

ARTICLE

The social sciences in Hungary during the Cold War and after

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Abstract

Based on various types of recently explored empirical evidence, this study attempts to account for the complex and ever-changing relationship the social sciences in Hungary have entertained with their foreign counterparts, both institutionally and through their intellectual references since their birth in the early 20th century. Historically, up until Communist times, Hungary was a German intellectual colony of sorts while remaining receptive mostly to French and other influences as well. This changed fundamentally after 1948 with the process of Sovietization. This implied the outright institutional suppression of several social disciplines (sociology, demography, political science, and psychoanalysis) and the forceful intellectual realignment of others along Marxist lines. Contacts with the West were also suspended and the exclusive orientation to Soviet social science enforced throughout the long 1950s. A thaw period after this attempt at Russian cultural colonization followed the years after the 1956 anti-Bolshevik uprising. From 1963 on, the Hungarian social sciences saw the reestablishment and state-supported promotion of disciplines that were suppressed earlier, the softening of the ascendancy of official Marxism, and the opening of channels of exchange with the West. In spite of the continuation of political censorship, ideological surveillance, and occasional expulsion of politically dissident scholars until 1989, Hungarian social scientists could benefit more often and intensively from Western sponsorship (such as study grants from the Ford foundation) and collaborations. After the fall of Communism, the expansion and reorientation of the social sciences to the West, dominated by Anglo-Saxon contacts, are demonstrated by various indices, such as data on the book market of the social sciences and books purchased by libraries, translated, or cited in major reviews.

Keywords

Sovietization, cultural colonization, Westernization, Social sciences, socialist Hungary

Hungary had been a German cultural colony proper during the nation building process in pre-socialist times (up until 1945). The academic system and the set-up of schooling equipment were constructed on the Prussian-German model via Austrian imperial mediation. Most of the intellectual exchanges among students and scholars took place with institutions of Germanic civilizational areas.

German was the only mandatory language taught in classical secondary education, followed at a distance (but only in *Realschulen*) by French. The fundamental German orientation of the elites did not change in the decades before 1945. This is indirectly reflected in the data on linguistic competencies of the population in the interwar years. According to the 1941 census of the post-Trianon “rump state” population, 11.3% declared that they spoke German (21% in Budapest), compared to only 0.6% French (3.2 % in Budapest) and 0.4% English (2.4% in Budapest). We can get closer to this colonial-type German orientation in Table 1, hereafter containing more detailed information of the linguistic skills of major categories of intellectual professions in the capital city.

Table 1: Declared knowledge of foreign languages by the main professional clusters with higher education in Budapest, 1930. (percentages)

		% with declared knowledge of				
	% with no such skills	German	French	English	Italian	numbers
lawyers	8.5	87.9	23.0	16.1	2.9	2136
medics	5.8	93.5	29.6	33.3	6.6	2697
engineers	5.5	90.9	24.6	34.0	4.1	3658
students	41.8	52.4	18.7	10.3	3.2	8022
SUM	23.6	72.2	22.3	20.1	3.9	16513

Source: Illyefalvi 1935, *passim*

As the table shows, the knowledge of German was a quasi must for established professionals, except for students, some of whom were as yet too young to achieve a commonly recognized level of German or, as mediocre pupils, had neglected the eight years of German classes during their studies leading to their *Matura*. 46% of male and 27% of female students started their higher education with a pass degree, or no degree at all (Illyefalvi 1935: 1062), in spite of the 1920 proto-Nazi *numerus clausus* law, which had claimed to alleviate the overcrowding of universities by reserving their benches for the best secondary school graduates, besides non-Jews.) The second language known by a significant minority, close to one quarter of the members of the Budapest intellectual professions, was French, except for medical doctors and engineers whose competence in English exceeded that in French. In the interwar years, French authors in history and the social sciences were still cited prominently together with their German counterparts in the Hungarian press (Karády 2019). However exceptional this may seem, the arrival of English on the horizon of interest among some important clusters of educated elites signals an important change. In some neighboring countries, equally under German cultural domination, the “English turn” much preceded that in Hungary. In both Poland and Czechoslovakia, English publications already served as the most frequent linguistic-national cluster of references in major journals of sociology during the interwar years (Kiliás 2018: 190). Yet the heavy influence of German is clear in these data, as well as in Hungarian sociology of that time. In foreign references found in the only sociological journal at the time, *Társadalomtudomány* [Social Science], the number of citations of English authors grew closer to the frequency of German ones only in the immediate pre-war and wartime years (Karády and Nagy 2019: 52).

