

# The Heads and the Walls. From Professional Commitment to Oppositional Attitude in Hungarian Sociology in the 1960–1970s:

The Cases of András Hegedüs, István Kemény, and Iván Szelényi

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In most of the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, sociology remained a perpetual source of ideological quarrels from the beginning of the 1960s to the mid-1980s. With this context in mind, this paper offers an analysis of some of the decisive aspects of the development of Hungarian sociology from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s. In particular, the discussion focuses on three central figures, András Hegedüs (1922–99), István Kemény (1925–2008), and Iván Szelényi (1939), and their intellectual developments from committed and professional sociological work to the adoption of a deeply critical attitude towards socialist social development. An examination of the similarities in their intellectual development, especially as far as their political confrontation with the regime is concerned, offers a context for a discussion of some of the topical issues of the professional, institutional, and ideological aspects of academic work in state socialist Hungary and the ways in which genuine scholarly achievements could give rise to oppositional attitudes and social dissidence.

Keywords: Kádár era, Sociology, Social Criticism, Oppositional Attitudes, András Hegedüs, István Kemény, Iván Szelényi

In most of the state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, sociology remained a perpetual source of ideological quarrels from the beginning of the 1960s up to the mid-1980s. Even if party and state authorities often recognized the usefulness of sociology for their purposes, especially in periods when economic and social reforms were on the agenda, the sociological approach to the study of society never ceased to be regarded as a challenge to Marxist-Leninist ideology. The critical potential of sociology lay precisely in the fact that concrete and empirically grounded research devoted to the social facts of labor conditions, housing, lifestyle, healthcare, education, poverty, etc. tended to reveal the less familiar and gloomy side of the building of socialism. At the same time, sociology could also challenge communist ideology on its own level, namely by calling into question the social model which had been officially proposed under the label of “advanced socialist society”. By adopting sociological perspectives in their

critical work on social conditions, social scientists started to discover and examine networks of relationships among social forms, stratifications, and developments which until then had gone largely unnoticed, as well as hierarchical relations of particular social strata existing and acting within the conditions prevailing under socialism. In doing so, they not only sought to rearticulate, if not explicitly to call into question, the Marxist conception of class system, but also to reconsider the Marxist-Leninist economic and social principles of the socialist model in the name of new strategies of social modernization. Thus, by the end of the 1960s, progressive Marxist sociologists in several Warsaw Pact countries, supported by reform-communist circles, tended to envisage themselves as the genuine mediators in the regime-society relationship. By taking as their starting point the empirical analysis of the given social reality, they were advocating a critical reappraisal of the ideological principles of the state socialist regime itself.<sup>1</sup>

With this context in mind, I aim in this paper to provide an analysis of some of the decisive aspects of the development of Hungarian sociology from the early 1960 to the mid-1970s. In particular, I focus on three central figures: András Hegedüs (1922–99); István Kemény (1925–2008); and Iván Szelényi (1939). Their otherwise somewhat disparate intellectual trajectories from committed and professional sociological work to the adoption of a deeply critical attitude towards various elements of state socialist social development and politics played fundamental roles in the subsequent formation of the profile of the cultural and political opposition, both within and beyond the social sciences in Hungary.<sup>2</sup> I offer a comparative study of the work and careers of these scholars, whose critical attitudes towards the regime were acknowledged by the mid-1970s at a minimum with their dismissal from their academic jobs. What makes this subject worth studying is also the fact that, unlike other groups of scholars who played decisive roles in the newly forming democratic opposition in Hungary (for instance members of the “Lukács school” in the 1960–70s<sup>3</sup> or the so-called “reformist economists” of the 1980s<sup>4</sup>), the sociologists in question never in fact formed a group. Rather, they had different backgrounds, different academic affiliations, and often contradicting views on the role and design of sociological

1 On these questions, see the essays in the volume edited by Keen and Mucha, *Eastern Europe in Transformation*, as well as the autobiographical collection of essays written by sociologists living in Central and Eastern Europe in this period, Keen and Mucha, *Autobiographies of Transformation*.

2 On the role played by Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi in the formation of the Hungarian democratic opposition, see Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 25–29, 72–77, 145–48.

3 Cf. *ibid.*, 19–25, 29–33.

4 Cf. *ibid.*, 169–70.

research. Yet there were also striking similarities in their intellectual development, especially as far as their political confrontation with the regime is concerned. A comparative study of their careers and contributions, thus, offers a perspective from which to examine (1) the modes by which professional, institutional, and political aspects of academic work could play formative roles in the development of a social critical approach to state socialism; (2) the ways in which genuine scholarly achievements could influence the birth of oppositional attitudes and social dissidence; (3) the forms of comportment among party authorities, with regards to which the limits of political tolerance and the effectiveness of reprisals were always dependent on a certain ideological flexibility adapted to academic situations and on a network of formal and informal institutional and personal relations.

### *From Reformism to Revisionism: The Case of András Hegedüs*

In the interviews he gave in the 1980s, András Hegedüs often described his political and scientific attitude in the period following his return from Moscow in 1958 as entirely “apologetic.”<sup>5</sup> To be sure, after being prime minister in the last eighteen months of the Hungarian Stalinist regime marked by the dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi, Hegedüs hardly seemed like someone who would have this attitude. In fact, as he reaffirmed in his memoirs, he was apologetic not only toward the socialist system that came in the wake of the events of 1956 in Hungary, but also toward the new political line represented by the Kádár regime itself. This apologetic attitude was certainly facilitated by the fact that, unlike most of the Rákosi regime’s political leaders, Hegedüs was neither expelled from the communist Party nor subjected to any disciplinary proceedings. There are reasons to believe that Kádár and his inner circle considered Hegedüs a possible ally in the fight against the revisionist tendencies within the Party, represented by the remaining followers of Imre Nagy. In 1961, Hegedüs was offered the position of Vice-President at the Central Statistical Office. It would be difficult to interpret this transfer as anything other than a reward for his loyal attitude toward the new regime. As a matter of fact, this attitude found clear expression in his post 1956 publications.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, instead of taking the position, Hegedüs expressed his desire to devote himself to full-time scientific work and,

5 Cf. Hegedüs, *Élet egy eszme árnyékában*, 329; “Beszélgetés Hegedüs Andrásal,” 13, 25.

6 Idem, *A munkásbérézés rendszere iparunkban*; idem, *A modern polgári szociológia és a társadalmi valóság*; idem, *Műszaki fejlesztés a szocializmusban*.

more specifically, to sociology. His request received the full support of some prominent party members, including György Péter, the head of the Statistical Office, and Hegedüs was given the mandate to organize and lead the Sociological Research Group to be set up under the auspices of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences beginning in March 1963.

