

Theses of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

Béla Nóvé:

**„PATRIA NOSTRA”
Minor Hungarian Refugees of 1956
in the French Foreign Legion**

Dissertation Supervisor:
Prof. Dr János Rainer

KÁROLY ESZTERHÁZY COLLEGE
Doctoral School of History
Eger, 2016

1. Antecedents of my research

The history and the afterlife of the Hungarian Revolution has long been in the focus of my research; on that subject I have published several collections of source material, compiled or written scholarly articles and studies, volumes of translations, life-history interviews, portraits, and shot documentary films also (see Chapter 5. of my thesis). In the past decade my attention has been increasingly attracted by some less well-known aspects of the Hungarian Exodus of '56, by the so far unexplored archival sources and the newly obtained oral-history sources of the Hungarian diaspora in the West. That is how I came across yet another exciting topic of my research: the life histories of nearly twenty thousand Hungarian young men who absconded in the wake of '56. My study follows up the multiple bifurcations along the career paths of this, by now largely forgotten, highly specific subgroup of the emigrant generation – the lives of about half of the approximately five hundred refugee boys (precisely 269) who subsequently became legionnaires, and whose identities I managed to establish from archival records kept by the French and Hungarian secret services, and specifically the lives of those roughly two dozen Hungarian veteran soldiers living in Provence and Corsica whom I was able to win over for the cause of doing some common “memory work.”

The literature published in the past sixty years on the Hungarian Revolution and the subsequent wave of refugees would fill a sizeable library; of this, the historiographic introduction to my study provides a detailed survey. Besides the sources and monographs published in Hungarian and other languages, a relatively large body of personal recollections, such as interviews, life-history interviews, and memoirs, is also available.¹ The life of emigrant associations and movements including the activity of the student population of universities and colleges is sufficiently documented,² and the self-representation and the ideological or political debates of the emigrant intellectual circles can also be followed up with the help of the archival periodicals of the Western emigration, and from the publications of their various organisations.³ However, no comprehensive scholarly examination of the afterlives of the adolescent refugees of '56 has been undertaken by anyone so far, even if a few remarkable publication meant to preserve the memory of one or another group of this population have in fact appeared, such as relevant parts of László Eörsi's monographs on the adolescent rebels who escaped to the West and then

¹ These are some of the important collections: Columbia Research Program, New York 1957; UN Special Committee on Hungary 1957, Hédervár Collection, OSA Budapest, 1956 Institute OHA, OSZK Történelmi Interjúk Tára

² Várallyay Gyula. *Tanulmányúton. Az emigráns magyar diákmozgalom 1956 után.* Századvég Kiadó – 56 Institute, Budapest, 1992.; Uő. *Tévíúton. Úgynökök az ötvenhatos diákmozgalomban.* L'Harmattan, Bp, 2011.; Czigány Magda. *Kényszerű tanulmányúton. 1956-os magyar egyetemi hallgatók Nagy Britanniában.* Józsvöveg Kiadó, Budapest, 2007.; Hidas, P. *The Hungarian refugee student movement of 1956-57 and Canada.* Canadian Ethnic Studies, 1998 30 (1), 19-50.; Kiss, Tamás. *Association of Hungarian University and College Students 1956 – Szeged.* Belvedere Meridionale, Szeged, 2006.

³ See e.g. Borbándi Gyula. *Magyarok az Angol Kertben. A Szabad Európa Rádió története.* Európa Kiadó, Budapest, 1996.; Borbándi. *Nem éltünk hiába. Az Új Látóhatár négy évtizede.* (Európa, Budapest, 2000.), or the eight-volume reprint edition of the periodical *Irodalmi Újság* originally edited in Paris and then in London (Bethlen – Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1991–1993.)

returned to Hungary,⁴ or András Lénárt's analytical accounts of oral-history research conducted among Hungarian secondary-school students in Austria.⁵ Among other things, my work is meant to fill this gap with a draft tableau of the generation in question, an issue to be returned to below.

Even more conspicuous is the paucity of published material concerning the Hungarian aspects of the French Foreign Legion. Looking for traces of the “invisible – Hungarian – legion” one will still find only sporadic personal data and memoirs of dubious reliability, even though the latter has been available in considerable amounts for the past six or seven generations of legionnaires. Curiously, it is the individual accounts of “civilian” contemporaries that appear to be the most trustworthy – these include data found in reports by Aladár Kuncz, Sándor Molnár, Arthur Koestler, and Endre Bajomi Lázár.⁶ That, among other things, is the reason why I found important further insights offered by archival legionnaire-related documents and French (German, English) legionnaire-related literature – such as material on the post-1956 “période hongrois” when more than 3,000 Hungarian volunteers served in the French Foreign Legion.

2. Research aims

The genre of my study is historical biography of a group, prosopography, coupled with the discrete analysis of some important aspects of the historical era in question. The data accumulation and the attempts at interpretation of five years' work are meant to serve the following purposes.

1. My primary objective was to fill a gap by uncovering the fates of a by now largely forgotten generation in terms of source exploration and documentation on the one hand and analysis on the other. All the more so as there is a regrettable dearth, to this day, of scholarly inquiry into and historical-sociological analysis of the integration of waves of Hungarian (e)migration to the West following-up successive generations. Where such studies are most conspicuously absent is, curiously, the subject of the emigrant diaspora of the Western European region. In that regard the most thorough, generations-wide, process description is undoubtedly provided by the migrant-related monographs and source publications on overseas migration by Julianna Puskás, Zoltán Fejős, and Albert Tezla, whose works are repeatedly cited in my study.⁷ That is in spite of the fact that even these authors themselves acknowledge that the only focussed research or independent field work conducted by

⁴ See e.g. Eörsi László. *A „Baross Köztársaság”, 1956*. L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2011., and the hundreds of “defecting” adolescents appearing in the biographies published in the author's website at www.eorsilaszlo.hu.