The persistent predominance of the German language was of course affected by the existence of a significant proportion of ethnic Germans in the country, though much less than in pre-1919 Hungary.

Those with German as their mother tongue were particularly frequent among the Swabian (Catholic German) peasantry and the Lutherans of Transylvania, as well as in the Western and Eastern Slovakian parts of the old kingdom, amounting to over 10% of the population. However, their size shrunk to half that proportion in the interwar rump state,¹ so that the dominant position of German had by that time much more to do with established transnational scholarly and otherwise intellectual ties (such as the overwhelming role of Germanic universities in students' study abroad trips before and after 1919²), inherited values, etc., than it had to do with the still heavily German or German-Jewish background of the professional intelligentsia.³ The position of French appeared to be much more modest, but far from insignificant. French, like English or Italian, was a language that had to be specially studied, since there were no indigenous groups of people liable to speak it as a home language (*von Haus aus*).

The disastrous collapse of the Old Regime in 1945 brought about a new situation in this field as well. The regime change was accompanied, among other destructions, by tragic human losses—amounting to close to ten percent of the population, especially among males. War casualties, mass atrocities committed by local Nazi thugs in Budapest against Jews, the deportation to death camps of provincial Jewry and many from Budapest as well, high death rates in Soviet work camps and those of prisoners of war, political emigration of staff members attached to the former regime (both civil and military officialdom), the partial exodus or non-return of many surviving victims of the Shoah, the judiciary or (by administrative internment) extra-judiciary blacklisting of Nazi acolytes, the politically biased “change of the guard” in civil service, academe, and all other leading elite spheres to the benefit of communist newcomers—all of this contributed to considerable positional shifts and transformations within the educated middle class. The transition to communism (1945–1948) was marked by a limited political democracy, controlled as it was by the occupying Red Army and its local allies (cf. Valuch 2001: 17f.). But it also raised immense hopes not only for liberal intellectuals cherishing the prospect of a Western-type democracy after the Nazi nightmare, but also for their leftist counterparts, the latter developing a blind and quasi-religious trust in Stalinist socialism. Some well-trained and successful intellectuals actually returned from the West or the East (when they survived the Stalinist purges), such as Jewish refugees from the *numerus clausus* or political emigrants under the Horthy regime, among them a number of doctors, psychoanalysts, engineers, and other professionals.

The 1945–1947 transition period was thus favorable for the rebirth of modern Hungarian social sciences and their opening to the West. Most of the previous taboos were abolished together with the earlier censorship of the press. New academic positions were created (like a restructured chair of sociology in the University of Budapest). The rearguard of the conservative-clerical academia was purged due to its collusion with the previous political establishment or/and the process of Nazifica-

¹ The number of residents with a German mother tongue was 5.5% in 1930 and 5.1% in 1941, while the knowledge of German was declared by 15.1 % of the population in 1930 and 16 % in 1941. *Magyar statisztikai évkönyv 1943-46*, Budapest, KSH, 1949, 22.

² See the collection of prosopographies published by László Szögi and his disciples. Out of the 13 volumes printed before 2015 on Hungarian students abroad in 1789-1918, only 3 address fully and 2 in part (Switzerland) non-Germanic countries. In a recent study based on Szögi's materials, I estimate that over 94% of student trips from Hungary in the long 19th century were directed to German, Swiss-German, or Austrian-German institutions of higher education. See Karády 2018: 263.

³ On the overwhelmingly German or Jewish background of modern professional elites and most clusters of students and graduates of higher education in “Dualist” Hungary, see my prosopographically grounded statistical synthesis in Karády 2012.

tion. A number of new journals were published in various specialties and some “generalist” intellectual reviews gathered a country-wide readership by major new publications. The seminal study by the political scientist István Bibó on “The Jewish question since 1945” appeared in the last issue of the critical review *Válasz* [Response], just before the journal’s prohibition.⁴

Indeed, the transition years ended soon with the communist takeover during the 1948 “Year of the Turn” (as remembered in communist historical recollections), which introduced a Stalinist-type Bolshevik dictatorship in Hungary. Its final aim and result for scholarly activities can be summarized as follows: Independent institutions of knowledge production and distribution—including the entire school system on all levels—were nationalized and subjected to severe ideological surveillance.