In the secondary literature based on the memoirs of many others in the field, Hegedüs' name is inseparable from the rehabilitation and re-institutionalization of sociology in Hungary.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the Sociological Research Group of the Academy was the first, and for quite some time the only, independent institute in socialist Hungary in which advanced research in the field of sociology could be carried out. Even more importantly, Hegedüs himself appeared to have been convinced at this point that sociology ought to be part of an "enlightenment process" the impact of which should spill over the barriers of even Marxist philosophy and ideology.<sup>8</sup> Thus, by late 1963, Hegedüs' intellectual position appeared fairly secure, and it seemed as if, over time, it would solidify even further. He was invited by the party leadership to take over the position as editor-in-chief of the political-cultural monthly *Valóság* [Reality], which, in line with an earlier decision of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) Politburo, was to be turned into a journal with a "comprehensive and scientific profile."<sup>9</sup> Due to his new function, Hegedüs also became a member of the "Theoretical Working Group" of the HSWP, which functioned alongside the Central Committee. This move seemed a sign of an increasing political trust in him.<sup>10</sup>

This tendency, however, did not last long. One year later, at the "Nationwide Ideological Conference" of the HSWP, the journal *Valóság* was condemned for its ostentatious attitude and lack of self-criticism.<sup>11</sup> Also, an important document entitled "Some Current Ideological Tasks of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party: Guidelines by the Central Committee," which was approved by the Central Committee in March 1965, harshly criticized sociological research in Hungary for its "abstract reasoning" and its "uncritical borrowings from the dubious achievements of bourgeois sociology."<sup>12</sup> The Guidelines also condemned

7 Cf. Kemény and László, eds. XXX. *1963-ban alakult meg a Szociológiai Kutatócsoport; Szántó, A magyar szociológia újjászervezése a hatvanas években*, 174–82, 199–211.

8 Hegedüs, "A marxista szociológia tárgyról és helyéről a társadalomtudományok rendszerében."

9 MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 304. ö.e., 24.

10 Szántó, *A magyar szociológia újjászervezése a hatvanas években*, 166.

11 Cf. MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 345 ö.e., 42.

12 "A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt néhány időszerű ideológiai feladata. A Központi Bizottság irányelvei," 151.

*Valóság* for its “erroneous views,” “incorrect, bourgeois attitude,” “oppositional tendencies,” and “decadent approach.”<sup>13</sup> These acts earned Hegedüs the label of “revisionist” for the first time and eventually triggered his removal from his position at the journal in June 1965.

For a time, however, Hegedüs’ dismissal from *Valóság* brought about no drastic change in the course of his intellectual career. On the contrary, his critical behavior had in fact channeled him towards the reformist party circles within the HSWP leadership, whose importance happened to be on the rise due their role in preparing the new economic reforms to be launched in January 1968. In 1965, Hegedüs was invited to take part in the work of the “Preparatory Committee for the Reform,” run under the auspice of the Economic Board operating next to the Central Committee. Hegedüs was asked to organize and oversee one of the eleven workgroups designed to assist the Preparatory Committee. His group was tasked with investigating “interaction between economic and social relations.”<sup>14</sup> In this period, with respect to his own scientific work, Hegedüs continued to both extend and sharpen his theoretical sociological research. On the one hand, he devoted himself to critical analyses of socialist society from a structural point of view.<sup>15</sup> On the other, he pushed the limits of critical analysis to new levels concerning the place and role of sociology within the system of Marxist social sciences, as well as concerning sociology’s claim to tackle some of the most vital social problems related to the building of advanced socialist society in general, and in Hungary in particular.<sup>16</sup>

Without doubt, the emphasis on sociology’s task of providing scientific self-knowledge for socialist society sums up the credo of Hegedüs’ vision of Marxist sociology. But it is also clear that his radical reformist endorsement of the critical function Marxist sociology could play in socialist society is separated, if at all, by only a thin line from the promotion of truly “revisionist” ideas. After all, Hegedüs’ Marxism seemed ready to jettison the classic Marxist theses on social development the moment the sociological analysis of the concrete social realities proved them false. At this point, however, he also believed that his ideas had essentially been confirmed by recent political and social developments and especially by the new economic reforms under preparation in both Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In an essay published in 1967 in the Hungarian

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13 Ibid., 161.

14 Nyers, “Emlékeim Hegedüs András pályafutásának három korszakáról,” 262.

15 Hegedüs, *A szocialista társadalom struktúrájáról*.

16 Idem, *A szociológiáról*.

literature monthly *Kortárs* [Contemporary] entitled “Reality and Necessity: The ‘Self-Criticism’ of Socialist Society as a Reality and a Necessity,”<sup>17</sup> he went so far as to assert the “historical necessity” of the emergence in socialist society of a new type of critical attitude designed to reshape the relationship between the party and society.

The fact that in August 1968 it was not sociologists, but Warsaw Pact troops who readjusted the regime-society relationship in Czechoslovakia ultimately triggered the escalation of Hegedüs’ situation within his party. On August 21, along with the Hungarian sociologists and philosophers protesting in Korčula, the Party members of the Sociological Research Group condemned the intervention and Hegedüs addressed a petition to the Central Committee on the issue. In its report to the Politburo on this case, the Scientific, Educational and Cultural Board of the Central Committee made it clear that the protest issued by Hegedüs and his comrades against the intervention in Czechoslovakia was in reality only the most recent chapter in a far-reaching story. The document noted that since 1966, the Agitprop Committee had brought up the issue of the “negative tendencies” manifested in “Hegedüs’ theoretically and ideologically dubious ideas” several times. In conclusion, and as a way to solve the situation, the report proposed the removal of Hegedüs from the leadership of the Sociological Research Group.<sup>18</sup>

After 1968, Hegedüs’ research activity in sociology underwent a reorientation. In a somewhat programmatic study entitled “For the Healthy Development of Marxist Sociology,” which Hegedüs wrote right after his removal from the Sociological Research Group and which was published in the *Társadalmi Szemle* [Social Review], the theoretical monthly of the HSWP,<sup>19</sup> he urged the continuation and even intensification of sociological research on social structures and social stratification under socialism. Hegedüs nevertheless did not entirely abandon the idea of advocating a radical “reformist position” when it came to sociological issues related to socialist development. This ambition, for example, was clearly manifest in the studies he devoted in this period to the sociological analysis of the question of “bureaucracy” under socialist conditions.<sup>20</sup> Also, his views on “social progress” under socialist circumstances soon came under ideological

17 Hegedüs, “Realitás és szükségszerűség,” 1011–19.

18 MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 476. ö.e., 131.

19 Hegedüs, “A marxista szociológia egészséges fejlődéséért,” 93–99.

20 The collection of these studies was published in a book that has never been published in Hungarian: Hegedüs, *Socialism and Bureaucracy*.

attack.<sup>21</sup> To be sure, it was precisely with reference to these lines of research that the accusations of revisionism against Hegedüs could be relaunched, accusations which eventually would lead to his expulsion from the party and his exclusion from academic and cultural life in general.

