

## Theses

In the case of Hungary, which fell within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence after the WW II, we cannot speak about an independent and effective foreign policy for long. Following the private action in July 1947 of Ernő Mihályfi, the Information Minister charged with foreign affairs, the representation of the country in abroad, the Hungarian diplomacy meant mainly only a simple and mechanical execution of the decisions made in Moscow.

Later, although only for a while, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 held out illusionary promises for an independent foreign policy but after the fall we have to speak not only about a depending foreign policy but rather about a diplomatic boycott. After 1956 the political quarantine was slowly easing up and a quite limited era of diplomacy came again. Decades later, at the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s, the demand appears for an independent Hungarian diplomacy, and indeed, the Hungarian foreign policy begins its separation from this time. In this growing manoeuvring room, due to the geopolitical features and historical traditions, besides the Austrian-German orientation Italy also played a part in the doctrine of Hungary's foreign affairs with more or less intensity.

The aim of my PhD dissertation is to demonstrate and analyse the development of the bilateral relations of Hungary and Italy between 1956 and 1989. In the focus point of my study stands the diplomacy of the Kádár regime, but naturally, besides these I also examine the ways of the changes in the Italian diplomacy towards Hungary. Furthermore, I point out what kind of mutual compromises, allowances and negotiations were necessary after the political estrangement caused by the convulsions of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution for the beneficial formation of international relations in accordance with the century-long friendship between the two nations.

The theme, which has been not or only partially processed, gives the opportunity to acquire an overall and detailed picture about Hungary's and Italy's thirty-year-long relationship and the picture formed by Italy about Hungary. Moreover, this dissertation would meet the demand of the Hungarian Italy-researches as there is an urgent need for reinforcing the Hungarian-Italian relations' inquiries, launching systematic analyses of later events like the revolution and the following Kádár period, and for publishing a wide range of issues relating to recent past events.

The elaboration of this chosen topic bears a vital importance since the 1956 Hungarian Revolution still has had a great impact on the present Italian political life. It is enough to

remember the event when the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution was coming and both in Hungary and Italy there were a strong criticisms against the former “Italian Communist Party”, and against several ex-politicians. In the centre of these assaults stood the emphasis on the difference between their opinions now and then and the definite claim for public apology. In connection with 1956 in both countries, the most often attacked and criticised left-wing politician was President Giorgio Napolitano. It is a common knowledge that the present president of the Italian Republic in 1956 with regard to the soviet intervention took the position that the military involvement was necessary for the sake of maintaining the world peace: “The Soviet intervention, beyond it prevented the chaos in Hungary it contributed greatly to the protection of world peace.”

President Napolitano, who, since the early 80s has considered his former opinion to be a wrong standpoint and a historical mistake, in the summer of 2006 made a self-critical and remarkable statement in connection with the events of 1956 : “Pietro Neni was right.”

Pietro Penni, in 1956, after the Russian invasion against Hungary broke his “unity of action” program, the common platform which bound the socialist and the communist parties together. Due to his statement there were hot debates in the Italian domestic politics in one of which an ex-socialist politician, Claudio Martelli drew the President’s attention to the case of Willy Brandt. The former German politician, the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, during his visit to Poland in 1970 laid a wreath and knelt down at the monument to the victims in the Warsaw Ghetto.

According to the most prominent representative of the Italian left-wing liberal press, the *La Repubblica* daily newspaper, the ghost of the Hungarian revolution, fifty years later, is still putting those communists into awkward situations – calling them to account for their consciences – who have not got the courage or the discernment to dissociate themselves from their party’s attitude.

The Catholic press, particularly the *Avvenire* welcomed the self-criticism of the Italian head of state and highlighted: “Beyond the debates and unavoidable polemics in our country we have to focus our attention on the victims, the Hungarians and all Eastern-European people who have experienced the communism’s barbarism”. The right-wing *Liberio*, in August 25, 2006, called upon the President to apologize to Hungary in public: “The free and democratic world should not forget the communist invaders’ brutal cruelty. Naturally, our present head of state has no direct responsibility concerning this, but he was among those Italians who welcomed the suppression, emphasising that this had protected the world peace.”

In Hungary, Napolitano was a central topic before his announcement, as on 24 May 2006 the veterans of 1956 – Mária Wittner, Sándor Rácz, László Balás Piri – protested in an open letter for the reason President László Sólyom had invited the President of Italy to the commemorations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution: “On behalf of the “Élő 56-osok” we strongly protests against inviting such a politician, even if he is the present president of Italy, to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution who lent a helping hand to the soviet murderers with putting down the Hungarian desire for freedom with ruthless violence.”

It is well-known that Mária Schmidt PhD, the director of the House of Terror Museum put this question about Napolitano’s planned visit via the most important Italian daily newspaper, the *Corriere della Sera*: “Meanwhile the Hungarian youths died under soviet tanks, Giorgio Napolitano supported Moscow’s intervention. Are you not ashamed of coming here?” To the journalist’s proposition that after half a century the President has admitted his mistake when he did not condemn the soviet invasion, and to the question whether the time of division has passed by Ms Schmidt replied the following: “Not for us. It’s Napolitano’s own business that he realized his mistake, but we could only accept it if he would have apologized publicly from us, Hungarian people. Until he does not do that, stay in Rome.” The Hungarian president did not share this opinion and invited the Italian president to Budapest, who after several self-criticisms, paid his visit to the Hungarian capital in the end of September, 2006. Literally speaking, the first leg of his tour was to the public cemetery of Rákoskersztúr at the 301 parcels, where he paid his tribute and bowed his head before the graves of the martyr prime minister and the fellow martyrs. The president later explained in his speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences that the 1956 Hungarian Revolution was fostered by the civil society’s desire for autonomy and the individuals’ religious and intellectual resistance towards the totalitarian state machine. These were manifested continuously in those actions which happened in the Soviet satellite states until 1989 when they burst out everywhere. Then he added: “Among those who could not understand the true nature of the Hungarian Revolution there were few, – when the Soviet military intervention violently put an end to it – who reconsidered their opinion and realized the great significance the historical event bears. Thus we must bow our heads again – as I did it today with a deep affectedness laying a wreath on behalf of the Italian Republic at the memorial to the Martyrs and the grave of Imre Nagy in the New Public Cemetery – before the fighters of the selfless revolution sentenced to isolation and defeat in a world determined by the Cold War logic and tension. They were the fighters of

such a selfless revolution which was a significant forerunner of our continent's unification in the civilization entity of the European Union.”

This visit in September preceded the troubles and tried to pacify the opponents of it and as a result of the tense Hungarian and Italian political atmosphere finally not President Giorgio Napolitano led the official Italian delegation to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations but the foreign minister, Massimo D'Alema. That Massimo D'Alema, who, as we will see later, was also connected from several aspects to the Italian interpretation of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

For the better understanding of the Italian hot debates on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, we should get acquainted with the history of the Hungarian-Italian relations in the last decades, especially with the Italian interpretation of the revolution which determined the common Hungarian-Italian history and the Italian political attitude in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.