Academic staff were exposed to drastic politically motivated purges. The incumbent of the Budapest Chair of Sociology Sándor Szalai, despite being known as a “leftist socialist” close to the communists, suffered a cruel prison term in 1950–1956 without even a show trial. Indeed, for some social and human sciences, which were liable to constitute non-communist or anti-Bolshevik ideological assets, the consequences of Sovietization proved to be even more dramatic than for other branches of study. Some disciplines – such as sociology, psychoanalysis, political science, and demography – were promptly outlawed as “bourgeois sciences.” These study branches were regarded as more dangerous than others for the new executives in power, since they could serve as competitors to the prevailing Marxist-Leninist basis of indoctrination under various denominations (“historical materialism,” “scientific socialism”). Access to Western scholarly literature was either ended (often relegated in libraries to “closed stacks”) or strictly controlled. The library of the Academy of Sciences, among the richest collections of publications in the social sciences in the country, was properly raided as early as January 1947 with the help of Red Army units in order to remove some 3800 volumes taxed to be “politically incorrect” (Péteri 1998: 65). The closure applied even more to personal contacts and any form of cooperation with representatives of the West. The Iron Curtain, identified by Churchill in his Fulton speech (March 1946), entered fully in force by the end of the decade in Hungarian intellectual life as well.

The ideological *Gleichschaltung* of the remaining academic system involved a state organized effort at Russification proper. This was not unknown, historically, in Russia, since the late nineteenth century when the then imperial government arbitrarily decreed the Russification of all non-Russian universities in the Western margins of the Empire, like Warsaw or Tartu. In Hungary the Soviet occupants did not go that far, but they took measures to similar ends. Russian replaced German in secondary school curricula and became a mandatory subject in all sectors of higher education. In scholarly publications, references to Russian sources—together with the ritual invocation of messages from the classics of Marxism-Leninism (preferably the works of Stalin himself) —became an inescapable practice. Special secondary schools were set up with fully Russian tuition, following the model of German, English or Italian gymnasiums that were suppressed by that time, founded under the Horthy regime. This “Eastern turn,” an aggressive attempt of Russian cultural colonization, was accompanied and to some extent compensated by the provision of scholarships in Soviet universities and a systematic, though strictly controlled, sponsorship and promotion of exchanges with Soviet partners. Henceforth, in every walk of academic life, lip service had to be paid to Soviet, and particularly to Russian, accomplishments. In historical reports on scholarly disciplines the alleged Russian temporal priority of major inventions and discoveries (“protochronism”) was enforced, often taking the dimension of colonial subservience.

⁴ See numbers 10–11 of *Válasz*, 1948.

It is true that Sovietization also included considerable public investments in the development of schooling with a policy of forced democratization of enrollments in higher education, based on a scheme of administrative counter-discrimination of sorts. This was carried out via a rigid quota system to the detriment of the former middle class' offspring and in favor of lower class children. Women were equally admitted since 1945 to all study branches, notably to law and engineering, study tracks that had previously remained closed to them. The rapid feminization of intellectual staff had a healthy impact on academia as well. The role of the Academy of Sciences was strengthened with new entitlements to award scholarly degrees (like "candidature" or "academic doctorate") and host professional research centers of its own, including some in classic social studies, like economics or law. The former was regarded as a useful study branch, all the more since it could benefit the program of forced industrialization. Economics was gratified with a full-scale university in Budapest (1948) and an unprecedented amount of resources for ideologically guided research. On the contrary, the formerly dominant position of jurists (still one third of the graduates of higher education in 1941) disappeared to the benefit of those in education, engineering, or economics.

The quarantine in which the burgeoning, newly institutionalized human and social studies (sociology, political science, demography, psychoanalysis, and most psychological specializations) were closed via prohibitions and/or forced ideological alignment started to be lifted already in the so-called "thaw period" after Stalin's death in 1953. This political turn did loosen restrictions for some of the disciplines. Others, like sociology, could only be pursued under disguises (notably in the Central Statistical Office). Western contacts of all sorts continued to be tabooed or even repressed. The coming of the 1956 uprising made this situation evolve by softening the censorship on public debates (on the press, history, philosophy, etc.) arranged under the auspices of the famous pre-revolutionary Petőfi Circle, a public forum tolerated as an informal gathering of reform communist and other intellectuals critical of the Stalinist state of affairs.