After all, by the end of 1972, the Kádárist party leadership had come increasingly under pressure from both its own hardliners and Moscow, each of which were demanding a revision of the allegedly overly liberal economic policies of the party.<sup>22</sup> Under these circumstances, Kádár was all too keen to demonstrate, to those inside and outside of his party, that the reform of the Hungarian economy and society was firmly under the control of the HSWP and that no deviation from the official Marxist-Leninist dogmas would be tolerated. As a result, there was a sudden change in the ideological climate and in the line that divided what could be tolerated as a legitimate Marxist “discussion” of the questions of existing socialism and what was to be rejected on the grounds of its assumed anti-Marxist content. Not surprisingly, the ideas defended by Hegedüs, along with those promoted by the members of the Lukácsian Budapest School, fell soon prey to this ideological fervor, which sought to cleanse Hungarian Marxism of its new leftist wildings.

In January 1973, speaking before the Nationwide Ideological Conference in Budapest, György Aczél, the Agitprop Secretary of the Central Committee, left no doubt about who was to blame for “denying the existing socialist practices.” He named Hegedüs among others, and he accused him of “calling into question the fundamental theses of Marxism.”<sup>23</sup> As a consequence, during a debate held in March 1973 under the auspices of the Cultural Political Work Collective the severely “anti-Marxist platform” of several social scientists and philosophers, including Hegedüs, Mária Márkus, Mihály Vajda, Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, György Bencze, and János Kis, was unanimously condemned.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of this report, the Central Committee of the HSWP prepared a proposal for the Politburo. The Politburo accepted the proposal and decided to publish a final resolution on the case.<sup>25</sup> It also ordered the Hungarian Academy of Sciences to take several measures against the scholars in question. Hegedüs, Vajda, and Kis

21 Hegedüs, “A társadalmi fejlődés alternatíváiról,” 843–54.

22 On this issue, see Tőkés, *Hungary's Negotiated Revolution*, 102–04.

23 Aczél, “Az ideológiai és kulturális élet néhány időszzerű kérdése,” 200–01.

24 “Az MSZMP Központi Bizottsága mellett működő Kulturpolitikai Munkaközösség állásfoglalása néhány társadalomkutató anti-marxista nézeteiről,” 37.

25 It is worth mentioning that János Kádár reserved for himself the right to make the final adjustments to both documents, MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 610. ö.e., 81.

was expelled from the HSWP, and all the scholars involved were dismissed from their academic jobs on the grounds of their “incapability for scientific work.” (They were offered lowering-rank positions as scientists or research assistants.)

Since none of the social researchers in question accepted the new jobs offered by the Academy of Sciences, their academic carriers in socialist Hungary were definitively over. As far as Hegedüs was concerned, after having accepted various advisory positions in large communist companies and after having been quickly dismissed from them at the order of party authorities, he retired in 1976.<sup>26</sup> His sporadic collaboration with the increasingly significant democratic opposition movements in Hungary during the 1970 and 1980s had often been hindered by his unbroken belief in the possibility of a pluralistic socialist society without the implementation of a pluralistic political party system. But his role as critical sociologist and his vision of the enlightened moderation of the society-regime relationship in communist Hungary were doomed to be relegated, at least until the end the socialist period, to the realm of academic folklore. In a volume published in English on Hungarian sociology in 1978 and edited by his successors at the Sociology Institute of the Academy of Sciences, the main text of the brief introductory study devoted to an assessment of recent sociological research in Hungary made not a single mention of his name.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Empirical and the Illusionary: The Critical Sociology of István Kemény*

One could characterize the sociological career of István Kemény as that of a strong character who was recurrently compelled to do empirical analyses of delicate topics—social stratification, poverty, the conditions of working class, the behavior of economic leaders, the problems faced by the Roma populations—related to the first two decades of the socialist reality in Hungary under Kádár. The unusual nature of his career was determined by the very historical event that served as the alpha point for both his career and the regime itself, namely the 1956 revolution. Having originally been sentenced to four years in prison for allegedly having participated in a “seditious conspiracy” during the revolutionary events, Kemény was released from prison in 1959.<sup>28</sup> Between 1960 and 1969, he worked as librarian at the National Széchenyi Library in Budapest. In 1963, he was asked to join as assistant a newly launched group research project conducted

26 Hegedüs, *Élet egy eszme árnyékában*, 366–67.

27 Cf. Huszár et al, *Hungarian Society and Marxist Sociology in the Nineteen-Seventies*, 5–15.

28 “Interview with István Kemény on his Career,” 138.

by the Central Statistical Office on the question of “social stratification” in Hungary. By accepting this invitation, Kemény succeeded in part in adopting sociology as his main profession and became involved in one of the most instructive and challenging empirical sociological research projects in Hungary at the time.<sup>29</sup> Since it used the term “stratification” (“rétegződés”) as one of its keywords, the 1963 survey challenged the view according to which the tendency of socialist society to lose gradually its original class structure should necessarily be understood as an improvement towards social homogeneity. In fact, as the project demonstrated, the loosening of class constraints had led to a more differentiated and not less imperious system of social stratification.<sup>30</sup>

In 1969, Kemény was asked to join the Sociological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences as a full-time research fellow. This change of status meant that Kemény immediately became involved in several empirically based research projects initiated and run by different institutes. One of the most interesting among them was devoted to the so-called “low income population” in Hungary. This research was run in effect by a work group within the Central Statistical Office. According to Kemény’s memoirs, the interest in the study of “poverty” in socialist Hungary was already present in the 1963 national survey, but György Péter, the president of the office, firmly opposed this idea, since he believed that if the Office as state institute “started to study poverty, this would suggest that it [socialist Hungary] was a system in which poor people could be found.”<sup>31</sup>

Kemény’s participation in the survey and the attention he devoted to the living conditions of the “low income” population became the foundation for his reputation. It can be said that this was one of the groundbreaking research initiatives in which he proved himself as a sociologist working with statistical means, but willing to go beyond the simply descriptive level of survey data to analysis of what these findings reveal about the living conditions under state socialism. Kemény’s task of translating the statistical category of “low income” into terms of the people’s real living conditions, and especially the living conditions of blue-collar workers, revealed hitherto unnoticed—or rather denied—aspects of socialist reality. Even before this research project officially terminated in 1972, he had an opportunity to give a lecture in 1970 on the topic at one of the annual sessions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in which

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29 Mőd et al, *Társadalmi rétegződés Magyarországon*.

