. augusztus, MAFIRT Krónika 83 [August 1947, MAFIRT Chronicle 83], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6492> (accessed on 21 November, 2021). László Rajk was a living person in 1947, the communist interior minister, just two years lasted after this ceremony, and he was executed, based on a false accusation of Titoism and espionage.

<sup>39</sup> Ruzsa Bence and Szabó Zoltán András, *Egy évszázad Kistarcsán* [A Century in Kistarcsa]. (Kistarcsa: Kistarcsai Kulturális Egyesület, 2020).

institutions took under state control.<sup>40</sup> Gyula Ortutay, the minister of religion and public education announced this in a press conference as an act of defending families from the clerical terror. During his speech, the anonymous news-editor(s) cut short scenes about ruined old schools, following new modern buildings, suggesting the quick repair work (made by communists) and the deep controversy between the school of reaction and the modern, democratic system.<sup>41</sup> Occupying and changing spaces was an expropriation of the past at the same time, making an own history, with great figures, meanwhile denying others.<sup>42</sup> An impressive illustration of the process, when Professor Grekov, a Soviet historian inaugurated as an honorary doctor at the Pázmány Péter University in Budapest. The first piece of the newsreel shows the statue of archbishop (Pázmány, founder of the original institution in the seventeenth century), then a sudden change and new professors in the old building, a friendly handshake of Hungarian and Soviet scholars.<sup>43</sup>

The former castles were one of the main targets of the communist power: these architectures usually underwent a radical transformation, got new functions and inhabitants. The Esterházy castle became a school and place of biological experiments,<sup>44</sup> the castle of Békés-Tarhos got respect from the 1950s, because of the applied Kodály-method and its

<sup>40</sup> Some denominational schools remained: in the 1963-1964 academic year, there were 10 religious secondary schools in Hungary, 8 Roman Catholic, 1 Protestant and 1 Jewish, see: Randolph L. Braham, *Education in the Hungarian People's Republic* (Washington: US Government, 1970): 77.

<sup>41</sup> Az iskolák államosítása [Nationalizing schools], 1948. május, UMFÍ Magyar Filmhíradó 11 [May 1948, New Hungarian Newsreel 11], <https://filmhivadokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6744> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Vörös Boldizsár, "Különböző politikai hatalmak – ugyanabban a fővárosban. Szimbolikus térfoglalási akciók Budapesten 1918–1919-ben" [Same Capital – Different Power. Symbolic Occupation Activities in Budapest, 1918-1919], in *Tömegek és ünnepek* [Masses and Celebrations], eds. Csúri Károly, Orosz Magdolna and Szendi Zoltán (Budapest: Gondolat, 2009), 15-31. The first Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 was a historical antecedent of the establishing Hungarian communist power after 1945, in a very ambivalent context.

<sup>43</sup> Grekov professzor díszdoktorrá avatása a Pázmány Péter Egyetemen [Professor Grekov inaugurated as an honorary doctor at the Pázmány Péter University], 1948. november, UMFÍ Magyar Filmhíradó 37 [November 1948, New Hungarian Newsreel 38], <https://filmhivadokonline.hu/watch.php?id=6955> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>44</sup> Filmoperatőr Eszterházán [A Cameraman in Eszterháza], 1949. január, UMFÍ Magyar Filmhíradó 45 [January 1949, New Hungarian Newsreel 45], <https://filmhivadokonline.hu/watch.php?id=7014> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

famous music school and choir.<sup>45</sup> An aristocratic hotel (Belvedere) changed into a hostel of talented students from the working and poor agrarian classes,<sup>46</sup> another castles in Balatonederics or Parád, functioned as pioneer camps from 1950;<sup>47</sup> during the collectivization years, these buildings might serve as training sites of tractorist women or directors of collective farms.<sup>48</sup> Castles were visible focus points and centres of a town, village or city, from a dominant position they ruled its surroundings: occupying them was equal to control the space and fill them with socially useful meanings (schools, camps, scientific and training places).<sup>49</sup>

Old places changed completely and new sites created afterwards: the Csillebérc Pioneer Camp was an iconic piece, a *lieu de mémoire*<sup>50</sup> of the

<sup>45</sup> Békés-Tarhos Állami Zeneiskolájában [In the State Music School of Békés-Tarhos], 1953. október, Magyar Filmhíradó 42 [October 1953, Hungarian Newsreel 42], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=11361> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

The footage shows here Lajos Monoki, son of a poor farmer and this student played Händel – a seemingly impossible and surrealistic scene from a really hard year in Hungary.

