Each society and each historical period have produced their respective ideologies and technologies of regulating people's relationships with their own selves. These provide the principles for good and righteous conduct that connects individuals to the order of production (that is to actual economic and power relations) in a satisfactory way. Among others, psychology fulfilled this function since the end of the nineteenth century, when Western capitalism expanded and modernized. More specifically, the role of psychology was to embed or frame the imperatives of good and righteous living in a medical discourse of truth and to reinterpret it through dimensions of normalcy and pathology (see Foucault 2002, 2006; Miller and Rose 2008; Rose 1990, 1996a, and 1996b; Cushman 1995).

Thus the inner world of the individual and human relationships had been presented as subjects of a universalistic scientific expertise, which was by its nature “international.” Additionally and nonetheless, the content, aims, and moral stakes of psychology have taken different forms in mutually dependent and unequal states across the world. Several studies discussed how psychology became one of the most important techniques for forming the subjects of twentieth-century Western capitalism. Less attention was paid, however, to Eastern European state socialisms, where psychology operated in the context of a catching-up modernization project.

In this case study, I will show how the geopolitical situation of a country, namely Hungary, influenced the content of psychological knowledge, and how
the professional identity of a psychologist changed in the context of specific policy priorities.

The post-war history of Hungarian psy-sciences is inseparable from the Cold War and the international political-economic integration of the country. After World War II, during the so-called coalition era, the psy-sciences had equally close ties to their own domestic tradition and to the Western, Anglo-American psychotherapeutic discourse that had greatly strengthened and became increasingly integrated during the war. Moreover, the psy-sciences were deeply nested in the vast policy interventions of the Hungarian state, and had also gained prominence through the Communist Party’s conceptions of policy. This constellation proved fortunate for a short period in the sense that it led to the unprecedented expansion and institutionalization of the psy-sciences in Hungary. Even though the psy-sciences had already developed strong ties with the international (Western) scientific discourse, this short expansive period was in many aspects particular and divergent from both Western and Soviet developments.1 If we examine the policy practices oriented to the formation of

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1 The rapid and innovative expansion of Soviet psychology after the 1917 revolution was both triggered by strong state intervention and grassroots activism. Soviet psychology explicitly aimed to assist economic-technological modernization, the catching up of the new Soviet state, as well as—because of the promise of socialism—the elimination of extreme social inequality. Following the Stalinist turn, alongside the development of bureaucratic state socialism and its legitimizing ideology, the function of psy-sciences had transformed as well. In the modernization paradigm initiated after the NEP, the main tools of the re-stratificatory class policy (the elimination of the civilizational backwardness of the worker and peasant masses and the provision of access to the bureaucracy for working class cadres) were administrative interventions and applied psychology, which examined the relations between the development of personality and its class position, both of which were eliminated from the policy repertoire. Creating “the new man,” that is the Soviet subject, was no longer a task for psychology, but rather that of the cult of personality, propaganda, and the ritual practices of state bureaucracy. Psychology of the NEP era had become ideologically and technically unnecessary in the context of catching-up industrialization, which relied on the inner resources of the country and the intensified exploitation of the population. The showdown between the “old” intellectuals and Stalin’s other political opponents; the transformation of education policy; the logic of the all-encompassing party bureaucracy; the cult of personality; and the new system-ideology, as well as the demand to fuel the concept of the Western enemy altogether led to the elimination of the huge post-revolutionary institutional network of psychology operating in the areas of pedagogy, child care, the military, and the world of labor.
subjectivity, we will see that their stakes were linked to the coalition era’s reform visions and power struggles, and the role of psychology was embedded in this particular context. After the country’s subordination to the Soviet sphere of influence, the Stalinist bureaucratic and political structure was adopted by Hungary too, which entailed the liquidation of those fields of psy-sciences that had long been eliminated in the Soviet Union as well as the implementation of the “Pavlovian” neurological discourse. The process of Stalinization created a symbolically divided scientific field: the international scientific discourses operated along a “Western capitalist” and “Soviet socialist” division in the Soviet Union. Hence Hungarian psy-sciences had also been pushed out from the domain of policy-making and became a persecuted Western technique. After the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the rehabilitation and re-initiation of Hungarian psychology also followed the Soviet model. In the new political discourse, the status of sciences and that of psychology had changed. After a decade of prohibition, the rehabilitation and reinstitutionalization of Hungarian psychology was an attempt to catch up to the Western discourse, which was perceived as international and universal. From the early sixties onwards, the fate of Hungarian psychology ceased to be directly linked to the Soviet Union. However, an indirect link remained intact by the characteristic policy-making mechanisms of the Kádár era.