30 Cf. Kemény, “Restratification of the Working Class,” 26–37.

31 “Interview with István Kemény on his Career,” 147.

he did not hesitate to talk about the phenomenon of “poverty” in socialist Hungary. In fact, he was in all likelihood the first social scientist to use this term openly in an academic speech in the post-1956 period in Hungary.

In his talk, Kemény claimed that it was misleading to draw a strict limit based on a minimum income per head in a household, as was proposed by the Central Statistical Office, in order to define a person or a family as belonging to the “low income” category. Instead, he argued that the descriptive use of the “low income” category should include consideration of concrete living and housing conditions, including family composition, cost of transportation, whether someone lived in or had a sublet, whether someone lived in an urban or rural setting, etc. According to Kemény, this would enable a more nuanced understanding of the poor as people “who were not able to live like others do.”<sup>32</sup> With this definition in mind, Kemény was keen to demonstrate new social inequalities in the socialist reality in Hungary. According to him, poverty as a real condition affected the lifestyle, social habits, educational standards, and everyday practices of those concerned.<sup>33</sup>

Not surprisingly, Kemény’s talk at the Academy created instant havoc in the Party headquarters. Although initially both *Népszabadság* [People’s Liberty] and *Társadalmi Szemle* published positive overviews of Kemény’s talk (which, however, failed to mention the term “poverty” in their account), more drastic consequences soon followed.<sup>34</sup> Kálmán Kulcsár, the head of the Sociological Institute at the time, was immediately ordered to dismiss Kemény from the Institute. Kulcsár did as he was told, but since Kemény had already been conducting another ongoing survey in the Institute concerning the Hungarian Roma populations, the Party headquarters was contacted again in order to determine what to do. Finally, the decision was made to allow Kemény to keep his job on a monthly basis, i.e. by “signing on the first day of each month a work contract which would last to the last day of the month” and repeating this until the survey was completed.<sup>35</sup> Kemény finished his survey on the Roma in late 1972, after which his status at the Institute was terminated.

The aim of the 1971 survey on the Roma population was to offer a comprehensive view of the social situation of Roma in Hungary, including their “linguistic and ethnic composition, settlement types, regional distribution,

32 Kemény, “A szegénységről,” 80.

33 Cf. idem, “Poverty in Hungary,” 247–67.

34 Cf. *Népszabadság*, November 15, 1970; Herceg: “A szocialista elosztás néhány kérdése,” 69.

35 “Interview with István Kemény on his Career,” 148.

housing conditions, family size, number of children and live births, education, the effects of industrialization in the 1950s and 1960s, employment, and income levels.”<sup>36</sup> Nonetheless, the research carried out under Kemény’s leadership between 1970 and 1971 was new and unusual in several respects. Most importantly, in setting up the basic analytical categories of the project, Kemény refused to attribute particular importance to the ethnic character of the population under study. As he stated, “in our research we classified as Roma all people whom the surrounding non-Roma community considered Roma.”<sup>37</sup> This enabled him and his team to sidestep the task of providing a scholarly (chimerical) definition of who was Roma and who was not, but perhaps more importantly, it allowed them to focus their efforts on what they considered the essential sociological aspects of the population under study. “The Roma question is fundamentally not an ethnic question, but a question of social strata,” the study concluded in the summary of its findings.<sup>38</sup> This indicated that Kemény’s sociological approach to the Roma followed in the footsteps of his earlier survey on poverty in that he privileged questions of social stratification over questions of social segregation or ethnic identity. Also, Kemény was far from sharing the optimism of some of the communist leadership, who considered the rapid transformation of the working and living conditions of the Hungarian Roma population as an unqualified form of progress towards social assimilation. Although the 1971 survey confirmed the facts related to the drastic changes in employment and to some extent the amelioration of living conditions, in other areas (especially in housing and schooling practices) it noted severe drawbacks.

If the 1971 survey on the Roma population did not cause a political scandal, this was due primarily to its accuracy and the indisputably scientific nature of its methods, but also to the fact that the circumstances of the Roma communities were far from being in the forefront of academic or social debates in Hungary at the time. Nevertheless, the whole body of the research material was released only in 1977 as an internal bulletin published by the Sociological Institute of the Academy, and it had no table of contents and no ISBN number.

By the time the Roma survey had been completed at the end of 1972, Kemény’s monthly based contract at the Sociological Institute had expired and had not been extended. Meanwhile, the historian Miklós Laczkó, who at the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences was given the task of preparing

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36 Kemény and Janky, “The Roma Population in Hungary 1971–2003,” 70.

37 Kemény, ed., *Beszámoló a magyarországi cigányok helyzetével foglalkozó 1971-ben végzett kutatásról*, 9.

38 *Ibid.*, 14.

a research project on the Hungarian working class, contacted Kemény and asked him to do a survey on Hungarian workers.<sup>39</sup> The Institute of History itself was asked by the Scientific Board of the Central Committee to carry out this research, and the director of the Institute, Zsigmond Pál Pach, was convinced by Laczkó to employ Kemény for this task. To be sure, this choice was not unfounded, since Kemény's earlier research on the working class had even drawn some attention in broader public forums.<sup>40</sup> But a closer look at this situation reveals very well the inherently contradictory and unstable processes through which, in an academic environment, communist functionaries sought to assess the party's ideological expectations. In fact, the research initiated at the History Institute on members of the working class had already clearly indicated the changing ideological circumstances which, in the short run, had brought to a standstill the economic reforms and triggered the official political rehabilitation of the doctrine of the "leading role of the working class" in Hungary. Under these circumstances, Kemény, with his 1956 legacy and bad academic reputation, did not in principle have a chance to return. But precisely because ideological and scientific expectations were suddenly and inextricably mixed, informal ties gained increasing significance. Pach was undoubtedly a loyal party functionary, but he could be convinced to take the risk of reinterpreting the meaning of "ideologically sound" as a characterization of potential colleague in light of an alleged need of expertise. And in doing so, he was clearly ignoring the fact that Kemény had already been prohibited from carrying out academic research in another scientific Institute belonging to the same establishment.