<sup>46</sup> Élet a Budai Kádár Kata Népi Kollégiumban [Life in Kádár Kata People's Hostel in Buda], 1949. május, Magyar Filmhíradó 23 [May 1949, Hungarian Newsreel 23], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=9918> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>47</sup> DISZ-táborok a Balatonnál [Camps of the League of Working Youth at Balaton], 1950. augusztus, Magyar Filmhíradó 31 [August 1950, Hungarian Newsreel 31], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10376> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

A SZOT Parádi Úttörő Mintatáborában [The Model Pioneer Camp of the Hungarian Trade Unions' Council in Parád], 1951. augusztus, Magyar Filmhíradó 31 [August 1951, Hungarian Newsreel 31], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10887> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

Úttörők élete a parádi úttörőtáborban [Life of the pioneers in the pioneer camp of Parád], 1952. május, Magyar Filmhíradó 18 [May 1952, Hungarian Newsreel 18], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10887> (accessed on 21 November, 2021). “The former hunting lodge of count Károlyi is now a pioneer resort”.

<sup>48</sup> Traktorista lányok Vas megyében [Tractorist girls in Vas County], 1952. január, Magyar Filmhíradó 4 [January 1952, Hungarian Newsreel 4], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=11011> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

TSZ-elnökök szakmai képzése Gödöllőn [Professional training of the directors of cooperative farms in Gödöllő], 1952. február, Magyar Filmhíradó 7 [February 1952, Hungarian Newsreel 7], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=11032> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

It is important to notice here, that Gödöllő was a representative place of the Hungarian king from the second half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>49</sup> According to the official view of the propaganda, the original owners (princes and counts, families of Esterházy, Wenckheim or Károlyi) were pointless people, managed their properties just for their benefit, without any responsibility for the local communities. The communist power shared these opportunities with the whole society.

<sup>50</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations*, no. 26 (1989): 7-24.

Hungarian recent past, which followed the model of the famous Artek Young Pioneer Camp on the Black Sea.



Image 3. Opening ceremony of the Csillebérc Pioneer Camp.

Csillebérc wanted to be a realized utopia, an ideal form of Children's Republic, a separate world in the mountains, with a simulation of self-government, a Pioneer Railway, an international site. The story, construction work started in 1948, the 100th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution – again, an illustration, how to expropriate the past, as the new generation continued the work of the original revolutionists of 1848. Youth brigades, Army, and Police built the camp, in a campaign, the final opening ceremony was 5 years later (July 1953).<sup>51</sup> The Hungarian

<sup>51</sup> A Csillebérci Úttörőtábor megnyitása [Opening the Csillebérc Pioneer Camp], 1953. július, Magyar Filmhíradó 29 [July 1953, Hungarian Newsreel 29], <https://filmhíradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=11288> (accessed on 21 November, 2021). For the previous details about the Csillebérc camp, see: Somogyvári Lajos, "Az úttörőmozgalom ikonikus helyei. Sajtófotók felhasználhatósága a múlt feltárásában" [The Iconic Places of Pioneer Movement. How to use press photos in the exploration of the past], *Történelemtanítás* [Teaching History] 6, no. 1-2 (2015). <http://www.folyoirat.tortenelemtanitas.hu/2015/07/somogyvari-lajos-az-uttoromozgalom-ikonikus-helyei-06-01-08/> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

Army launched the show, by raising a flag (Image 3); the militarized environment of education and the youth movement was a normal characteristic in this period (e. g. the activities of pioneers based and reproduced of army units). Composition in the background is conventional, a motto and images about leaders, the title expressed in the name of the children: “We thank you to the Party our happy and joyful childhood!”. The faces of Lenin, Rákosi and Stalin covered the slogan (the Hungarian communist leader is in the centre): it was a familiar tryptichon in these years, a visual sign of every official ritual.<sup>52</sup> Adults has been imitating and representing children’s perspective frequently in history, but sometimes they have to return to learning situations as well.