⁵ Lénárt András. Újra „otthon”. Hazalátogató '56-os emigránsok, in *Az 1956 Institute évkönyve, 2008*. 109-143. Uő. Fluchtgeschichten von 1956er Jugendlichen, in: Ibolya Mörber–Zoltán Fónagy, eds. *Die ungarische Revolution und Österreich 1956*, Wien, Czernin Verlag, 2006. 465-495.

⁶ Kuncz Aladár. *Fekete kolostor. Feljegyzések a francia internáltságból*. Kriterion–Országos Széchényi Könyvtár, Kolozsvár-Budapest, 2014. – Molnár Sándor. *Magyar sors francia földön*, Párisi Magyar Akadémia, é.n. Paris, 1932. – Koestler Arthur. *A Föld sötétje*, Osiris, Budapest, 1988. Bajomi Lázár Endre. *Tramontana. Magyar önkéntesek Franciaországban*. Zrínyi Kiadó, Budapest, 1984.

⁷ Puskás Julianna. *Kivándorló magyarok az Egyesült Államokban 1880–1940*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1982. – Fejős Zoltán. *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke, 1890-1940*. Közép-Európai Intézet, Budapest, 1993. – Tezla Albert. *„Valahol túl, Meseországban...”*. *Az amerikai magyarok, 1895-1920*. Európa Kiadó, Budapest 1987.

them was of a mostly local character, due to the nearly incomprehensibly random geographical distribution of the Hungarian emigrant population of America. (Puskás's investigations were limited to the Cleveland area, while Fejős explored the generations of Chicago-based Hungarian-Americans, and Tezla, whose impressive collection of sources cover the whole of the North-American continent, focused his documentation on the early twentieth-century Hungarian colony of his birthplace, South Bend, Indiana.)

2. The rationale and the findings of my statistical data-collection are discussed in the relevant chapters of my study and in the appendix of documents. My purpose with these has been to provide significant amounts of missing data and the critical revision of earlier data publications in order to help, with well-founded estimates and solid facts, fellow-researchers gain relevant insights and conduct further research. My work has included various areas of supplementary tasks ranging from that of offering repeated and reliable estimations concerning the magnitude of underage refugees, the percentage of post-'56 Hungarian legionaries, specifically of escaped adolescents, among those missing or killed in action, those who deserted or repatriated, and among the casualties of the wars in Indochina and Algeria. The conclusions to be drawn from these data are summed up under the heading "New scholarly results" below.

3. Right from the outset, I regarded it is an important task to introduce, as truly and vividly as possible, the part played by the secret services (Deuxième Bureau vs Hungarian counterespionage) in the above, and thoroughly to explore the various means of recruiting agents, handling diplomatic conflicts, and deploying media and propaganda campaigns. The full arsenal of all that manifested itself in the case of underage emigrants, debated parrionately for long years, as early as the autumn of '56, and then played a decisive part in shaping the chances of the adolescent migrants of '56 at the various bifurcations of fate and history as well as the changing attitudes of these people to their native and host countries and their "third homeland" the Foreign Legion ("Patria Nostra") until the regime change of 1990 and virtually to this very day.

4. As it was clear to me from the beginning that the most intensely formative, and in many ways controversial, youthful experience of the target group of my research had been the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and then, a few years later, the Algerian War (1954-1962), I identified it as an important research objective, too, to provide a true and detailed close-up picture of both of these cold-war conflicts of historic significance. Due partly to the scarcity of relevant sources and partly to the insufficient treatment of these sources, the topic required significant amounts of further exploration. The multiform lack of documentation concerning the underage refugees of '56 and of material held by the various aid organisations (UNHCR, US AID, Caritas, Red Cross Societies, etc.) will illustrate the former, while the virtual absence, in Hungary, of anything beyond the heavily biased, ideologically motivated and scattered publications of a single author (László J. Nagy) can be cited to indicate the latter.

5. It is here that the complex of objectives determining the approaches to my research should be clarified. Among other things, it was precisely while pondering the ambiguous ethical and political evaluation of Hungary's '56 vs Algeria that I tried, through the fullest possible assessment of facts and personal motives, to transcend the mostly unprofitable and misleading dichotomy of "victims and villains" in my work. In order to do that, I had to determine, before all else, the extent to which my target group – that adolescent generation of '56 refugees which, born in the years of World

War II, had seen untold deprivations, violence and inhumanity at a very early age – was in control of their own deeds. Put another way, was it only the series of traumas and pressures of the 20th century that shaped their fates, or did their rebellion against all that and their daredevil actions that was also responsible for the turns their careers took?

6. A sympathetic and nuanced evaluation of that was enhanced by the inclusion of another analytical approach with which I examined the variations of these persons' individual and group identities and the characteristic conflicts of these identities on the basis of the relevant models and interpretations in the works of classical and contemporary authors on developmental and social psychology (Freud, Erikson, Mérei, Ferenc Pataki, János László, Ferenc Erős; Pierre Bourdieu, Eric Hobsbawn, Rogers Bruebaker, and Peter Stachel).