The survey on the Hungarian workers began on September 1972 and was finished by the end of 1973. In part, Kemény used most of the descriptive categories developed in his earlier research on social stratification, the working class, poverty, and the Roma populations, applying these categories to workers.<sup>41</sup> One of the most striking aspects of Kemény's descriptive study on the working class was the strong emphasis on the forms of social cohesion, which correlating closely with workers' morale. Workers showed significant shared commitment to common concerns, including mutual recognition of expertise, solidarity in struggles for better earning and working conditions, and a shared interest in technological improvement. However, in light of Kemény's survey (which was based on interviews), these forms of cohesion were delineated as forms of

39 "Interview with István Kemény on his Career," 148.

40 Cf. Kemény, "Az úton lévők hatalmas tábora," *Népszava*, October 17, 1969.

41 Cf. idem, *Velük nevelkedett a gép*.

common strategies of negotiation and tactics of circumvention directed against the various forms of administrative power represented by the management and directors of the factory or the party. In the preface to the French edition of his book on workers, Kemény described the general strategy followed by the Hungarian working class as one of “permanent resistance,” according to which they sought “to obey the instructions in appearance only.”<sup>42</sup>

In 1973 the Scientific, Educational and Cultural Board of the Central Committee organized a debate at Institute of History on Kemény’s manuscript. The text was harshly criticized by leading Hungarian historians, such as Iván Berend T. and György Ránki.<sup>43</sup> This was followed by a series of events which adhered to a well-known political logic. First, Kemény’s manuscript on the Hungarian working class was rejected for publication. Then, in March 1974, the Institute of History was ordered to terminate his contract, and virtually at the same time Kemény was prohibited by the Party authorities from participating in any research or publication initiatives. In 1975, the National Educational Institute led by Iván Vitányi tried unsuccessfully to hire Kemény to take part in a research project.<sup>44</sup> After this, Kemény attempted to engage in various research initiatives using his colleagues as cover, but in January 1977, he decided the situation was hopeless and resolved to leave Hungary for France.

### *Iván Szelényi and the “Immanent Critique” of Socialist Society*

In a recent essay written on the development of Hungarian sociology in the 1960s, Iván Szelényi argued that between 1966 and 1968, Hungarian sociologists began to realize that empirical research in itself does not necessarily lead to value-free or apologetic results. Empirically grounded sociological investigations were increasingly perceived as having the potential to provide critical insights into the social determinants of socialist society.<sup>45</sup> According to Szelényi, by the end of 1960s, there were two general but not mutually exclusive trends that provided the impetus and the intuitive backdrop to these critical approaches. On the one hand, there was an approach which aspired to offer an “ideological

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42 Idem, *Ouvriers hongrois*, 16.

43 “Interview with István Kemény on his Career,” 151.

44 Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 171.

45 Szelényi, “Nostalgikus jegyzetek a hatvanas évekről,” 13.

critique of socialist society.” This approach was influenced by György Lukács<sup>46</sup> and his school, and it was championed by Hegedüs. It sought to contrast the reality of established social conditions in existing socialism with the Marxist ideals. A different approach, on the other hand, was advocated by more empirically-minded sociologists, such as Szelényi himself, who were carrying out a “critique of socialist ideology.” This approach focused on some of the internal inequalities and contradictions of socialist society, which reflected the regime’s ideological blind spots and therefore favored the elaboration of an “immanent” critique of socialist ideology and social reality.<sup>47</sup>

Szelényi’s account of this topic is worthy of consideration from a historical point of view in part because in some of his writings published in the early 1970s he had already made clear his position on the critical function of sociology. In fact, in the methodological part of his dissertation *Settlement System and Social Structure*, submitted in 1972 for the degree of “candidate of science” (*kandidátus*, the equivalent of a PhD degree), he outlined the principles of social criticism in sociology in terms very similar to those presented in his more recent writings. In his dissertation, Szelényi drew a sharp distinction between “social critique” and “critique of ideology,” and he argued that, unlike the former approach, which appeals to transcendent values in order to influence collective will and prompt action allegedly needed to build a better society, the latter seeks to analyze ideology critically as a social product serving actual interests.<sup>48</sup>

Szelényi joined the Sociological Research Group of the Academy in 1963 at the invitation of Hegedüs, first as a part-time research fellow and then, from 1967, as a full-time research fellow. His first work on housing conditions in one of the slum-areas in Budapest (coauthored with Ferenc Nemes) marked his entry into the field of sociology.<sup>49</sup> In 1968, Hegedüs was forced, for political reasons, to resign from the leadership of the Sociology Group, and his position was taken over by Kálmán Kulcsár. At the time, Szelényi was tasked with the part-time supervision of the newly established “Sociological Laboratory” at the Social Science Institute, working under the Central Committee of the Party. A year later, he published his work (coauthored with György Konrád) on the sociological problems faced by the communities living in the new housing

46 György Lukács also went by the names Georg Lukács and George Lukács over the course of his career.

47 Ibid., 14.

48 Szelényi, *Városi társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek*, 29.

49 Nemes and Szelényi, *Lakóhely és közösség*.

projects in Hungary,<sup>50</sup> and shortly after this, he also took over the direction of the regional sociological department at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. Simultaneously, Szelényi also began a teaching career at the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest, and he similarly was given a teaching position in sociology at the Political Academy of the party.<sup>51</sup> Thus, when Szelényi was appointed to serve as one of the editors-in-chief of the newly established sociological monthly *Szociológia* in 1972, his career seemed to be on a fast track to ultimate recognition. As a matter of fact, at that point in time he was undoubtedly one of the highest-ranking social scientists in Hungary who was not a member of the HSWP.

