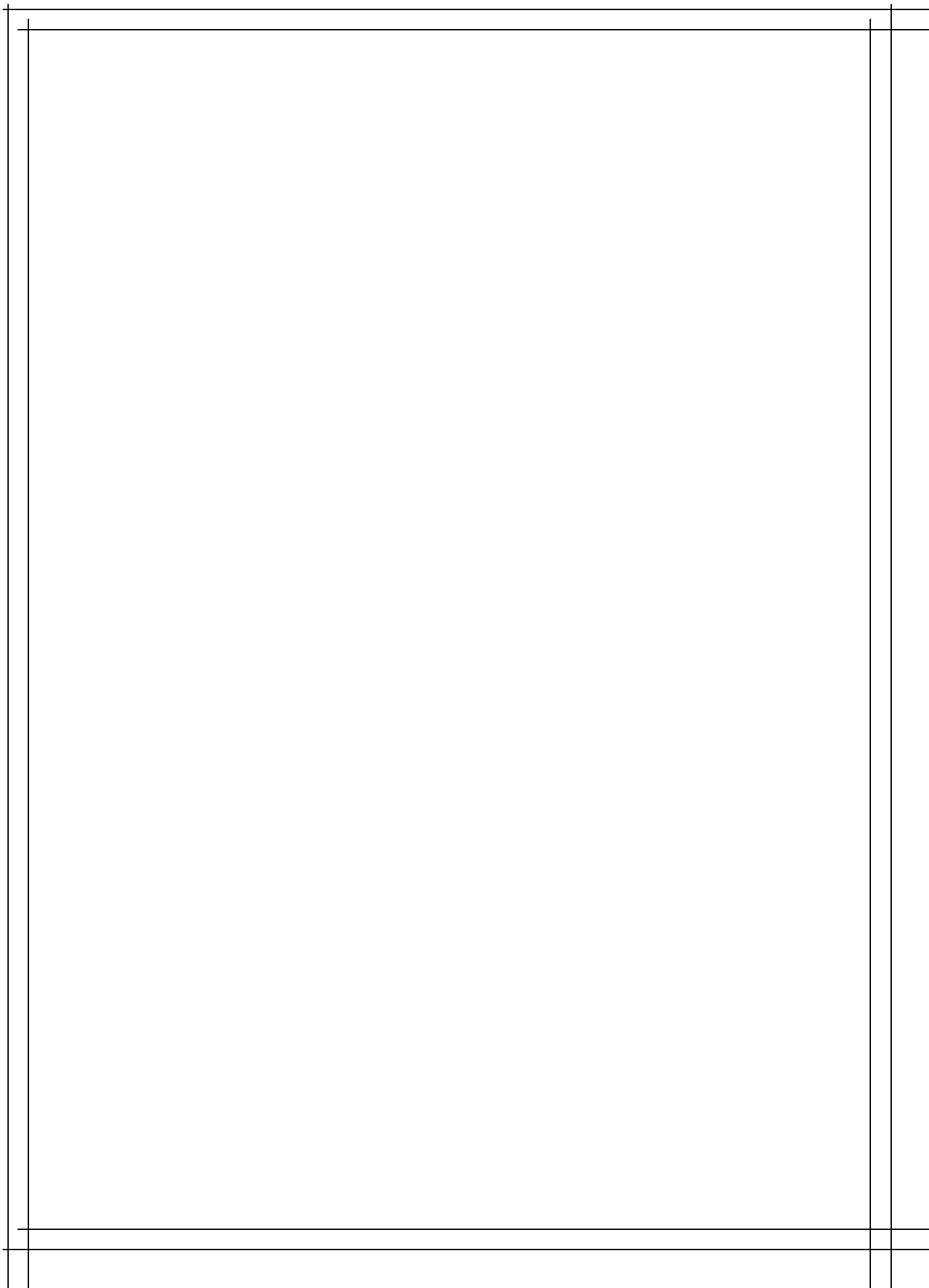


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Reconstructions



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Editors' Foreword

There is a hidden plane of ideas far above the edges of our earthly horizon¹ where the air is thin and the sky is of a much darker colour. It remains inaccessible for most of us, but we have it on good authority that this plane is replete with shining *ideas*, constituting the essence of all things we see taking shape in this earthly realm. Bound by no material limitation, these ideas are perfect. The lucky among us are occasionally able to extend their mind to this hidden plane. If they adapt to the twilight of that crisp world and have a sharp eye, they can even see things under a tenebrous dome of stars. Once they return, they might be able to transform what they saw and understood into words comprehensible to all of us.

The *ideas* on this hidden plane are perfect, but our earthly realm is crude and flawed. One cannot simply translate their experiences from up there and hope that everyone will understand. It takes tremendous effort to *re-construct* the perfect understanding of an *idea* into a form that earthlings can grasp. So pilgrims entering the hidden plane must be steadfast and willing to work even harder once they return to be able to convey their experiences.

Sometimes, however, the journey takes the opposite direction, and the challenges of it are reversed. One has to dive into the deep, the dwelling place of monsters great and puny, the world of anglerfish and plaice, the murky waters of history and even murkier ones of the present, where

¹ See Plato, *Phaedo* 109e-111a.

threats past and future abound, and where one can only see in flashes and glimpses.² In the darkness, there be dragons; but also nightingales, moths, and racoons. And one has to emerge having tamed the chaos of what they found there into at least a semblance of order: to reconstruct the debris of a long-sunken galleon into a solid structure and make a story out of disparate, contradictory fragments.

This second issue of *Jakobsleiter* is a result of long months of work: both that of students and their teachers. It is a collection of *reconstructions* about a variety of topics. Behind each one of the articles, you will find someone who commenced a pilgrimage of the mind into the hidden plane of ideas and sometimes descended into the dark, and returned in time to successfully tell us about their findings. Behind all of them, you will find the editors who were lucky enough to witness and aid these journeys and peer-reviewers, who were kind enough to support the authors with their knowledge and expertise. In their intellectual travels, students relied on the work of many guides and advisors, on and outside of the Editorial Board. On the Board, Derya Şahin Ipek was integral to selecting and feedbacking the submitted articles. We would also like to express our gratitude to the colleagues who were involved in preparing the issue for publication at different stages: Erdost Akin, Fanni Andristyák, Emese Bálint, László Fejős, Balázs Hetényi, Gitta Markó, Anna Márton, Adrian Matus, Rudolf Paksa, Peter Symmons, Dalma Szentpály, and Eszter Szép.

We, the editors, are truly happy to witness the diversity of topics represented in this 2023 issue of *Jakobsleiter*, entitled *Reconstructions*. The first article, by Boldizsár Áts, is a reconstruction of how the insignia of the Arrow Cross movement developed, arguing for a novel understanding of the ways their popular representation differs from and distorts reality. The second one, by Ádám Asztalos, spans two millennia, comparing the representation of the Praetorian Guard in a modern movie with what can be known about them from ancient sources. The third article, by Hanna Bíró and András Wéber, is a study on whether historical unrealised attempts at constructing perfect urban environments indicate that a variety of similar, current projects are also doomed to fail. The fourth article, by Anna

² See, e.g., Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History,' V; Michel Foucault, 'Truth and power: an interview', in C. Gordon (ed.) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf), p. 79.

Koharek, is a reconstruction of an increasing ecological trend in Europe, which threatens bee populations, but also of the ways in which bees are equipped to fight back. The fourth contribution, by Kristóf Földényi, dissects the development of Budapest from the perspective of the concept of the 15-minute city, arguing for a difficult yet cautiously hopeful future for the capital of Hungary. The sixth article, by János Pecznik, examines the Hungarian punk subculture during the last two decades of the Socialist regime, arguing that the government's extreme treatment of it was a result of the irreconcilable difference between their respective self-representations. The seventh and last article of the current volume, by Mateo Coelho, is a captivating reconstruction of Mayakovsky's play *The Bedbug* and an analysis of how this work represents the author's political ideas and his disillusionment with the political regime for which he had so ardently advocated. We, the editors, are humbled and honoured to be presenting this second issue of *Jakobsleiter*. We hope that these *reconstructions* bring our readers closer to the plane of hidden ideas and hidden depths. Dreamers as we are, we also dare to hope that it will inspire the next generation to similar pilgrimages.

Masha Semashyna and Andor Kelenhegyi

BOLDIZSÁR ÁTS

The Arrow Cross Uniform and Memory Politics

The short-lived hegemony of the Arrow Cross Party over Hungary, a period from 16 October 1944 until 28 March 1945, has survived vividly popular remembrance. This period, characterized by state-sponsored terror, institutional anti-Semitism, radical gangs roaming Budapest, and the chaotic defence of Hungary, has always had an aura of mystique surrounding it. For many today, the Arrow Cross Party appears as a centralized and well-organized group, whose members were mere cogs of a machine controlled by the supposedly all-powerful party leader, Ferenc Szálasi. The historic precedent in popular media as well as scholarly publications of presenting party members nearly without exception in full uniform carries significant implications for the viewer. Their uniformization seemingly deepens the ties of individuals to the ideology at large, casting them more as agents of the administration, in turn diverting attention from the fact that the atrocities were committed by regular people, often carrying out crimes independently. Events like the Maros street massacre in Budapest poignantly drive this point home: instigated by a monk turned political commissar, a group of party members forced their way into a hospital and murdered eighty-four people in January 1945 (Kurucz, 2020, p. 196).

This is the sort of violent action by which the Arrow Cross rule is characterised today, leading to the next area of contention, their “monopoly

over violence.” While the Arrow Cross movement is rightly condemned for the exorbitant acts of indiscriminate terror it enacted, it has also served as a convenient bogeyman. Given the brevity of this government’s reign and the number of people deported or massacred as part of the Holocaust compared to the total number of deportations and fatal victims, it has received disproportionate blame, traditionally cast as a sole scapegoat for the Hungarian Holocaust. A strong factor in their shouldering of this responsibility is the weight of crimes it displaces. It helps to forget that most of the Hungarian Jewish population was deported in 1944, during the premiership of Döme Sztójay, still under the purview of regent Miklós Horthy (Sarkadi, 2021). This is an issue central to modern Hungarian politics, as the memory politics (*emlékezetpolitika*) of the political right seeks to posit Horthy and his namesake period almost as a political forebearer.

The process of demonizing the Arrow Cross Party is greatly eased by their organizational, symbolic, and altogether superficial visual similarities to the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP). When presented in a Nazified fashion, observers are more inclined to believe that the Arrow Cross Party and its ideology were simply a Hungarian branch of the NSDAP. This affiliation with the larger, richer, and longer-standing movement furthermore serves to transfer some of the organizational qualities one may expect from it, overestimating the competence and capabilities of the Arrow Cross Party of 1944–45. This then ties back to the issue of scapegoating, as the overestimation of their organizational capabilities can, in turn, lead to the assumption that they were just as centralised as the NSDAP, relieving individuals lower in the hierarchy of blame.

The most visible of the visual elements are the black uniforms, caps, and, most importantly, the Arrow Cross armbands inspired by the NSDAP. It is through these visual traits that this article seeks to explore the connection of the Arrow Cross to the NSDAP and the issue of political remembrance. Given the scarcity and questionable reliability of written period documents to help this approach, visual sources such as photographs and film reels were primarily used to assess how the Arrow Cross Party members were equipped and clothed. Such a visual approach also provides further context to evaluate the regime’s acts of violence and their true potential, particularly challenging the dominant tendency to compare the Arrow Cross Party and the NSDAP one-to-one.

Post-World War I Nationalism in Hungary

The ultra-nationalistic elements that later defined the Arrow Cross Party have their origins at the end of World War I. Similar to many right-wing organizations in Europe, these groups were initially isolated and limited in number. Like many other belligerents, after the war, Hungary experienced a widespread but uniquely successful left-wing surge, leaving it the only post-war European nation, aside from the Soviet Union, to establish a socialist government known as the Hungarian Socialist Republic (Hatos, 2021). As socialist elements exerted power, the opposition on the right rallied around the reactionary Miklós Horthy and the White Army. When Horthy assumed power following an ill-fated irredentist war by the Socialist government, right-wing extremists became part of the state structure and received a mandate to deal with any perceived socialist agitators and supporters as they saw fit. This resulted in pogroms and political killings later known as the White Terror (Bodó, 2022). Following the defeat of the Hungarian Socialist Republic, Horthy marched on Budapest and shortly re-established the monarchy, assumed the position of regent, and incorporated many former White soldiers into army and government positions. By doing so, Horthy assimilated most potential radicals into the new regime (Gellért, 2020). This assimilation appears to have managed to placate the more extremist elements, with right-wing radicalism primarily manifesting itself as fervent anti-communism, forceful irredentist sentiment, and fluctuant antisemitism rather than the openly violent form seen in Germany (Paksa, 2013, pp. 16–17).

Prior to the success of the NSDAP in Germany, Hungarian national socialism had little electoral development. Following Hitler's rise to power, the first explicitly NSDAP-imitation parties were established, marking the beginnings of the Arrow Cross and other National Socialist movements. These Hungarian fascistic and National Socialist movements were fractured, lacking centralized leadership, and competing not only against socialists and other ideologically dissimilar parties but also against each other. The most notable trailblazer parties were the *Nemzeti Szocialista Magyar Munkáspárt* (National Socialist Hungarian Worker's Party), later renamed *Kaszásskeresztes Párt* (Scythe Cross Party), established by Zoltán Böszörmény in 1931, and the *Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Földműves és*

Munkáspárt (Hungarian National Socialist Peasant and Worker Party), founded by Zoltán Meskó and Count Fidél Pálffy in 1932 (Udvarvölgyi, 2004). The former was the first successful NSDAP-inspired party, while the latter is considered to be the first “real” Arrow Cross Party, a direct ideological predecessor to the many Arrow Cross movements (Máthé, 2021).

Ferenc Szálasi and Hungarianism

With the increased interest in Hungarian National Socialism, as well as its increasing antipathy towards the existing establishment culminating in a failed coup by Böszörmény, the government began cracking down more actively on radical organizations (Paksa, 2013, pp. 100, 328). While this was happening, in 1933, an army officer named Ferenc Szálasi published his first political work, outlining his ideals for an ideology known as *Hungarizmus* (Hungarism). This political movement loosely combined elements from German National Socialism, Italian fascism, and Socialist economics, creating an ideology that designated Hungarians as a sort of *Übermensch* of the Carpathians, while retaining some Marxist economic policies, such as industrial nationalization and agricultural centralization (Paksa, 2013, pp. 121–125). Szálasi was also uniquely tolerant of ethnicities other than Jews, as he opposed German Nazism’s imperialistic and hierarchical ordering of nationalities (Paksa, 2013, pp. 208–209).

In 1935, Szálasi founded his first political organization, the *Nemzet Akaratának Pártja* (Party of National Will), often abbreviated as NAP, in what historian Rudolf Paksa calls the second wave of Hungarian National Socialism and a structural and ideological shift following lacklustre electoral results in the elections (Paksa, 2013, pp. 100, 104–105; Tarján, n.d.). The party’s imagery, particularly its use and specificity of symbols, indicated Szálasi’s tendencies to ascribe meaning to the visual elements of his movement, relevant later (Paksa, 2013, pp. 109–10). On October 24, 1937, a large breakthrough was achieved amongst the Hungarian far-right, as an Arrow Cross coalition was formed, incorporating many smaller parties, essentially under the dominance of Szálasi and the NAP. It is noteworthy that neither of the aforementioned landmark parties of Böszörmény, Meskó, and Pálffy joined this block. In short order, Szálasi assumed a *de facto* party

leader position through personal propaganda and the ousting of certain rivals (Paksa, 2013, pp. 112–113). However, his direct control was quickly curtailed, as he was convicted of illegally establishing a party movement, and the NAP and the new coalition were dissolved. Szálasi served a prison sentence of a little over three years beginning in 1938 (Paksa, 2013, pp. 110, 120).

During Szálasi's imprisonment, the Arrow Cross coalition was banned and reformed multiple times under the leadership of Kálmán Hubay and others (Paksa, 2013, pp. 111–13). With renewed zeal, extensive propaganda, and press campaigns, the coalition occupied the position of the chief opposition faction (Paksy, 2009; Paksa and Nagy, n.d). Importantly, this occurred while Szálasi was in prison, which served to unite the splintered groups and elevate Szálasi to a Messiah-like figure in the eyes of his disciples. This description would overstate his capabilities. When released from prison following the First Vienna Award, Szálasi failed to maintain the upward electoral trends observed during his absence, and the party lost considerable political influence.

Over the next few years, the Arrow Cross movement faced scandals and setbacks, reducing the party to near irrelevance. Szálasi and his movement were relegated to the minor of the two far-right opposition blocks, competing against the larger establishmentarian “Gentleman Fascism” of Döme Sztojáy and Béla Imrédy, who had broken with the ruling MEP coalition. The larger party absorbed many smaller nationalist parties, including Pálffy's and even some members of the Arrow Cross Party. These defections, coupled with previous setbacks and experiences with governmental and political ostracization, led Szálasi to champion a very anti-establishmentarian and antisemitic rhetoric, which would largely dictate the party's position in politics for the upcoming years, cementing its and Szálasi's “wildcard” reputation (Paksa, 2013). This trait did not lend itself well to Hungarian politics, making the party antipathic to potential influential centrist and moderate supporters. Though party members and the press remained active and engaged all classes, they were unable to draw on political connections or many donors.

When Germany occupied Hungary in 1944 under Operation Margarethe, Döme Sztojáy was installed as prime minister and minister for the interior, with his movement gaining power in a pro-war coalition (Paksa,

2011). By that time, the Arrow Cross Party—Hungarist Movement had isolated itself from mainstream politics, due to Szálasi's increasingly fervent anti-establishmentarian rhetoric. This was the primary reason for their exclusion from the coalition installed after the German takeover (Paksa, 2013, p. 270). The Arrow Cross Party was only brought to power in October of that year, under Operation Panzerfaust, following the discovery of continued ceasefire negotiations between Hungary and the Allies. In popular Hungarian parlance, this period is also referred to as the Arrow Cross coup. Since this is when the Arrow Cross became the ruling party of Hungary, it is the period most of the photos, propaganda, and accounts of the Arrow Cross Party date to (Paksa, 2013, pp. 293–297). As a result, this is where the classic image of the Arrow Cross Party originates.

The Uniformization, Equipment, and Organization of the Arrow Cross Party in Power, 1944

When one thinks of the paramilitary branch of the party, the *Nyilaskeresztes Pártszolgálat* (Arrow Cross Party Service), or even a common party member, images like the one in Figure 2 may come to mind. A man dressed in a black uniform, topped by a matching field cap, holding a baton, pistol, submachine gun, or a rifle, and around his left arm, the emblematic Árpád-striped armband, featuring in a white field the arrow cross itself bearing a white *H*.

This is how filmmakers and theatre productions preferred to portray them after the war, seen in movies like *A tizedes meg a többiek* (The Corporal and the Others, 1965, dir. Keleti), and *Az ötödik pecsét* (The Fifth Seal, 1976, dir. Fábri). This depiction lends a much more powerful character to the Arrow Cross as an ideology, aligning with what one would imagine when thinking of a popular fascist movement. Though this may be in line with the aspirations of the movement, one should recall that the organization had very few donors to count. Since it was never remarkably well-supported in the upper echelons of politics and society and primarily drew its support from the lower strata of society, most members would have been unable to afford such a uniform. According to pictographic evidence,

only a select number of party members, namely the ceremonial guard, the *Nyilaskeresztes Díszszázad*, were outfitted in such a fashion.

In effect, the modern understanding of Arrow Cross, especially regarding its organization, surpasses even the period propaganda in many aspects. The uniformization was likely managed individually by Arrow Cross precincts while adhering to an overall “militaristic appearance.” Based on photographic evidence, this was accomplished by repurposing other uniforms, such as *MÁV* and *Levente* uniforms (these can be seen in the first instalment of the *Hungarista Híradó* (Hungaristic Newscast). The party also seems to have reappropriated *Honvéd* uniforms, and of course, any active service members wore their regular uniforms. For those unable to obtain uniforms of any sort, regular civilian clothing was worn, possibly supplemented with various pieces of uniforms, such as school caps or *Bocskai* caps. The only form of identification was an armband, which will be discussed shortly.