7. I found a similarly profitable analytical tool in the examination of advantageous and disadvantageous types of socialisation in the case of this peculiar generation of refugees. What that involved was the exploration of the degree to which the adaptation, in various successive biographical situations, of this veteran group, by now well over seventy years of age, was helped or hindered by the fact that as 13 to 17 year-old teenagers they set out for the wide world on their own in late 1956 and then, a few years later, they joined, many of them still as minors, the Foreign Legion. No doubt, these circumstances heavily impacted their socialisation, delaying the commencement of their civilian lives – starting a family and choosing a non-military career. The question that remains to be answered is why it happened the way it happened in each individual case.

8. Another useful approach in my research involved the use of the relevant model offered by the “culture-shock theory” in my examination of the frequently changing life situations and the various cultural effects, as members of this veteran '56 generation of “great times” had often been posted in dozens of Foreign Legion bases in three or four continents during the 20 to 30 years of their active service (in Algeria, Corsica, Madagascar, Djibouti, Chad, Tahiti, French Guyana, etc.). The well-tried recommendations of cultural anthropology helped me to employ the protocols of the “participant observer” and to acquire the constant self-control required of the field researcher.

9. Finally, I also set it to myself, on the basis of my personal experience and my reading in the literature of the history of emigration, as an objective to determine what the target group of my research should be defined as: a Hungarian colony living in France or rather a distinct “diaspora of legionnaires” separated from the larger community of the emigrant diaspora. To determine that, I tried to use the analogous and contrary examples found in the Hungarian and international literature of the subject.

3. Research methods and sources

My growing interest in the sources of the history of Hungarian emigration has, in the past decade, been fed by the disturbing recognition that the generation of '56 emigrants is disappearing and, with it, much of the corpus of personal memories, too – due to the uncertain future of the documentary heritage and the collections related to the Western diaspora. Meanwhile, the archival documentation of the aid organisations that played a key role at the time (UNHCR, the Red Cross, US Aid,

Caritas, etc.) is either scanty in terms of many important details, or has remained unexplored to this day.

1. Scarcity: sources, bibliographies, data banks and historiography

It was in Hungary that I was first faced with the “distress of dearth” and then I ran into the same situation during my fieldwork in Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, France, and overseas. What I found was, among other things, that no reliable data bases, annotated bibliographies, or historiographies of any comprehensive nature – or at least ones covering the last a century and a half – of the sources and literature on the Hungarian history of emigration have been compiled to this day.⁸ The situation is no better where it comes to the most sensitive documentary sources of the refugee drama of '56. According to the witness accounts given by members of the Red Cross personnel, a commando of the interior ministry loaded the entire correspondence (included thousands of requests for search and personal data) of the Tracking Service of the Hungarian Red Cross on a lorry and took the material to an unknown destination in early 1962,⁹ while archives of the same section of the Austrian Red Cross was destroyed by a fatal water-pipe leakage in 1973.¹⁰ Files kept in thirty-five countries of five continents on thousands of naturalised or adopted underage Hungarian refugees are still closed to the public. (In the archives of the Swiss Red Cross alone, the adoption files of 680 Hungarian children of '56 are still kept under lock and key at the bottoms carefully locked vaults in Bern.¹¹) Similarly, most of the personal files in the archives of the Western secret services and armed forces (Bundeswehr, US Army / Navy / Air Force, Légion Étrangère) are still not open to research sixty years after the event, even though these organisations were, by default, the yearned-after final destinations of the wide-roaming adolescent emigrants.

2. Library, archival and media-history research

I started my research somewhat more than five years ago in Hungarian libraries and archives (OSA, ÁBTL, OSZK, MNL OL, 1956 Institute, OHA). Already then, it appeared as a distressing deficiency that no comprehensive generation-research of a scholarly standards had been devoted to the fates of the nearly twenty thousand Hungarian adolescents who had “struck out for the wide world” without adult companions at the turn of 1956 and 1957. And that in spite of the fact that the fates of “the orphans of the revolution” had remained a major cause of the propaganda-battles of the cold war on both sides of the Iron Curtain as witnessed by several media campaigns and diplomatic exchanges of notes. That, too, is reflected in a spate of news agency releases, and the plentiful press coverage of the case in Hungary, Austria, Yugoslavia, and the West as well as background reports made by Radio Free Europe (RFE background reports, Open Society Archives, Budapest), which I successfully sifted through for several important personal data.

3. Interviews, memoirs, oral-history collections

⁸ It is the latter gap that I wished to fill with a 160-thousand character long overview. That material was discussed in a workshop hosted by the Minority Research Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in June 2016. The discussion provided me with several new and useful considerations and additional data.

⁹ Verbal communication by Mária Gombár and Ilona Kucsma (Hungarian Red Cross), October 2011. The disappearance of the tracking cards and correspondence was reinforced by Magda Kodri, former head of the Tracking Service of the Hungarian Red Cross, in an interview given to the author in December 2011.

¹⁰ Sources of verbal information as in the previous note.

¹¹ Based on a detailed account sent by former Swiss adoptee Dr Tibor Sámuel Pataky (St. Gallen) to the author in February 2012.