To be sure, Szelényi's success was influenced by the fact that he kept his distance from sensitive political matters. For instance, unlike many of his prominent colleagues (including Hegedüs), he refused to denounce publicly or through official Party channels the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and he also remained reserved with regards to the Lukácsian-Marxist social critical attitude widespread in the Sociology Group. As he later remarked, not only did his empirical mindset save him, for the time being, from getting into political trouble, but he also managed to benefit, in his career, from the overall intellectual and political situation.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, one should note that the topics he chose and the approaches he followed in his research allowed him to move in directions that were far from any simple value-free empirical position. In fact, in a study published in 1969 on the role of sociology, Szelényi argued that the empirical orientation in sociology had the genuine potential to foster normative interpretations in social policy or open up alternatives for social services.<sup>53</sup>

In a way, in their 1969 book *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái* [Sociological Problems of the New Housing Developments], Konrád and Szelényi had already gone beyond a mere descriptive account of the case under study. Without doubt, some of the concrete findings of their investigations were truly shocking.<sup>54</sup> Most notably, statistical evidence showed that, quite contrary to what was expected, apartments in newly built housing developments in Budapest and other major cities appeared to be systematically allocated to people belonging to social groups with higher incomes, mostly to the educated middle and upper

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50 Konrád and Szelényi, *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái*.

51 Szelényi, "Nosztalgikus jegyzetek a hatvanas évekről," 16.

52 Idem, "Utószó. Jegyzetek egy szellemi önéletrajzhoz." 443.

53 Idem, "Empíria és szociológia," 14–26.

54 Cf. idem, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism*, 6.

middle class. On the base of these findings, Szelényi and Konrád revealed the de-privileged status of low-income earners and the working class as such and concluded that “as a whole, the construction of new housing developments cannot be characterized as social or communal house-building” in Hungary.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, they called attention to the “exceptionally grave consequences” which these developments were about to create in a metropolitan environment in terms of “social segregation.”<sup>56</sup>

Between 1970 and 1973, Szelényi and Konrád extended and deepened their analysis of the Hungarian housing system. In 1972, Szelényi submitted a manuscript entitled “Settlement System and Social Structure: Sociological Elements for an Analysis of the Hungarian Housing System and Urban Structure” to obtain a PhD degree.<sup>57</sup> The text provided a more radical assessment of the problems related to the housing issue in Hungary, and it also embedded these problems in a larger socio-historical and structural analytical framework. Sociological problems concerning housing were thus found to be representative of other major forms of socio-economic inequalities under socialism, and this called for further investigations. Also, one of the novelties of the new analyses was their emphasis on the evaluative and critical importance of sociological analyses addressing the urban housing and planning system. As Szelényi stated in the methodological part of his dissertation, an immanent “ideological-critical” approach defined as “sociology of planning” was necessary in order to reveal and assess the “social relations of interest” underlying the processes of socialist social planning.<sup>58</sup>

In 1972, *Társadalmi Szemle* published an article, which was strongly critical in tone and in content of a paper published by Szelényi and György Konrád a few months earlier on various sociological and historical aspects of Hungarian urban development.<sup>59</sup> The vehemence of the article was hardly surprising if one takes into account the purpose and arguments of the paper it was targeting. In a nutshell, by labeling urban development in Hungary “retarded” or “lagging,” Konrád Szelényi managed to blame the socialist economic policy of the previous two decades for its neglect of proper urban infrastructural developments, criticize

55 Konrád and Szelényi, *Az új lakótelepek szociológiai problémái*, 138.

56 *Ibid.*, 146–47.

57 Cf. Szelényi, *Városi társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek*, 16–141.

58 *Ibid.*, 29–31.

59 Apró, “Mi késleltette a magyar városfejlődést?” 28.

its insensitively administered social-policies, and point out some current “social conflicts” which had been consequences of these wrong-headed policies.<sup>60</sup>

In one of his late interviews, Szelényi characterized this ill-received writing as the best he had ever written with Konrád.<sup>61</sup> Whatever the case may be, it is certain that in the beginning of the 1970s, with the rise of anti-reform sentiments and the new anti-reform ideological offensive in the making, the critical approaches and orientations advocated by the Konrád and Szelényi tended to fall short of meeting the new prerequisites set forth for a “legitimate” Marxist way of doing social scientific research. Apart from the growing pressure to reinstate a noticeably more orthodox Marxist ideological approach to both theoretical and empirical issues, political approval (and disapproval) began to play an important role in shaping sociological research topics and activities. Even the ambition to exert more straightforward political control over the sociological research apparatus appeared on the agenda, as demonstrated for instance by an Agitprop party document from 1973 which proposed subjecting sociological surveys to “central authorization” in order to prevent them from being used to draw “false” or “ideologically hostile” conclusions.<sup>62</sup>

In principle, given his leading positions at various research institutions and the fact that he had been elected to serve on the editorial committee of the newly established revue *Szociológia*, Szelényi seemed to have little to worry about. Yet, in a way, it was precisely his personal inclination towards professional solidarity and his belief in the pursuit of sociology as an independent critical science that would soon bring him close to the end of his prosperous career in Hungary.

In 1973, Szelényi was among the few intellectuals who protested against the denunciation and removal from their academic positions of some of the closest disciples of Lukács and sociologists like Hegedüs and Maria Márkus. The next political event in which Szelényi took an important part was the trial of Miklós Haraszti. Haraszti, at this time an ultra-leftist poet and writer, was arrested in May 1973 on charges of having distributed mimeographed copies of his work entitled “Darabbér” (“Piecework”), which had not been given approval for publication. In the trial, Szelényi agreed to testify that as a journal editor, he intended to publish parts of Haraszti’s text in the revue *Szociológia* because he considered it a valuable and realistic analysis of factory life and workers’ lives in

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60 Konrád and Szelényi, “A késleltetett városfejlődés társadalmi konfliktusai,” 19–35.

61 “Beszélgetés Szelényi Ivánnal,” 179.

62 MNL OL M-KS 288-41. 161 ö.e. 2.

Hungary.<sup>63</sup> To be sure, this statement was not entirely true. Nevertheless, due to the appropriate strategy chosen by the defense and the solidarity campaign that surrounded the case, Haraszti, although found guilty on the charges brought against him, was sentenced to serve only eight months in prison, a sentence which was suspended on condition that Haraszti spend three years on probation. But the trial had other consequences as well. Because of his involvement in the case, Szelényi was removed from the positions he held at the Institute of Social Sciences and at *Szociológia*. He was also temporarily prohibited from publishing, but more importantly, his reputation as a critical but reliable non-party member academic was severely damaged.