## LEARNING SOCIETY

In the communism, every member of the society had the obligation to learn. Learn from the Party, learn from the ideology, and learn from the Big Soviet Union – repeatedly, as Lenin published originally in a Pravda article in 1923:

In order to renovate our state apparatus we must at all costs set out, first, to learn, secondly, to learn, and thirdly, to learn, and then see to it that learning shall not remain a dead letter, or a fashionable catch-phrase (and we should admit in all frankness that this happens very often with us), that learning shall really become part of our very being, that it shall actually and fully become a constituent element of our social life.<sup>53</sup>

The terms of learning, teaching and studying re-defined and re-phrased in the communist terminology, using the synonyms and associations of hard working, fighting for peace and against our enemies, fronts between progression and reaction. Adding a military language to the education made the participants (children and adults) a part of an international clash between the capitalist and communist world. Only

<sup>52</sup> The three leaders together may evoke us to the Holy Trinity, because of their cult, associated rituals and so on, to the Lenin Cult and political religion, see: Somogyvári Lajos, “Lenin as a Child. Visual Propaganda and Pedagogy”, *Acta Paedagogica Vilnensia* 42 (2019): 29-42.

<sup>53</sup> V. I. Lenin, “Better Fewer, but Better”, in *Lenin Collected Works, Vol. 33. August 1921 – March 1923* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), 487-502, the quotation is from 487-488.

the winners of the new system appeared in this context (the preferred social categories), because bourgeoisie, traditional elites was excluded from the secondary and higher education, to break their previous cultural monopoly and privileged positions; and this was another field of the battle. Some of the “catch-phrases”, leading slogans, which express this everyday fight, were visualised or verbalised explicitly in newsreels (Lenin might have criticized these, too):

“Increasing our theoretical knowledge strengthens the front of production”

“The Marxist-Leninist knowledge increases the production”<sup>54</sup>

“Great Stalin, the teacher of Komsomol, and Soviet youth”

“Work, fight, learn, teach!”<sup>55</sup>

“Hooray for Mátyás Rákosi, the biggest friend of airplanes!”<sup>56</sup>

“With learning for surplus-production!”<sup>57</sup>

These short sentences has some interesting similarities: Stalin, Lenin or Rákosi is always a friend, father or teacher, a close and available person to everyone. The imperative phrasing articulate the historical necessity of development and real connections between agriculture, industry and learning. Education and economy had their own plans; more and more people had to be involved in these to achieve the goals, which changed day by day.

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<sup>54</sup> Both are from here: Pártiskolát végzett munkások [Workers qualifying at the Party school], 1949. december, Magyar Filmhíradó 49 [December 1949, Hungarian Newsreel 49], <https://filmhira-dokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10081> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>55</sup> Both are from here: A DISZ alakuló kongresszusa [The 1<sup>st</sup> Congress of the League of Working Youth], 1950. június, Magyar Filmhíradó 25 [June 1950, Hungarian Newsreel 25], <https://filmhira-dokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10348> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>56</sup> A Magyar Repülő Szövetség országos kongresszusa [National congress of the Hungarian Aeronautical Association], 1951. február, Magyar Filmhíradó 7 [February 1951, Hungarian Newsreel 7], <https://filmhira-dokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10763> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

<sup>57</sup> Mezőgazdasági esti iskola Palotás községben [Agricultural school for adults in the village of Palotás], 1953. március, Magyar Filmhíradó 13 [March 1953, Hungarian Newsreel 13], <https://filmhira-dokonline.hu/watch.php?id=11213> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).





Image 4. Learning adults in an agricultural school.<sup>58</sup>

Continuous campaigns to eliminate illiteracy and spread an official knowledge might prove the ambivalent modernisation project of communism, with negative (Soviet imperialist push) and positive factors (extension of schooling), too.<sup>59</sup> On Image 4, traditional roles exchanged, instead children, adult parents sit in school desks and learn. It is not an ordinary time of day to this: we are in the evening, after work; it could be hard to concentrate, as the faces showed so. A lyrical and artistic narration framed the pictures: “The last rays of sunset gild the houses, in the village of Palotás, Nógrád County. However, twilight does not mean the end of workday here. Farmers from cooperative farms and individually working peasants gathered in the school to learn new agricultural methods in the course”.

