

## **Writing Mythology. Representations of the Hungarian Soviet-Republic in Pál Somogyi's works**

### **Abstract**

The knowledge of history is a form of representation for societies, which is indispensable in maintaining collective identity.<sup>1</sup> It is possible for the individual to tell “his own” story, thus forming the canonized past-narratives in order to express his own relations in a community. How these individual social representations appear, are ways of “world making”.<sup>2</sup> The “nineteener” past was an important aspect of the self-representation of individuals in the Rákosi and more significantly in the Kádár era. This was a two-way mechanism in which the veterans shaped their own social representations by telling stories about their heroic past. By doing so, they inevitably shaped the representations of the Soviet-Republic in society. On this ground, it seems like a profitable historiographic venture to analyse how certain individuals took part in this two-way mechanism and how they shaped the representation of the past and their own selves. Pál Somogyi was one of the most prominent of these veterans in the city of Kaposvár after World War II. In this study we examine his representations of the 1919 Hungarian Commune.

**Keywords:** Hungarian Soviet-Republic, memory policy, Pál Somogyi, social representations, Stalinism

### **Introduction**

Pál Somogyi was a somewhat mediocre writer, whose main area of interest was his own participation in the Russian Civil War and the Hungarian Soviet-Republic. His works are now largely ignored in his birth town, Kaposvár – even though he had a significant literary-organizational role after his return from Soviet emigration. He has a surprisingly significant position in the Hungarian minority's literary-canon in Vajdaság (Vojvodina) as an avant-garde poet.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, in the Hungarian motherland he is mostly – and perhaps rightfully so – canonized as a servile lackey to the Bolshevik regime and a rather talentless dilettante. But foremost: he is almost completely ignored.

In this work we do not engage in a debate whether his literary contributions have any aesthetic quality or not; we focus on what we are convinced, is the most important aspect of his literary career. He was a wilful and active former of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's social representations, which was for the most part backed by the state-party but didn't lack the

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<sup>1</sup> László, J. (2003): 156.

<sup>2</sup> Moscovici, S. (1988): 231.

<sup>3</sup> Szabó Palócz, A. (2019)

personal initiative. In this study we examine how he tried to shape the representations of 1919 and how this responded to his own representation in the society.

### The life and works of Pál Somogyi

Pál Somogyi was born in the city of Kaposvár, in the year of 1894 to a poor Jewish family.<sup>4</sup> Graduating from primary school, he went on to become a carpenter, following his parents' will. After he was freed from the apprentice-status, he became a carpenter in a factory of his hometown and a member of the Social-Democratic Party of Hungary. In 1914 – when the Great War broke out – he was one of the firsts to be drafted and sent out to the front. He was captured by the Russians and was taken as a prisoner of war at the end of May, 1915. After the revolution in Russia, he was set free and joined to fight for the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War. In December of 1918 he arrived in his hometown, Kaposvár and voiced his pro-Bolshevik thoughts in the community of the local worker's movement. During the dictatorship of the proletariat, he became the political commissioner of the terror squadron in Somogy County, the infamous Latinca Squadron. He was also a member of the local Worker's Council. After the fall of the proletariat, he was convicted and imprisoned, but he managed to escape to Serbian territory. He published his first literary work, a book of poems titled *Terjed a tűz* (The Fire is Spreading) in the Serb-occupied city of Pécs, 1921. In the year of 1933, when he was no longer tolerated in Yugoslavia, he had to emigrate to Moscow. In the Soviet capital, he had several publications in the journal of Hungarian emigrants, *Sarló és Kalapács*. After World War II, he was finally able to come back to his hometown, Kaposvár. Here, he continued to publish frequently and became one of the local literary organizers of Somogy County.