All that was soon supplemented with the findings of simultaneously researched interviews, memoirs, and the testimony of the above-mentioned contemporary collections, from which a bizarre and heart-wrenching tableau of fates emerged, representing the lives of a populous generation of refugee adolescents. Besides the teenage rebels afraid of the reprisals and the nearly two thousand Hungarian students in Austrian secondary schools, thousands of Hungarian apprentice miners ended up in mines in West Germany, Belgium, France, Sweden, and the English Midlands, where they lived in close communities for years to come. The youngest were taken to children's homes or placed with (adoptive) families, while young girls were admitted to church institutions and semi-closed factory dormitories for workers. A surprisingly large number of boys applied for admittance to Western armed forces and organisations: the Austrian Gendarmerie, the Bundeswehr, the bases of the US Army, Navy, and Air Force in Italy, France, the FRG – and, of course, the French Foreign Legion.

4. The legionnaire-related documents in the archives of the Hungarian and the French secret services

Out of methodological and practical considerations, it is the latter that I chose for the target group of my further in-depth research. I did so, above all, because the legionnaires' appeared to be one of the most populous and most distinctly specific groups of adolescent refugees. Also, that was the closest and most homogenous group and, up to 1968, the end of the French evacuation of Algeria, the one whose traces were the easiest to follow. It was not a negligible consideration either that it was this group on which the greatest wealth of archival and personal sources of a biographical nature appeared to be available. In the Historical Archives of the Hungarian State Security Services (ÁBTL) alone I examined more than a hundred legionnaire-related files – not researched to this day – in the next four years. (These included registration cards, building registers, agents' reports, periodic reports made by postal censors, etc.) Added to all that was the challenge that what awaited me here were (war)paths untrodden by civilian researches so far, as nobody had conducted research into or published their findings on the "Hungarian history" of the French Foreign Legion.

5. The inclusion of Provence and Corsica-based veterans in my life-history research

A further widening and deepening of my explorations' focus resulted from my introduction, in person, to some two dozen Hungarian veterans, who maintain close connections with each other to this day. Most of them had been submitted to a "baptism of fire" as adolescent rebels as early as the autumn of 1956, after which they escaped from the reprisals to the West. In a few years' time, they joined the Foreign Legion, where they served for 15 to 29 years at some two dozen military bases on four continents. A further boost was given to my research done in Hungary's archives when, in the spring of 2012, a grant received from the Balassi Institute enabled me methodically to examine the material of Hungarian relevance from the years of the Algerian War held in the Central Archives of the Foreign Legion in Aubagne (Centre Documentation LE), being the first Hungarian researcher having to do so.¹² Thirdly, I managed to expand my oral-history interviews at home and in France and involve my veteran informants in a memory-preservation project lasting for years between the autumn of 2011 and the autumn of 2015. This included the shooting of a film with the crew of the Duna Region Foundation (Dunatáj Alapítvány)

¹² Journal de Marches et Opérations de la Légion Étrangère, 1956-1962, Bilan annuel, 1959; 1960.

following up the lives of the film's subjects. (The approximately 40-hour footage has been made into a television and feature film titled *Patria Nostra*, expected to be released and aired in the autumn of 2016).

6. Questionnaire-based research among Provence and Corsica veterans

As a preliminary research, this questionnaire was part to serve the purposes of biographical and historical data-collection on the one hand and those of self-reflexive knowledge on the other, used as the basis for further research exploring, in the framework of life-history-interviews and group discussions, individual, group, generation, and ethno-cultural identity-formation as well as the dynamics of conflicting loyalties. The questionnaire comprising 50 questions and probing into three, equally proportioned, phases of the Provence and Corsica veterans' lives (i.e., those before, during and after the years in the Legion) was completed in writing by nine respondents, each in his 70s, between 2011 and 2014.¹³ In my work I make ample reference to the completed questionnaires – alongside other sources – to shed light on certain important turning points, biographical phases, or situations calling for personal decisions; doing so, I occasionally cite groups of answers given to some salient questions.¹⁴

7. The image of the legionnaire as formed by “civilian” emigrants of Hungarian origin in France

Arriving at a “mature,” analytical, stage of my research in the past two years, I decided methodically to explore the relationship of my target group with a number of reference groups important to them (relatives at home, members of their birth cohort, “civilian” emigrants in France, the host – mainly local – French environment, members of an older generation of Hungarian legionnaires, deserters from the legion, returnees repatriating to Hungary before and after 1990). As part of this project I sent, in 2015, a circular containing a seven-item questionnaire to 25 to 30 former emigrants in France, mainly those who had left Hungary in 1956. The purpose of the questionnaire was to help me establish what my respondents knew and thought of their former fellow-refugees who had joined the Foreign Legion and whether they maintained any contact with them. They responded in person, by telephone, or in writing, and some of their specific answers are cited in appropriate sections of my work.¹⁵

8. Life-history interviews recorded with camera or dictaphone

From the beginning, I strove to establish open and mutually confidential relationships with a narrow circle of my target group (among them a dozen or so veterans in Provence or Corsica) and to find opportunities during our repeated interviews in Hungary or abroad for them individually to recall the major events of their lives before a camera or a dictaphone. With each of them at least one (in some cases as many as four or five) several-hour long interview was made in their own homes, in addition to which four of them were escorted by us to the scenes of their childhoods during their visits in Hungary. Our interviews were in part “open-ended”

¹³ Respondents to the questionnaire were A. Domokos (Budapest, 1939) Paris, 2012 – Béle Huber (Sopron, 1942) Aubagne, 2012 – János Spátay (Budapest, 1943) Puyloubier, 2011 – Sándor Soós (Budapest, 1939) Séptemes les Vallons, 2012 – Gyula Elek Sorbán (Budapest, 1940) Toulon, 2011 – Tibor Szecskó (Gyöngyös, 1939) Aix-en-Provence, 2011 – Tamás Morvay (Budapest, 1938) Vins sur Caramy, 2012 – Sándor Nemes (Szekszárd-Zomba, 1941) Borgo (Korzika), 2011 – Lajos Pápai (Öcsöd, 1937) Montrichard, 2014

¹⁴ In the appendix to my study called “Documents” I publish the questionnaires completed by my first respondent Sándor Nemes (Borgo, Korzika) as a sample.