Arming the Arrow Cross Party members and various associates was also a haphazard operation. After the 1944 coup, the governing Arrow Cross Party legalized the bearing of firearms for members of the *Nyilaskeresztes Pártszolgálat* (Arrow Cross Party Service, also known as *Fegyveres Pártszolgálat*, later *Fegyveres Nemzetszolgálat*) and “group leaders.” This was largely ignored, as most supporters of the party were issued weapons without much regulation (Teleki, 1972). The *Nyilaskeresztes Díszszázad* (Ceremonial Guard) was the best-equipped group, and so was the core of the *Nyilaskeresztes Pártszolgálat*. These formations had priority, receiving the most modern and standardised equipment. Many photos show Szálasi-loyalist soldiers with German MP 40 and domestically produced 43 M Király submachine guns, alongside Hungarian 37 M pistols and 43 M rifles. Other armed party members and delinquents received either captured, lend-leased, or confiscated weapons. Many were equipped with Soviet Mosin Nagant, German Mauser Karabiner 98K, and Hungarian, Austrian, or Romanian Mannlicher, and possibly Italian Carcano rifles (Fig. 4, 5, 7). The more connected and higher-ranking could acquire submachine guns, and select people were tasked with operating Panzerfausts and machine guns like the 7/31 M Schwarzlose (Fig. 6). They did not shy away from utilizing commercial firearms either: hunting shotguns, pistols, and rifles can be sometimes spotted on photographs and a few recordings. This patchwork

of small arms meant that a diverse range of ammunition was required to operate a section, posing a significant logistical challenge that could not be realistically fulfilled in the tumultuous climate of Hungary in 1944–45. Any such units would have been ineffective in active combat, exacerbated by their lack of training, an incompetence that led to some of the first Arrow Cross Party Service fatalities (Máthé, 2013). These factors, coupled with legislation giving them considerable judicial powers, relegated them to “internal security” duties, such as press-ganging and “deserter-hunting” (Teleki, 1972). In this sense, the armband itself was a badge of office, one issued as freely as weaponry, a dangerous combination. The authority conveyed by an Arrow Cross armband was so great that some members of underground Zionist groups and resistance movement, notably David Gur (Endre Grósz), were able to actively save persecuted Jews, by gaslighting bystanders to believe that they would “take care” of the person in question, only to let them go when out of sight (Paksa, 2020; Végső, 2021).

The Arrow Cross Armband

These armbands served as the most recognizable and widespread form of identification during the brief regime. It is unclear when Szálasi’s party officially adopted this piece of identification, as it was already commonplace in the Scythe Cross Party and NSDAP. It is reasonable to assume that it was an early addition, likely during the adoption of the Nazi model. Nevertheless, this appears in virtually all media depicting party members and is the single most universal article of clothing, uniting the otherwise loosely uniformed groups and serving as an immediate form of identification.

The issuing of this armband may seem straightforward, as it was centrally distributed, but that too is multi-faceted. The most common variation at the time of Operation Panzerfaust was the Árpád-striped model, denoted “2” in Figure 8. Several other types of armbands existed; at least three can be distinguished. To understand the terminology to be used here and in the following figures, refer to Figure 5. It has been suggested by historian Áron Máthé that these were intended for people of different stations within the party, primarily the two main types, striped and unstriped (noted in different colours). Given the singularity of the source and the lack of other

corroborating evidence, it was at best an isolated incident (Máthé, 2013, pp. 66). A more likely explanation for the differences in the armbands is a gradual change in design and a decentralized and shifting mode of production and distribution. It is worth noting that the Arrow Cross Party had very limited resources until they assumed power in October 1944.

The German-inspired solid-based armbands with the white round backdrop and green arrow cross in the middle (see Fig. 8, types “1.1.1” and “1.1.2”) are reminiscent of the German inspiration. Additionally, the party leadership decided to distribute more of the striped pattern for the coup, suggesting that by the time of Operation Panzerfaust, the striped pattern had become the main and most widespread form. This is only compounded by the fact that Szálasi chose to wear this pattern of armband for his meeting with Hitler in December 1944 (see Fig. 8). The variation in solid-based armband is harder to conclusively pinpoint. For type “1.2,” there are only two photos of someone wearing it, from the same event, so it is likely a customized instance of “1.1.2” (see Fig. 8), updated to better match the new pattern. It is also possible that this served as the inspiration for the new design to incorporate the *H*. While Rudolf Paksa has suggested that this design was Szálasi’s idea while he was in prison, photographs from the 1938 edition of *Life Magazine* disprove this theory (Paksa, 2013, pp. 120–21). Without any hard evidence for the former, it can only be stated that this emerged before then. This theoretical evolutionary tree of the armbands can be seen in Figure 7. Details and illustrations of the major types of armbands can be seen in Figure 8.

Development of the Arrow Cross

The trajectory of the Hungarian far-right in terms of propaganda imagery follows a similar path to the ideologies of the parties themselves. The first NSDAP clones in Hungary adopted the swastika as their main ideological symbol, perhaps modifying it slightly, but generally retaining the defining characteristics, just as they followed the original ideology. This can also be seen in Figure 9, on Böszörmény, the leader of one of the first National Socialist parties, who modified the symbol by changing the colour of the swastika from black to green (Máthé, 2021). In 1933, the Ministry of the In-

terior banned the use of the swastika, under the pretence of it becoming an official symbol of a foreign state, namely the German Empire. As a result, the parties were forced to adopt new symbols.

The *Nemzeti Szocialista Magyar Munkás Párt*, as hinted at before, modified their swastika, fashioning it out of two crossed scythes, with the handles and blades imitating the bends of the cross, as seen in Figure 9. The *Nemzet Akaratának Pártja*, led by Szálasi, adopted a more complex emblem, featuring the image of a rising sun, and the word *HIT* (Faith) written in runic script (Paksa, 2011). This can be seen in Figure 1.

It is worth mentioning here that the symbol itself was designed by Szálasi, and each element had a deeper significance. This trait of Szálasi was carried over to his final design for the Arrow Cross Party—Hungarist Movement that he would later lead. The most emblematic symbol of the ideology has much murkier origins. The Arrow Cross has been attributed to multiple people and organizations, with the only solid point being that it comes from the western side of the Danube (Paksa, 2011). It is nearly impossible to definitively establish which right-wing movement first started using the symbol, but the earliest pictorial source is that of a pin on Count Fidél Pálffy, dating from 1934 (Fig. 13). Pálffy was the right hand of Meskó, who led the *Magyar Nemzeti Szocialista Földműves és Munkáspárt* (Hungarian National Socialist Peasant and Worker Party), and it was likely the first group to adopt the arrow cross as their own. This is further supported by a period leaflet dating to 1935 (Fig. 12). The meaning behind this infamous symbol is similarly uncertain. Some claim that it originates from the *Képes Krónika* (Illustrated Chronicle) and was originally the coat of arms of Saint Ladislaus, though no concrete supportive evidence exists for this (Peticiok, n.d.). Based on the way the Arrow Cross is used in combination with an outline of Greater Hungary, it is reasonable to say that this symbol of a revisionist party is meant to show aspirations to restore the former borders of Hungary, reversing the Treaty of Trianon (see Fig. 11 and 12).

This symbol was later simplified and adopted by the Arrow Cross party, the coalition formed while Szálasi was imprisoned, with the emblem retained when he assumed control of the party (Fig 10). In October 1944, when Szálasi assumed power, the eastern regions of Hungary were already under Soviet occupation, and the capital was mere months away from a full-blown siege.

The Myth of the Arrow Cross

Having now discussed and dispelled at length the image of a well-organized, well-equipped, and effective Arrow Cross Party, let us now consider what brought about this false picture in the first place and what it means at a societal level. As the capabilities of the Arrow Cross Party are often so grossly overstated in popular consciousness, it may come as a surprise that this image was the result of a mostly organic post-war development. A similar phenomenon can be best observed with Nazi Germany and its reputation, most notably regarding the technological superiority of its military and the Wehrmacht's responsibility for the atrocities committed. The popular myth of the German military superiority, as well as the "Clean Wehrmacht" myth, came about due to German ex-generals and servicemen such as Heinz Guderian and Franz Halder holding a monopoly over the popular narrative regarding the Eastern Front, and the lack of non-propaganda recordings of the German army (Guderian, 1957; Wette, 2006). With the advent of documentaries, the visual aspect came into play, while B-roll showed the modern and powerful German war machines, taken straight from period-correct propaganda sources. This particular visual aspect lingers today, for the same reason it did then: a lack of other visually engaging and relevant sources. It is then reasonable to conclude that the myth emerged through a combination of naivete and dishonesty. Though the image of the Arrow Cross is not a carbon copy, it follows a similar trajectory.

Compared to the Nazi movement, the Arrow Cross produced considerably less propaganda and was a closely controlled subject for a long time after the war. During the few months the Arrow Cross Party controlled Budapest, a vital centre of propaganda production, it was still able to generate and distribute an exorbitant amount of propaganda. Two complete episodes of the *Hungarista Híradó* (Hungaristic Newscast) were produced, complete with footage from the front and propaganda recordings of Arrow Cross Party members contributing to the defence of Budapest. Additionally, the *Magyar Világhíradó* (Hungarian Global Newscast) was also made to promote the cause and report on actions of the government in a mostly positive light (Filmhíradók Online, n.d.). Multiple series of leaflets, bulletins, and posters were distrib-

uted in Budapest, urging the populace to take up arms and see the new government as their saviour. In these sources, primarily the more emblematic and flashy Ceremonial Guard dominated the visual materials dealing with the subject.

During the Communist era, the Arrow Cross regime was not encouraged as a subject of discussion. On the one hand, most of Szálasi's former lower-level followers had integrated into the new regime, with some even still serving to put down the popular revolution of 1956 (Máthé, 2013, p. 3). On the other hand, many more continued to live their lives and carry their beliefs, becoming revolutionaries and finding themselves on opposing sides of the barricades. Films were often the only visual connection to this era, and they all presented the Arrow Cross visual stereotype. *Budapesti tavasz* (Spring of Budapest, 1955, dir. Máriássy), *A tizedes meg a többiek* (The Corporal and the Others, 1965, dir. Keleti), and *Az ötödik pecsét* (The Fifth Seal, 1976, dir. Fábri) all feature their Arrow Cross grunts in uniforms. With an abundance of full uniforms in media, and original photos featuring full uniforms, professional works dealing with the subject adopted this look, further cementing the misconceptions of the "German" Arrow Cross. Although secondary education has started to include more varied chapters and imagery on the subject, the scope of the curriculum makes it extremely difficult to cover this topic. As a result, many high-school students either do not learn about this period of Hungarian history at all or only briefly encounter Arrow Cross stereotypes. People who do not learn about the subject at school will then most likely never explore the topic out of personal interest, leaving films and series as the main points of connection to the topic. Even recent films like *Walking with the Enemy* (2013, dir. Schmidt) fall for the "professional war criminal" trope. To effectively educate the broader population about this is paramount, and removing uniforms will not only improve historical authenticity but also communicate to the viewer that these people were just as ordinary as they themselves are. The more sources become available, and the more research is made on the subject, the better the average person can be informed, whether through popular media, school, or independent inquiry.

Ultimately, the way Arrow Cross Party members are presented may influence how their actions and the people themselves are perceived. Giving a criminal a uniform could aid in dispersing the blame, directing it not against the assailant but against the uniform and ideology. While this may appear a net neutral, as these concepts are justified subjects for denunciation, it also alleviates the individual human factor in the crimes by equalizing it with policy. This is a subject explored through a more intimate lens in the literary works of Gábor Zoltán, *Orgia* (2016) and *Szomszéd* (2018). It also helps to forget that most often these people did what they did by their own initiative and to overshadow people compliant with the regime. This is a theme also explored in the 2021 documentary, *A gyilkosok emlékműve* (Monument to the Murderers, 2021, dir. Dániel Ács), which partially inspired this article.

While these examples hint at a shift in the evaluation of Hungarian history towards a revisionist mindset, the debate around the Horthy era and its role in the Holocaust continues in academic circles. It is clear that the current establishment's support for the administration bogs down attempts to reevaluate regency and in turn recontextualize the dictatorship.



Figure 1: Seal of the NAP



Figure 2: The Ceremonial guard saluting the “martyrs” of the Arrow Cross coup in the infamous uniforms, 16 October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, ‘Hungarista Híradó 1.’, film. Available at: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5885>



Figure 3: Arrow Cross Party members during the coup, 15 October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, ‘Hungarista Híradó 0.’, film. Available at: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5883>



Figure 4: Members of the Arrow Cross Party Service giving out arms to party members in October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, 'Hungarista Híradó 0.', film. Available at: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5883>



Figure 5: Associates, possible members of the Arrow Cross Party in Levente caps and with mismatched rifles in October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, 'Hungarista Híradó 0.', film. Available at: <https://filmhiradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5883>



Figure 6: Associates, possible members of the Arrow Cross Party in civilian clothing manning a Hungarian 7/31 M. Schwarzlose in October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, 'Hunarista Híradó 0.', film. Available at: <https://filmhíradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5883>



Figure 7: Associates, possible members of the Arrow Cross Party in various pieces of clothing. Some are partially in uniform, others in civilian. The person in the middle left is a German Soldier. October 1944, via Filmhíradók Online (Nemzeti filmintézet), originally published by Magyar Film Iroda RT., 1944, 'Hunarista Híradó 0.', film. Available at: <https://filmhíradokonline.hu/watch.php?id=5883>

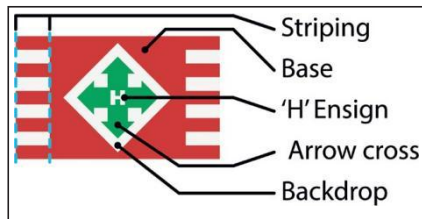


Figure 8: Terminological reference, anatomy of an armband



Figure 9: The Szálasi-Hitler meeting on 4 December 1944, via Origo, accessed 24 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.origo.hu/tudomany/20191015-a-75-eve-tortent-ki-ugrasi-kiserlet-egesz-folyamataba-kodolva-volt-a-kudarc.html>

2

- Árpád-striped circumference 4 white, 5 red stripes
- The Árpád stripes stop at equidistance from the arrow cross & backdrop
- White square tilted at 45° serving as backdrop
- Green arrow cross on the backdrop
- The letter "H" placed at the centre of the arrow cross
- The size of the "H" may fluxuate
- Most common type

Appears: 1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.



1.1.1

- All red base
- White, round backdrop
- Green, slim arrow cross on backdrop
- Likely the earliest pattern
- On some images, the arrow heads are more barbed

Appears: 8, 9, 13, 33, 35*, 35**



1.1.2

- All red base
- White, round backdrop
- Green, broad arrow cross on backdrop
- Likely an early pattern
- Thickness of the cross may vary, but the illustration shows the thickest extent

Appears: 25, 29, 33*, 35*,



1.2

- All red base
- White, round backdrop
- Green, broad arrow cross on backdrop
- The letter "H" placed at the centre of the arrow cross
- The size of the "H" may vary

Appears: 29*, 29**



Figure 10: Theoretical evolutionary tree of the armbands

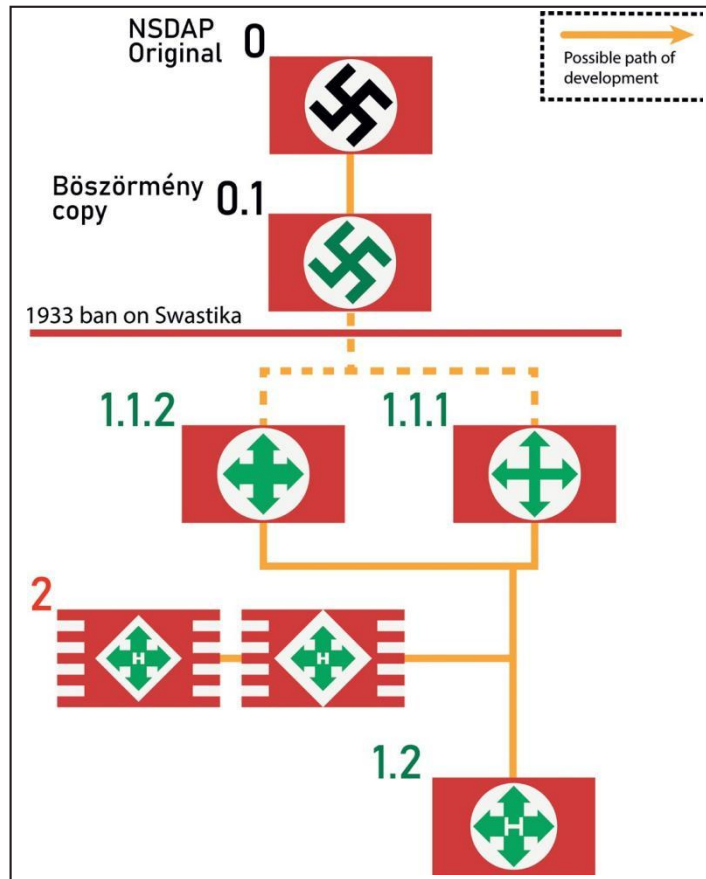


Figure 11: The four types of armands, in order: Main Árpád-striped variant (“1”), the two earlier forms (“2”, “2.5”), “2.5” included to provide a direct link to “3,” the “hybrid” style (descriptions included)



Figure 12: Pamphlet of the National Socialist Hungarian Worker's Party, with a portrait of Böszörmény and the party symbol below a Turul, c. 1933 (?) (misdated on site), *Darabanth*, 33rd concluded major auction of historical documents, handwritings, and curiosities. Available at: <https://www.darabanth.com/hu/nagyaukcio/33/kategoriak~Mutargy-papirregiseg-egyeb/Tortenelmi-dokumentumok-keziratok-erdekessegek~13876/1932-Boszormeny-Mozgalom-Nemzeti-Szocialista-Magyar-Munkaspárt-prospektusa-benne-Boszorme~II2135629/>



Figure 13: Portrait of Count Fidél Pálffy, c. 1934, via *MuseoMap*, Hungarian National Museum, original positive paper print. Available at: <https://www.museomap.hu/en/record/-/record/oai-aggregated-bib5792010>



Figure 14: Poster of the coalition Arrow Cross party, the Hungarian National Socialist Party, c. 1937, via *Axioart*, Abaúj Antikvárium és Könyvlap, 95th book auction. Available at: <https://konyvlap.hu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/95arv.pdf>; <https://axioart.com/tetel/-plakat-a-szalasi-ferenc-vezette-szelsojobbaldali-magyar-ne>

Figure 15: Leaflet of the Meskó and Pálffy-led Hungarian National Socialist Peasant and Worker Party, c. 1935, in Paksy, 2014.



Figure 16: Arrow Cross propaganda posters in Budapest, c. 1944, *Fortepan*. Available at: <https://fortepan.hu/hu/photos/?q=nyilas>

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ÁDÁM ASZTALOS

The Historical Accuracy of the Praetorians in *Gladiator* (2000)

Like many other Hollywood films set in ancient periods, *Gladiator* is historically inaccurate. The film follows Maximus, a Roman general and a companion of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. After the accession of Commodus, Maximus is caught up in a conspiracy and forced to flee. During his flight, he is captured by slavers and trained as a gladiator. He becomes famous and starts fighting in Rome, where he reveals himself to Commodus. Maximus ends up killing the Emperor but dies from his wounds.

From the main character being a fictional person to the death of Commodus and the transition of Rome from a monarchy to a Republic, the film does not adhere to its historical roots. I will not review these inaccuracies but rather how the movie portrayed the Praetorian Guard. This paper is only concerned with analysing the film's original cut (2000) rather than the later-released extended version, as this was the one originally shown in movie theatres. The film was widely popular, one of Ridley Scott's most famous, and remains one of the most successful films at the Academy Awards (Holland, Pius, and Beachum, 2022).