The first anti-communist revolution in October 1956 contributed to the changing environment more or less in the same sense. It was followed by a severe political repression, to be sure, with hundreds of executions and thousands of heavy prison sentences dealt out to participants who did not flee westward. But, on the other hand, the "thaw" was immediately felt with regard to contact with the West, and the earlier severe censorship over Western cultural products started to be cautiously but significantly alleviated. The Western social sciences and humanities (SSH) were no longer systematically regarded as "hostile to socialism," and various arrangements were publicly sought for the accommodation of empirical research in the earlier ostracized social and human disciplines developed in the West. In the meanwhile, officially, the fiction of ideological supremacy of Marxism-Leninism was maintained and regularly stressed. The rhetorical solution was either to regard the study branch in question as an acceptable ideological partner of official Marxism, or to qualify the suspected disciplines as plainly "Marxist" (like "Marxist sociology")—which was no longer regarded as a blasphemous oxymoron. This happened sometimes against all evidence, as in the presentation of the new *Sociological Review* (1973) (Karády and Nagy 2019: 96). The qualification was accepted by Western observers as well (Kiss 1971), some of whom—more importantly—realized the novelty of the scholarly production of their Hungarian partners. As early as 1974 the products of the reborn sociological profession in Hungary earned a publication in German in four volumes (Balla 1974).

After the amnesty pronounced in 1963 of those condemned in the aftermath of 1956—this concerned above all Jewish intellectuals, since those in the "populist" camp were largely spared from the anti-revolutionary backlash—a number of institutional initiatives were made for the readmission of earlier banned empirical social research. This can be observed all over the "Eastern Camp" following

Soviet initiatives during the Khrushchev era, but much less liberally outside Hungary and perhaps Poland. Unoccupied positions were abundant in academe anyway, thanks to the mass emigration of scholars to the West after the October 1956 uprising. Some of the posts were reserved for the compromised and disbanded Stalinist leadership, who could thus organize their intellectual reconversion and self-promotion in the domain of social studies. A research group in sociology was founded under András Hegedüs (1963), the former young *Strohmänn* of Party boss Rákosi as the Bolshevik prime minister. He had accomplished in the meantime a rather exceptional moral and ideological U-turn. Demography was also recognized as a legitimate discipline, with a specialized research group first in the Statistical Office (1958) and later as an institute of the Academy of Sciences. This was a pragmatic response to the sharp decrease in birth rates after 1956, following first the softening and later the elimination of the formerly drastically applied prohibition of abortions. Social statistics resumed to be published (even if not combined with the earlier variables such as religion and ethnicity, one of the flagships and sign of refinement of Hungarian statistical investigations). The surviving ethnological research group, sponsored by influential communist fellow travelers, was also developed into an institute of the Academy of Science. In the last decade of communist rule, even research in Western-style empirical political science (with a special institute for opinion polls) was reinstated. Recruitment policies of academic staff and university personnel were significantly softened, so that descendants of the ruling elites of the pre-socialist period who were previously excluded could henceforth hope for a career in academe. After 1964, even the social quota system for student enrollments in higher education was abolished, and children of the “old middle class” could pursue higher studies without particular difficulties or humiliating discrimination.

This development continued with ups and downs, but by and large improved throughout the rest of the socialist period up until 1989. It equaled, on the whole, a more or less progressive process of liberalization of the working conditions in the social and human sciences, but without granting them full professional autonomy or self-regularization. This was part of the “Kádárist deal” with the intelligentsia ensuing after the bloody and massive retaliation against actors in the 1956 October Revolution. This process was temporarily suspended in the post-1968 years, when “economic reform” including the introduction of market mechanisms, which was much hoped for and capitalized upon by the Kádárist leadership, had to be abandoned under attacks from the conservative wing of the Party. However, the liberalization process was not interrupted for good, as it was the case in neighboring socialist countries. The Communist Party, forced to align with Moscow’s foreign policy, turned against intellectuals protesting after the military repression of the “Prague Spring” by the troops of the “Warsaw Pact,” dismissing several from their positions (such as András Hegedüs, head of the Sociological Research Group), but not necessarily depriving them of Party membership. This happened later in 1973: Following a high-ranked party order against intellectual dissidence, Hegedüs and three other leading scholars were removed from the Sociological Institute, while four fellows of the Philosophy Institute of the Academy of Sciences also lost their academic jobs. This led several years later to a wave of forced emigration to the West among leading sociologists and philosophers such as István Kemény and Iván Szelényi or several “offspring of Georg Lukács,” among them Ágnes Heller.