¹⁵ Dr Paul Wiener, Párizs; Martha Dufournaud, Párizs; Sándor Szabó, Versaille; Anna Koós, Mátyás Oláh, New York, Budapest.

and in part thematically controlled, depending on the given situation and the means at our disposal. I did not deem the total-abstention method of narrative interviewing productive here, as the respondents expected to find active interlocutors and, what is more, occasional “reminders,” interpreters, walking name and address directories or even “temporal police” in the person of the interviewer.

9. Group gatherings, interviews with friends and relatives

It was an altogether different situation where it came to also pre-arranged group gatherings, such as events honouring the memory of '56, banquets, family and sickbed visits, and field trips to the scenes of the respondents' childhoods. During these, we (including the crew of the documentary film) strove, to the best of our abilities, to stay in the background to allow our veterans to open up in the most authentic manner possible in the presence of their relatives, friends, neighbours, or colleagues. Separate interviews were conducted with relatives, friends, and other veteran or active legionnaires, recording some 30 or 40 additional conversations.

10. Memoirs and the collection of additional memory-material

I received plenty of useful further help with my work from my veteran respondents. They provided me with legionnaire-related sources in French and in Hungarian, gave me handbooks and, relying on chains of confidential references, enabled me to involve further members of their generation in my research; subsequently they also played a major part in helping me identify, by name and personal particulars, 269 of the approximately 500 adolescent refugees who had escaped to the West and then joined the Foreign Legion. On my request, many of them recorded their recollections in writing, of what had happened to them during their escape, their stay in refugee camps, their early memories as emigrants and as participants in the fights of '56 and then in the Algerian War. Many of them also had their share in collecting further memory-material (archive photos, letters, personal and official documents); it is mostly due to them that I have been able to illustrate my work with many original pictures evoking the periods in question, and that I can now deposit plentiful and varied source material complete with questionnaires, with their memoirs, and with interviews, all under the heading “Legion-related Research” in the Oral History Archives of the 1956 Institute.

4. New scholarly results

The most important achievement of my work may be the fact that through contrasting the findings of library and archival research with personal memory-material (questionnaires, memoirs, life-history interviews recorded with camera and dictaphone), a complex documentation of the crossroads in the troublesome lives of a by now largely forgotten group of adolescent refugees of 1956 has now been compiled. I also regard it as a gap-filler that the multifaceted life-history repertoire of a nearly twenty-thousand strong adolescent refugee generation has been drafted and filled in with plentiful archival and personal data related to the Revolution of '56, the battles fought, and the early period of the emigrant experience. Following the fates of the refugee adolescents, my work offers plentiful fresh insight, through a series of analytical case studies and numerous newly discovered details, into the background of the intelligence and propaganda operations of the cold war as well as the peculiar modes of functioning that characterised the secret services and armed organisations of the period.

My statistical data collection has yielded a whole range of so far unknown factual figures and estimations. Thus a careful collation of the data published earlier on the number of young refugees who escaped to the West (Survey of 1957 by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, UNHCR Report, records kept by the interior ministries of Austria and Yugoslavia) allowed me to conclude that the this refugee group's order of magnitude had been underestimated by most authors and sources, and that the figure in question was approximately one third above the former estimations, i.e., some 14 to 18 thousand boys and girls remained permanently in the West. Relying on Hungarian and French sources and on personal data collection I also managed to determine the size of the Hungarian contingent within the Foreign Legion between 1945 and 1963 (4,000 persons), the number of those joining up after 1956 (cc. 2,500), and finally the estimated (cc. 500) and identified (269) number of legionnaires among the underage refugees of '56. The latter breakdown of figures enabled me to offer a nuanced analysis (of those who completed the first five-year term of service, the demobilised, the deserters, the repatriated, those recruited as agents, etc.).

Another, similarly new and relevant insight produced by my research is that the counter-espionage service of the Hungarian interior ministry was only able to identify and put on record less than one third of the Hungarian legionnaires only, despite years of comprehensive data collection, correspondence monitoring, and agent recruitment. I believe that an old debt was settled when I managed, on the basis of reliable French and Hungarian interior-ministry sources, to tot up the losses sustained by Hungarian legionnaires in the Indochinese and Algerian wars. The factual and estimated numbers of those killed in action in Indochina are 288 and 330 respectively, while the corresponding figures with the Algerian War are 36 and cc. 120 respectively. (These data do not include the number of Hungarian legionnaires who died in POW-camps, which is estimated by the survivors to be at several hundred.) These data suggested a further important conclusion: based on the relevant birth dates, it can be calculated that in both generations of legionnaires – one third of the post-45 and about one fifth of the post-56 people – the percentage of those who escaped, or were taken by force, to the West, in their teens was very high. History has a depressing tendency to repeat itself.

I stepped on untrodden paths when I undertook to trace down, applying the criteria of strict source criticism for the first time, the surprisingly rich material of Hungarian interest in the past of the French Foreign Legion. It was a similarly pioneering endeavour historically to reconstruct the role played by the Hungarian contingent of legionnaires in the Algerian War.