As the emperor's personal bodyguard, the Praetorian Guard was responsible for protecting the ruler and maintaining order within the capital city of Rome. However, it is important to note that other units, like the German bodyguards (*germani custodes corporis* or *numerus batavorum*; Suetonius, *Caligula* 43) during the Julio-Claudian era or the imperial horse-guards

(*equites singulares Augusti*; Cowan, 2014, pp. 18-20) during the era the film is set, also protected the Emperor. The film does not reference any of these units, so they will remain out of this paper's consideration. The power and influence of the Praetorians extended far beyond their official duties, as they frequently played a role in shaping the political landscape of the empire. They often had the power to decide who would become emperor and could influence political decisions through their support or opposition to various candidates. This allowed the Praetorian Guard to exert significant influence over the authoritarian rule of the Roman Empire and highlights the importance of understanding their historical accuracy in popular cultural depictions like *Gladiator*. The Praetorian Guard's role in maintaining authoritarian rule in ancient Rome can provide insights into contemporary political issues and power dynamics. By examining how the Praetorian Guard exercised their power and influenced political decisions, audiences can gain a better understanding of the ways in which political power is wielded and the potential consequences of authoritarian rule. In the compelling story of the film, the guardsmen represent the physical power of the Emperor and are an important part of the narrative. In this paper, I will discuss the portrayal and actions of the Guard in the film *Gladiator* in terms of historical accuracy.

The Guard, previously an unofficial bodyguard, was incorporated into a permanent institution by Augustus. Having only recently ascended to power, the Emperor had to rely on a robust military force to support his regime. Augustus, wanting to uphold the democratic veneer of his regime, limited the number of soldiers stationed in Rome at any time. Only three of the nine cohorts were stationed in the city, while the others were dispersed around Italy, but they would be later consolidated into the *Castra Praetoria* inside Rome. He also put two equestrian prefects in charge to limit their possible power, but it was not unusual for the Guard to have a sole commander. However, more measures were needed to stop opportunist leaders from taking power, as ultimately, Augustus's preemptive preparations failed to stop opportunistic men from seizing power. The Guard would kill and elevate many future Emperors, sometimes leading to civil war and turmoil.³ From the merger of Augustus's and Antony's guardsmen in 31 BC into a

³ The assassination of Pertinax, one of many committed by the Guard: see Appelbaum, 2007.

unified division to its eventual dissolution by Constantine in 312 AD, the Praetorians would serve the Empire in many different ways. The Guard fought on the battlefields alongside their legionary counterparts, intimidated the senatorial opposition, collected taxes, and guarded the Emperor (De La Bédoyère, 2017).

I have analysed the Praetorian Guard's appearances and mentions in the film, comparing them with the related historical literature and archaeology, and will write about each scene in the order they appear on the screen. First, we shall inspect what the Praetorians wore in the film, as this does not vary during the movie. Each guardsman is shown wearing purple garments and an accompanying purple cloak. Some higher-up soldiers might have worn purple to signify their devotion or closeness to the imperial family. However, most wore plain citizen togas to maintain the fantasy that the Emperor was not a military dictator. When legionaries are shown on screen, they wear dirty and worn armour, whilst the guardsmen, in contrast, are always in clean clothes. The armour a praetorian might wear is up for debate, as the many triumphal monuments in Rome showcase many distinct variations. In the film, the Praetorian helmets are crested with an eagle on top. These helmets might be consistent with the information in related archaeology, as the gravestones of the *equites singulares Augusti* often show them in this manner, but this is not true for the rest of the Guard. They carry a more ovoid shield than that used by other Roman soldiers at the time, which is also consistent with the related archaeology. Their standards in the movie feature the eagle at all times. In reality, every Praetorian cohort had its own insignia, which was also true for their shields (Cowan, 2014, pp. 36-43).

One of the reasons for the historical inaccuracy of the armour and clothing of the Praetorian Guard might be because of story-telling concerns. The director and the costume designers wanted to distinguish the Guard's elite nature by making them wear different colours, distinctive helmets and armour, uniform insignias and shield patterns. The design of the Praetorians is also similar to that of Commodus, so the viewer associates them with each other. The stylishness and elegance of the Emperor's and his Guard's attire starkly contrast with the patchwork team of gladiators led by Maximus.

The first time we see the Praetorians is when they accompany Marcus Aurelius to a vantage point. We can see a standard with the inscription of the fourteenth Praetorian cohort. However, the maximum number of co-

horts in service at any time during the principate was twelve, except during a civil war (De La Bédoyère, 2017, pp. 69-80). During the opening battle scene, we do not see any guardsmen fighting, only protecting the Emperor. Protection of their sovereign was the Guard's primary purpose, but they also fought with the army commanded by the Emperor (Birley, 1987). We also see the men serving to protect the commander's tents and escorting Commodus and his sister to the camp. The Guard would act in such capacities.

The Praetorians played an immense political role in Rome. The Emperors used them in clandestine operations against conspirators and political dissidents (Sheldon, 2004, pp. 122, 165). Therefore, it is probable that the guardsmen sent to execute Maximus would dutifully complete the task assigned to them. If it is true that in the movie, the Praetorians took no part in the fighting, it is possible that they did not respect Maximus as the other soldiers did. Even further, if the soldiers had just arrived as a part of the entourage of Commodus, they might not have known who the general was. Maximus's escape attempt and fight against his four Praetorian captors is not probable. However tenacious or experienced he might be, fighting against four armed and armoured foes is challenging. These men were supposed to be the Emperor's defenders, and even if they just came from Rome and did not see action for years, they were, in the end, still four able-bodied soldiers. The guardsmen had to be weakened by the writers to let Maximus escape.

The film version of Commodus ordering the death of Maximus's family might be a realistic scenario, but this question is out of the scope of this paper. In the film, he sends his trusted Praetorians, who execute the mother and child and ravage the farm. In the literature, there is no information on such an execution where men were sent to kill an unarmed mother and child, but the guardsmen did not usually shy from violence. In April 190, under the rule of Commodus, Rome had a shortage of grain, which the grain prefect blamed on the freedman Cleander. During a horse race, a group of children incited the audience of the race to riot. As a response, Cleander sent a wing of Praetorian cavalry to disperse the rioters. The horsemen trampled over and killed many of the rioters, unlike the urban cohorts led by Pertinax, who rallied to the side of the people (De La Bédoyère, 2017, pp. 214-215). Would the guardsmen sent to kill Maximus's

wife and child cause such burning and destruction as they did in the film? Probably not, but the devastation needed to be increased to further fuel the viewers' revenge drive.

The following scene we see the Praetorians in is the triumphal entry of Commodus into Rome. We do not know if this is a true Roman triumph for his "victory" against the German tribes or a parade for his accession. As Gracchus, one of the senators, says, "He enters Rome like a conquering hero. But what has he conquered?" It shall be assumed that this is a triumph. The accuracy of this triumph is not the concern of this paper. Guardsmen wore plain togas without armour inside the city, but during such processions, they would don their ceremonial armour. The soldiers and the guardsmen involved in the procession would, unlike the film, be unarmed (Versnel, 1970).

Inside the Senate building, we see armed members of the Praetorian Guard. The Emperor needed a close attendance of guardsmen at all times. There is a story of a senator who wanted to apologise to the Emperor for his offensive remark and started grovelling at the Emperor's feet. When the Emperor tripped on the man and fell on his face, the senator was set upon by guardsmen and nearly beaten to death (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.13). An escort of Praetorians inside the Senate is probable with an Emperor like Commodus, who might have wanted to intimidate the senators. In the following scene, senator Gaius says: "Clever? The whole of Rome would be laughing at him if they were not in fear of his Praetorian," further reinforcing the view that Commodus uses the Praetorians as a means of intimidation. The Praetorians did not receive sympathy from the Senate nor the people alike, with the famous poet Juvenal writing about how a Praetorian guardsman left a nail in his foot whilst running by (Clark, 1988).

We see Praetorians patrolling the city, accompanying the young Lucius Verus and helping with the games at the Colosseum. These are all duties they performed. The Praetorians and the urban cohorts patrolled the city and kept order on the streets. Escorting the imperial family was one of the functions of the Guard (Bingham, 1997). However, in a later scene, we see Lucilla accompanied by her non-imperial guards. She might have wanted to distance herself from Commodus and his informants inside the Praetorian Guard, like the infamous speculators. These soldiers would spy for the Emperor. This is why she might have deliberately chosen a personal trusted

entourage. Like spying, the guardsmen could be used in a variety of tasks. For example, the Guard was used as crowd control and security during the Roman games, but they could occasionally step into the arena and participate in the bloodshed (Tacitus, *Annals* 12.56). The scene where the guardsmen accompany Commodus onto the floor of the Colosseum has a logical basis, as there is little chance that the Emperor would go unescorted to meet with a group of gladiators.

After the Emperor's spies uncover the conspiracy between Maximus, Gracchus, and Lucilla, guardsmen are sent to take the senator away. Of the many men of prominence taken away and executed during the reign of Commodus, this must have been a routine procedure of the Praetorians. The logical next step was to take out Maximus, as seen in the film. A much larger group of guardsmen are sent to deal with Proximo's slave school than against the feeble senator, Gracchus. After pulling down the gate and bursting into the compound's courtyard, they advance towards the residence of the gladiators, and a brawl ensues. The director does not show much of the fight scene, only close-up shots, making it hard to know how the conflict is going. Eventually, the Praetorians carefully lay an ambush for Maximus and surround him. The film shows archers at vantage points both in the ambush and the gladiator school. Many Praetorian specialists were instructed in archery (Cowan, 2014), showing off their prowess during the siege of the *Castra Praetoria* in 238. Using their bows to lethal effect, they repelled the besieging mob.

The strength of the Praetorian Guard is up for debate. On the one hand, they were the elite bodyguards of the Emperor. Nevertheless, some sources beg to differ, like Cassius Dio. He writes about how the peaceful and easy living of the guardsmen led them to become soft (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXXIV, 16). He also mentions a comical scene of the Praetorians preparing during the civil wars following the death of Commodus. The sailors of Misenum had forgotten how to drill, and the war elephants would not even carry their drivers. Cassius Dio might have been exaggerating, as historically, the Guard served as frontline units during the Marcomannic War. On the other hand, even under the routine training of the Guard, a man could become skilled in combat. Otho's Praetorians, many of whom had never seen battle, defeated Vitellius's regular troops at Placentia and Cremona (Tacitus, *Histories* 2.12–15). Hadrian would constantly

be drilling and training his soldiers like war would break out any minute (*Historia Augusta*, Hadrian 10.2). Rigorous training can make up for the experience of fighting battles. I am inclined to believe the film's narrative, as the gladiators are unarmoured but have constantly been fighting and are experienced. Whilst the film's Praetorians did not partake in the campaigns against the Marcomanni, making them somewhat inexperienced, they are still heavily armoured and have the advantage of surprise.

Chains bind Maximus down in the underground of the Colosseum, and the final confrontation is coming. The movie never clearly states who Quintus is. At the film's start, he is dressed like Maximus and the rest of the legionaries. When we see him again after the attempted assassination of Maximus, he similarly wears more ornate armour like Commodus and the Praetorians. This shift in colour scheme symbolises the change of allegiance from the general to the Emperor. He was probably promoted to the prefect of the Praetorian Guard by Commodus on his ascension to the purple as gratitude for siding with him during the tenuous time in the wake of Marcus Aurelius' assassination. If he indeed is the commander of the Praetorian Guard, then this portrayal is not in line with the historical literature. In Commodus's fifteen-year reign, eleven Praetorian prefects commanded the Guard, with no single man serving from his accession to his death (Howe, 1942). This would mean that a Praetorian prefect would not be able to establish a meaningful relationship and maintain strong ties with his men.

After embracing Maximus, Commodus stabs the Gladiator with a poisoned blade, and the lift takes them up with the Emperor's escort to the Colosseum. We can see a full complement of soldiers who surround the fighters. Cassius Dio states that Commodus would only be accompanied by his Praetorian prefect and his eunuch chamberlain when fighting in the arena, not a unit of guardsmen. He usually fought against people with some disability or drawback that made them unable to fight properly (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXXIII, 19). Even then, Maximus was an excellent fighter, even when poisoned, so extra precautions might have been taken, which is why more guardsmen are present.

After a fierce fight, the Emperor is disarmed and asks Quintus for a sword. After Quintus does not answer, he asks again, but the prefect continues staring. Commodus asks a third time, now from the soldiers, who start to take out their swords. At this, Quintus orders them to be sheathed.

With no help from the Guard, Commodus takes out his hidden dagger and attacks Maximus, who, after a tough bout, defeats him. The Guard had betrayed Emperors before, routing from their side when they most needed them. When public opinion was swaying to the side of the pretender Galba, Nymphidius Sabinus abandoned Nero along with the Praetorian Guard. The same soldiers would abandon Galba when he failed to pay the cash handout Sabinus had promised (Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Life of Galba 24–26). Many other Emperors were deserted or assassinated by their bodyguards, like Pertinax, Didius Julianus, and Caracalla. So we can determine, especially with Pertinax and Didius Julianus, who reigned just after Commodus, that the Praetorians of the time would abandon an Emperor if it suited them.

But would it suit their interests? We see Quintus changing in character during the film, becoming ever more distant from Commodus. After all the evil the Emperor has done, Quintus is fed up. The last straw is when Commodus, disarmed by a poisoned opponent, asks for his sword. Whether Quintus's actions are historically realistic is impossible to determine. The men who commanded the Guard were a colourful bunch. Sejanus was a plotter who slowly and surely undermined Tiberius, siphoning authority to himself (De La Bédoyère, 2017). Sextus Afranius Burrus wanted what was best for the young Emperor Nero, and with the help of his tutor Seneca, they maintained a stable government and restricted Nero's vices (Suetonius, *Nero* 35.5). On the other hand, Ofonius Tigellinus supported Nero in all his sins and even partook in them, deserting the Emperor when his position was no longer stable (Tacitus, *Histories* 1.72.2, 1.72.19). Quintus's decision not to give Commodus a sword is a matter of personality, and Quintus is a fictional figure.

The next question is whether the guardsmen would have obeyed Quintus over the Emperor. The actions of the soldiers depend on their loyalty and ties. During the reign of Tiberius, the Emperor condemned the wayward Praetorian prefect Sejanus. Special precautions were taken so that the guardsmen, on hearing the news of the condemnation, would not side against Tiberius. Macro, the designated new prefect of the Guard, ordered the Senate building to be surrounded by the members of the Vigiles and all Praetorian units to remain in the *Castra Praetoria* (Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LVIII). These measures were enacted to limit the Guard's interfer-

ence and stop them from siding with Sejanus. When the guardsmen heard the news of Sejanus's downfall, his supporters had been thoroughly purged, and he and his family had been executed.

So a long-standing and cultivated relationship between a prefect and his Guard could redirect their loyalty from the Emperor to their prefect. However, this relationship was not always needed for a prefect to take control of the Guard. Nymphidius Sabinus was only in charge for three years but successfully influenced the Guard to abandon Nero. Sabinus had offered cash rewards to the potential defectors, and the soldiers were faced with the prospect of fighting against the veteran army of Galba (Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Life of Galba 2). The soldiers in the film have no such rewards or troubling circumstances that could push them into disobedience.

In the end, it all comes back to Quintus. It seems that during the entire reign of Commodus, Quintus was in charge of the Guard and must have cultivated a good relationship with them. If so, the prefect's words must have carried the necessary authority to make the soldiers sheath their swords. Situations like this are why the system of two prefects was devised by Augustus so that no one man could have such power over the Guard. The situation would be realistic if Quintus had the time and personality to wield such influence over the soldiers. However, had the reign of Commodus featured a multitude of prefects, no one man could have amassed such an influence over the soldiers to be able to overrule the Emperor.

To summarise, *Gladiator* is a historically inaccurate film, with liberties taken in particular in the presentation of the Praetorian Guard. The movie strays from historical accuracy, but these liberties can be taken in order to make a good story. The coldness and uniformity of the guardsmen's attire display their elite nature and provide a solid contrast to Maximus and the rest of the gladiators. They are, in a way, an extension of Commodus's power and wrath, as they brutally murder Maximus' wife and child and keep the senators in check. The guardsmen accompany the Emperor everywhere, always in the background, symbolising that he is in control. And the last scene, when the soldiers desert their Emperor, is when Commodus loses control.

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HANNA BÍRÓ and ANDRÁS WÉBER

Radical Urban Megaprojects: Will They Fulfil Their Promises?

The second industrial revolution not only affected how the world economy or social structures operate but also how our cities are inhabited, function, and look. As the tools were given to architects to think and design on a much greater scale, numerous fascinating and futuristic city plans were born. These plans, which were great examples of experimental urbanism, were striving to reform urban life and planning. However, most of them never actually left the drawing board for several reasons. The scale of these projects was too massive for their times, they lacked substantial funding, or they just could not be constructed due to the technological limitations of the past. Nonetheless, these plans all raised several significant ideas about how a city should relate to the ones who live in it, i.e. how much space and individuality residents need, what the role of the city is regarding societal systems and problems, economy or environment, or who is eligible to live in the city. In order to understand these ideas, this paper will first examine four past projects that were all intended to be utopias by their designers: Arturo Soria y Mata's Ciudad Lineal, which is the only one out of the four that was built in some form, Peter Barber's Hundred Mile City, Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, and lastly, Frank Lloyd Wright's Broadacre City. After observing the common elements and themes of these plans and evaluating them based on how likely they were to turn into a reformer or a dystopia, we will reflect on our findings regarding two aspiring utopias: The Line

in Saudi Arabia and the Smart Forest City in Mexico. Both of these projects propose a hub for intellectuals and equality, new concepts about how a city could be built, and though the following ideas will not be covered within this paper, both projects advocate for environmental friendliness and economic prosperity for both its residents and the surrounding area (Allan and Parida, 2022; Gibson, 2019). However, specific details about what life would actually look like in these cities are missing. Consequently, numerous problems may arise concerning agency and authority given to residents, personal space, or social polarization among the inhabitants.

To fully understand why The Line and the Smart Forest City might turn into dystopias, we must dive deep into several concepts regarding this topic. As Sarah Moser, Marian Swain, and Mohammed H. Alkhabbaz argue, “We are currently entering to the most-intensive period of new city building perhaps since the peak of colonial expansion” (Moser, Swain and Alkhabbaz, 2015, p. 74), which they refer to as “entrepreneurial urbanism” (ibid.). Ruth Levitas describes utopias as “The construction of imaginary worlds, free from the difficulties that beset us in reality [...]” (2010, p. 1). From this characterisation, it is clear that what these projects are trying to achieve is a dreamlike world. If they fail, they might create the polar opposite of a utopia. This essay will take a look at unrealised urban plans of the past which were aiming to be considered reformers at the time. Second, this essay will examine the Line in Saudi Arabia in relation to the past projects mentioned in the first paragraph by highlighting their common qualities and thus the common reasons which contributed or might contribute to the lowered chances of feasibility. Third, we will investigate the Smart Forest City Cancun by applying the same method of investigation as with the Line. Next to our findings from the past utopias, we will strongly rely on the principles of experimental urbanism (Cugurullo, 2021), into which all of our explored projects can be classified. Given the above, we can estimate that The Line and The Smart Forest City Cancun both aspire to be reformers. Yet after comparing these two contemporary projects to past projects and carefully investigating their various social aspects, we can conclude that both The Line and the Smart Forest City only seek to achieve an idealized reality. The plans promise equality and extraordinary welfare for all of their residents, yet they obstruct the livelihoods of the lower classes, since their knowledge-based economies assess them as ineligible for joining these commu-

nities, thus denying them the ability to find accommodation in these cities. Further, both plans raise questions about comprehensive informational transparency and the freedom of their communities, since uniformity is a key principle that both cities are likely to enforce. Hence the freedom of expression could potentially be harmed. Moreover, the projects do not fully disclose how their governmental facilities would operate, and further layouts of both cities include the possibility of social polarization between residents. It can be concluded that these cities have a great likelihood of not living up to the future they desire to create and becoming dystopias.