In this paper we mainly focus on two of his works: *Képek Somogy megye munkásmozgalmából* (Snapshots from Somogy County's Worker's Movement, 1951) and *Tűz a Kapos mentén* (Flames Along the River Kapos, 1959). The two publications can be considered as different editions of the same narration, but with significant changes. The first one, released during the Rákosi era, was published in the local daily newspaper as a memoir, speaking in first person singular, so the readers could rightfully expect authentic recordings of 1919 in the spirit of "how things actually were".<sup>5</sup> The latter writings were published in 1959 as a separate book and its genre was changed drastically: it was presented to the public as an autobiographical novel.<sup>6</sup> Most of the characters (including the narrator) was pseudonymized. Somogyi's own character's name for example became János Tímár. Despite the differences in genre and in the form of publication, it seems right to handle them together.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> About Pál Somogyi's road to participation in the 1919 Commune in a psychobiographical perspective: Zab, TL., (2023/b).

<sup>5</sup> "Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist." – voiced by 19th century German historian, Leopold von Ranke.

<sup>6</sup> It was actually part of a duology, as a sequel of *Nagy iskola*, published in 1953. In contrast to *Terjed a tűz*, which was published locally, it was distributed nation-wide in 5000 copies.

<sup>7</sup> The stories that make the narrations up were retold in other publications with slight but sometimes significant differences. In this work, we chose to only cite those versions if it is inevitable.

## Analysis

In this chapter we are to analyse Pál Somogyi's works (mostly *Képek Somogy megye munkásmozgalmából* and *Tűz a Kapos mentén*) by examining how those shaped the representations of the Soviet-Republic in the following aspects: representations of *classes*, *agricultural policies*, *Soviet-Russia*, *violence*, *social-democracy*, the *Communist Party of Hungary* and *Sándor Latinca*.

### Representations of classes

Considering that Somogyi's worldview was a vulgar-Marxist and Leninist one, we cannot ignore how certain societal structures, so-called classes, were represented in his works. His characters are in every sense destined by their class-descent and there is no example of any character who would break free of this pre-determination. If we simplify, there are 3 categories of classes that every character fits into. First, there are members of the ruling classes. Second, there are the industrial workers. And last, but not least: the agrarian peasantry, which in this region was the most numerous and, in a sense, the most significant in revolutionary political action.

The "ruling classes" are the most diverse group of the listed three. In here, we usually mean the rich bourgeois of Kaposvár and a few noblemen, who are introduced by Somogyi to the readers. They usually are the organizers of the counterrevolutionary forces, who mainly operate in the background. There is one character, a nobleman who shows some ostensible good will towards the soldiers of the Red Army. At first, he voices his gratitude toward "the Hungarian soldiers" on their success against the Czechoslovak Army and offers them his castle as headquarters. Afterwards, he instructed the Czechoslovaks on where to aim their artillery strike. "I fight against you until my last breath. I will form alliances with everyone, who fights against you. I have been degraded, they took my lawful property, what was given to my ancestors by the king." – he says to the soldiers upon his capture. The lord is portrayed by the stereotypical attributes of noblemen, more specifically, similarly to the progressive aristocrats, such as Mihály Károlyi, the president of the first Hungarian Republic. The moral of this character's story is to emphasize: the proletariat cannot trust anyone in its quest, but their own class and agricultural workers.

The group of industrial workers are the most integral to the story, because our narrator, or the personification of the writer is one of them in both versions of the work. The importance of the industrial workers is further stressed by taking in account that in Marxist theory they are attributed with messianistic values: they are the ones who are able to eliminate society's class system. In Somogyi's stories their most important agent is the narrator (or János Tímár) who manages to organize some of the workers into a local suborganization of the CPH and gains

sympathy from most of the proletariat of the county towards them. Albeit even Somogyi cannot claim that they joined this (most probably fictive) suborganization in large masses.<sup>8</sup>

The proletariat's majority is portrayed in a positive way as Communist sympathizers. There is, however, a group that differs strongly from this representation: the leaders of the Social Democratic Party's – in Somogyi's words – right wing. They are generally depicted as traitors of their class – I will elaborate about this topic further in the *Representations of the Social Democracy* subchapter. There is one more interesting type of worker represented in the narration – the archetype of the lumpenproletariat. There is only one character (called Vendel Nagy) who fits in this category. He seems to be a slow-minded alcoholic. Although his family has some positive influence on him, after some ill-intentioned manipulation from the reactionists he takes part in a counter-revolutionary revolt. In this conflict, he is shot to death.<sup>9</sup> The narrator still shows some sympathy towards him, which is very unusual considering his general attitude towards the traitors of the worker class.