<sup>58</sup> Mezőgazdasági esti iskola...

<sup>59</sup> I. V. Gluschenko, “The Soviet Educational Project: The Eradication of Adult Illiteracy in the 1920s – 1930s”, *Russian Education & Society* 57, no. 11 (2015): 911-953. Monica Mincu, “Communist education as modernisation strategy? The swings of the globalisation pendulum in Eastern Europe (1947-1989)”, *History of Education* 45, no. 3 (2016): 319-334.

Text and image differs from each other: what we see is hard (and perhaps not voluntary) working, what we hear is a sound of satisfaction. As a conclusion of a sudden change, in the second part of the newsreel the speaker talk about production percentages, procedures of cultivating the land, commitments to exceed numbers. Without any problem, this thinking could shift from one sphere to another immediately, from public to private sphere.



Image 5. An insight look into the life of Hajdu family.<sup>60</sup>

Visitation at a family is traditional genre in the corpus: we always see everyday people and not celebrities, politicians, etc., referring that the introduced elements are universal. István Hajdu, the man in the foreground was a stahanovist; studied in a one-year school, to make the next step in his career. The children are playing on this scene, meanwhile their father is learning (first exchange of the roles), and the main character

<sup>60</sup> Bepillantás a Hajdu család életébe [An insight look into the life of Hajdu family], 1951. November; Magyar Filmhíradó 48 [November 1951, Hungarian Newsreel 48], <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=10970> (accessed on 21 November, 2021).

in this newsreel is not him, but the wife, Istvánné Hajdu (second turn), who did have not a typical women job, as a crane-operator in Ganz Ship Manufacture. An article published next month, in which the same story told, like here in the footages; about the loving care of the state, great work, children and a new two-room flat.<sup>61</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Propaganda was overall, infiltrating every level and sphere of living, from which one could not hide away. These messages incorporated and transformed traditional elements adding them new meanings and functions. Every channel needed in the political indoctrination, and a newsreel can give us a multimodal experience, with acoustic and visual elements, a good way to “a sensory history of schooling”.<sup>62</sup> There are multiple possibilities to continue, one is to reveal changes in newsreel production and distribution: for example in 1954, these footages de-politicized, Soviet references disappeared, might cause by a sudden change in the political power, namely the reform-communists and Imre Nagy takeover. The difference is explicit and proves the close connection between propaganda and power, because next year (1955), Mátyás Rákosi, the orthodox communist direction and old style newsreels returned.

Topics, patterns and narratives show continuities and discontinuities, a longitudinal study can give a detailed and broader perspective. To achieve the big picture, we should take into consideration the activities of other satellite countries, and not just this: common elements of propaganda-work of authoritarian regimes may help to understand the various social reactions from collaboration to resistance, different contexts and meanings. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger criticized the genre universally in 1962: quick footages and rapid switches prevent viewers from developing a sense of consciousness.<sup>63</sup> If a political manipulation boosted

<sup>61</sup> “Ifjúságunk válasza Rákosi elvtársnak: jobban dolgozunk – jobban tanulunk [Our youth is answering Comrade Rákosi: we will work better – learn better]”, *Szabad Ifjúság* [Free Youth], 2, no. 136 (1951): 3.

<sup>62</sup> Ian Grosvenor, “Back to the future or towards a sensory history of schooling”, *History of Education* 41, no. 5 (2012): 675-687.

<sup>63</sup> Hans Magnus Enzensberger, “Scherbenwelt. Die Anatomie der Wochenschau”, in *Einzelheiten*, Hans Magnus Enzensberger (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962), 88-109.

this effect, the result may be worse – historians has to reflect these phenomena in a deeper level to understand the growing importance of media and the complexity of our contemporary world. A huge question is the acceptance of every propaganda: we do not know much about different opinions of the public or weak points of the newsreels, the real feelings of producers and filmmakers. There are some sporadic sources (informal letters, diaries, secret reports) about this, have to collect and fill the puzzle in the future.

### **Note on the author**

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