Even contact with émigrés, if they were not considered to be active political enemies proper, was no longer stigmatized and penalized as before. Iván Szelényi could return for research (if not for publishing) in the country, and the journal *Szociológia* could even bring out an interview with him in 1982, just a few years after his expulsion, while he was still pursuing a brilliant international career (Berényi 2018: 254). The anti-communist sociologist Oszkár Jászi, founder of the first major sociological workshop of the country before 1918, turned into one of the most cited “foreign” authors of

his craft by the 1980s in the highly influential review *Valóság* [Reality] — outnumbered only by references to Marx and Max Weber (Karády and Nagy 2019: 123-124). This applied even more to Western professional literature. *Szociológia*, founded in 1972, was particularly open to “international” studies related mostly (up to three quarters of all such articles) to Western intellectual products (Berényi 2018: 257). Even more significantly, ideologically grounded criticism of Western scholarship, a must in Stalinist times, tended to weaken and by the late 1970s almost disappear in a discipline like philosophy, which was at the forefront of the “ideological war” against the West throughout the Cold War period. In the official *Hungarian Philosophical Review* during the years 1957–1961, a large third (35%) of Western studies reviewed were negatively evaluated, another third (35%) were just “liked a bit,” while the rest (30%) were disapproved and rejected. For the 1974–1979 period, one can observe a clear U-turn in these areas. The large majority (58%) of the reviews of Western authors by that time were positive, over a third (37%) were “liked a bit,” and a mere 5% were critically discarded (Szűcs 2018: 284).

If censorship—which was always implicit or indirect in Hungary and in charge of journal editors and directors of publishing houses—was not suspended, the recourse to Western scholarship and cognitive importations as well as cooperation with Western authors was no longer proscribed. This policy of “opening to the West” had political and diplomatic as well financial counterparts (since 1973 the state started to borrow a growing amount of credits from major capitalist banks). For social scientists, this entailed a progressive change improving their career prospects in several concrete terms. According to rumors, by the 1980s the bargaining power of Hungarian state financiers could be strengthened in business negotiations by concessions to let intellectual dissidents obtain study grants in the West.

Indeed, as early as 1964, the Ford Foundation started to distribute, following an agreement with the government, substantial grants for study and research stays in the West (usually for one year at an academic institution in the United States). Up until 1968, at least 145 such grants were offered to Hungarian applicants selected by the Foundation (Duller forthcoming). In the same period, official contracts of the Hungarian Academy of Science with Western state organizations of academic exchange (like the French CNRS or the West German DAAD) allowed more and more Hungarians further study or research trips across the Iron Curtain. The author of this article received many of his Hungarian colleagues in the Parisian *Maison des Sciences de l'Homme* and, starting in 1972, he himself could count on a monthly (sometime bi-monthly) study trip to Budapest every year. The *EHESS* university in Paris, the *Wissenschaftskolleg* in Berlin, the UNESCO-founded European Centre of Comparative Research in the Social Sciences (1963) in Vienna became important scholarly hubs to host Hungarian and other East European scholars in Western academia. In 1978 Hungarian academics became eligible in the Fulbright international scholarship program with the negotiated consent of the Kádárist government. Finally, during the late Kadar era (in 1984), the Open Society Foundation of George Soros began its operations in Budapest as a joint enterprise with the Hungarian Academy of Science. Its program proposed support for different forms of intellectual creativity, publications, and exchange for academics, artists, freelance intellectuals, and research institutions. Over 3200 Hungarians could benefit from Open Society scholarships for research stays in the West at large, including Western Europe. This was by far the most comprehensive scheme to support transnational intellectual mobility in the country. Thanks to a systematically respected policy of politically neutral selections of beneficiaries, the grants were awarded to members of the anti-regime opposition as well as to other students, graduates, and academics, including many members of the present government (as of 2020). In this way, the Soros Foundation contributed to both

the fall of Communism in Hungary and the modernist opening of the scientific horizon to productive intellectuals in the country.

By the 1980s this process of readmission, promotion, and controlled Westernization of the Hungarian social sciences attained a level close to what could be considered normal in a truly open society. Disregarding certain topical taboos—such as the ties with the Soviet Union, the qualification of the 1956 uprising, or the state of political democracy in the country—social scientists could almost as freely choose their research topics, study partners (including Western ones), and methods of investigation as their Western counterparts. The level of Westernization, achieved gradually by social scientists since the early 1960s, can be equated with an intellectual revolution of sorts under communism. The social disciplines in Hungary were able to accomplish a nearly full conversion from “mimicry institutions” (Koleva 2018: 120), typical of the Soviet Union and some other “people’s democracies,” into Western-type scholarly establishments. The official “Soviet Sociological Association” for “concrete research,” (Keen and Mucha 2003: 10) put up from nil already in 1958 to send delegates to the world conference of the ISA (International Sociological Association) in Stresa (1959), appears to have been mostly in charge of an “ideological offensive on the field of international science.” (Voříšek 2008: 89) While several other similar agencies in Sovietized countries acted under full Party command in support of the Soviet camp in the ideological war waged against Western capitalism (Batygin and Deviatko 1994: 17), their Hungarian counterpart obtained considerable funding and a large degree of (even if not complete) professional autonomy. Though the Party hierarchy, flexibly represented by György Aczél, who was in charge of cultural matters in the Central Committee of the Communist Party, did not abstain from setting preferences and sometimes even privileged targets for research, this was accompanied by rather generous subsidies and funding schemes. The latter, by the 1980s (with the “OTKA program” since 1986), followed almost avowedly Western patterns of project-based support for research.