The agricultural workers and the society of the villages are just as important to the author as the industrial workers. They were the most numerous societal group in the region, so it was generally important for the success of the Commune to gain their support. What is most upfront for the reader is that they're generally represented in a positive way. There are no offensive caricaturistic portrayals between them, like in the case of the ruling classes. There are no portrayals of kulaks or other agricultural groups that are generally portrayed in a negative way in Stalinist propaganda. They are generally depicted as supportive towards the dictatorship of the proletariat and their main objective was to get a small piece of land for their families to live on – this is treated by the author with sympathy. The most significant character in the narrations of impoverished peasant heritage is József Kis (pseudonymized András Gulyás), who gets more attention in the 1959 edition. He leaves his wedding behind to go to the front with his comrades and sacrifices his life there.<sup>10</sup>

### **Representations of agricultural policies**

The field of politics which is most concerned with agricultural production, had high importance in the short history of the Soviet-Republic. It was even more significant in an agrarian region such as Somogy which had a great share of agrarian proletariat between its inhabitants. The partition of the large latifundia – that were persistent in the county – was in the focus of political communication. In the left side of the political arena, there were two options: partition and the introduction of a large number of smallholders, thus making production ineffective or founding collective farms from the lands of the latifundia but simultaneously losing the support of the land-hungry peasants.

In this situation Somogy County was remembered to be a followable example for the future generations of the worker's movement. Hungary's first collective farms were introduced here

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<sup>8</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I. and Somogyi, P. (1959): 15-20.

<sup>9</sup> Somogyi, P. (1959): 65-67.

<sup>10</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part III and Somogyi, P. (1959): 54-59 and 72-75.

in the early days of March. There was also some amount of land-partition to the agrarian proletariat. It almost seemed like Somogy was following Lenin's footsteps – at least, partially. The Leninist example in this period of the dictatorship was partition and distribution. As a result of these, Somogy County had two separate and contradicting aspects to be proud of from 1919. First, they could present themselves as people, who recognised the Leninist school of thought. On the other hand, the age when the texts were published, the collectivization of smallholders' land was an important governmental directive. Therefore, it was enticing to mention that Somogy County was the birthplace of collective farms in Hungary.

Somogyi chose a creative solution to utilize both historical traditions: he proudly mentions in the first chapter of the 1951 edition that collective farms were formed.<sup>11</sup> Later though, he tells a story, when he and his comrade, József Gálosi go out to a nearby village to agitate on the side of the collective farms. Somogyi notes that beforehand they were greeted by the villagers with “ribboned young girls dressed in white”, because they already knew the “land-distributor Communists”.<sup>12</sup> By these guidelines (and because it was not the Leninist way) they were not in agreement with collectivization of the land, so they started partitioning it to the poor. Afterwards, according to the story, they were arrested by the dictatorship of the proletariat, but they were eventually set free by Sándor Latinca after a few hours.<sup>13</sup> Somogyi had a key part in forming Somogy County's representations as an exemplary region in agricultural political aspects. He tried to merge together these contradicting elements of the County's history, which are written in a more clarified manner in one of his later works. He states that allegedly Latinca frequently said to them: “Distribution of the land would be a great bridge towards the collective farms.”<sup>14</sup>

### Representations of Soviet-Russia

The Russian Revolution and its aftermath had an undeniable effect on the Hungarian organized workers in the years 1917-1919. Presumably, the Hungarian Soviet-Republic couldn't have been created if its Russian counterpart, Soviet-Russia wouldn't have existed. That being said, after 1945, constructing the Soviet-Russian influence on Hungarian history was of great importance.