Interestingly enough, by the time they got involved in the Haraszti trial, Konrád and Szelényi had already embarked down a path to challenge the regime in power directly. At Konrád's initiative, they had started to compile a scholarly manuscript which Szelényi envisaged as their critical-sociological masterpiece. To be sure, they were well aware from the very beginning that the task was politically impossible, meaning that the text would never be published in Hungary. As Szelényi later remarked, they were consciously preparing themselves to "commit scholarly suicide."<sup>64</sup> Their manuscript was thus meant from the outset to be a *samizdat* in its format, which makes it one of the very first examples of this genre in socialist Hungary.<sup>65</sup> Not surprisingly, the police, which had been keeping Konrád and Szelényi under constant surveillance since the Haraszti trial, was well informed about their activities and waited for the moment to confiscate the manuscript and arrest its authors. The two men were detained on October 22, 1973 on charges of incitement, and they remained in custody for seven days.

The major argument of Konrád and Szelényi's *samizdat* book *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* was that under Eastern European state socialism, the intelligentsia was in the process, for the first time in history, of forming a dominant class. With this context in mind, the authors sought to adopt a reflexive critical position, which, like in Szelényi's earlier sociological works, aimed to provide an immanent "critique of ideology."<sup>66</sup> According to Konrád and Szelényi, the class dominance of intellectuals in state socialism manifested itself in their increasingly crucial position (and allegedly experts) as "planners" and "redistributors" within this system. In other words, they argued that a constant

63 Szelényi, "Egy kézirat története," 6.

64 Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, xvii.

65 Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék*, 73.

66 Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, 251.

intellectual materialization of certain “teleological” knowledge about long-term public interests in socialist society, embodied in the intellectuals’ bureaucratic class position, not only played a functional role in sustaining the regime, but was a fundamental element without which the socialist mode of production itself would have lost its distinctive features.

Without a doubt, Konrád and Szelényi’s book was a clear attempt to call into question some of the most crucial ideological cornerstones of existing socialist regimes: the tenet of the leading role of the working class and the ideological benevolence of the party. As a matter of fact, this point was clearly stressed in a report submitted to the Politburo of the HSWP about the case.<sup>67</sup> The document also informed its readers of the outcome of this “unlawful activity”: after seven days of detention, the two suspects acknowledged authorship of the manuscript, and the case was closed with a “prosecutor’s warning.” At the same time, as a result of the case, Szelényi immediately lost his remaining jobs at the Institute of Sociology and the University of Economics, and his career in sociology and in the academic life in general was definitely over. The only reasonable option for him was to accept the offer made by the interior affairs authorities, which at the time was rather exceptional, to leave the country.<sup>68</sup>

### *Conclusion: From Professional Commitment to Oppositional Attitude*

The most striking aspect in the careers of István Hegedüs, István Kemény, and Iván Szelényi is not simply that, even with their different intellectual and political backgrounds, fields of interest, and academic contributions, they were all sidelined by the mid-1970s for political reasons. Even more remarkable than this is the fact that their involvements in politically contentious situations were triggered by the adoption of a similar intellectual attitude. Nevertheless, the formation of their noticeably analogous way of perceiving and reacting to certain scholarly situations seems to imply more than mere discontent with certain ideological expectations in Hungarian academia. It stemmed rather from their engagement in a complex setting of professional, institutional, and disciplinary practices and relations that gradually shaped their personal experiences and scholarly strategies in a similar way.

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67 MNL OL M-KS 288-5. 650 ö.e. 163–64.

68 Konrád and Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power*, xviii.

From this point of view, the decisive impact of two institutions (the Central Statistical Office and the Sociology Research Group) on the development of the intellectual profile of Hegedüs, Kemény and Szelényi should be highlighted. Although the forms and lengths of their engagement in the work of these institutions varied greatly, similarities are also apparent. Contact with the pioneering sociological work carried out at the Statistical Office constituted an important milestone in the career of all three of them. It certainly made them appreciate the role of a specific institutional environment and a diverse academic body in the development of an effective and relatively free research agenda. Hegedüs seemed to have been fully aware of this when he was given the green light in 1963 to establish his Research Group at the Academy of Sciences, where he also hired Szelényi. At the same time, as Kemény has remarked, the Sociology Research Group represented a trend similar to that of the more empirically minded sociological cluster of the Statistical Office led by Zsuzsa Ferge insofar as both institutions “wanted something that was hitherto forbidden” in Hungarian sociology.<sup>69</sup>

It should be noted that this took place during the subsequent period (1968–72), when the multiplication of institutions and research opportunities allowed for an increasing flexibility in sociological research and teaching. This was illustrated for instance by the case of Szelényi, who divided his time between the Sociological Research Group and the Institute of Social Science of the Central Committee, while he also held various teaching positions. The emergence of this new situation within the sociological profession in the early 1970s was certainly fostered by the central administration’s growing interest in and demand for accurate social knowledge relevant to various policy and economic issues. For example, Kemény’s research on the Roma population and the working class and Szelényi and Konrád’s work on the housing conditions in Budapest and other cities clearly reflected this tendency. This conjuncture in sociology has led to the proliferation of research institutions and even the introduction of a certain division of labor between them, and it has also created a need to implement forms of professional training to ensure further reinforcement. At the same time, this new situation has also changed the ways in which institutions in the academic sphere are used by sociologists to adopt and pursue their research agenda. Kemény’s pursuit of various research projects in different institutions between 1969 and 1973 demonstrated significant flexibility in this regard. To be

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69 “Interview with István Kemény on his career,” 147.

sure, the growth in the available resources (including financial resources) and the reliance on project-oriented institutional backing have created significantly more options for research, much as they have also enabled people working in the discipline to pursue their efforts with a greater degree of professional commitment and have made it easier to overlook built-in ideological safety mechanisms in research.

Apart from the institutional factors, the variety of topical interests and approaches in sociological research and the ways in which the image of Hungarian society was altered over the course of the 1960s in sociological debates have clearly shown a strong vivacity and an openness within the discipline. In this context, both the more social critical approach taken by Hegedüs and the empirically driven orientation developed by Kemény and later Szelényi shared the conviction that society was made up of critically important factors which have their own particular functions and modes of development. The focus on social stratification on the one hand and the mesmerizing effects of discovering and analyzing social inequality on the other also constituted a common element in their works. Thus, Hegedüs' strong insistence on the function of sociology as the most direct scientific instrument in the pursuit of critical knowledge of society has not essentially contradicted the more empirically grounded approaches adopted by Kemény and Szelényi. The differences between their approaches were, rather, strategic, insofar as Hegedüs insisted on the fact that the importance of sociological research should lie in ushering academic discourse towards an explicitly social critical, if not political role—something which Kemény and Szelényi were less ready to embrace if it was propagated in the name of a normative, let alone Marxist perception of society. For them, the realistic tone of sociology implied in and of itself a sufficient stance in order to approach social reality in critical terms.