I. Urban Reformer Projects of the Past That Never Moved Beyond the Drawing Board

To start with, we are going to look at projects of the past which aimed at reforming urban life. In the late 1880s, Spanish architect Arturo Soria y Mata developed a new concept for city planning: Ciudad Lineal, which translates to Linear city (see Figure 2). According to a study of several axis-like cities, a new principle emerged: that a line-shaped city eliminates social problems caused by urban congestion (Tufek-Memisevic and Stachura, 2015). The objectives of the Linear City were the connection among services within the settlement itself (Tufek-Memisevic and Stachura, 2015); low occupant density, and the integration of both rural and urban life into one (Curl, 2006, p. 163). Similarly to the Linear City, the Hundred Mile City was “a speculative design proposal” made by Peter Barber Architects. As Barber wrote (2017), the Hundred Mile City would be located along the Green Belt of London to solve the housing crisis caused by the rising real estate prices in London (Figure 1). By creating a suburban belt wrapped around London, the settlement would not only create an affordable residential area close to the capital city, but also grant the proximity of the countryside to its residents. Cars would not be allowed, and all would have to rely on public transport, such as a high-speed monorail, which would take passengers from Bexley to Brentford in only 40 minutes (Barber, 2017). The housing units within the project would be of high density (Gregory, 2019), thus reducing the size of the apartments, and would cater to a wider variety of social classes.



Figure 1: The 100-mile city

Unlike the lineal plans mentioned before, the Ville Radieuse, which was a project for the centre of Paris designed by Swiss architect Le Corbusier, was entirely different. Corbusier wanted to solve the housing crisis that emerged in the 20th century and believed that only the prefabrication of city layouts could result in a livable city. He explained his idea in 1929 in the following way:

The city of to-day is a dying thing because it is not geometrical. To build in the open would be to replace our present haphazard arrangements, *which are all we have to-day*, by a *uniform lay-out*. Unless we do this *there is no salvation*.

The result of a true geometrical lay-out is *repetition*. The result of repetition is a *standard*, the perfect form (i.e. the creation of standard types). (Le Corbusier, 2015[1929], p. 385; see a slightly different translation in Merin, 2013)

The perfect layout he imagined was one similar to the human body, which he aimed to realise in his project, the Ville Radieuse. A commercial centre and skyscrapers symbolize the “head,” a place for the wealthier. The prefabricated skyscrapers divide the central area into vertical villages: each having its own services, like rooftop



Figure 2: The Linear City



Figure 3: Le Ville Radieuse

kindergartens (Figure3). Upper-middle-class residents would enjoy a quiet life away from industrial sectors whilst lower-class dwellings would be separated by a green belt. Corbusier's plan was so radical that his contemporaries opposed his idea. Hugo Häring, a German architect,

argued that it was “a proposal of an abhorrent future, organized like a ‘Prussian military world,’ orderly, aligned, disciplined, but cold” (quoted in Burbano, 2021). Corbusier's idea never got realized since constructing it would have come with the full destruction of the historical centre of Paris, which the whole nation opposed.

In 1932, Frank Lloyd Wright saw plans for Ville Radieuse and detested them so much that he started developing his own plans based on his abhorrence towards the radical and strict ideas of Corbusier. This quickly resulted in the birth of an alternative solution for the urban crisis. He imagined a new territorial division across the United States: dwellings of 10,000 inhabitants which he named Broadacre City, all

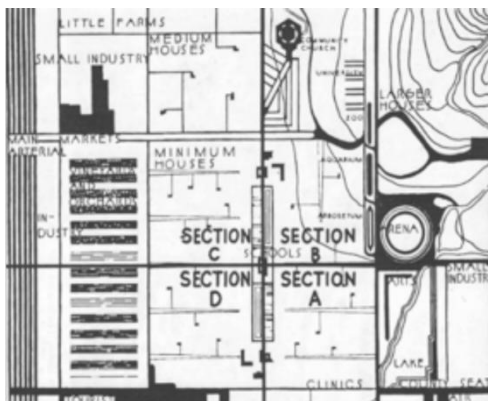


Figure 4: Broadacre City

connected by highways since Wright thought that distance should be measured by automobile (see Figure 4). He found promising that the mass production of cars had already started and saw it as a possibility of no longer needing to congest residents just to gain access to services (Wright, 1932). He was convinced that a transition between cities and villages would naturally

appear and wanted to moderate it. But Wright and Le Corbusier both wanted to mass-produce parts of their layout, not considering local needs and cultures. Ultimately, Broadacre City never moved beyond the drawing board for the same reason as the Ville Radieuse: who would have allowed knocking down all the existing cities within the US?

Although all past projects existed only on an imaginary scale, the notion that urban architecture had to be reformed was clearer than ever. They wanted to provide solutions for the same problems: equality, the housing crisis, and reforming the layouts to make cities more livable. However, we must address that they had very different answers to these problems: all projects, except for Broadacre City, which was planned with individualism in mind (Cugurullo, 2021, p. 11), calculated with a high population distributed in a meagre area, which was beneficial for accessible housing but also had the potential to limit agency and control. As Kevin Lynch wrote in his 1981 book *A Theory of Good City Form*:

The control of space is important to environmental quality in any social context: rich or poor, [...] centralized or decentralized, homogeneous or heterogeneous, stable or fluid. But it is particularly critical in a changing, pluralistic society, where power is unequally distributed and problems are large in scale. In an authoritarian society, decentralized place control will be an escape valve, even a possible wedge of change (although revolutionaries will argue this point) (Lynch, 1981, pp. 211–220).

How power was being exercised influenced the rights of residents, and in case those were damaged, the micro-societies within the projects collapsed (ibid., p. 218). Therefore, to determine whether such a plan would have been successful, we must also examine the power relations between the governing body and residents, as the exercise of its authority directly affects citizens.

Given the above, all four past projects are reformers but, most importantly, are radical in some sense. These cities' architects tried to create vastly different environments from their surroundings, i.e., to destroy classical cityscapes, significantly change the layout of existing cities, or plan structures of extreme scales. Moreover, all of these cities strove to create equality between the residents and the opportunities within a city, to integrate the rural areas into the city network to find solutions to accessible housing, to

revolutionise travelling within the cities, and in some cases to create harmony between the cities and nature. However, their scales and layouts can be seen as posing a danger of harming the authority of residents and their self-expression or even exacerbating social polarization between the various social groups living in the city. Nonetheless, their goals, their planned development and their following of a masterplan that may not leave space for natural expansion, and even the fact that they had only existed in a theoretical sense, prove that these projects belonged to the phenomenon of experimental urbanism (Cugurullo, 2021). They all focused on reimagining not just the physical form of cities but also how societies within a city could function. Moreover, these plans were often highly subjective in the sense of visions, especially in the case of Broadacre City. Their attributes made them influential in urban planning even if their true form never came to life.

However, none of these characteristics grant a utopian vision. Even if their *raison d'être*, in this case, the urban reason (Cugurullo, 2021), might promise a utopian future with revolutionary ideas regarding housing or public participation, they are still experimental. Hence, these projects are prone to take a different turn and transform into dystopias. In addition, behind the foreground of the urban reason might be the interests of various corporations that specialise in city development or profit and growth-oriented socio-economic drive of governments (Cugurullo, 2021; Moser, Swain, and Alkhabbaz, 2015). Therefore, based on whether these similarities or problematic points of experimental urbanism manifest in the case of The Line and the Smart Forest City, which both strongly resemble past projects, we can ascertain if these new reformer projects are truly bound to become what they promise.

II. Examining the Line for Dystopian Aspects

The Line was first introduced to the public back in 2017 as part of a development series called Neom (Nihal, 2022). Though Neom incorporates several high-profile and boundary-breaking projects like new tourist venues, shipping ports, research centres, etc. (Allan and Parida, 2022), it is The Line that is undoubtedly the most ambitious out of all these. Located in the Saudi Arabian desert, The Line is planned to be 170 kilometres

long, 500 metres high, and 200 metres wide (Figure 5), and, once finished, it will be capable of housing almost 9 million residents (Allan and Parida, 2022), which is around the same number as the population of New York City. Since the width of the structure is quite narrow, no cars will be allowed within the city (Crook, 2022), consequently, every necessity such as schools, pharmacies, shops, etc., will be available within a five-minute walk for all residents. If residents want to get around faster, self-driving flying taxis will be at their service (Cooke, 2021), as well as a high-speed underground



Figure 5: The Line from above

train, which is planned to be located under the city and will be able to travel from one end of the structure to the other in twenty minutes (Jones, 2022). Moreover, The Line promises to have glow-in-the-dark sand, an artificial moon, and even indoor beaches. In addition, The Line puts a heavy focus on the structure's environmental friendliness (Figure 6) since there will be farms and self-sustaining indoor crop fields located within the city, and multiple means of carbon capture methods will be used to be as green as possible (Jones, 2022). Further, the main premises of The Line include stimulating economic developments in the region by attracting capital and intellect from around the world. According to Moser, Swain, and Alkhabbaz (2015), Saudi Arabia's megaprojects are purposefully part of the country's preparation for a post-oil future. The Line promises the creation of a new scientific and academic citadel, and, most importantly, of new housing (Neom, c. 2017). However, as Aly (2019, p. 105) investigated, the city envisions its population to be made up entirely of intellectuals, highly trained professionals, and robot servants:



Figure 6: The Line from inside

NEOM transcends Florida's idealized no-collar workspace city with creative class dominance to be a city with actually no working and service classes, exclusively made up of highly-skilled labor. NEOM is envisioned to be a city where the division of labor is only between the dreamers and the robots.

Correspondingly, the ones in need of affordable housing, the vulnerable or the families that can barely afford to pay their rents (Habitat, 2023), and members of the working class will not have access to the myriad of newly built condos or even to the job opportuni-

ties of the city. Concerning the reason for urban development, other than the economic purposes of the Line that Moser, Swain, and Alkhabbaz inspected (2015, p. 74):

while the projects are ostensibly being created to address housing deficits, poverty and unemployment, they are top-down and lack any sort of public participation. Emerging issues of exclusivity are becoming apparent in new cities, which tend to cater to the elite [...].

Further, the overall height and the floor allocation of the structure could contribute to polarization between residents, which was examined by Al-Kodmany (2018, p.7):

Recent developments of ultra-luxury residential supertalls in New York City have reinforced the “mansions in the sky” phenomenon. New supertalls (e.g., One57 tower and 432 Park Avenue) are vividly exposing the new “social ladder” of the city by placing the richest people “physically” on the highest altitudes. This new socio-spatial polarization (vertical slums versus mansions in the sky) reinforces social and racial segregations, echoing Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “symbolic capital.”

Therefore, the lower levels of The Line could become a slum-like area, while the super-rich would occupy high-rise condos and would not be disturbed by any problems of the low-rise parts of the city. Even if we look past the social exclusivity, the accumulation of high-net-worth individuals, or just capital, does not create a well-functioning city nor a society (Cugurullo, 2021).

Further, how authority and power would be practiced within the city is not clear enough. The city will not have a mayor, since as part of Neom it will operate as a corporation and will have a CEO, whose responsibilities and powers are not yet specified. In addition, Neom as a whole is part of the Saudi Crown Prince's legacy (Aly, 2019). His authority and ascendancy are not specified either. To have a clear and transparent governing body in a city is a must, since every citizen must have the ability to work and construct a common future and society. The agency and individuality of residents may also be in question, since independent expression or freedom of creativity may be restricted as to reach a homogenous façade within the city (Allan and Parida, 2022). Even if we look past the sociological questions of The Line, humanitarian problems appear. In connection to the construction of the city, members of the Huwaitat tribe, on whose lands the structure is being built, are forced to relocate (Michaelson, 2020). Moreover, three members have been arrested and sentenced to death, while previously in 2020 one member was reportedly shot during an eviction (Ravenscroft, 2022). Therefore, if we consider all of The Line's principles and faults, the cons outweigh the pros, thus turning The Line into a possible dystopia, though it must be acknowledged that all of the city's problems are intertwined with the lack of exact information regarding its problematic aspects.

III. Investigating the Smart Forest City with a Focus on Its Dystopianism

In the following part, we will turn our eyes to a new plan which is expected to be carried out in Central America. The Smart Forest City Cancun (see the layout envisioned by Boeri Architetti in Figure 7) is an urban project designed by Stefano Boeri Architetti in the years 2018–2019, which would function as an additional but separate scientific district

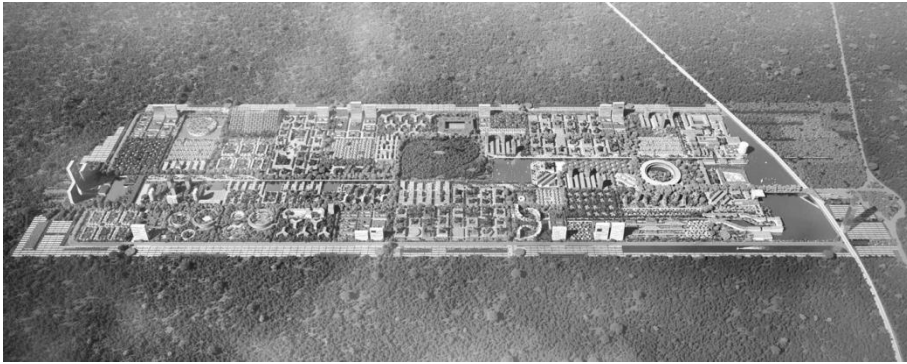


Figure 7: The Smart Forest City Cancun

to Cancun city, where new global innovation centres will be built. The project is still in its early stages of development, and there are many questions about its construction. The firm's purpose is to create a settlement that sets a new standard for urban development, available to all. The plan promises guaranteed visibility to newcomers from all nations who consciously intend to be part of systemic change—turning away from capitalist megalopolises to smaller, sustainable communities since the city would be capable of hosting 130,000 inhabitants and would cover 557 hectares of land. Stefano Boeri confirms (2019) that every service will be accessible to all since the municipality is self-sustainable, relying only on local production. The firm also states that the Smart Forest City would be primarily aimed at students, professors, and research fellows at the leading universities, which contradicts their previous statement of providing equal access.

A data-collecting service based on sensors will work city-wide to provide recommendations in all areas of life, such as energy consumption. Consequently, every act will be visible, raising the question of whether the system has the authority to make visible certain actions that were intended to remain hidden or that the collected data will be used for economic gain. Some have already raised concerns about the potential for increased surveillance due to the high-tech infrastructure. Although the firm (2019) assures that the sensors would “collect and share relevant information [...] turned into suggestions in support of everyday life,” they do not provide details.

Considering the expected number of inhabitants compared to American metropolitan cities, such as New York or Brasília, the size of this settlement is rather small and aims to create a revolutionary layout that could be reused for other cities in the future. Boeri (2019) states that the settlement would have a circular economy by becoming self-sufficient in energy production through a perimeter ring of photovoltaic panels and a water channel connected to the sea, which would allow the city to be irrigated sustainably. The firm leaves it with the question of what industrial parts would be built within the city to sustain the inhabitants, which evokes a fear of the unknown and the uncertain, thus making the execution of the plan less realistic. If an extension to the original layout were necessary later, let us say caused by the popularity of the city, it would induce expansion. But as the Smart Forest City's layout was prefabricated in a way that its self-sustaining system is ideal for the original size only, an extension would cause the masterplan and the whole system to collapse, since there is no space for further development. The same can be said about Broadacre City, The Line, and the Hundred Mile City. It is clear that since the designers of all four projects left no space for subsequent additions, they all had and have confidence in their expertise in urban necessity.

IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, The Line and the Smart City Cancun have a high chance of failing at living up to their own promises to become utopias and reformers of the urban struggle. After examining four grand experimental projects of the past, this paper can ascertain that providing solutions for equality, housing crisis, and reforming already existing and generally used layouts is not enough for a project to truly grow into a sustainable dream city. The most important aspect of this process is how power is exercised in the city, to what extent agency and control of the residents are limited, and how the power relations work within the city itself. Therefore, by examining The Line and the Smart Forest City Cancun with our new set of conditions, we can conclude that both projects paint an idealized world of equality and prosperity for all their residents. However,

this, in reality, would not happen, since both plans favour the educated, thus excluding the lower social classes by evaluating them as ineligible for living in such a city in a knowledge-based economy. Moreover, the two projects raise serious questions about the freedom of their inhabitants, since both of them strive for uniformity among their residents and their condos and for comprehensive informational transparency. As a result, personal space and freedom of expression could be negatively impacted. Additionally, these projects do not disclose completely how the governing body of the cities would work with and for the citizens, and because of the layouts of both cities, social polarization may be inevitable between residents. Ultimately, based on the currently available scarce dataset provided on the official sites of NEOM and Stefano Boeri Architetti respectively, these seemingly perfect cities have a big potential to turn into complete dystopias.

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ANNA LÍVIA KOHAREK

The Effects of Fungi and Aflatoxin on Honeybees

Introduction

Reading a powerful quote can spark one to create something meaningful. It can be an inspiration to follow. For me it was written on a poster I saw in a hallway: “... *the task of interpreting and explaining the varied and unruly reality that we inhabit.*” This powerful quote grasps the basic driving force of scientific curiosity and scientific work. It shows how one needs to be able to think and write with different disciplines in mind, and how one must be able to synthesise them together for their exact purpose. It illustrates the intention of this article perfectly as well. This research aims to state some of the main reasons behind the decreasing number of honeybees in Central Europe (Koisor et al., 2007; Potts et al., 2010), followed by a deeper discussion of one of the most pressing problems, namely the rising amount of fungal infections and mycotoxin poisonings in honeybees.

Climate change is increasingly affecting living organisms, impacting us in ways we would never imagine. Many of these impacts are widely discussed, such as higher temperatures or extreme weather conditions like heat waves and droughts (Mimura, 2013; Dale et al., 2001). These can have devastating effects on a variety of organisms, including ecologically and economically crucial honeybee species. Abiotic factors like the pesticides used in agriculture, and the unpredictable climate conditions

ranging from extreme heat and drought to too much rain, all weaken the colonies and honeybees alike (Neov et al., 2019). Until recently, the main biotic factors widely mentioned in relation to honeybee colony losses were Varroa mites, hornets, or other small hive beetles and viruses (Neumann and Carreck, 2010). These are all predatory or parasitic in nature. All of these factors can interact, causing more devastating results. Moreover, since bees are eusocial animals (meaning they live in colonies), the factors affecting their populations can appear at multiple levels, from the molecular to that of social behaviour.

Fungal infections are a lesser-known impact of climate change. In Southern Europe, fungal infections of agricultural crops are more common due to warmer weather conditions. However, this problem is emerging in the Central-European region as well, as the humidity and the temperature are rising in this region rapidly (Battilani et al., 2016). These newly appearing fungi have the potential to cause disturbances in the production of a wide variety of plants (e.g., maize, wheat). Certain fungal species like *Aspergillus*, *Fusarium*, and *Penicillium* produce various amounts and types of mycotoxins (Vila-Donat et al., 2018). They can infect the crops pre- and post-harvest too, causing large economic damage (Battilani et al., 2016). Additionally, they infect beehives as well. Because bees pollinate about 80% of all agricultural and wild plants in Europe (European Commission Food Safety, n.d., para. 1), it is important to understand how fungi affect bees.

According to current estimations, even if humanity manages to keep the temperature rise at +2°C (Battilani et al., 2016), fungal infections will become more common in countries that have not faced this threat before at a larger scale. With the spread of fungi, beehive infections will become more and more common. This will bring numerous problems. Although bees can metabolise aflatoxin (one of the most common mycotoxins) to some extent, they cannot tolerate exposure to the toxin for long (Niu et al., 2011). The larvae are at an even higher risk because they can get infected, but cannot protect themselves against fungi and toxins. This results in conditions called stonebrood and chalkbrood, where the larvae turn into mummies after the consumption of fungal spores (Vojvodic et al., 2011). This will cause a continuous decrease in the number of worker bees. Honeybees can and do keep their hives clean (Rothenbuhler, 1964),

therefore they get rid of any mould infections as soon as they detect them. If the hives get fungal infections more often, that will raise the need for bees to clean and aerate their hives more often, which would mean less energy can be spent on pollination.

Mycotoxins are low molecular weight secondary metabolites of certain fungi, with the characteristic of being able to cause pathological responses in any consumer (Berenbaum et al., 2021). This is not only because the original compounds are toxic, but also because most animals produce bioactive metabolites, which have amplified toxicity, such as—in the case of aflatoxin—aflatoxin B1-8,9-epoxide (Niu et al., 2011). However, this is not the case with bees. Niu et al. (2011) found that a possible metabolic pathway in honeybees is through cytochrome P450 monooxygenases (CYP450), with non-toxic metabolic products. Bees naturally produce a substance called propolis, which promotes the activity of these CYP450 enzymes. This suggests that bees can naturally defend themselves from fungal infections. Due to the structure of the beehive, the larvae are sealed off from each other, and honey is made in many separated wax cells as well, limiting the ability of the fungi to spread in the hive. However, this is not everything the bees do to protect themselves from fungi. Since propolis has strong antimicrobial properties, bees can sterilise their hive with it (De Vecchi and Drago, 2007). Nonetheless, this is not an ideal solution, as the production of propolis requires additional energy from the bees. If the amount of propolis used increases, this may result in lower honey yields (Simone-Finstrom and Spivak, 2012).