As a writer who was intending to manufacture a Stalinist origin story from the history of 1919, Pál Somogyi had to tie some praising sentences of the people of Soviet-Russia into the narration. The main character (the narrator and János Tímár) in both stories comes home from Russia and this experience gains him a position of importance in the local worker community. In both narrations, his first public appearance takes place in the Worker's Community Home (*munkásotthon*), where he argues with the leadership of the HSDP about Soviet-Russia. The narrator claims, he said the following speech: “In Russia, with the leadership of Lenin and Stalin the revolution was victorious. The Russian people, workers, peasants and soldiers led by the

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<sup>11</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I.

<sup>12</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part II.

<sup>13</sup> Basically the same story retold can be found in Somogyi, P. (1959): 35-42.

<sup>14</sup> Somogyi, P. (1961)

Bolshevik Party broke Tsarism, took the factories and mines to their own hands. The land was distributed to the impoverished peasants. [...] The people are free and happy. In Russia, its over for the oppressors of workers, princes, counts, barons, and the rest of the capitalist exploiters.”<sup>15</sup> In the 1959 edition Stalin’s name was left out.<sup>16</sup>

When Somogyi describes his daring escape from captivity, he mentions: “I heard it from the Russian workers that Russian comrades escaped from the prison, from exile, endangering their lives to work further for the sake of the case.”<sup>17</sup> The author felt it important to emphasize that something as self-explanatory as “escaping a prison sentence is better than actually serving it” is from the influence of the Russian Bolsheviks. In the scenes where forementioned József Kis (András Gulyás) loses his life, two Russian soldiers die with him, to highlight the sacrifice the Russians made for the freedom of the Hungarian people.<sup>18</sup> These little pieces of recognition would feel out of place if we wouldn’t have any understanding of the unilateral cultural relations between the Soviet Union and Hungary.

In another episode, two agitators (the narrator and his companion) are discussing whether they should distribute the land to the land-hungry peasants or should they agitate in favour of the collective farms. The other agitator asks the narrator: “You have been to the Soviet-Union. Did you distribute?” “We distributed.” “Then we will distribute, too.” – replies the other, as though it would be completely unreasonable to think that any other way could be better than the one applied in the Soviet Union. “If Lenin distributed, then surely it is just and it is well that way.” – sounds the moral of the story.<sup>19</sup>

### Representations of violence

The attitude towards violence was a key problem of Communist ideology. As one of Hungary’s ideologists, Georg Lukács asked before his Bolshevik upturn: “Is it possible to achieve good by condemnable means? Can freedom be attained by means of oppression? Can a new world order emerge out of a struggle in which the tactics vary only technically from those of the old and despised world order?”<sup>20</sup> When Somogyi published the first version of his memoir, the Communist movement has been through most of its initial ups and downs and Bolshevism was reinterpreted in a Stalinist form. The moral problem that fascinated Lukács in 1918 was no longer a problem. The Bolsheviks (and even more so, the Stalinists) were not amoral and that is true in Somogyi’s works, too: the ethical judgement of violence is measured by the dialectics of history. Their moral epistemology is merely in a constant contradiction with “bourgeois ethics”, which concludes our own spontaneous judgments and responses to the social world.

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<sup>15</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I.

<sup>16</sup> Somogyi, P. (1959): 10.

<sup>17</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part VI.

<sup>18</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part III. In the 1959 version only Gulyás dies, one Russian loses his leg and one of them gains a concussion. Somogyi, P. (1959): 73-75. The fact that during the events Somogyi’s descriptions are based upon, had three mortal victims and neither of them was Russian, sheds even more light on this phenomenon. Gellért, T. (1969): 260.

<sup>19</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part II.

<sup>20</sup> Lukács, G. (1977): 423.