Of the plentiful fresh insight yielded by the analyses of my group in the areas of socio-history and group psychology, here I only intend to highlight two. One is related to the long-term – i.e., occurring over periods spanning whole eras or life phases – changes in multi-ethnic and in their ideology openly supranational bodies (the Foreign Legion!) whereby corporative associations held together by force are transformed into voluntary civilian communities; this phenomenon is clearly exemplified by the veteran associations of former Hungarian legionnaires. As it is identified as a trend by Gábor Gyáni generalising the findings of earlier research done by Julianna Puskás, Zoltán Fejős and others, after their successful integration the Hungarian refugees of '56 “began to relinquish their group identities in return for individual identities; their relationships within the ethnic (Hungarian) organisations and within their interpersonal relations (marriage, the choice of residence) were

increasingly loosened, and they drifted apart from the Hungarian ethnic network.”¹⁶ Of course, Gyáni does not claim – and neither do the researchers he cites – that this would have been a universally valid scheme covering the Hungarian emigrant diaspora of '56 in its entirety all over the Western world. And it certainly was nothing of the sort. It is precisely the salient counter-example of the Hungarian legionnaires that illustrates that there was, as there could be, a way out of the shaken and weakened ethnic-based group identity toward something beyond an individual or an alternative ethno-cultural identity, toward a radically new, corporative – and in its slogans – supranational group identity (for young and active legionnaires), and then, after several decades and at the price of half-hearted compromises (and, curiously, with the mediation of the here and there “Hungarianising” veteran legionnaires’ associations), back, on the part of the refugees of '56, to a partially ethno-cultural, partially historical-political identity, as it is well exemplified by the uniquely cultic acts of memory-work commemorating '56 as performed by the Hungarian veterans of Paris and Provence.

The other surprising conclusion reveals the delicate correlation between the testing situations of adaptation and the young emigrants’ abilities of socialisation on the one hand and, on the other, the chances of their integration. The target group I examined, while exhibiting certain identity markers peculiar to generation and social environment (such as their gang spirit, handicaps of socialisation, deviant tendencies, etc.), did not initially distance itself from the rest of the Hungarian refugee community of '56 in France. The process of independent group formation – and, with it, the emergence of a shared mode of existence and a shared sense of identity – characteristically started in Algeria, after these people had joined the Foreign Legion, and then continued during the drawn-out French evacuation, when these people were cooped up for years in dozens of regiments, together with fellow-legionaries of dozens of other nationalities and some three thousand of their older compatriots. The “colonial” way of life was the most characteristic of these people while they served in France’s North-African colony, where their units or the location of their postings hardly changed, even though the military manoeuvres kept them constantly on the move. However, homogenous colonies could not be formed here either, due to the multifarious differences of ethnicity, generation, and rank – as it is demonstrated in the chapter of my work discussing the issue of “the Hungarian legionnaires’ mafia.” What they were offered increasing opportunities of, as they came to know each other better in time, was the spontaneous strengthening of shared memories pertaining to '56, and a growing sense of generational community before they repeatedly parted ways on leaving Algeria. That sense of togetherness would then serve, after decades when they returned to civilian life, for a close-knit community of Hungarian veterans living, not too far from each other, in Provence and sharing a strong sense of group identity, as a basis to revive, as nostalgic recollections, their memories of the “military colonies” with its rituals and corporative traditions.

But from the viewpoint of successful integration, the prolonged chance described as “the psychological moratorium of the young” by Erik H. Erikson was even more important. It regularly emerges from their memories that, coming of age in the early 1950s, their socialisation was in effect stalled, and most of them were forced into the Foreign Legion by their severe failures of adapting to French civilian life. It is a fact that this populous generation of adolescents was tested conspicuously early and severely by the crises of adaptation, as indicated by several documented

¹⁶ Gyáni Gábor. '56-os menekültek emlékező stratégiái. in Kanyó Tamás. Emigráció és identitás – '56-os menekültek Svájcban, L'Harmattan, 2003, 137.

cases, too. All that was added to the tests, hard under any circumstances, of identity crisis characteristic of adolescence as such, which was often coupled, especially in the great cities of France, with xenophobic stigmas and cruel humiliations as well as the sense of alienation, homelessness, deprivation, and starvation. No wonder if many of them tried to find a way out of the depressing entrapment in the failures of socialisation by joining the Foreign Legion.

But then the 18 to 20 year old recruits suffered even greater tribulations in wartime Algeria, partly due to their being crowded together by force, their exposure to constant aggression and stress, and partly to the newer challenges of feeling multiple alienation: from the multicultural environment of the Foreign Legion on the one hand and, on the other, the foreign languages and customs of the local population, which they had to adapt themselves to day in day out. Those surviving these trials and managing to switch to the corporative way of life, which offered a certain sense of security with its rigid regulations, could serve the five or ten years following the first five in more distant and more peaceful postings. They were thus given a reprieve – another chance after the first severe failures of adaptation to start, strengthened in body and mind and having acquired the French language, their civilian lives anew in France, finding there a new family, a new home, and a new career for themselves.

After the above summary of my theses, it is here that I wish to return to the question which, as suggested above, had better be transcended: what should we regard the adolescent refugees of '56, those five hundred Hungarian legionnaires among the “orphans of the revolution,” who squandered the prime of their youthful lives, all in vain, on Algeria? Were they “victims or villains”?