Additionally, seasonality and environmental stressors (such as parasite infections) can weaken the hive (Neov et al., 2019). From spring through autumn, bees constantly keep their hive at the same temperature and low humidity with frequent aeration. This prevents the ideal conditions for fungi growth from forming (Morse, 1972). However, beehives are at the highest risk of *Aspergillus* infection in the winter, when the bees hibernate and cannot clean their hive. Additionally, water can precipitate through condensation if the hive walls are cold, which allows *Aspergillus* to grow inside the hive (Sigler, 2010).

All of this shows that honeybees are more prepared to fight fungal infections and mycotoxins than most animals, for example, mammals, but their defences are not sustainable if more extensive exposure to fungi and

toxins weakens the bee population. My hypothesis is that the higher exposure to aflatoxin is a major cause of the present-day honeybee worker bee population decrease compared to the early 21st century. This will result in a decrease in the production of honey as well.

Methodology

This article is a literature review based on a search of the Web of Science database (accessed April 28, 2022). This database contains peer-reviewed publications that are highly cited and searchable. The keywords used for this search were “Europe,” “bee,” “mycotoxin,” and “aflatoxin,” with a geographic limit set to Europe. The search resulted in 182 peer-reviewed articles published between 1975 and 2022. However, most of these articles (about 90%) were not relevant to the aim of this study because they did not contain information on aflatoxin contamination of honeybees or focused on regions outside of Europe. The remaining articles were closely examined to find experiments with similar interests and goals as this paper. These articles were found to cite each other, so not every article is directly referenced in this paper. The articles from this search are marked with an asterisk in the list of references.

Results

Current research shows that honeybees are prepared to fight fungal infections not only through their metabolism but with specific behaviour as well. This behaviour is part of the social immunity of honeybees: it enables them to recognize infected larvae and corpses within the hive and then immediately start cleaning them out. Interestingly, this behaviour is found to be genetic rather than learned (Glinski and Buczek, 2003). Several studies are trying to find the exact mechanism and the genes that are responsible for this behaviour. Spivak et al. (2003) found that worker bees aged 15–20 days are mainly responsible for keeping the hive clean. This age is older than the nursing age, but younger than the worker bees who go out of the hive, proving the high organisation of honeybee colonies. This

hygienic activity of honeybees is likely induced by olfactory cues, where a specific neuromodulator called octopamine (OA) plays a pivotal role (Spivak et al., 2003). Research suggests that this neuromodulator is connected to the sensory inputs, antennal motor outputs, and higher brain functions. It has also been shown that it is involved in memory formation and learning (Grohmann, 2003). Utilising this knowledge, there are honeybee colonies that have been specifically bred for better hygienic activity.

Experiments performed by Spivak et al. (2003) showed that honeybees of the right age in hygienic colonies detect and remove dead brood faster. They also have been found to perform more hygienic activity in general than bees of the same age in non-hygienic colonies. Thus hygienic colonies present an economically advantageous solution to delaying or moderating the devastating effects of the rapid spread of fungi described earlier in this article.

However, other traits, such as honey yield or pollination services of honeybees, should be considered before selective breeding for hygienic behaviour can begin on a larger scale. Leclercq et al. (2017) assessed this uncertainty in their research. They summarised available experiments to date and found that there was a lack of studies on the connection between pollination and hygienic behaviour. This gap still seems to persist. Nonetheless, there have been smaller-scale studies addressing the honey yields of the different colonies. Spivak et al. conducted two different experiments (Spivak and Gilliam, 1998; Spivak and Reuter, 2001). In both cases, the hygienic colonies produced a higher honey yield than the commercial non-hygienic colonies. While these studies are promising, there is still a need for longer, larger-scale research.

In their experiments, which measured the effects of aflatoxin on honeybees and propolis's effect on the process, Niu et al. (2011) found that aflatoxin concentrations as low as 5 ppm can kill worker bees. While none of the concentrations they used (ranging from 0,5 µg/g to 20 µg/g) caused bee mortality in less than 24 hours, in 72 hours the higher concentrations caused over 90% mortality. If the simulations run by Battilani et al. (2016) stand their ground, the risk of aflatoxin-producing mould contamination will increase by about 90% in the next 80 years. Even with the hygienic behaviour of honeybees, these results suggest that their health will be in danger in the future. However, there is a need for further results about weather predictions as well as the honeybees' reaction to aflatoxin exposure. Ad-

ditionally, specific areas such as the connection between pollination and hygienic behaviour or the exact origin of this behaviour should be further explored. If the current results and hypotheses can be replicated in larger-scale studies, the future of honeybees in Europe will not look so grim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is an emerging issue in the Central European regions, given that different fungi are becoming more and more common there. If left unaddressed, this poses a potential threat to honeybees. Using our current knowledge, beekeepers and scientists can work together to selectively breed more hygienic colonies, offering a possible way out, keeping in mind that the solution might be dependent upon a better understanding of the interaction between behaviour and the molecules that trigger it, including genes, olfactory cues, and other compounds.

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KRISTÓF FÖLDÉNYI

The 15-minute City in Budapest

The Plight of Our Cities

“Today, 55% of the world’s population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to 68% by 2050” (United Nations, 2018)

Cities around the world are facing the serious challenges of overpopulation, along with other problems such as pollution, an increasing number of cars, diminishing green spaces, and housing shortages, to name a few. In many instances, urban centres are already reaching their full potential for growth, and with increasing pressures, the prevalent looming crises need to be addressed urgently. The challenges facing many metropolises often stem from poor urban planning. Most major cities today have a planning structure based on zoning that separates different activities, such as leisure, work, and housing, thereby generating time-consuming commutes in between urban zones (The World Bank, 2015). This zoning phenomenon not only increases inequalities and gentrification, with the disproportionate distribution of services, but also has a great impact on the environment, due to the increased use of cars (Velasco and Cohen, 2022). The recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has, at the same time, altered peoples’ attitudes and habits as to how they wish to live. The prolonged lockdowns prompted a growing awareness of the drawbacks of long commutes as well as a recognition of the scarcity of local services (Pozoukidou and Chatziyiannaki, 2021). The changing life patterns shed light on the unsustainability

of urban life, in the context as it had been known before the pandemic. These growing issues support and in fact promote the need to restructure our cities to meet the requirements of a modern, environmentally friendly, accessible urban environment.

One possible remedy to these complex urban problems could be the concept of the 15-minute city (Moreno, 2016). The underlying premise is quite simple: within 15 minutes from your home, all essential amenities for your day-to-day lifestyle (living, working, commerce, healthcare, education, entertainment) can be reached by foot or bicycle, while also encouraging the development of local green and community areas (Moreno, 2020; Moreno et al., 2021). The main aim of this concept is to decentralise cities, thus reducing the number of cars and carbon emissions. The 15-minute city uses historic patterns (the village) and tries to simulate them within the context of the metropolis. The question is whether a large portion of a given urban population can be directed to inhabit specific zones, thereby reducing the daily movement of the population.

Cities around the world have begun implementing the 15-minute city. This process of change is arguably the most complex in the European context, due to the historic structure. Although in European cities, the acute problem of zoning is less prevalent, municipalities must face the challenge of integrating visionary ideas, such as the 15-minute city, both in the rigid historic city centres and also the mono-functional suburbs, where mainly housing is present. Two significant examples of urban transformations that this paper will focus on are found in Paris and Barcelona. In different approaches and models, both cities demonstrate actual implementations of forward-looking urban projects. Whilst the examples of Paris and Barcelona offer positive visions, an outstanding investigation worthy of review is the case of post-Socialist cities of Eastern Europe, specifically, how they have evolved since the dismantling of socialism. The seeds of the 15-minute city model were in fact embedded in many urban priorities of the socialist era, most predominantly in the socialist panel housing blocks. The question remains, how these cities continued to evolve with the end of the communist era and progress into the 21st century. By examining one city in particular, Budapest, it becomes evident that despite ambitious plans, there are significant obstacles to the realization and widespread implementation of the concept of the 15-minute city.

This paper examines the overall model and recipe of the 15-minute city, demonstrated by two European examples that have, at least in part, successfully developed this concept. Through semi-structured interviews and the empirical study of a single case (Budapest), I aim to understand how the integration of the 15-minute city in Budapest, a significant ex-socialist city and the largest metropolis in Central-Eastern Europe, differs from these successful examples, reviewing the major obstacles impeding the broader implementation of this concept.

What is the 15-minute City?

The Evolution of an Urban Concept

The origins of the 15-minute city concept can be traced to a number of 20th-century urban planning concepts. The first major milestone was the Garden City movement in the early 20th century. This was a response to the over-centralisation of urban amenities, based on the vision of the English town planner Ebenezer Howard, creating interconnected neighbourhoods in the ‘greenbelt’ of a city (Khavarian-Garmsir et al., 2023). The main premise was for them to contain residence, industry, and agricultural activity. Later, in the 1920s, Clarence Perry proposed the “neighbourhood unit” concept, emphasising the idea of self-contained communities where inhabitants could easily obtain their everyday necessities (Lawhon, 2014). In the late 20th century, the New Urbanism movement rose to popularity, which sought to prevent urban expansion, thereby supporting walkable, environmentally friendly, mixed-use neighbourhoods (Trudeau, 2013). With the start of the 21st century, an amplitude of issues are plaguing many metropolises: problems stemming from overpopulation, environmental transformation, and transportation shortages, just to name a few. Following these approaches, the 15-minute city emerged as another concept offering potential solutions to these questions.

Although having several variations, such as the 5-, 10-, and 20-minute neighbourhoods, this paper will explore the 15-minute city as the most commonly acknowledged concept. The 15-minute city idea was originally developed in 2016 by Carlos Moreno, a French-Columbian urbanist (Moreno, 2016). However, it became more popular in 2021, as

a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The 15-minute city has the following three key features. Firstly, the rhythm of the city should follow humans, not cars. Secondly, each square meter should serve many different purposes. Lastly, neighbourhoods should be designed so that we can live, work, and thrive in them, without having to constantly commute everywhere (Moreno, 2020). This aligns with the main features of the 15-minute city, with having a green environment while everything is in proximity.

The 15-minute city began gaining attention in the past years, with many cities, such as Paris, Milan, Shanghai, etc., incorporating it into their long-term vision. Currently being tested in several neighbourhoods around the world, trends are starting to become visible related to this urban concept. From what can be observed, it is apparent that the 15-minute city creates a more sustainable, liveable, healthier city, serving the inhabitants rather than cars (Nieuwenhuijsen, 2021). In addition, with the introduction of new green areas, promoting walking and cycling over car use, the 15-minute city has a positive effect on the environment, enabling the achievement of net-zero plans (Allam et al., 2022). In terms of numbers, this means that for every person who replaces driving in favour of cycling and walking, around 4,6 metric tonnes of emissions can be reduced (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2016).

On the other hand, there are still concerns related to this urban model. One of the unresolved questions relates to the location of the workplace. One would rightfully say that in such a complex system as the city, one simply cannot place every type of job within 15 minutes of home. However, the COVID-19 pandemic gave rise to new perspectives on work methods, showing that it is possible to work effectively in alternative environments. In their essay, Mina Di Marino et al. (2022) discuss the new workplace model, reviewing collaborative and flexible work environments as a possible solution to having workplaces within 15 minutes. In addition, there are also concerns about equality, as it is feared that the 15-minute city model would exacerbate gentrification: "... a 15-minute city that is no more integrated than a poor rural village. In that world, the rich have isolated themselves from the poor, and the poor are cut off" (Glaeser, 2021). As a result, many fear that this concept is only beneficial for wealthier populations. However, as Dr Ellie Cosgrave (2022), a professor of urban innova-

tion, argues, with more involvement and participation from all the different participants in this debate, we can form our cities in a way that is a good environment for all of us.

Reimagining Our Cities: Examples of Urban Change

In order to implement the 15-minute city, we need to rethink our urban settlements based on the four guiding principles set up by Moreno (2020). First, ecology, for a green and sustainable city. Second, proximity, to live with reduced distances to other activities. Third, solidarity, to create links between people. Finally, participation, to engage citizens in the transformation of their neighbourhoods. In addition, for a successful 15-minute city, it is crucial to involve the private sector as well (Allam et al., 2022). As the private sector can provide the required funding for the costly restructuring of the neighbourhoods, through careful participation, both the public and private sectors could benefit from this collaboration. With the guiding principles, one can bring the general idea of the 15-minute city to the neighbourhood level and examine each case individually, and as Guzman et al. (2021) argue, context-dependent considerations are required to have healthy built environments and urban transformations.

Cities around the world have started implementing the general concept of having smaller, more accessible, and more sustainable neighbourhoods. In addition, the use of cars within the city has been reappraised, attempting to limit cars within urban centres. Urban planners globally have integrated the general phenomenon of the 15-minute city into their own urban contexts, at times as a tool for rectifying the issues of the existing neighbourhoods, and in other situations as a recipe for developing new areas. Two relevant examples are Paris and Barcelona.

In Paris, Anne Hidalgo, the current mayor in office since 2014, is committed to developing the 15-minute city with the help of Carlos Moreno and is one of the pioneers in applying this concept. Through her program, *La ville du quart d'heure* (the quarter-hour city), she is aiming to lower carbon emissions of the city, while also having a pedestrian-centred metropolis. The most important actions regarding the 15-minute city relate to transportation, creating bike lanes, of which the city now has over 1000

kilometres, dropping the speed limits, and cutting parking places (Gongadze and Maassen, 2023). This is accompanied by other actions, including the creation of local community hubs, sports facilities, coworking places, and children's streets (Willsher, 2020). In addition to this, the community is deeply involved in the designing process, including capital that is available for the residents to crowdsource projects, and also setting up platforms where Parisians can share their ideas on running projects (Dakouré, Bourdeau-Lepage and Georges, 2023; Gongadze and Maassen, 2023).

Another similar development has been happening in Barcelona, named Superilla (Superblock), building on the special grid-like planning of Barcelona. The special urban structure was designed in the 19th century by architect Ildefons Cerdà, which was a ground-breaking plan of its time (Roberts, 2019). These Superblocks usually consist of nine blocks, and vehicle traffic within these blocks is limited and mostly used by residents, cutting off through traffic. The main idea is similar to the 15-minute city, which is to give back to people the streets that are currently used by cars (Mueller et al., 2019). Inside the Superblock, the speed limit is 10 km/h, and the streets are one-way only. Moreover, the streetside parking is mostly moved underground. As a result, streets are freed from cars and can be given to the people. These streets are reconfigured to have bike lanes, large sidewalks, more green areas, social areas, playgrounds, etc. As a result, as Ferrer-Ortiz et al. (2022) found, Barcelona has a high level of accessibility to most of the basic services within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from any point in the city. Furthermore, similarly to Paris, Barcelona developed public forums, where they involve the local residents in the designing process, ensuring that the inhabitants' needs are met (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2016).

Analysing Paris and Barcelona, it can be seen that what both cities do is use their existing historical planning and turn it into their advantage. As a result, both cities meet the four guiding principles for the 15-minute city that Moreno mentions. Not only do these cities focus on the physical dimensions of the neighbourhoods, creating green spaces, bike lanes, and reducing car usage, but they also incorporate a crucial aspect, that is, thinking of the local residents. With the creation of community spaces and by generating a discourse between the stakeholders, it is ensured that the common good is met, and the neighbourhood serves its citizens, which is paramount to creating a successful 15-minute city.

Budapest: The Central European Context

Budapest, being one of the largest and most important urban centres in Central Europe, is a unique example of a post-socialist city. The city has a special geopolitical position, as throughout its history, it has been a bridge between the West and the East, which can be seen in its urban planning as well. After the fall of communism, in the early 1990s, Budapest was anticipated to be a leading economic and commercial centre within the newly defined region of Eastern Europe. However, in examining its urban and economic evolution, we can see that these aspirations have not yet been fulfilled. When reviewing Budapest's history and urban precedents, one can see traces and heritage that would make Budapest a suitable place for implementing the 15-minute city model. However, it also becomes evident that there are major obstacles that prevent this model from becoming a reality. In understanding the evolution of Budapest's urban context, it is important to examine which patterns led to its development, and, more importantly, which conditions today inhibit its embrace of the 15-minute city model.

From 1872 until the End of World War II: The Establishment of a Metropolis

The significance of Budapest's planning structure is related to its urban development. In fact, it is a relatively new city, established in 1872, with the merger of the cities of Buda, Pest, and Óbuda. At this time, Hungary was still part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and as a result, Vienna had a great influence on the planning of Budapest. Pest was zoned upon a boulevard-avenue system, similar to Paris and Vienna (Bodó, 2022). In this historic period, Budapest was gradually developing into a cultural, transit, and political centre. Also during this period, in 1896, the Hungarian Millennial Exhibition was hosted in Budapest, leading to large-scale developments in the city, such as the first metro system in continental Europe (Barenscoff, 2010).

This development "boom" also gave birth to new housing concepts on the periphery of the city. The expansion of Budapest at the beginning of the

20th century encouraged developments resembling the Garden City movement of the time, early versions of the 15-minute city. A key example is the Wekerle estate, an urban complex located in the outer parts of Budapest, being part of Kispest, which was annexed to Budapest in 1950. This housing estate has many aspects that are parallel with the 15-minute city, and its special structure is striking just by looking at the map of Budapest. It is named after Sándor Wekerle, a Hungarian prime minister who promoted the idea of building housing estates for government employees due to the growing housing shortage. The first idea and the decree for building this estate emerged in 1908 with a clear urban vision, supported by the integration of noted architects of the time who designed key buildings (Nagy, 1994, pp. 1–24). The fundamental concept of the urban design in question revolved around a central public park and square, which functioned as the focal point of the urban landscape. The bigger shops were located at the centre of this neighbourhood, opening onto the square. A variety of public institutions, including several schools and kindergartens, were integrated into the model. Next to these, many other amenities were also built, such as churches, a cinema, and a sports centre (László, 1926). Most significantly, the estate offered housing for a diverse population, thereby providing a decent quality of life. As a novel concept, a life standard for the upper working and lower middle classes was created, with this kind of mindset missing in several of today's developments.

Following World War I, the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy resulted in the Trianon Peace Treaty, with Hungary becoming an independent country. The country's territory shrank by over fifty per cent, resulting in the weight of Budapest in the country becoming disproportionately large (Kovács, 1994). The following decades resulted in overall economic stagnation, increased by the damages suffered in World War II. The glory and the economic surges at the end of the 19th century remained unparalleled, and Budapest became a shadow of its glorious past. This economic and urban development was further tainted by the onset of the Communist era, which would redefine the overall structure of the city.

The Arrival of Socialism

Following World War II, a new political chapter began in Hungary which was to last for over forty years, namely, the arrival of socialism, the lasting impacts of which can still be felt today. Socialist ideology, which was mainly centred around the erasure of social hierarchies and promoting equality, was a strong departure from the feudal society that had been the prior model.

The socialist reign also had a strong impact on urbanism in Hungary, and, more specifically, on the evolution of Budapest during these four decades. In 1950, twenty-three former villages and adjoining larger towns in the agglomeration were added to Budapest, and to this day these form the districts of Budapest (Beliczay, 2009). At this time, the wide expansion of public infrastructure, including public transportation, hospitals, schools, and public spaces took place. New industrial development fuelled a housing shortage, which then generated the construction of prefabricated housing blocks, also known as panel buildings. These infrastructural and architectural developments reshaped the overall landscape and demography of Budapest.

The Architecture of Socialism: The Panel Housing Model

The key architectural response to the housing crisis was the introduction of panel or block housing. This type of housing, adopted widely in the Soviet Union, resulted in the construction of over 700,000 dwellings in Hungary between 1960 and 1990, representing a significant proportion of the population's housing stock (Balla, 2021). Due to the system of lacking property rights, all housing development was controlled by the state, and housing was owned and distributed by the state. Although foreign from the vantage point of a market-driven economy, one advantage of the block housing model was that it provided equal access to housing. The acute need for it was met by prefabrication, a technique that led to grey, monotonous, and technically poor buildings. Although easily criticized, the type was solid and easily adapted to a wide variety of sites.