This bourgeois “false consciousness” is an inner enemy, which is to be neglected while we are attempting to create the new, utopian society.<sup>21</sup> After all, “[...] if God had placed sin between me and the deed enjoined upon me — who am I to be able to escape it?”<sup>22</sup>

In Somogyi’s work, represented violence can be sorted into two categories: ethical and unethical violence. Ethical violence is – of course measured by the historical dialectics – prevalent and is always the right thing to do. Furthermore, neglecting one’s duty to commit violence if necessary is a sin. This specific kind of sin is often associated with social democratic ideology – at one point the author breaks his storytelling position to inform us that this social democratic “humanism” still (sc. in 1951) prevails: “<<We do not want to use the weapon of retorsion>> - boasted in the near past József Balla...<sup>23</sup> In this regard, what the Communists built on one side, the right-wing social democrats demolished it on the other.”<sup>24</sup>

There are characters in the story, who are able to withhold their duty as Bolsheviks. In this regard, the soldiers in the so-called Latinca Squadron were using excessive and indifferent violence with their Italian war prisoners from bourgeois families: “Without any specific order, they shot them in the head.”<sup>25</sup> – informs us the author. In another episode it is found that a Hungarian nobleman, lord of the castle the Red Army is stationing in, was helping the opposing Czechoslovaks. His execution was almost instant.<sup>26</sup> It is an important aspect of these acts of violence, that they are not orgiastic, but instant results of the clear-minded decision making of the responsible Communists. The storyteller is not wasting too many words on detailing the acts – he merely mentions them briefly, not so much as being ashamed about it, rather than refusing to even linger on the possibility of doing something less violent would have been the better attitude.

Unethical violence is executed by the reactionaries, and it is shown as unnecessary brutality – orgiastic and sadistic abnormality of the ruling class’s lackeys. For example, in this description of Somogyi’s night in a prison cell: “From outside, from the officer’s Casino, noises of drunken shouting, wild roistering infiltrated the cell. I was not able to listen to it. I was seeing in my mind the faces of my five comrades, who were executed by them last night.”<sup>27</sup>

The description of the roistering was essential in the way how the acts of white terror were depicted in the Bolshevik regime in Hungary. It was the most important way to furtherly differentiate ethical and unethical violence from each other – in a more popular approach than historical dialectics. This way, the representations of the violence committed by the Bolsheviks and by White Terrorists are even more differentiable. This contrast is made clearly visible in a lot of ways in Somogyi’s text, but we will only provide one further example. Just after the

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<sup>21</sup> Mills, CW. (1994): 33.

<sup>22</sup> Quotes Lukács, G. (2014): 11.

<sup>23</sup> József Balla was a Social Democratic politician who took part in the event in Somogy during the 1919 Commune as a vice president of the Worker’s Council and as a political organizer of the railway workers. Balla, J. (1955)

<sup>24</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part III.

<sup>25</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part III.

<sup>26</sup> The story of the nobleman appears in the 1959 edition, but this time without the execution: Somogyi, P. (1959): 59-65.

<sup>27</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part V.

paragraph about the officers' roistering, we read a description of one of the executed five men, Sándor Latinca: "I saw the dead-white face of Latinca, child-like clear blue eyes, from which love always radiated towards us if he looked in our direction, but these eyes always mirrored the lights of ice-cold hatred, if he was opposing the enemy."<sup>28</sup> Latinca's hatred is described by using cold colours, the colours of mental clarity and inner calmness. But this calmness is also the source of violence towards the enemy, which is in strong contrast to the drunken blood-orgy the White Terrorists are executing.<sup>29</sup>

### **Representations of social-democracy**

The social democratic movement had a somewhat rough history in Hungary. Their historical heyday was probably around 1918-19 and it ended around the time they united with the Bolsheviks, or at the latest, around the point of the fall of the proletariat's dictatorship.<sup>30</sup> Their role in the Commune was interpreted as a scapegoat for the Bolsheviks, they were treated retrospectively as traitors of the proletariat. This attitude is pungent in Somogyi's writings. His approach towards the "humanitarianism" of their leaders was already discussed in this paper. In Somogyi's stories, social democracy is equivalent with the betrayal of the class.

There are some leaders who were historically known as Social Democrats that are portrayed as Communists in the text, such as Lajos Tóth or Sándor Latinca. Their reinterpretation and representation enrich the Hungarian Bolshevik hagiography – which is an important aspect of building political hegemony.

