

**Tina Ilc**

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## **Hungary 1956 in Slovenia 2006**

In the last week of October I was researching on how the Hungarian revolution was represented in Slovenian media. In my opinion, the rate of remembering that event was not very high in my country, as I haven't noticed many events connected to it. There was a symposium on that topic organized by the Ljubljana University and a fictional movie called *Whooping cough* (which is connected to Hungary 1956) was shown on the Slovene national television.<sup>1</sup> Therefore I focused on how this event was represented in one of the main Slovenian newspapers *Delo* and some of its sections. I believe it is necessary to mention that Hungary could not be in the spotlight these days, as the local election was held on Saturday the 21<sup>st</sup> of October, so of course that had been the main topic for all the media in the past few weeks. Yet, I do not think that this was the only reason for a lack of information on that topic. I guess countries of former Yugoslavia do not see any importance in that event, as Yugoslavia successfully opposed Stalin in 1948. However, I have analyzed five articles, published in the above mentioned newspaper, two of them describing the revolution in general, two of them dealing with more specific aspects and one of them commenting it. The other articles that referred to the anniversary mainly dealt with current events in Hungary and not that much with the past.

The two articles dealing with a general view of the uprising have quite a lot in common. They both find the reasons for the revolution in a general discontent with communism and a lack of political freedom. The course of the revolution itself is not much stressed and what I find particularly surprising is that ÁVH (State Security Police) is only



Black and white representation in the article *Tedna, ki sta pretresla komunizem*: the two titles say *Revolutionaries* and *Oppressors*.

mentioned once in each of the articles, though they actually started the violence on Budapest streets. I do not know what could be the possible reason for that, I can only guess the reporters wanted to simplify the story and represent it in black and white, so they put Soviet communists on one side and revolutionary Hungarians on the other, avoiding the fact that not all Hungarians supported the revolution. Another thing that both of the articles have in common is that they deal a lot with the consequences and historic significance of the uprising. Besides mentioning the number of victims the uprising is also described as a hard punch for the communist bloc, but on the other hand the end of the hopes for freedom in Eastern Europe. It is also represented as the first people's uprising against totalitarianism in post-war Europe, which is not the case, as there had been two uprisings in Poznan and GDR before. The last aspect that is stressed in both of the articles is the international reaction on the revolution: The ignorance of Western countries, especially USA, is criticized, but one of the authors justifies it by saying intervention of Western countries would have inevitably led to a Third World War.

As I already mentioned above, there were also two newspaper articles concentrating on more specific aspects of 1956's Hungary – the reactions of Hungary's two neighboring countries, Austria and Yugoslavia. Both of the neighbors somehow differed from others as they were the only two non-members of the Warsaw Pact. The Hungarian revolution was quite a trial for Austria, as it had declared political neutrality only a year before. Austria showed solidarity by accepting many Hungarian refugees and also by showing disapproval of Soviet intervention. As the author of the article says, by this reaction Austria somehow defined its neutrality. On the other hand, Yugoslavian reaction of course is not presented in such a positive way. The title of the article, dealing with this topic, is “How Tito Betrayed Imre Nagy”. Yugoslavia was in fact expected to help revolutionaries as they had made a stand against Stalin only 8 years before. The Yugoslavian embassy in Budapest gave shelter to most of the Hungarian political leaders, yet on November the 11<sup>th</sup> Tito announced that Yugoslavia supports János Kádár, this marked Nagy's supporters as counter-revolutionaries and Soviet intervention as inevitable. After that all the politicians and their families, who found shelter in Yugoslavian embassy were assured they could safely return to their homes, but they were abducted by Soviets and taken to Romania instead. The author of the article criticizes the reaction of Yugoslavia by saying that it was a betrayal.

The fifth and last article I have analyzed seems quite important to me as well as from the view of our project, as its title is “History and Memory”. The author of this comment

states that the European memory is divided, as the West experienced freedom in 1945, while the East had to wait for another 40 years. The Hungarian revolution is important for European history in two ways: it indicated the break of totalitarian structure, yet it also indicated the stability in relations between East and West. The author explains that by saying USA and USSR it was silently agreed on borders of their spheres of interest. The article is concluded by the words of a Britain diplomat who reported from Hungary during the revolution: "Hungarians will neither forget nor forgive that."

***Sources:***

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Szabo, Jozsef. "Tedna, ki sta pretresla komunizem". *Nedelo*, 22 October 2006, p.3.

Vidmajer, Saša. "Madžarska se spominja". *Delo*, 21 October 2006, p.7.

Vidmajer, Saša. "Zgodovina in spomin". *Delo*, 24 October 2006, p.5.

<sup>1</sup> Later I discovered there is also an exhibition held in National Museum of Contemporary History, but it opened on 6<sup>th</sup> November, so I could not include it in my research.

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