Still, the stress here must be laid on “almost.” The surveillance of intellectuals of all standings and levels never ceased before 1989 via informers of the political police. Hungarian scholars invited to the West (or only meeting or corresponding with Western visitors) had to report on their contacts to their superiors. Marxism-Leninism continued to be taught in mandatory courses in every study track of higher education. Russian was the first language (mostly the only one) in the curriculum of secondary education. In the final years of communism, this led to a quasi-generalization of “double talk,” typical in the party hierarchy, within circles of the social sciences and beyond. In written and any other public discourse, the official Party line on political, ideological and intellectual matters was formally kept up or at least paid lip service. In personal interactions, on the contrary, officials did their best to display their openness to the West, telling anti-regime jokes and affording to be ironic about local affairs or those in other “socialist” states. The rigid observance of the Soviet Party line in “Democratic Germany” (GDR) – in sharp contrast to Hungarian habits – or the Romanian misery under “the Genius of the Carpathians” were particularly targeted in political jokes or lived experiences narrated in Hungary in late socialist times.

In 1989 Hungary achieved a “negotiated revolution” of sorts and a smooth transition to Western-style democracy. The space is lacking here to give a detailed report on the further development of the SSH in the last quarter of a century, marked by two major turning points. First in 2004, the country joined the European Union. By this time, its scholarly establishment was eligible to benefit from European research support schemes. The Hungarian human and social sciences, like all other intellectual, economic, and other activity sectors of the country, appeared to be re-anchored to the Western hemisphere. Second, since 2010, the new government under Viktor Orbán embarked on a self-

proclaimed “illiberal” and nationalist (in many senses, truly “reactionary”) science policy, recalling interwar and communist practices. Among other things, political discrimination in academic appointments and in the distribution of research funds has progressively been reintroduced, much as it had been in earlier authoritarian regimes. Recently this policy has culminated in open attacks against independent civil society institutions supported by Western sponsors. This is a way to put at risk their continued operation and even challenge the survival of the Central European University (CEU), well known worldwide. The CEU, which was founded and generously endowed in 1991 by George Soros, has been forced as of 2019/2020 to expatriate to Vienna the majority of its teaching programs, all those accredited in the United States. Via a new academic law, the Academy of Science has also been deprived of its network of research institutions, taken over by a special state agency in 2019. At the same time, gender studies was forbidden to be taught in Hungarian higher education. Such assaults on academic freedom have already aroused countrywide and international protests. Indeed, the CEU has become the leading academic center for teaching and research in social studies in the entire post-Soviet area, hosting among other assets the best international library in social disciplines in a formerly communist country.

STATISTICAL INDICATORS

Following this historical overview of the intellectual “ferryboat” between East and West, as Hungary was described in the early twentieth century by the visionary poet Endre Ady, let us now turn to a concise set of quantified data illustrating the changing impact of foreign scholarship in the Hungarian field of human and social studies. This concerns sensitive issues of the Bolshevik attempt at Russian intellectual colonization, the attenuation of dogmatic Stalinist repression and the progressive Westernization under constraint in communist times, followed by the sudden and unforeseen emancipation from heterodox (extra-scientific) coercions after 1989 as well as new forms of state-imposed curbs since 2010.

The set of indices mobilized herewith are grounded on bibliographical data related to a representative sample of publications from the collections of the Budapest Municipal Library, one of the largest in the country and in charge of the bibliography of the human and social sciences since early communist times. This serial indicator of the intellectual relationship with the West and the East covers the long period of 1945–2013 and serves as a proxy, illustrating indirectly an essential aspect of the international orientation of disciplines in social matters in the country. The proxy here consists of the “national” categorization of publications (by original languages) either published in Hungarian translation or received from abroad. Translations appear to be the best approach for illustrating the changing impact of “foreign policies” on the intellectual orientation of social disciplines at large. These publications required heavy investments due to translation costs, hence involving enhanced financial risks in addition to the usual criteria of editorial decisions.