There is a character in the two editions, who unites all of the negative aspects of the Social Democrats in one person. His name is István Zónig in the 1951 edition and he is pseudonymized in the 1959 one as Zamek. In the 1951 one, he is only appearing twice, once at the beginning of the narration, when the narrator arrives back in his hometown and visits the Worker's Community Home. There, he finds several leaders of the Social Democratic Party delivering speeches about the Bolsheviks' wrongdoings in Russia. The narrator of course, interrupts them and delivers his own, overwhelmingly positive experience about the events.<sup>31</sup> Following the speech, several of his young comrades persuade him to form the Communist Party's local suborganization. After this, the social democrats supposedly tried to repress their activity – but their acts were only "fuel to the fire". Zónig's other appearance is after the fall of the dictatorship, where the storyteller emphasizes that Zónig and his companions were the only ones walking free on the Main Street, while the other members of the party were in custody.<sup>32</sup> In the 1959 edition Zónig's (Zamek's) role is inflated. He now not only serves as a political antagonist, but he also engages in a love triangle with the protagonist; he tries to marry Tímár's

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<sup>28</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part V.

<sup>29</sup> The orgiastic atrocities of the White Terrorists are depicted in Somogyi, P. (1959): 81-85.

<sup>30</sup> About the social democrats' activity during the Commune: Varga, L. (2019)

<sup>31</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I.

<sup>32</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part IV.



local sweetheart by persuading her with commodities – further stressing his weak moral fibre and treacherous nature.<sup>33</sup>

### **Representations of the Communist Party of Hungary**

The representations of the Communist Party of Hungary (and its leadership) are certainly an interesting aspect of the representations of the Soviet-Republic. The stories are written from the perspective of the periphery, rather than of the centrum. It should be noted that in this region of Hungary, before the Commune, there was no suborganization of the Communist Party, there were only small groups of supporters, mainly members of the HSDP. Therefore, by “the representations of the Communist Party” in the title of this subchapter, we mainly mean representations of the centrum. In Somogyi’s stories there is no significant historical achievement attributed to the circle of Béla Kun, the CPH. The main heroes of the narration are the young Bolsheviks of Somogy, and of course, their mentor, Sándor Latinca. Lenin (and in the 1951 edition, Stalin) are mentioned as leaders from a faraway land, but the CPH does not have this function. This is due to the problematic nature the CPH’s leadership had in the Stalinist regime. Their name was taboo because most of them were mercilessly executed during Stalin’s Great Purge. The newly forming, politically motivated narrations of the Soviet-Republic had to emphasize other participants of the Commune, mostly Hungary’s Stalinist dictator, Mátyás Rákosi and participators who were already dead before Stalin’s murderous mechanisms could have done any harm to them – most frequently Tibor Szamuely.

In Somogyi’s work this is exactly the case: in the 1951 version, the characters form the local organization of the Communist Party (which is most probably fictive) and they send up a delegate to the Party’s headquarters to inform them and ask them for fliers and newspapers. When the delegate returns, he says: “I have talked to Szamuely and Rákosi. I received every command! We may begin our work...”<sup>34</sup> In the 1959 edition, the main character (who is taking the narrator’s place), János Tímár is already bringing the party’s leaders’ directives and the propaganda materials with him, when he arrives from Russia. This way Somogyi vindicates this merit to himself and more importantly, Béla Kun regains his place between the party leaders. “Béla Kun has been arrested. [...] I have talked with comrade Szamuely.” – reports Tímár.<sup>35</sup>

### **Representations of Sándor Latinca**

Sándor Latinca was a member of HSDP and a functionary in the county of Somogy during the Soviet-Republic of Hungary.<sup>36</sup> The author of our stories, Pál Somogyi was a political commissar in the terror squadron that wore his name: the Latinca Squadron. After his return from his Soviet exile, Pál Somogyi took part in the earliest episodes of the martyr-cult in connection with Latinca

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<sup>33</sup> Somogyi, P. (1959): 42-47.