Even though socialist panel housing had several negative features, it is important to examine its benefits. In an interview with the chief architect of Budapest, Zoltán Erő (2022), he stated, “In this sprawl around the whole city, in this suburbanization zone, you won’t find places as well-endowed as housing estates.” When analysed from the perspective of a 15-minute city, this statement can be verified, as many aspects correlate. The most important is that the government put a lot of effort into ensuring that all essential services were located within a housing estate. This resulted in shops, schools, kindergartens, doctors’ offices, etc., being located on the first floor of the blocks (Csaba, 2006). In addition, large parks, playgrounds, and community spaces have been created between the buildings, with large walkways for all generations to move around safely. As an overall assessment of the block housing model, its overall architectural merits and urban impact can be questioned, however, it has to be stated that these complexes offered many positive living models which, when examined today, would support many of the ideological elements of the 15-minute city.

Post-Socialism

With the fall of communism in the late 1980s, a new political and economic chapter began in Hungary. The transition from socialism to a market-oriented economy brought significant changes to the country, offering new challenges and opportunities. This change also had a great impact on urbanism, most importantly on Budapest. The market-driven context introduced new stakeholders, most prevalently developers. Next to the government, the private sector and the general public also started to emerge as a voice in the city’s future. Their interests had to be aligned, as the private market launched into reshaping the urban landscape. The core question, which remains acute to this day, was whether the urban context of the city (twenty-three districts), the overall urban vision of the city, and the interests of the private sector could or still can be aligned to match the requirements of a 15-minute city.

Since the political changes at the end of the 20th century, Budapest has undergone a huge transformation. With aspirations similar to those of several Western European cities, the leadership of Budapest has aimed to cre-

ate a more liveable and sustainable environment. One of the urban models that Budapest has in its strategy is the concept of the “City of small distances,” which is the 15-minute city under a different name (Budapest Főváros Önkormányzata, 2021). However, Budapest is facing several challenges that are related to urbanism and the city structure. The urban area under consideration is confronted with countless difficulties that are pervasive across many cities worldwide. One of the biggest issues is the growing number of cars, causing constant traffic jams, poor air quality, parking problems, etc., which are considered to be among the greatest problems by the citizens of Budapest (Hungary Today, 2019). Also, compared to Barcelona or Vienna, Budapest has a small number of pedestrian streets, and in most parts of the city centre, people are forced to walk on narrow pavements that are partly occupied by parking cars. Bike lanes are non-existent in several parts of the city, and even if there is one, it is often simply painted on the side of the road.

In addition to the aforementioned common urban challenges, Budapest is confronted with a distinct set of issues that are specific to its unique geographic, historical, and socio-cultural context. These issues are often related to some extent to socialism and its heritage. In discussions with Carlos Moreno (2023), an important theme was how the 15-minute city could be implemented in post-socialist cities. In his view, one of the main obstacles that prevents this concept from becoming a reality in Budapest is related to the city’s outdated structure and infrastructure, which were inherited from the previous political era. In the past thirty years, the city has failed to develop a long-term urban development strategy (Keresztély and Scott, 2012). Despite some major infrastructural investments, such as creating the new M4 metro line, the city has failed to deliver an overall vision. In addition to funding issues, a major impediment is the city’s municipal system, having twenty-three different districts, which makes it a challenge to generate communal consensus (Keresztély and Scott, 2012). The urban contour of Budapest has also radically changed. Beginning in the 1990s, huge waves of people moved outside of the city to surrounding settlements, with around 800,000 people currently living in the agglomeration belt (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH), 2014, p. 30). A solution that several cities have successfully implemented is called park and ride (P+R), which allows people who live outside the city to park their cars in the sub-

urbs and enter the city centre with public transport. However, this has not yet become widespread in Budapest, as there are only a few of these parking stations, and the supporting public transportation system is operating with vehicles reaching the age of fifty years (Nagy, 2023). This results in the fact that around two-thirds of the vehicles that enter Budapest daily are private cars (NKK Nemzeti Közlekedési Központ, 2021).

The other issue is related to the current suburban developments in Hungary. Thomas Vonier, renowned architect and urbanist, stated in a discussion: “I remember visiting and seeing these suburban developments in Budapest, that if you didn’t know you were in Hungary, you might imagine you were in the United States. And those are just not the right models for the world to be following” (Vonier, 2022). In the past decades, massive modern developments took place in Budapest, as it is visualized by Vonier. However, in most cases these projects are not favourable to most people, representing the interests of only a small part of society. Currently, instead of the public sector, namely the municipalities, the private sector is dictating the current vision for Budapest (Keresztély and Scott, 2012). The biggest problem related to this is that private inventors will try to make as much profit as possible, especially when there is limited control from the authorities. Although at the beginning of these projects, many developers consider the environmental and social issues too, in the end, public benefits are subordinated to short-term profit. In addition, it can be seen from a recent study that to date, public participation regarding developments in neighbourhoods is limited, meaning that local and prospective residents in many cases cannot participate in the designing process of their neighbourhood (Bajmócy, 2021). A visible tendency is a rise in cheaply built housing estates, with limited infrastructure or assets for the population. Moreover, these developments mainly target the upper-middle income class, resulting in less and less social housing. Even though municipal governments have the power and opportunity to implement stricter land use regulations, they often refrain from doing so due to concerns about potential development (revenue) losses, ignoring public welfare concerns. In conclusion, the four guiding principles of the 15-minute city—ecology, proximity, solidarity, and participation—are rarely met in current major developments in Budapest.

The Future of Budapest: The Window of Hope

The growing issues plaguing cities worldwide are embedded in many problems. Most prevalent are the environmental conditions stemming from overpopulation and the impact of cars. In an attempt to address these negative tendencies, such models as the 15-minute city offer recipes to improve the quality of life within the urban context. The successful implementation of this concept is visible in the recent transformations introduced in such cities as Paris and Barcelona, both of which were able to introduce measures towards the improvement in the living and commuting structures of these historic cities. The successful implementation relied not only on strong visions but on the active interaction between the stakeholders as well.

In Budapest, traces of the 15-minute city can be identified in different parts of its history. Both the Wekerle estate and the Socialist panel housing present examples of the 15-minute city within their historic context. These neighbourhoods serve as a good basis and make Budapest an optimal place for the implementation of a broader 15-minute city model. The problems of the post-socialist era were relevant in the first decades after the fall of communism at the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century. Now, over thirty years following the political changes, while many urban questions have been addressed, some of them still can be related to the city's socialist heritage. Budapest's failure to create a long-term vision coupled with a rampant domination of private development created a situation where the private sector dominates urban developments, often preventing the integration of the advantages of the 15-minute city. Yet, by creating a balance between the stakeholders and by learning from other successful implementations of the 15-minute city, Budapest can still adapt this concept, creating a more robust urban environment.

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JÁNOS PECZNIK

The Intertwining Narratives of Subcultural and Political Development: The Punk Movement and Cultural Politics in the Hungarian People's Republic

Introduction

Subcultures are often understood as groups within a society whose behaviors, norms, and values differ in some distinct ways from those of the dominant culture, and punk culture is considered one of the most notable and iconic subcultures that arose in the 20th century. According to British sociologist Dick Hebdige, “no subculture has sought with more grim determination than the punks to detach itself from the taken-for-granted landscape of normalized forms, nor to bring down upon itself such vehement disapproval” (Hebdige, 1979, p. 19) Punk’s origins can be traced back to the beginning of the 1970s in the United Kingdom, where the dilemmas certain youth bands covered with their songs and their attitude appeared to be immensely hostile to the societal and political status quo of the time. The British punk scene was initially constructed by working-class individuals who saw their lives as an endless struggle, in which every single one of their aspirations to better their situation was obstructed by those in power. This scene represented their engagement with the values of the upper class. These values were stereo-

typically thought to be authority or economic interest, therefore punk's initial values revolved around anarchism and anti-capitalism: notions that are the most telling signifiers of demarcation from the contemporary "mainstream" values (Robb, 2010).

However, as the movement spread globally, there have been countless reinterpretations of what "being punk" constitutes, on account of the various external and internal circumstances the spreading movement had to accommodate, and the societal, political, and cultural context of the given scene it was about to enter. Though the core values of non-conformism and the desire to provoke remained more or less inviolate, the notion of punk seemed to have acquired a rather flexible definition, which resulted in it being accessible to every social stratum in every political system (O'Connor, 2004). While the defining characteristic of punk became the engagement in antagonistic opposition to mainstream culture and its political and economic systems, this antagonism manifested in a whole array of different forms on account of the given country's political system and its societal relations that often contradicted one another.

The globalization of punk culture resulted in its arrival in the Hungarian People's Republic as well, where punk broke the surface in 1977 in the form of Spions, a neo-avantgarde band made up of so-called marginal intellectuals. Since the peculiar socio-economic circumstances of the country shaped the identity of Spions and their successors too, the Hungarian punk ethos became oppositional to the contemporary *Hungarian and Eastern-European* societal and political relations, thus forming its own ideology based on its perception of the stereotypical values of the Hungarian ruling class (generally associated with the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party and the government). Although similarly bringing about a spectacular example of moral panic (Cohen, 2011) in the West, punk met even more serious disapproval in Hungary, both on a societal and a governmental level. This era was considered a period of extenuation regarding the previously exceedingly strict cultural policies, and a significantly less stringent attitude toward the inpouring Western artistic approaches and products could be sensed in every sphere of the entertainment industry (Takács, 2006). Nonetheless, the government's approach to punk was extremely hostile: the members of

punk acts would face a whole array of retributions ranging from police harassment to imprisonment.

I argue that this phenomenon derived from what Antonio Gramsci refers to as *challenging the cultural hegemony* (Gramsci, 1971). This article will show that the emergence of punk subculture and the excessive governmental response to it can be explained in relation to the critical significance of cultural hegemony during the socialist regime in Hungary. In other words, the excessive governmental response to the emergence of punk can be understood by examining the nature of the opposition between the parent culture and this particular youth subculture through the prevailing cultural-political approach towards the role of arts in socialism. This article argues for this by comparing the values propagated by the Hungarian ruling class—communicated through the centrally administered filtration of cultural products—and the expressed values of the punk community. In this way, the prevailing characteristics of the Hungarian cultural policy during the socialist regime can be juxtaposed with certain acts of the punk subculture. These examined punk formations were consciously selected since each of them unveils a certain aspect of the punk community. Though all of them are considered punk, each possesses a somewhat different status in the subculture on account of their varying social and ideological compositions.

Methodology

In order to draw a historically accurate narrative of this opposition, I conducted several interviews with actors who actively participated in the formation of the punk subculture in Hungary:

- Tibor Zátónyi, guitarist of the first Hungarian punk band Spions;
- Tamás Rupaszov, bassist of the infamous early 80s punk band Rottens;
- and Feró Nagy, frontman of Beatrice, the most accomplished Hungarian punk band in the 80s.

By analyzing a number of punk lyrics and frequently occurring lyrical themes and musical elements, I supplemented my preliminary findings regarding general attitudes toward authorities and society. Excerpts from these interviews and lyrics will be given throughout the article to introduce

certain factors important to the study or to draw attention to the personal experiences of said actors. Throughout my research, I also examined records of well-documented trials and several public civil reports to provide evidence of the contemporary political judgment of punk bands in the 1980s. Throughout my research, I examined statistical data regarding the Hungarian cultural policy and its activity in the entertainment industry. The theoretical framework for assessing the opposition between punk culture and the Hungarian government and society is based on the works of the Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In 1848, in *The Communist Manifesto*, German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels proposed that the economic recessions and practical contradictions would sooner or later provoke a proletarian revolution among the working class, thus deposing capitalism and turning over the current hierarchic construction of society (Marx and Engels, 1848). He argued that the dialectical changes this restructuring of social institutions would provoke would be able to determine or redetermine a society's superstructure. Building upon that, Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1971) proposed the distinction between the War of Position and the War of Manueuver. By this he meant that achieving a political takeover and adjusting societal standards to the new system are—though both crucial in a successful revolution—distinct procedures, and that the latter can only be implemented after achieving position, that is, accomplishing the former.

In the Gramscian theory, the notion of the dominant class is associated with the so-called organic intelligentsia—a social stratum that is distinguished not by their occupation or education but by their social function. Each class, as he explains, creates

one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic sphere but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur [for example] creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 5).

This distinction serves as the basis for the theory of cultural hegemony.

Cultural hegemony, according to Gramsci, is political leadership based on the consent of the subordinate, a consent that is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the worldview of the ruling class. It is crucial that this consent is not achieved by coercion. Therefore, one cannot talk about cultural hegemony if what Gramsci refers to as the hegemonic process (the process in which the norms that the ruling class promotes become accepted by society as a whole) is achieved through the use of force. Gramsci suggests that establishing hegemony in a society can be best achieved through education, mass media, work, church, or the family. These institutions assist the ruling class in a way that just by living their ordinary life, the subordinate classes consent to and secure cultural hegemony. It is crucial that maintaining cultural hegemony does not imply a society that is entirely free from conflict. It only implies that regardless of the possibility of oppression and exploitation in a society in which the dominant class imposes intellectual and moral leadership, there is only a *relatively* high degree of consent and a *relatively* low level of objection. One of the most important aspects of cultural hegemony, therefore, is that there should not be, in any system, a final set of ideological criteria by which it is decided what is promoted and what is not: the consensus should be continuously “re-negotiated” on account of the constantly changing cultural environment (either global or local). This phenomenon is best explained by the notion of counter-hegemony, which implies that the cultural battle is a continuous process. This ideological antagonism of conflicting interests is often entered by certain cultural movements (such as, the British sociologist Dick Hebdige (1979) argues, youth subcultures) that may influence the current position of hegemony.

However, according to Gramsci, there is a criterion which, when disturbed, may account for the temporary use of coercion, or as he puts it, the temporary practice of the repressive state apparatus. This criterion is the ideally unchallengeable position of the state’s authority. Although the hegemonic process—as explained above—is marked by both resistance and incorporation, there are limits to the concessions made to certain cultural (or countercultural) actors by the dominant group. As Gramsci explains, the subordinate group can never be allowed to challenge the

socioeconomic fundamentals of class power. In times of crisis, therefore, when moral and intellectual leadership is not enough to secure continued authority, the hegemonic process is replaced temporarily by coercive power, in favor of maintaining hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). As will be shown throughout the article, this exceptional phenomenon is crucial to this study.

The Anglo-American punk scenes have been subject to countless thorough pieces of research exploring their historical, societal, and ideological backgrounds. In contrast, the number of academic works aiming to investigate the nature of the initial Hungarian punk subculture (the punk subculture of the late 1970s and early 1980s), especially its relations to its contemporary societal, cultural, and political circumstances, appears to be insufficient. Kürti (1991), on the one hand, provides a thorough analysis of the political nature of youth and rock music (including several punk bands as well) but focuses rather on the underlying oppositional messages of each act than on the response of the political leadership. Havasréti (2006), on the other hand, describes the opposition between the neo-avantgarde scene and the government in detail but neglects to identify the socio-economic significance of the governmental response.

The Hungarian Punk Scene: A Historical Overview

Spions

While in the West, punk originated primarily among the working class, the Hungarian scene seemed to have broken this tradition, as the first wave of punk groups were the products of intellectual endeavors. In 1977, a group of intellectuals led by Gergely Molnár, journalist and neo-avantgarde artist, formed the band Spions, which was of great significance for the development of the Hungarian punk scene (Horváth, 2010).

In their 1977 manifesto, the notions of militarism, alienation, and hatred pointed to the core punk values: nonconformism and provocation. Their prominent lyrical themes involved destruction, anti-communism, and anarchism (Horváth, 2010). Much like their Western counterparts, Spions ex-

pressed their desire to provoke: they dressed like Soviet officers, dyed their hair, and wrote rather scandalous and contradictory songs. One of their most provocative songs, “Anna Frank,” described a disturbing scene in which Anne Frank was being raped by a Nazi officer: “A little forced intercourse before they come and take you away. Anna Frank! Make love to me! Anna Frank! Cry, you bitch! Anna Frank! Otherwise, I’ll give you up!” (Kürti, 1991).

The Spions’ pessimist ethos and mortifying tonality, modulated with dystopic depictions of future society, impacted a whole new generation of underground bands in Hungary. The band’s overall ideology and style were the most transparent in one of their first songs, “Nirvânia,” which described the dystopian scenery of an underdeveloped country. This song contained their most telling sign of demarcation from the common working-class punk lyrics since it did not express any explicit critique toward the system. The song only implied the subversive message through an allegorical, dystopian depiction of a country that in a way resembled Hungary (Zátonyi, 2023).

Another crucial characteristic of this intellectual punk movement lay in the complexity of the themes covered. While the prominent themes among the Western punk bands were concerned with simpler notions and sentiments (Savage, 2019), Spions—being constructed by intellectuals—were concerned with much more abstract and complex, rather philosophical subjects such as amoral aestheticism, the rationality of dread, and the mechanism of masochism (Horváth, 2010).

The governmental response to the band’s provocative attitude did not lag behind. The ominous first Spions show, where they first performed “Anna Frank,” gained widespread negative recognition for the band. This convinced the political leadership to set a watch on the members. The several civil reports that emerged and gained publicity after the systemic transformation bear testimony that after this performance, the activity of each band member was explicitly monitored by the informer network and police force combined. All members reportedly encountered explicit and implicit threats, including orderly identity checks and continuous police presence in their proximity. Molnár, for instance, was laid off from his workplace and failed to find another institution to employ him (Partizán, 2020a). Reportedly, several venues rejected their requests to perform, which might have been catalyzed by the joint disapproval (both societal and political)

towards their ideology and seditious stance. Being subject to governmental persecution, the members realized the continued existence of the band was no longer possible, which made them consider defection to the West. In the spring of 1978 Molnár—followed by two other bandmates shortly after—left the country. This ultimately ended the career of the first Hungarian punk band (Zátonyi, 2023).

Beatrice and the *csöves* movement

While the Spions only attracted a small number of Hungarian intellectuals, the breakthrough of punk, owing to the band Beatrice, involved a considerable proportion of working-class and intellectual individuals as well. This was preceded by a similar social formation, often referred to as the *csöves* community. Due to their several similarities described below, this movement is considered a precursor of the Hungarian punk community, therefore (similarly to their Western counterparts) one might as well identify them as “proto-punks.”

This community derived from the working class at the end of the 1970s and emerged after the second global oil crisis. As a result of the crisis, a great segment of youth experienced the system’s incertitude and inability to care for its citizens, which encouraged them to discard their hopes for individual prosperity and find a new, radical lifestyle, rejected by mainstream society. This community mostly consisted of working-class youth and was associated mainly with alcohol and drug consumption, tattered clothes, and an overall ill-groomed appearance (Partizán, 2020b). The fact that nowadays, the word *csöves* is associated with homelessness is not a coincidence, either: countless *csöves* individuals decided to leave their homes and reportedly spent whole months in the streets. The most crucial point of cohesion among these people, however, was the shared enthusiasm toward rock music. Live shows by bands such as Beatrice, Hobo Blues Band, and P. Mobil (the so-called *black sheep* bands) attracted thousands of “protopunks.” These events often culminated in scandalous situations, which frequently resulted in press coverage (Rácz, 1998). The significance of the *csöves* community lay in the underlying shared disapproval of social norms, which determined the defining characteristics of the later punk community.