The dynamics of translations clearly illustrate the fate of Western contacts in the social sciences over time, especially over the three (or four) more or less radical turns in the cultural policies of the political regimes observed. In the transition period before 1949, there were very few translations to start with, and their distribution responded to a pattern established during the interwar years with a relative bias toward the German orientation. English and French books appeared in the second rank, with one fifth of all translations, before the modest share (less than one tenth each) of all other categories, including Russian and East European. It can be remarked that translations from French had by that time lost their expected prominence, compared to those from English, as suggested by

the distribution of linguistic competence in the 1941 census mentioned above. This is the reflection of an all-European trend. The advancement of English in intellectual markets was generally observed almost immediately after the victory of the Anglo-Saxon Allies over Nazi Germany.

Table 2: Social science books translated into Hungarian from various languages as received in the Municipal Library of Budapest, selected periods - 1946–2013 (percentages)

	East European	Russian	English	French	German	other	all	N	yearly average (rounded)
1945-1948	9.7	9.7	19.4	19.4	32.3	9.7	100	31	8
1949-1955	14.8	40.6	8.4	5.8	14.8	15.5	100	155	22
1956-1960	17.1	17.1	18.4	15.8	20.3	11.4	100	158	32
1961-1975	17.1	20.5	17.0	10.9	21.3	13.1	100	1978	132
1976-1989	16.1	20.5	19.6	8.6	21.5	13.7	100	2144	153
1990-2005	3.8	1.5	47.6	9.0	22.0	16.2	100	9241	616
2006-2013	4.1	0.8	53.8	6.8	19.0	15.5	100	4738	625

Source: Nagy and Karády 2018, 322.

This situation was turned upside down in the next six years covering the Stalinist rule in Hungary. During this period, the number of translations increased significantly and the absolute majority of translations were made of “socialist” languages. This was the obvious manifestation of the Soviet-Russian effort at cultural colonization, since the growth of translations from other “people’s democracies” lagged behind. Interestingly, translations from German still exceeded those from French or English. However, the latter two were restricted to a minimum, even when compared to those from other languages (mostly Italian and Spanish). This relative prominence of German may be attributed at least in part to East German “socialist” publications. It was actually maintained throughout the entire socialist period and even beyond, to some extent (if compared to translations from French).

The post-1956 period presented a quite different pattern following the progressive but always limited liberalization of cultural exchanges with the West. There was first a real explosion (a multiplication by more than four times) of the yearly number of translations. Second, the proportion of translations from Russian and from other socialist countries decreased considerably – to slightly over one third of all translations. But this proportion was systematically maintained and unchanged until 1989. Otherwise, there were no major changes in the share of other translations, except for the continued loss of weight among French works. The increase in translations from English was visible but also markedly restricted before 1989. It did not attain the share of German works, hinting at the efficient containment by communist editorial decision makers of the ever increasing Anglo-Saxon cultural hegemony, observable elsewhere outside the Sovietized world.

A new situation emerged after the fall of communism in 1989. There is indeed a sharp division between the “before” and “after” periods. Above all, there was an unprecedented increase in the yearly numbers of translations (multiplication by four times), a good illustration of the liberation of publication markets from communist constraints. Even more interestingly, the share of “Eastern” translations collapses at a stretch. Before 1989, one out of four or five of all books dealt with here was

globally translated from Russian, and one sixth or one seventh were translated from other socialist countries, besides those (not distinguished in the data) coming from East Germany. Afterwards these proportions approached nil. Conversely, the share of translations from English expanded suddenly after 1989, so as to reach a proportion close to the majority. The fact that this growth was still not proportionally overwhelming points clearly to the absolute domination achieved by Anglo-Saxon scholarship: Indeed, translations from English were by that time actually much less needed among the targeted readership than translations from other languages, given the multiplication of social science professionals and rank-and-file public officials conversant with English. Other languages were by that time much less practiced by SSH scholars. As stated earlier, German maintained its strong second position over time, while French continues to lose weight gradually. This is a fair reflection of the evolution of intellectual power relations between the two historically major Western civilizations besides the Anglo-Saxons. At the same time, the share of translations from other languages—Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese—has been maintained. This is probably the other side of the coin of English domination and the persistence of a strong German impact via contacts with the vast Germanic intellectual market (including neighboring Austria and Switzerland). Since translations signal the opening of Hungarian social sciences to the West, translations were more and more demanded from hitherto marginal scholarly languages of big Western societies, representing fast expanding intellectual markets, especially in Southern Europe and South America.