<sup>34</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I.

<sup>35</sup> Somogyi, P. (1959): 17-18.

<sup>36</sup> His most extensive biography: Kávássy, S. (1973)

in 1945-46. Those early attempts were not endorsed by the Communist Party's inner circle, so they died out soon after.<sup>37</sup> *Képek Somogy megye munkásmozgalmából* was another attempt to put emphasis on his name and role in the 1919 Commune. In 1951, it was a different political atmosphere than in 1945-46. Now, the Communist Party was a state-party and it had more motivation to emphasise the dictatorship of the proletariat in 1919. Pál Somogyi's intention to canonize Latinca as one of the most important historic figures of Somogy was finally starting to unravel.

Latinca's representation in the work is of a superior leader, a mentor to the young Communists. He is in every sense, the embodiment of a higher truth, his clear vision and commitment toward Communism is uncompromisable. (It is still a disputable historical statement how exactly engaged Latinca was with the ideas of the Bolsheviks. It does certainly seem that he had good ties with the local advocates of it.) In these works, Latinca is represented as a Communist, who is known and endorsed by the inner circles of the CPH, but he doesn't join the (probably fictive) suborganization of Somogy, because he thinks it is best for the case if he works from inside the HSDP (as a crypto-communist). He does, however, go on long tours of agitations and propaganda-spreading for the Communist, supposedly without the knowledge of the social-democrats.<sup>38</sup>

Latinca is represented by Somogyi not only as a crystal-clear Communist, but also as a martyr and a hero of the case. His, and his comrades' execution is mostly narrated by adapting the vision of the poem by Jenő Hamburger.<sup>39</sup> To represent true Communists in a way that they are victims, rather than perpetrators was a highly useful addition of the mythology of the Hungarian communist movement. It was possibly used as a counterbalance to their unorthodox ethical perspective about violence and murder. If the reaction is unleashing their blood-thirsty brutality against clear minded communist heroes of the common people, it is justifiable to use violence against them, while fighting for a more just, utopian future.

## Conclusions

After our analysis we can comfortably establish that Pál Somogyi's 1951 work was a local adaptation of typical Stalinist representations of the Soviet Republic, with some interesting personal initiative on locally significant subjects, such as Sándor Latinca, other local politicians or the soldiers of the Latinca Squadron. The 1959 edition was somewhat adapted to the new political status quo, for example the parts that idolized Rákosi and Stalin were left out and Béla Kun's name is mentioned. But principally, it cannot be recognized as a fresh perspective of the Commune, because in its depth it holds onto its most significant characteristics, although in a more subtle way. Somogyi's stories were no doubt taken with a lot of suspicion from the public, especially those who had some firsthand recollections about what actually happened in Somogy County in the year 1919, nevertheless, they are still important historical narrations. They certainly set the ground for narrations on the Soviet-Republic and implemented dominant,

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<sup>37</sup> About these early attempts of cult-building surrounding the memory of Sándor Latinca: Zab, TL. (2023/a).

<sup>38</sup> Somogyi, P. (1951): Part I.

<sup>39</sup> Hamburger Jenő: Latinca-ballada.

hegemonistic ideas about Hungarian history. For some time, they meant the only legitim way of talking publicly about the local historical events, at least until the late 1960's and 1970's, when more professional adaptations were published about the Commune. And for the author, these stories provided a hardly questionable status of authenticity in the Bolshevik regime, and he became one of the region's most notable "nineteener" veterans – thus achieving himself a steady place between the county's cultural policy formers for the years to come.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> About the "nineteener" veterans' role in the Rákosi-regime, Péter Apor concludes, that they had little if any significance in the new dictatorship. They were presented as the ancient, but deeply respected reliquiae of the past. Apor, P. (2014): 42. In this sense, Somogyi was a typical veteran, who had a similar societal role like the one described by Apor. But this role was enough for him to maintain a significance in the cultural life of the region and he had enough societal credit to operate a literary journal from public funds (*Somogyi Írás*).

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