Being a formerly *csöves* act, Beatrice, led by Feró Nagy, was one of the first Hungarian punk bands to reach commercial recognition. Whilst Spions remained an underground, lesser-known act throughout their fairly short career, Beatrice's shows attracted thousands of people, which subsequently accounted for the formation of a "traditional" punk scene in Hungary. The main representatives of the *csöves* community (such as Hobo Blues Band and P. Mobil) began to seek compromises with the political leadership, converging to the socially accepted norms and starting to merge into mainstream society. Beatrice, however, remained a marginal act, thus establishing a traditional punk-like subculture revolving around the remnants of the *csöves* community and subsequently realizing Western punk characteristics. The band's first encounter with Western punk music, namely the Ramones and the Sex Pistols, influenced the band's music and lyrical themes to a great extent, which resulted in an apparent commitment to liberalist ideology. Although this stance was seldom explicit, it could be easily detected in songs such as "Angyalföld" or "Jerikó." Regardless of the fairly low level of the band's political involvement, several civil reports were issued during the brief three years of the band's activity, which criticized it, often describing it as a "threat to society." The two songs mentioned above were deemed to be an "impending opposition against adult society" (Jávorszky, 2019). The following excerpts exhibit the underlying subversive and Westernized messages the band often incorporated into their songs:

[...] The Mercedes flies like the wind,—the trolley just flounders [...] ("Angyalföld") [my translation].

[...] There are no friends beyond the wall—Wait! I'll get behind the wall and tear it down—Jericho! Jericho!—Its walls crashed down long ago [...] ("Jerikó") [my translation].

Beatrice could not escape retribution either, since the problem of the state-owned monopoly over publications remained unsolved, generating heated debates and discontent among several underground bands, including the so-called *black sheep* bands. Given this monopoly, the only way a band could release their music was through the governmentally funded but autonomously functioning Hungaroton Records led by Jenő Bors and, most importantly, Péter Erdős. Beatrice, trying to release their first album, ap-

pealed to Erdős, but they could not come to an agreement, since the offer Erdős proposed would have severely conditioned the release of the album. These conditions comprised a six-month-long intermission in the band's operation, during which they would not have been allowed to perform, a mutual agreement regarding the content of the record (with special respect to the lyrics), and that the members would agree to behave in accordance with the ethical and political norms (Nagy, 2023). Although Beatrice did not accept these conditions, the other *black sheep* bands decided otherwise. This further expanded the gap between the *csöves* and the punk community, and once again increased the opposition between punk and the ruling party (Kürti, 1991).

Similar to Spions, Beatrice was also subject to governmental persecution. However, while Spions only experienced monitoring, in the case of Beatrice it manifested in a whole array of intimidating tactics, from monitoring to physical violence. Feró Nagy (2023) recalls his experiences of this persecution as follows.

Nagy: We would always hide from the cops. When hanging around a corner and seeing a police car, we would hide in a doorway until it would be gone. If we did not have time to hide, the policeman would get out of the car and ask for our IDs. [...] If you said something during a show, you might have found yourself in an interrogation room the day after. Police often showed up at the door of my apartment, too. They always arrived at 4 or 5 in the morning, I believe it was a form of psychological terror... Every once in a while they would take me in and interrogate me but sometimes they would just check on me. [...] Our shows were frequently interrupted and cut off by the police. [...]

The frequent and often brutal state violence Beatrice faced resulted in the band's dissolution. Lajos Miklóski, bassist and songwriter, was compelled to leave the band and seek psychiatric help, reportedly due to the nerve-trying intimidation he had to endure continuously. These police interventions, according to Feró Nagy, often culminated in physical violence on the part of the police.

Nagy: Once, during a show, I screamed "Temporarily!", which at the time was quite dangerous to say, since this term was strongly attached to the presence

of the Soviet army, which was “only temporarily” stationed in Hungary during the Kádár era. [...] The next thing I knew I was again in an interrogation room, beaten up by a police officer. [...] We lived in constant fear, we were afraid that we might get killed during these interrogations (Nagy, 2023).

Traditional punk in Hungary, CPg, and “Remarks Against the Grimewave”

Following the dissolution of Beatrice, the government resorted to progressively firmer proceedings against punk movements. “Felszólalás a Szennyhullám Ügyében” (Remarks Against the Grimewave), written by Péter Erdős, became one of the most significant milestones regarding the opposition between the punk subculture and the political leadership in Hungary. Published in 1983, the article drew public attention to the “dangers punk subculture poses to youth.” The article mistakenly characterized punk as a fascist, radical movement, and associated the whole genre with national radicalism and with the emerging skinhead bands (that most certainly possessed these “punk” characteristics), on account of a live show that featured both punk and skinhead bands (described in detail below) (Erdős, 1983). The article was followed by significant press coverage and rising numbers of hearings revolving around certain punk bands.

As a consequence, several punk bands suffered the same treatment from authorities as Beatrice did. However, while Beatrice still attracted a great segment of the *csöves* community, thus at least integrating itself into a larger subcultural ambience, the new, culturally irrespective punk community, completely devoid of societal approval, seemed to have failed to embed itself in the existing cultural conditions (Kürti, 1991). Tamás Rupaszov (2023), the bass player for the punk band Rottens, recalls his memories of this phenomenon as follows.

Rupaszov: It was quite dangerous to be punk in those days. We were alone, we looked different: we were basically targets, punching bags. We were practically at war with everyone. The workers attacked us [...] they did not like how we looked so they just attacked us. The gipsies, the *csöves* gangs, the cops attacked us. My ID was checked three to five times on a daily basis.

By 1983, punk in Hungary, regardless of the distinct processes that preceded it, became quite similar to its Western counterparts, at least in

regard to the fact that it was made up entirely of working-class youth, thus ultimately leaving behind its former intellectual roots. This was apparent in the lyrical themes and musicality, as the complexity of both dropped spectacularly during this period. The previous traditions of incorporating subversive content into punk songs through allegories and metaphors were in decline. Although this traditional wave preserved the primary oppositional and anti-communist ethos of their precursors, the means of conveying this message—as the following excerpts show—manifested in a rather straightforward, sometimes even primitive manner:

Dirty, rotten communist gang,—how come you aren't hanged yet,—hey, hey, on the meadow (CPg, “Áll egy ifjú élmunkás a téren,” quoted in Kürti, 1991).
You are white or you are red—the streets are flooded with blood—American or Russkie—a total asshole anarchy (ETA, “Anarchia,” quoted in Kürti, 1991).
They demand and want equality—the jerks!—All they do is yap all day, they feed on canned food—horse's prick to them, this is a senile gang (T-34, quoted in Kürti, 1991).

One of the most famous cases regarding the criminalization of punk was the CPg trial, which took place in January 1984. CPg (Coitus Punk group), originating from the Csongrád county underground scene, was a traditional punk band that, after encountering continuous police harassment and realizing their inability to succeed due to societal rejection, moved to Budapest, where eventually they would be prosecuted for incitement. The trial was preceded by a number of scandalous events such as the chicken sacrifice on March 4, 1983, when the audience tore a dead chicken apart amidst a CPg show, and their performance in Mozaik Klub alongside the infamous skinhead band Mos-Oi, who later would also be tried for their radical right-wing ideology apparent in some of their songs, such as “Cigánymentes övezet” (Gypsy-free zone) (Szőnyei, 2022).

Naturally, the court found each member guilty of incitement and sentenced them to three years of imprisonment, thus ending one of the most crucial and extreme events in the history of Hungarian punk music. Though the CPg trial is thought to be the most unjust and cruel precedent of magisterial proceeding against a punk group, similarly,

traditional working-class punk bands like Auróra (based in Győr) and Közellenség (based in Veszprém) both were sentenced to years of imprisonment merely because of their subversive lyrics and attitude (Kürti, 1991).

Analysis: Cultural Policy in Hungary between 1956 and 1989

In the following section, I will analyze the phenomena described above within the framework of the Hungarian cultural-political doctrine in relation to Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony and explain why the punk movement encountered such firm pushback.

Since the socialist regime in Hungary was a system where direct political control incorporated the administration of both the field of art and academics, the emergence of the punk subculture in Hungary was framed by the contemporary cultural-political approach towards the new wave. During this particular period, between the revolution of 1956 and the systemic transformation of 1989, the prevailing Hungarian cultural policy tended to extenuate the previously rather strict governmentally-ordered censorship. This maneuver resulted in the formation of the TTT (Tiltott, Tűrt, Támogatott), a system that served as a tripartite filter for artistic acts (Takács, 2006). In English, TTT translates to *illicit*, *tolerated*, and *supported*, and into which of these categories a given artistic act fell determined the central political leadership's attitude toward it.

During the socialist regime, according to the general political viewpoint, the artist and their art were inseparable. Accordingly, those who performed in the politically disapproved "imperialist" styles became themselves subject to political disapproval, which manifested in a whole array of different forms ranging from dismissal from work to imprisonment. Belonging to the *supported* category, on the other hand, rewarded the given acts or artists with a number of privileges. These artists often received material benefits and the governmentally distributed awards and nominations as well. Between these categories lay the practically homogenous category of *tolerated* acts. Although they did not benefit from governmental support, neither did they have to fear punishment. Though theoretically, mobility between each category was possible, it seldom occurred that an *illicit* or *tolerated*

act would ascend into the *supported* category. However, the borders of the *tolerated* and the *illicit* acts were rather faint, allowing for certain acts to shuttle between the two categories. Needless to say, most (if not all) punk bands were reportedly situated in a similar way: between the *tolerated* and *illicit* categories (Hopkins, 2020).

Since the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party (MSZMP) declared in 1972 that “in Marxism, there is no place for ideological pluralism since it shall be the singular conception that motivates practical action and holds together intellectual endeavors” (MSZMP, in Vass, 1975), it became evident that whether an act could continue its operation in the Hungarian art sphere was entirely dependent on whether they fit into the Marxist approach toward art. Said Marxist approach was rather implicitly defined during the Eleventh Congress of the Hungarian socialist party as follows:

[...] the measure of the choice of themes covered, the style, and the liberty of the given artistic trend shall always be to what extent it assists the representation of society and to what extent the work of art is able to apostrophize that society. The artistic attitude that often occurs, and is “modern” only in a way that enhances obsolete trends and isms and creates autotelic works in the spirit of the outdated “l’art pour l’art” movement, neither contributes to society and art nor does it keep pace with the socialist nation. (MSZMP, in Rákossné Szőke, 1975)

In brief, the socialist regime did not disapprove of every Westernized cultural product, only those that did not fit into the strictly defined Marxist ideology regarding the role of arts in socialism. The differentiation between the unwanted or “decadent” and the licensed non-socialist works of art lay in whether the works not only corresponded to the socialist ideology but conveyed centrally legitimized values that were deemed worthy of propagating (Takács, 2006).

It is crucial to note that this filtration was a manual process, executed in correspondence with the state standards, and in theory, if done right, it could serve to exclude unwanted cultural products from the market, thus establishing a homogenous cultural sphere all over the country. Therefore, I argue that the TTT can be understood as a means of establishing and maintaining cultural hegemony, through which only the governmentally approved cultural products were able to reach the masses. It is evident, therefore, that by only administering those works of art that the central

leadership deemed to fit into the Marxist criteria, acts like Spions, Beatrice, CPg, or basically any punk band who brought about a rather distinct approach or even criticism toward the desirably homogenous cultural-political sphere encountered governmental disapproval. Due to Spions' intellectual ethos, which manifested in either oblique criticism of the system or flagrantly provocative songs such as "Anna Frank"; Beatrice's Westernized and liberalist stance; and CPg's unvarnished and often vulgar display of subversiveness—needless to say, all these acts ended up in the *illicit* category in no time. One might question, however, whether these characteristics were enough to justify the treatment punk acts received on the part of the authorities.

I believe the main reason behind such firm proceedings, which (in the case of certain working-class punk bands) even led to the criminalization of punk, is that punk acts—besides their explicit subversive criticism—were not concerned with administrating their works through the central leadership and were autonomously operating acts in the otherwise controlled cultural setting, thus challenging the state of cultural hegemony and state authority. This phenomenon is best represented by the demarcation of punk and *csöves* acts, described above. By accepting Erdős's conditions regarding the release of an album through the centrally vetted Hungaroton Records, bands like P. Mobil and Hobo Blues Band conformed to the cultural-political standards, drifting further into the *tolerated* or even the *supported* category, regardless of the criticism they had received before (Partizán, 2020b). By releasing a severely censored but centrally legitimized record, these *csöves* acts consented to the partial diffusion of their ethos in order to become a legally operating part of the state-controlled art sphere. Beatrice, on the other hand, by declining the opportunity to incorporate itself into this sphere, further expressed its disapproval toward the system, providing ground for the continuous police harassment that led to the disruption of the band.

This assumption serves as an explanation for the excessive governmental response against punk acts. As explained above, Gramsci argues that since the subordinate group can never be allowed to challenge the socioeconomic fundamentals of class power, in times of crisis, when moral and intellectual leadership is not enough to secure continued authority, the hegemonic process can be replaced temporarily by coercive power, in favor of main-

taining hegemony. Since all of the examined acts represented a stance that proved to be incompatible with the propagated cultural-political doctrine and did not exhibit a tendency to seek compromises with those in control, the dominant class, especially in the 1980s, when maintaining their dominance became more and more difficult, was compelled to resort to the coercive power of the repressive state apparatus.

Conclusion

By introducing the historical context in which the Hungarian punk subculture flourished, this article showed how a different interpretation of a foreign cultural product manifested in a system whose cultural atmosphere hardly provided space for such revolutionary trends. By examining the lyrics and overall ethos of the Hungarian punk bands, I aimed to showcase the subversive nature of punk acts during the 1970s and 1980s. And by noting the most significant milestones of the governmental response, I was able to delve into the discourse between the state and punk actors. The cultural-political context of punk's existence helps to understand why it was considered a serious threat to the status quo for its refusal to incorporate itself into the larger mainstream cultural milieu and, moreover, for its unprecedented opposition to the prevailing norms. One can therefore see that by establishing cultural hegemony through the TTT system, whose most significant parameter was the central administration and censorship of each artistic act, the state shaped and homogenized the social and cultural norms to such an extent that it made the nonconformist ethos of punk appear as a threat to the status quo, thus establishing a motive for the excessively hostile treatment of punk acts.

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MATEO COELHO

Between NEP's Alley and the Gates of Stalinism: Mayakovsky's *The Bedbug*

Introduction

As Russia's gruelling Civil War ended in 1922, Lenin and the Bolsheviks instituted the New Economic Policy (NEP), allowing for limited private enterprise to boost the failing economy brought on by the combined effects of the First World War, Civil War, post-Civil War international isolation the state had suffered, and the uncompromising system of War Communism. The plan worked, and the 1920s became a relatively prosperous time for the newly formed Soviet Union. But while the economy had recovered, from an ideological point of view this new, more capitalistic system was already fraught with contradiction, drawing criticism from a great number of revolutionaries who had fought for the abolition of the capitalist order and for the Communist utopia promised by Lenin (Naiman, 1997, pp. 5–6).

In this article, I will explore a specific instance of this line of criticism, namely the play *The Bedbug* by the poet and playwright Vladimir Mayakovsky, a pillar of the Russian avant-garde and one of the most outspoken critics of NEP. I will examine the nature of Mayakovsky's criticism as present in the play, as well as compare this criticism with a topic that the work prophetically hints at: the coming Stalinist Soviet Union. As we will see, the play ends up criticising both systems in a seemingly contradictory fashion.

Before embarking on a close reading of Mayakovsky's masterpiece, we

must address a few factors limiting this interpretation of the play. The first factor is the fact that the interpretation below is based on an English translation by Max Hayward, which, however accurate, creates an unsurpassable barrier between us and the original text. Mayakovsky's wordplay, as well as the many levels of subtext held by certain Russian words, is confined exclusively to the Russian language. However, even though such intricacies are inaccessible to us, we can still identify the images and scenarios that survive the translation into English, allowing us to grasp the ideological essence of the play.

Vladimir Mayakovsky

According to his own account, Mayakovsky was born in 1893 and came from rural Georgia. The son of a forester, he was a self-made man. A problem teenager, he was a dropout and a revolutionary, writing and distributing Marxist samizdat papers for the Bolshevik party. At the age of eighteen, this landed him in prison for a year, where he began educating himself and took up poetry. Once released, he left the Bolsheviks and took up painting. He met David Burliuk, the avant-garde poet, at the art academy. Through this acquaintance, Mayakovsky started publishing poems with the Futurists, among whom he stood out as one of the few poets who were not just provocative, but actually possessed considerable talent (McGavran, 2013, p. 3).

Mayakovsky enjoyed provoking the public, wearing a yellow blouse instead of an ordinary man's shirt, and using vulgar, even erotic imagery in his poems, like this verse from his famous poem "A Cloud in Trousers" (1915):

Each word,
each joke,
which his scorching mouth spews,
jumps like a naked prostitute
from a burning brothel (Mayakovsky, 1960, p. 73).

These lines caused outrage at the time; their provocative, yet lyrical nature was the essence of Mayakovsky's colourful poetry. Within his

public persona, there was a split between the stark revolutionary Futuro-Marxist agitator, and a sentimental, deeply sensitive poet, who wrote love poems as well as any of his contemporaries (Brown, 1963, pp. 37–68). His best works are a joint effort from the two sides, such as his poems “Backbone Flute” (1915), the already-quoted “A Cloud in Trousers” (1915), or the play *Mystery bouffe* (1918). We can only speculate as to where the poet’s sympathies really lay regarding this dichotomy, but to exclude either the sentimental or the utopian Mayakovsky would be fundamentally misrepresentative.⁴

The Russian Civil War and Propaganda Posters

Before the Civil War ended in 1922, Mayakovsky and the visual artist Alexandr Rodchenko (1891–1956) started working together, first to create enlistment posters for the Red Army, and after the Civil War ended, to make advertisements they deemed as commercial agitation. Now in the relative mainstream, the creators of these works used them to support themselves financially, yet the avant-garde concept of art as a world- and a life-shaping force led them to consider these agitprop materials to also be high forms of art (Groys, 1992, p. 27). But even though the new system allowed him to support himself, for the revolutionary Mayakovsky, who held a communist utopia as the ultimate goal, NEP seemed like a step backwards.

Mayakovsky’s relationship with the Soviet state through the revolutionary and Civil War years was at first one of mutual endorsement, even though Lenin admitted to not understanding his poetry (Brown, 1963, p. 50). It was in the NEP years that the relationship between Mayakovsky and the Party leadership gradually deteriorated. LEF, a radical avant-garde journal co-edited by Mayakovsky and home to the most relevant avant-garde artists at the time, was heavily critical of NEP and its architects. This, along with a series of changes that the Bolshevik Party made to shape NEP as if it were, instead of a step backwards, the more mature, clear-headed

⁴ This did not, however, stop Soviet scholars, who after Stalin’s proclamation of Mayakovsky as a literary giant tried to present Mayakovsky as being only a revolutionary. As stated by Boris Pasternak in his book *The Voice of Prose: People and Propositions*: “Then Mayakovsky began to be introduced forcibly, like potatoes under Catherine the Great. This was his second death. He had no hand in it” (Pasternak 1986, p. 73).

heir to the juvenile chaos of war communism (Naiman, 1997, p. 8), made Mayakovsky and the avant-gardists into a nuisance for the State.

The scandalous past of the Futurists was coming back to haunt them as anti-hooligan campaigns were implemented throughout the Komso-mol media of 1925–26 (ibid., p. 257). The fact of the matter was that the avant-gardists were no longer needed.⁵ What made the avant-garde into an engaging and relevant movement can be derived from Mayakovsky's first play, *Mystery Bouffe*. The "mystery" in avant-garde ideology was the concept of utopianism, an idea that was both filled with hopes and was incredibly hazy and inconsistent at the same time. It is also important to mention that the Russian word for mystery, *misteriia*, was also used for mediaeval church plays, giving the word an ecclesiastic overtone and an association with the divine. The "bouffe" element on the other hand, a playful, irreverent tone, was what made the haziness of avant-garde ideology palatable and relatively approachable. It was this element of "bouffe" that resulted in the avant-garde falling out of favour with the Party in the late twenties, and desperate to keep on publishing, they were left only with their mysterious utopias (Clark, 1996, p. 271). The unofficial ultimatum offered to the avant-garde by the party was summarised by Zinoviev in his 1925 work *Filosofiiia epokhi* (Philosophy of an epoch) in the following manner: "The proletarian avant-garde must look all the more attentively, all the more searchingly at the road upon which we walk; it is all the more essential that one repeatedly measure the path already covered and analyse the dangers lying in wait for the Revolution in the future" (quoted in Naiman, 1997, p. 4). Mayakovsky was in the same situation as at the beginning of the 1910s, except, as he was now a national icon, the public eye followed his every move. It was under these circumstances that he wrote his 1929 magical comedy *The Bedbug*.