The question rings falsely rhetorical to begin with, as no answer to it can be anything but personal and individual. In any case, what the documents and the surviving comrades bear witness to is that among these people there were rebels, heroes and dupes as well as selfish and aggressive cases of self-seeking moral insanity, those who willingly “ratted” on their comrades and those who worked for the Western or Hungarian intelligence services – sometimes consecutively for both –, and those, too, who boldly risked their lives to save others. One thing is for certain: the fates, often taking long detours, of the majority of these people were marked by successful or failed attempts at resolving conflicting loyalties, which repeated themselves throughout their lives. They wanted to belong to someone, somewhere – a desire shared by all of us ever since of being born – and for that they often had to pay disproportionately high prices. And when their choices were reduced to equally wrong alternatives, the instinct to survive would not let them ponder the question, “Should I be a victim or a villain?”

The handful of Provence and Corsica-based Hungarian veterans whom I was introduced to can be said to be lucky survivors and belated messengers of this much-tried generation. But even the lives of these respectably aged men have been spent almost all along fighting the battles, trying them beyond their strength, of losing and reclaiming their homeland, of homelessness and of homemaking. Their restless search for a place to live and a mate to live with has not come to an end yet: some of them are still toying with the idea of returning to their homeland – for a longer time or even for good.

5. The candidate's publications on 1956

1. Books

- Nóvé Béla: *Kortárs Krónika 1956 [Contemporary Chronicle 1956]*, Krónika Nova Kiadó, 2012.
- Nóvé Béla: *A katalán torony. Esszék, tárcák, publicisztikák [Catalan Human Tower. Essays, feuilletons, journalistic writings]*, Mandátum Kiadó, 2013.
- Nóvé Béla: *Múltunk, ha szembe jön. Cikk, tanulmányok [Face To Face With Our Past. Articles and studies]*, Noran Libro Kiadó, 2013.
- Les trajets du samizdat ["Paths of Samizdat"]. In: *Budapest. Une guide culturelle, Autrement, Paris 1988.*
- The Orphans of the Revolution. Hungarian Under-age Refugees and their Stories In: *East Central Europe in Exile. Patterns of Transatlantic Migrations.*, Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2013. vol 1. pp. 65-92.
(előkészületben:)
- Nóvé Béla: *Patria nostra – '56-os menekült kamaszok a Francia Idegenlégióban [Patria Nostra: Adolescent Refugees from Hungary in the French Foreign Legion]*, Balassi Kiadó, 2016. október

2. Translations

- Heller Ágnes - Fehér Ferenc: *Egy forradalom üzenete, 1956 [Hungary, 1956 Revisited]*. Kossuth, 1989.
- Heller Ágnes - Fehér Ferenc: *Jalta után [From Yalta to Glasnost]*, (másokkal) Kossuth, 1990.

3. Documentary films

- *Patria nostra. 1956-os menekült kamaszok a Francia Idegenlégióban – 24 perces válogatás egy készülő dokumentumfilmből [Patria Nostra: Adolescent Refugees from Hungary in the French Foreign Legion. A 24-minute compilation of excerpts from a documentary in the works]*. <https://vimeo.com/45564805>
- *Bibó-émlékkönyv 1979 [Bibó Memorial Volume 1979]* (Dunatáj Alapítvány 2014. rendező: Surányi Z. András, szakértő, beszélgetőtárs: NB)
- *Patria nostra. 1956-os menekült kamaszok a Francia Idegenlégióban [Patria Nostra: Adolescent Refugees from Hungary in the French Foreign Legion]* (Dunatáj Alapítvány 2016. rendező, szakértő, beszélgetőtárs: NB)

4. Portraits, interviews, and oral history interviews

- „Nekem ez szívügyem volt.” Forgács Pál utolsó interjúja [“For me, it was a labour of love.’ Pál Forgács, the last interview”]. *Élet és Irodalom*, 1996. július 12.
- Félbeszakadt hatásvizsgálat. Töredékek Kardos László életút-interjújából [“Abandoned impact assessment: Fragments of a life interview with László Kardos”]. *Élet és Irodalom*, 1999. június 18.
- Egy lónyais örökdiák Londonban – Huszár László építész életútja [“An eternal Lónyay student in London: The life of architect László Huszár”], *Holmi*, 2008/9.
- Huszár László (London) életút-interjúja, 2002 [László Huszár (London): A life interview, 2002]. 1956-os Intézet, Oral History Archives

- Grúber Istvánné Hegedűs Györgyi életút-interjúja, 2009 [Mrs. Györgyi Grúber-Hegedűs: A life interview, 2009]. 1956-os Intézet, OHA
- Mécs Imre életút-interjúja, 2012 [Imre Mécs: A life interview, 2012]. 1956-os Intézet, OHA