In order to specify and counterbalance the previous picture emerging from data on social science books translated into Hungarian, it is worth resorting to another indicator, the “national” references to foreign authors and publications in one of the few “oecumenic” organs of the social sciences, the Hungarian statistical review (*Magyar statisztikai szemle*). This journal displays the additional and quasi-unique characteristic of having almost full continuity in publications since its start in 1923 (except for six months at the end of the Second World War). Unlike the rest of professional journals dating from the pre-socialist regime, this journal escaped closure and blackout, even at the height of the Bolshevik mania of secrecy related to all public information in the 1950s (Péteri 1998: 135-137).

Table 3: National references in the *Hungarian statistical review* at various historical junctures (percentages)⁵

	Soviet, Russian, Ukrainian	other East and Central European*	Anglo- American	French	Austrian	German	Italian, Spanish	all	N
1930-39	8.8	31.2	20.0	9.6	7.1	14.4	8.9	100	6085
1940-49	15.3	29.5	18.2	9.1	2.9	16.1	8.9	100	2411
1950-59	32.9	22.7	17.8	6.5	3.0	14.3	2.8	100	2635
1960-69	17.5	27.8	20.6	7.4	4.1	19.0	3.7	100	4327
1970-79	16.0	26.5	18.8	9.4	5.1	20.7	3.5	100	3491
1980-89	14.1	23.5	16.5	9.8	8.4	23.5	4.3	100	3641
1990-90	9.5	25.3	19.5	10.3	9.6	19.6	6.1	100	3171

*Czech, Czechoslovak, Polish, Romanian, Slovakian, Yugoslav.

⁵ Self-generating data on “national references” (languages, countries, states) from the digitalized version of the *Review* are available online.

Interestingly enough, when compared to book translations, and even to the language of publications reviewed in the *Statisztikai Szemle* or registered at the library of the Central Statistical Office,⁶ the international referential network of the *Szemle* appears to be much more balanced, displaying more continuity in time and much less politically generated biases typical of the different historical periods. It is true, though, that the number of Soviet and associated references reach their apogee in the Stalinist 1950s, while they appear markedly less frequently after the fall of communism. The 1950s represent a low ebb of all other “national” references outside the Soviet realm proper, most likely a sign of the relative self-closure practiced by administrative authorities against anything foreign, except for what emanated from the Soviet center. In this data set there is no sign of Anglo-Saxon domination whatsoever. Curiously, in the 1930s there are many more mentions of Anglo-Saxon statistics than in later decades. References to French remain at the same level throughout (less or around one half of references to Anglo-Saxon matters), while those to German topical areas tend to grow or stagnate at a high level from the 1960s onwards. On the whole, neighboring countries (which became “people’s democracies” except Austria) attracted the maximum level of interest from Hungarian statisticians in the journal since (and especially during) the interwar years. The *Szemle*’s policies, as that of an official state publication of the Central Statistical Office subject to strict governmental control, were not aimed at catching up with the latest scholarly innovations (coming mostly from the West), but rather at reporting on data sets produced in or concerning countries with which Hungary was most closely involved economically, politically and culturally, especially with its neighbors and mostly its political allies.

CONCLUSIONS

Given the limited range of this study, its conclusion points to only a few major findings. Following the Stalinist interlude (1948–1956), the Hungarian social sciences saw a self-contained but more or less regular growth in the reception of Western scholarly products—a real move towards restrained “Europeanization.” 1989 also constituted a break in this respect. Henceforth, “Westernization” has increasingly meant the dominance of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, besides strong Germanic and weakening French influence. In contrast, Russian and socialist scholarship had a rather restricted impact in Hungary throughout the period, as compared to the effective membership of Hungary in the Soviet political camp. Even under Stalinism, in spite of official endeavors, there are no signs of a Russian intellectual domination comparable to the English one starting after 1989 following various indications. Apparently, the Soviet system represented a weak cultural power, incapable of the intellectual colonization it actually aspired for. The prominence of “Soviet science” was paid lip service to, as an enforced obligation under political duress. It never attained a similar degree of intellectual legitimacy and scholarly strength it had claimed to possess.

⁶ Karády 2012, table 1.4.3. Among publications received and discussed in the *Szemle*, books in English represent the largest “national” cluster from the 1960s onwards, only to constitute the absolute majority after 2000.

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