⁵ Trotsky writes the following on the Futurists: "The Futurist break with the past is, a tempest in the closed-in world of the intelligencia that grew up on Pushkin, Fet, Tiutchev, Briusov, Balmont, and Blok..... The Futurists have done well to push away from them. But it is not necessary to make a universal law of development out of the act of pushing away" (Brown, 1963, p. 50).

The Bedbug

Introduction

The plot of *The Bedbug* is as follows: Prisypkin, a worker aspiring to bourgeois status, leaves his working-class girlfriend to marry a rich woman, from whom he hopes to gain a comfortable living. At their wedding, however, the ballroom ignites amongst the celebration. Once the firefighters arrive, their water immediately freezes over the charred building in the cold Russian winter. This is followed by a time jump fifty years into the future, where in the meantime, a communist utopia has developed. Here, scientists have discovered the frozen body of Prisypkin, and use their technology to defrost him and a bedbug hidden in his coat. Prisypkin discovers the wondrous world around him, where there are no signs of overworked workers, disease, or anything that could impede the absolute productivity of the system. But Prisypkin is soon discovered to be incompatible with this new world, and his decadent habits wreak havoc across the utopian city. They soon lock Prisypkin and his bedbug in a zoo.

This “magical comedy” was staged at the Meyerhold theatre, with Vsevolod Meyerhold (1874–1940) directing. Rodchenko designed the sets for the production in the already-fading Constructivist style. Meyerhold, who championed the play, brought on the young Dmitri Shostakovich (1906–1975) to write incidental music for the production.⁶ The brightest stars of the old and new avant-garde came together to make this production possible, in what would turn out to be the sunset of the Russian avant-garde.

The production of *The Bedbug* took place in the winter of 1928 to 1929, the end of NEP and the beginning of the Stalinist Five-Year Plans. The avant-garde was only three years away from being banned completely by the 1932 decree of the Central Committee (Groys, 1992, p. 33). Reflecting on these shifts in power, in his play Mayakovsky wrote about this contrast between NEP and the hoped-for new world that might emerge fifty years in the future.

⁶ Shostakovich was disillusioned with the character of the poet, describing Mayakovsky as the embodiment of everything he despised (Volkov, 1984, p. 247).

One reading of the play, typical of its early Soviet critics, is as a critique of the petite bourgeoisie (Mikhailov, 1988, p. 558). This is backed up by Mayakovsky's derogatory portrayal of Prisyarkin. On the other hand, a reading that Irwin Weil promotes is that in this play, Mayakovsky questions the very thing he had been fighting for, realising that a communist utopia would be a cold and desolate place, where the sentimental Mayakovsky, just as Prisyarkin, would feel terribly depressed (Weil 2012).

The play itself thus deals with the clash between Mayakovsky the revolutionary icon and Mayakovsky the romantic. Pinpointing an obvious victor between the two is usually only done by a confirmational critic, who made up his mind about the play before seeing it. The genius of the work is that it can be interpreted in almost any manner, and ideologies directly opposite to each other could find evidence for support in this truly magical comedy.

Welcome to NEP

In the first scene, we are faced with an idiosyncratic image of the NEP era (Naiman, 1997, p. 6): the State Department Store, state-owned, but privately run. An army of salesmen and women advertise their merchandise to passers-by.⁷ As Prisyarkin lurks around, delighting at the sight of the varied goods offered by the traders, one of them shouts: "Why get married on account of a button? Why get divorced on account of a button?" (Mayakovsky, 1960, p. 243). In fact, this is the first line of the play, and it foreshadows the intentions of Prisyarkin: he is shopping for his wedding, as he plans to wed the aristocratically named Elzevier Renaissance. It is Prisyarkin's infatuation with social status that motivates him to marry into the Renaissance family. Throwing the merchant's wisdom aside, he is planning to marry on account of a button.

Yet even though our protagonist worships the deliciousness of upper-class existence, he is a worker and prides himself on being one. "In our Red family there must be no petty bourgeois squabbles over fly buttons!" (ibid., p. 247). This hypocritical statement could serve as a good anecdote for summing up the NEP era. Even though everyone claimed to be part of the "Reds," denouncing all bourgeois sentiments, the citizens of

⁷ It is important to see that Mayakovsky finds only the message of these salesmen to be reprehensible since advertisement is a legitimate form of art in his eyes.

the newly formed Soviet Union were all guilty of enjoying the privileges of a relatively open market. This contradiction is superbly captured here, as Prisyarkin reverses himself within only a couple of pages.⁸

Amidst the shopping spree, Prisyarkin's working-class girlfriend Zoya shows up just in time for her beloved to break up with her. In the second scene, we see Prisyarkin's previous home, a hostel for young workers. We are shown his excessive pursuit of bourgeois status, for example, how he regularly borrows the shoes of his flatmates without their permission to look good in them. As we learn all this, a youth runs in: "Zoya Beryozkina's shot herself! They'll give her hell for this at the Party meeting!" (Mayakovsky 1960, p. 260).

After the rather grim scene at the youth hostel comes scene three, where Prisyarkin is wedded to Elzevir Renaissance. But instead of taking place in a ballroom or dacha as we would expect from an aristocratic wedding, the Renaissance family's beauty parlour serves as the venue. The fact is, in line with Prisyarkin's petty attempts at climbing up the social ladder, the Renaissance family's name implies their similar desire to rise from the status of the petite bourgeoisie to that of the magnate. This kind of social climbing was a defining trend amongst *fin-de-siècle* European societies (Hobsbawm, 1987, ch. 7) and its presence here shows yet again how NEP moved away from socialism and back towards capitalism.

Being a proper Russian wedding, a great deal of vodka is consumed, leading to an increasingly chaotic celebration. As the wedding party gets drunker, a piano (a classic trademark of the aristocratic household) is dragged to the middle of the stage, and one of the guests starts to play. Another particularly inquisitive guest starts criticising his playing: "Why do you play only on the black keys? I suppose you think black is good enough for the proletariat. You play on all the keys for the bourgeoisie, is that it?" (Mayakovsky, 1960, p. 267). But when the pianist obliges him by playing on the white keys as well, the inquisitor strikes again: "So you compromise with the Whites, opportunist!" (ibid., p. 267). The irrational bureaucratic pejoratives used towards Mayakovsky around the time of the publishing of the play by entities such as the state-endorsed creative union RAPP (established in 1925 and a precursor to the Union of Soviet Writers) are mani-

⁸ To avant-garde artists like Malevich, it was exactly this type of attitude that they aimed to eradicate through the cleansing and elevating of the proletariat through their art (Groys, 1992, pp. 15–19).

fested in the words of this drunken guest (Brown, 1963, p. 40).⁹ Soon after this episode, total bedlam ensues, culminating in a fatal spark that sends the whole Babylonian vision up in flames.

The Year 1979

In the fifth scene, we pick up the thread after a fifty-year time jump in the utopia of 1979. The Institute of Human Resurrection takes a global vote on the resurrection of Prisyppkin. They assess the pros and cons of the operation: "... I have to bring to your attention the objections of the Epidemiological Office, which fears a spread of bacteria known to have infected the former inhabitants of what was once Russia" (Mayakovsky, 1960, p. 273). "For the sake of research into the labour habits of the proletariat, for the sake of studies and manners, we demand resurrection!" (ibid., p. 274). The first concern considering dangerous bacteria turns out to be prophetic, though the bacteria in question are not actual microbes, but human shortcomings such as obsequiousness and sycophancy.

As they accept the resurrection, reporters and newsboys flood the stage in a cacophony of jubilant advertisements, akin to the one at the beginning of the first scene, with the substitution of cosmetic products for pieces of information. One newsboy shouts: "Feature on ancient guitars and romances And other means of drugging the masses!" (ibid., p. 277). This short phrase exemplifies the redundancy and rejection of the "l'art pour l'art" nature of romantic songs and music¹⁰ in a utopian society. This concept is deeply rooted in avant-garde theory (Groys, 1992, p. 28). In the avant-gardists' view, the purpose of art is to guide humanity towards a utopia, where once the artists arrived, their services would no longer be needed, and art as a whole would cease to exist, the job of the artist being taken over by the state. A process very similar to this occurred in the 1930s, when artists were stripped of their independence and forced into narrow confines, but to say that this had happened due to the establishment of a utopia would be a gross misunderstanding of the core concept of utopia.

⁹ Mayakovsky, shortly before his death, joined RAPP after being relentlessly pushed by the authorities to do so.

¹⁰ Although not all music is rejected by the future society: marches, for example, are well liked and widely implemented.

The sixth scene continues in the resurrection lab, where we find amongst the scientists the old but very much living Zoya, who tries to convince the professor supervising the resurrection not to go forth with the procedure. She warns him of Prisyphkin's wickedness, but to no avail; the professor accuses her of dwelling on the past, and has to open a "dictionary of obsolete words" to understand the expressions Zoya uses: "What's business? ... bootlegger ... Bulgakov ... bureaucracy... ah, here we are: 'business: a kind of activity that prevented every other kind of activity'" (Mayakovsky, 1960, p. 278). These are, like the next set of words, all expressions that Mayakovsky would like to see disappear, by the year 1979 at the latest:¹¹

Suicide? What's "suicide"? ... supertax ... surrealism ... here we are: "suicide."
 (Surprised.) You shot yourself? By a court order? A revolutionary tribunal?
 Zoya: No ... By myself. ...
 Professor: By yourself? Carelessness?
 Zoya: No... love. ... (ibid., p. 278).

This really makes no sense to the Professor, and he orders the scientists to proceed with the resurrection.

The fact that the Professor is unfamiliar with these expressions, however, raises an interesting contradiction: the Professor, who is also described as being old, most definitely encountered these words before, since the utopia by that time was at the very most fifty years old. Since the futuristic city is home to enough centenarians for them to have their own union, it is reasonable to think that the Professor is at least sixty years old, or probably older (if he is considered "old"). This means that he had encountered these words before, but either forgot them or was acting like he was unaware of their existence. I consider the former possibility to be the more logical one since the Professor condemns in Zoya exactly what he demonstratively does not do: dwell on the past. This condemnation, like the redundancy of romances, can be traced to the avant-garde, the Futurists in particular.¹² It does not take many logical steps to see that

¹¹ Mayakovsky and Bulgakov exchanged jabs by poking fun at another in their respective works. Bulgakov punched back at Mayakovsky in *The Master and Margarita*, where he based the character of Riukhin, a poet filled with self-doubt and desperation, on Mayakovsky.

¹² See the manifesto "Slap in the Face of Public Taste" by David Burliuk, Aleksei Kruchenykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky, and Velimir Khlebnikov (Burliuk et al., 1988 [1912]).

this utopian society actively condemns such tendencies, repressing them like the Professor did with his memories, to fit the narrative of the utopia. This, however, makes the concept of this future city a much less utopian picture and more of an oppressive, flawed regime that builds on crushing humanity's natural tendencies. We are much closer in this sense to the Stalinist regime than the utopian city laid before us in the following few scenes.

When Prisypkin wakes, he is shocked, shaking everyone's hand and bolting for the exit. The doctors are all petrified by the handshake and rush to wash their hands as Prisypkin jumps to the street. Here, he is overwhelmed by the great city. "Not a soul in sight! Not a single horse! Just automobiles, automobiles, automobiles!"(ibid., p. 286). As his bedbug flees from him, he erupts into song to lure the tiny creature back to him before, clutching his head, he falls into Zoya's arms unconscious.

The seventh scene brings yet another change of setting, we are taken to a plaza where artificial trees grow different products by plateful, from tangerines to perfume. Mankind has conquered nature and made it its tool. A small crowd gathers around a reporter, who sums up the events since Prisypkin's resurrection. "To make its transitional existence easier the doctors ordered the resurrected mammal to be fed with a mixture that is toxic in large doses and repulsive in small ones—'beer' it's called" (ibid., p. 285). We hear from the orating reporter that this incident sparked an outbreak of intoxication in the utopian city. An outbreak of art and love has also swooped down: a crowd of people, dancing, singing, and smelling roses, pass through the stage.

It is here that they identify these phenomena as symptoms of microbial infection. It is, of course, necessary to do so, since acknowledging the possibility that Prisypkin turned these previously lawful citizens into raving rascals by freeing an inner tendency for these behaviours would cause the whole system to implode. By implying that the state of the "utopia's" inhabitants is not the perfect, unwavering state of the human soul, this would thereby debunk its own claim as the ideal society. It is much easier to label the phenomenon as an infection. It is in fact the same logic used here that *they* later use to convict Prisypkin as a parasitic threat to humanity. A man from the reporter's audience exclaims: "I don't mind sacrificing myself in the cause of science. Let them inoculate me with a dose of this mysterious

illness!” (ibid., p. 286). The pristine environment of the so-called “utopia” begins to deteriorate, with decadence infecting its many inhabitants. These inhabitants, however, as we see from the lone man in the crowd, are not all unwelcoming of the change that Prisypkin has brought with him. This small piece of dialogue shows that at least some of the inhabitants of the city yearn for their circumstances to change.

The penultimate scene takes place in an immaculate apartment where Prisypkin lies drunk and oozes filth into the pristine environment. He is depressed. Two doctors contemplate what to do with him, disgusted by the terrible odours he releases, while the unfortunate time traveller curses at them.

Prisypkin: [...] You resurrect me and now you make fun of me! Like giving lemonade to an elephant!

Doctor: Society hopes to raise you up to a human level. ...

Prisypkin: To hell with society and to hell with you. ... Freeze me back!” (ibid., p. 290–91)

It is hard not to lament with Prisypkin the terrible nature of his predicament, and suddenly we feel empathy towards a character who, in the context of NEP, seemed to be morally reprehensible. The doctors are of course perplexed by his complaints about the world being cold and unfriendly and give him more to drink just to make him stop breathing his fumes in their direction. Zoya replaces them and brings Prisypkin a stack of books. He asked for romantic literature, but since Zoya could not find any, she brings books from Prisypkin’s time:

Zoya Beryozkina: [...] Hoover: An Ex-President Speaks ... translated from the English.

Prisypkin (takes the book and hurls it aside): No... I want something that... plucks at my heartstrings. ...

Zoya Beryozkina: Well, here’s a book by someone called Mussolini: Letters from Exile (ibid., p. 291).¹³

¹³ These books probably survived due to their political significance, and not because of the quality of their contents.

Then, Prisypkin reads from the newspaper: They have found his Bedbug. He rushes out to reunite with the one creature that shares his predicament. Prisypkin's sympathy for his bedbug, a creature that feasted on his blood for so long, is in direct contradiction with how this future society deals with its own parasite, namely, Prisypkin. In the next scene, however, these parallels between insect and man grow to Kafkaesque proportions.

The last scene takes place in the city zoo. A diverse and international crowd gather around a veiled cage in anticipation. Even the leadership of the City Soviet are present. Unlike in the first four scenes, political power is given great importance here, with people cheering for the government's representatives as they arrive, since for the inhabitants of the utopia, they are a familiar part of everyday life. The Director of the Zoo makes an impassioned speech recounting his efforts to identify the two exhibited creatures, concluding, that they are both non-human. "...the famous *bedbugus normalis* and ... er ... *bourgeoisius vulgaris*. They are different in size but identical in essence" (ibid., p. 299). The director presents their findings: that Prisypkin is nothing less than a shapeshifter, merely mimicking humans. Prisypkin can be clearly defined as the enemy of the State and of the People, not being a threat to them physically but ideologically, as he represents the disgusting side of human nature. I have already assessed why categorising his habits as an illness alienated him from the future society, and here, we see Prisypkin pigeonholed into the role of a parasite, further distancing him from the status quo. The dehumanisation of the enemy is a trend across all totalitarian regimes, be it through propaganda, like in the Cambodian Genocide, or pseudoscience, like in the years leading up to the Holocaust. This characteristic trait solidifies the fact that this "utopia" is in fact a totalitarian regime.

The Director goes on to claim:

Both have the habitat in the musty mattresses of time.

Bedbugus normalis, having gorged itself on the body of a single human, falls under the bed.

Bourgeoisius vulgaris, having gorged itself on the body of all mankind, falls onto the bed. That's the only difference (ibid., p. 300).

They are both considered to be bloodsucking insects, in an eerie parody of scientific race theory. As they draw back the curtains to a fanfare by

the orchestra, the onlookers stare in awe and bewilderment, as Prisypkin drinks and smokes in the cage, accompanied by his trusty Bedbug. To demonstrate the placidity and spinelessness of the *bourgeoisius vulgaris*, the Zoo Director, armed and wearing protective gloves, escorts Prisypkin out of the cage to show the crowd the *bourgeoisius vulgaris*' imitation of human language. But just as he is about to do so, Prisypkin looks out, into the audience. He jumps out in front of them and addresses them in desperation: "Citizens! Brothers! My own people! Darlings! How did you get here? So many of you! When were you unfrozen? Why am I alone in the cage? Darlings, friends, come and join me! Why am I suffering? Citizens!" (ibid., p. 302). He is dragged off stage by the zoo attendants. The Director tries to calm the guests and orders the playing of a march as the curtains close, and the play ends.

Conclusion

The society portrayed as utopian is by the end of the play stripped of its immaculacy and shown for what it really is: a society under the rule of a merciless authoritarian regime. It has much in common with a scene from Imre Madách's *The Tragedy of Man*, where Madách explores what a global implementation of Fourier's phalanstery would look like (Madách, 2020 [1861], scene XII). The element of pseudoscience, present in *The Bedbug* as an example of race theory, shows up in *The Tragedy of Man* as phrenology; in both cases, the pseudoscience entails severe consequences for the protagonists. The conclusion we can draw from Madách's scene, although not identical to that of Mayakovsky's, is one equally critical of utopias, which do not and cannot exist, even if flawed systems would like us to think otherwise (Naiman, 1997, p. 13).

The vilification of Prisypkin and the petit bourgeois like him would come into full force with the Stalinist years. Stalin, bypassing the notion of race theory, ostracised all who benefited from the decadence of NEP, which included most of the population, allowing him to cherry-pick among an extremely large pool of enemies of the state. This meant that the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Prisypkins that took place during the Great Terror could be based entirely on charges that

almost the entire population was guilty of. Mayakovsky, however, was not among these victims. He shot himself only a year after the premiere of *The Bedbug*.

Following Mayakovsky's death, Stalin turned him into a national icon, awarding him the title of "the greatest poet of our socialist epoch" in 1935, posthumously (Sundaram, 2000, p. 71). This idolisation of the poet made *The Bedbug* fit for communist propaganda, which hailed the play as a critique of the petite bourgeoisie that offered an optimistic anticipation of a time when a global communist utopia would have eliminated all suffering in the world. This ideological distortion could draw some support from Mayakovsky's derogatory portrayal of Prisyarkin. On the other hand, according to a reading that Irwin Weil develops in his lecture on the topic, Mayakovsky is questioning the very cause he had been fighting for, having realised that he would be incompatible with such a system (Weil, 2012). Weil's argument is primarily based on the closing monologue, which he interprets as a direct foreshadowing of the Great Terror. Edward Brown, in his chapter on Mayakovsky, rejects this reading by dismissing the final monologue as a mere paraphrase of the closing statement of Nikolai Gogol's famous play *Inspector General* (1836). Far from warning the viewers of the horrors of the characters' situation, Gogol raises a mirror to his audience and thus shows them to be just as pathetic as the protagonist. Brown argues that this is exactly what Mayakovsky is doing, accusing his audience of all being Prisyarkins (Brown, 1963, p. 63).

In my opinion, Mayakovsky, by writing *The Bedbug*, signed his death sentence. The nineteenth-century civic poet Nikolai Nekrasov wrote: "A poet I may be, but a citizen I must be." For Mayakovsky, this was the other way around, as Brown points out in his last chapter about him (Brown, 1963, 65). Being a politically engaged avant-garde poet was a necessity for him: bathed in contradiction, standing proud at the head of the vanguard leading humanity into a brighter future. This time, however, the contradiction was not in himself, but in his ideals. In writing such an ideologically uncertain work filled with self-doubt and anxiety, it is clear that he was disillusioned with the direction his country had taken. The triumphant Mayakovsky was gone. His pride could not bear him fizzling out in the service of the state. In his last desperation, he took his own life.

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