5. Articles, studies, film and book critics

- Happening helikopter-huzatban. Jancsó Miklós: Szörnyek évadja ["Happening in helicopter blast: Miklós Jancsó's *Season of Monsters*"]. *Filmvilág*, 1987/4.
- Vágóhídi vérvád. Kézdi Kovács Zsolt: Kiáltás és kiáltás c. '56-os témájú filmjéről. 1987 november ["Slaughterhouse Blood Libel: On Zsolt Kézdi Kovács' movie *Cry and Cry* concerning 1956"]. (In: Katalán torony, 2003 pp 81-84.)
- Önkényuralmi emlékeink – avagy az emlékezet önkényuralma ["On our memories of despotism, or, on the despotic nature of our memories"], *Magyar Lettre International*, 48./2003. - lengyelül: „Nostalgia”, Czarne, Warsawa, 2003. – olaszul: Nostalgia: Saggi sul rimpianto del comunismo, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2003.
- Rediscovering the Hidden Path of Samizdat and the Dissent Movements, in: *Przeгляд*, Warsaw, July 2005.
- „Elhunyt korszakról jót, vagy...” Tükörszilánkok. Kádár-korszakok a személyes emlékezetben. ["Talking of a deceased era...! Shards of mirrors: Kádár eras in personal memory"] *Holmi*, 2008/12.
- Cenzúraviták a '80-as évek Magyarországon ["Debates on censorship in Hungary in the 1980s", *Kritika*, 2011/1-2. oroszul: Jevropa, Varsó, 2009/3.; angolul: *Eurozine.com*, 2010. szeptember + *Paradigma*, Szentpétervár, 2010/14.; németül: *Osteuropa*, Berlin, 2010/12.; litvánul: *Kulturos Barai*, Vilnius 2010/9.
- Gyászmunka vagy halotti tor? Molnár Adrienne: Ötvenhatosok a rendszerváltásról ["Processing grief, or funeral feast? Adrienne Molnár's volume of life interviews], *Élet és Irodalom*, 2011. 11. 13
- Világtörténelem – helyben... Eörsi László: A „Baross Köztársaság” [Local World History: On László Eörsi's book *The "Baross Republic"*], 1956. *Élet és Irodalom*, 2011. 10. 21.
- Menekültkarácsony, 1956 ["Christmas of refugees, 1956"]. *Élet és Irodalom*, 2011. 01. 14.
- A forradalom árvái. Az '56-os emigráns és remigráns kamaszok sorsa ["Orphans of a revolution: Teeange refugees and returnees after 1956"]. *BBC History Magazin*, 2012/1-3.
- Bibó, 100-54-48 *Élet és Irodalom*, 2011. 01. 14.
- Szabó Zoltán, 100 +/- ? *Kritika*, 2012 /12.
- Rejtőző fondok, kései tanúságtételek ["Fonds hiding, late testimonies"]. *Múlt-kor*, www.mult-kor.hu/cikk.php?id=38081 , 2012. 12.27.
- Perishing Papers, Vanishing Witnesses? The Future Fate of Hungarian Diaspora Collections. *Slavonic and East European Information Resources*, 2013/1
- The Orphans of the Revolution. Hungarian Under-age Refugees and their Stories In: *East-Central Europe in Exile. Patterns of Transatlantic Migrations.*, Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2013. vol 1. pp. 65-92.
- A forradalom árvái / Népfelkelők idegen zászlók alatt / Patria nostra – 3 részes cikksorozat ["Orphans of a revolution; Insurgents under foreign flags; Patria nostra: A series of articles in three parts], *BBC History Magazin* 2012/1-3.
- Szigorúan nyilvános – Szőnyi Tamás: Titkos írás. Állambiztonsági szolgálat és irodalmi élet, 1956-1990. I-II. c. könyvéről ["Strictly public: On Tamás Szőnyi's

- book *Cryptography: State Security Service and Literary Life 1956 – 1990*, vols. 1-2], *Revizor*, 2012. szeptember
- „Ha elesnék, maradjon valami utánam.” Soós Sándor '56-os kamasz nemzetőr emlékeiből [“I want to leave something behind in case I should fall.’ Recollections of Sándor Soós, adolescent National Guard militiaman in 1956”]. *Budai Polgár*, 2012.11.02.
 - Á la recherche des vétérans hongrois [“In search of Hungarian veterans”], *Képi Blanc magazine de la Légion Étrangère*, 2012/6.
 - The Orphans of '56. Hungarian Child Refugees and Their Stories. *Eurozine*, 2013.01.21. <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2013-01-21-nove-en.html> litvánul: *Kulturos barai*, Vilnius, 2012/12., lengyelül: *Res Publica Nowa*, Varsó, 2013/4.
 - „Patria nostra”. 1956-os menekült kamaszok a Francia Idegenlégióban [“Patria Nostra: Adolescent Refugees from Hungary in the French Foreign Legion”], *Kommentár*, 2013/2.
 - «Patria nostra», Un documentaire sur des jeunes émigrés hongrois engagés dans la Légion Étrangère [“Patria Nostra: Adolescent Refugees from Hungary in the French Foreign Legion”]. *Revue historique des armées*, n° 270 - 1er trimestre, Paris 2013.
 - „Szerelmes levelek a Szaharából. Magyar légiósok szerelmi levelezése [“Love letters of Hungarian legionnaires from the Sahara”]. *BBC History Magazin* 2015/4.
 - „Híre ment, hogy arany van a búza közé rejtve”. Interjú B.-né Kodri Magdával a Magyar Vöröskereszt Személykereső Szolgálatának egykori vezetőjével [“Word got around about gold hidden among the wheat.’ An interview with Mrs Magda B-Kodri, former head of the Hungarian Red Cross People Search Service”], *Kritika*, 2016/1-2. 18-22.

6) Exhibition design, and catalogue editings

- Szamizdat. Alternatív kultúrák Kelet- és Közép-Európában, 1956 – 1989 [Samizdat: Alternative Cultures in Eastern and Central Europe, 1956-1989]. Stencil Kiadó – Európai Kulturális Alapítvány, Budapest 2004.
- The Hungarian Exodus of 1956. Concept and textwork of a documentary photo exhibition displayed at the University of Gdansk, Poland, June 2012.