This strategic difference was also reflected in the different ways in which Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi appealed to and used Marxism in their works. Although they all seemed to agree fundamentally that orthodox Marxist-Leninist categories were totally inadequate for a sociological analysis of social structures and development, they nevertheless manifested different rationales in their precepts on which their rejections were based. In the case of Hegedüs, his adherence to the idea of socialism remained unbroken throughout his career. It was precisely this idea that fueled his criticism both of the Stalinist vision of society and the more technocratic agenda of building socialism. For him, redefining socialist reality in terms of domination, subordination, alienation

etc., and thus challenging the received doctrines of Marxism-Leninism, was a necessary consequence of the perception of sociology as the ongoing critical examination of the course of socialist construction in which the drive towards “optimal” economic and social development should be counterweighted by a particularly strong focus on processes of “humanization.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, for Hegedüs the constructive use of Marxism in the search for a “leftist” normative view of society remained a cornerstone of his sociological approach. Kemény’s manifest rebuff of Marxism followed a different path. In his case, it was more the result of a pragmatic rejection expressed in neutrality towards, neglect of, and cavalier disregard for Marxist categories. However, this sociologically orchestrated disinterestedness was grounded in the very methodology he employed in most of his research. The combination of social-statistical quantification with deep interviewing offered empirical findings and a foundation for social categorization which were substantial proof of the purely apologetic nature and scientific inadequacy of official Marxism-Leninism. In Szelényi’s case, the motivations for overlooking Marxism were different in nature. His stance was based on a predominantly theoretical rejection, manifested in a strategy of almost complete neglect of Marxist terminology in his earlier writings, which has accompanied an increasingly subtle search for empirical confirmation. In other words, for Szelényi, the inadequacy of the Marxist approach has relied primarily on its incapacity to address and frame phenomena of social structure, stratification, mobility, inequality, etc. in the study of which other Western sociological theories (for example the Weberian or Polányian approaches) have proven more conclusive. Nevertheless, it was precisely the fact that his rejection was theoretical in its design, and not purely political or empirical, that allowed him to return in a certain way to Marxist categorizations in his *The Intellectuals on the Road Class Power*.

Nevertheless, it would certainly be misleading to characterize the series of events that led to the exclusion of the three sociologists in question from Hungarian academic life by the mid-1970s as a cumulative process which could not have gone another direction and ended in a different scenario. Although there are always underlying reasons for ideological climate changes (and in this case, they usually accurately reflected the actual orientations and power struggles in which policy was rooted, especially in the academic sphere), ideology as such was far from a coherent and all-powerful system of norms providing direct

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70 Cf. Hegedüs, “Optimalizálás és humanizálás,” 17–32.

support for the eventual implementation of administrative measures. Ideological intervention had to be channeled through institutions and forums of scholarly communication within which formal and informal relationships, political pedigree, and personal stamina often played roles as important as the role of the attitudes of the party's cultural or agitprop bodies. But this also means that the escalation of an academic affair usually was fueled by a certain stubbornness or hard-minded attitude on the part of those who were targeted by the party authorities for political reasons. This kind of stubbornness certainly played a vital role in the case of Hegedüs, Kemény, and Szelényi. Yet their work was hardly intended initially as an immediate challenge to ideological or political barriers. Their dogged determination stemmed rather from their professional commitment to the value of sociological research, which, due to the more and more unsound and ambiguous standards of scholarly performance introduced for ideological reasons, gradually morphed into the adoption of a stance which could rightly be called oppositional, although in each case with a different connotation.

The fact that the revitalization of sociological research and the launch of empirical investigations were closely connected to economic reform drives from the mid-1960s had some serious consequences for the fate of sociology as a discipline in Hungary. First of all, as was made explicit by the case of Hegedüs, the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries in 1968 and the subsequent halt of the reforms were perceived by many as a defeat and as a consequent shrinking of scholarly opportunities. Yet what really counted was not necessarily the political face-value of these events. It was, rather, the lack of a positive model under these circumstances for valuable and pioneering sociological research which affected negatively the academic performance and vision of progressive sociologists. Whereas the Guidelines on Scientific Policy issued by the Central Committee of the party in 1969 accorded unlimited liberty to research in social science, it also called for “prudence and responsibility” (i.e. self-censorship) in making scientific results available to the public.<sup>71</sup> But the nature of empirical findings in sociological research and the flexible and institutionally different understanding of scientific responsibility rapidly revealed the ideological frailty of these claims. Especially in sociology, in which scientific truth is supposedly founded on the critical observation of social facts, any demand for self-control and self-limitation could produce utterly counterproductive if

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71 Cf. *Az MSZMP Központi Bizottságának Tudománypolitikai Irányelvei*, 37–67.

not false results. Combined with the conviction that politics can discover in sociology something which it cannot discover by any other means, sociological responsibility in principle overtly fostered the emergence of a critical attitude.

Thus, one can understand why Hegedüs, even after his many conflict-ridden entanglements with the political world in Hungary, kept stubbornly challenging the prevailing view on socialist development in Hungary, arguing that the return to market conditions was in fact a false turn, because it intensified social stratification and inequality. The adoption of a political stance in this case was clearly motivated by sociological insight into society and its amalgamation and a belief in the idea of a genuinely socialist democratization of human relations. Similarly, Kemény's uncompromising excavation of delicate social facts was linked to his belief in the unconditional value of the empirical study of social reality, even if it had regularly culminated in sociological analyses touching critically on some basic ideological tenets. Finally, Szelényi's increasingly radical approach to sociology as a critique of ideology originated in and was founded on his perception of the discrepancy between certain empirically detected social tendencies which fostered inequality and a particular set of socio-politically promoted interests in society which supported them. In each of these cases, the only legitimate option offered by the academic establishment for sociological work consisted of keeping a low profile from the perspective of critical attitude and promoting the very social status quo the shortcomings of which had been revealed by sociological means. No wonder that for each of the three scholars irritation and disappointment with this situation, which was also for them a sociologically reflected disposition, called for a radical response: the emergence of an oppositional attitude both in their scholarly work and in the ways in which they were more and more ready to take serious political risks.

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