Due to limitations of space, this chapter aims to present the characteristics of Hungarian psychology through the lens of child psychology in these three decades.

Antecedents: The Psychologization of Childhood

Child-focused psychological expertise began to institutionalize in the early twentieth century in close relation with a newly-established child protection service, philanthropic initiatives that provided aid for poor mothers and their children, and also with the pedology movement,2 which advocated for public

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2 The pedology movement examined the anatomic, physiological, psychological, and sociological characteristics of the child in a complex way. In the 1890s, these fields of knowledge were interlinked by the assumption that childhood is essentially a different state than adulthood. The methods of pedology such as empirical observations, questionnaires, and the use of various instruments of measurement like ability and achievement tests, were borrowed from empirical psychology and psychotechnique.
educational and pedagogical reforms. The institutionalization of psychology and pedology began before World War I, was suspended after the fall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils (the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic), and continued again from the mid-1920s onwards. Neo-nationalist cultural policy and state social policies aimed at mitigating the effects of the recent political-social shocks perceived psychology as an efficient tool of professional intervention. Therefore, greater state resources were allocated to the development of psychological vocational guidance, special and remedial schools, and other institutions for psychological expertise focusing on child behavior (child guidance clinics, psychotherapy, and psychological research).

Between the two world wars, childhood was a central domain of public health and security discourse, which addressed the possible ways to improve the quality of the population. In this period, several state-run research institutions as well as child counseling and vocational guidance centers were established. Yet these institutions employed few psychologists, and they only reached a limited segment of the population. Child psychology primarily operated under umbrella institutions subsidized by civic philanthropy: orphan care, mother and infant protection, and educational consultancy. The professional community at that time was small and its members were enthusiastic young doctors, teachers, and a few psychologists who had graduated from Western universities and were, without exception, deeply committed to scientific theories and social reforms. In these circles, Jews who had been forced out of higher education and public services as well as bourgeois women aspiring to intellectual professions were characteristically overrepresented.

Psychological expertise on childhood was a consistent and central element of reform plans aimed at the exposure and resolution of social problems across the intellectual streams of the interwar period (from the völkisch movements to public health care and mental hygiene movements). However,

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3 Two institutions played pivotal roles after 1945. The Hungarian Royal Laboratory of Psychology and Special Education established and directed by Pál Ranschburg was divided into two institutes in 1927. One department continued to work as the Research Institute of Child Psychology and was directed by János Schnell; the other, the Hungarian Royal National Laboratory of Pathology and Special Education, was directed by Lipót Szondi. Their institutional profiles were different. Besides research activities (the development of ability and achievement tests), Schnell’s institute mostly focused on child-psychotherapy and child guidance, whereas Szondi’s laboratory primarily functioned as a research institute focusing on the area of the pathology of achievements and abilities of mentally disabled children and orphans.
it would be an exaggeration to state that psychology was a dominant discourse within public institutions or in the self-definition of individuals between the two world wars. Nevertheless, psychologists had high ambitions with regard to their discipline. The common denominator or shared argument between psychology and the eugenics, mental hygiene, and reform pedagogy movements was that social problems are psychological problems and vice versa. Therefore, they argued, in ideal conditions (e.g., with appropriate state subsidies and intervention) psychological expertise would be capable of improving the “quality” of the population, and, by extension, resolving social problems such as poverty, crime, alcoholism, prostitution, and political “deviances” (see, e.g., Lechner 1919; Nyíró 1939; Oláh 1923; Szondi 1939).

1945–1948: The “Psycho-Boom” in Public Education

After World War II, the institutionalization of scientific knowledge about childhood significantly expanded all over the Western world. By this time, psychology had developed into an integrated and formally institutionalized scientific domain. The centers of this expansion were the most powerful states politically and economically: Great Britain and the United States. During the war, both in the army and in the hinterland, psychology had become an expertise and technology deployed to influence and manage interpersonal relations. Later on, these technologies quickly diffused across the public spheres of the emerging Western welfare democracies from the public service sector to business corporations. The parent-child relationship became one of the most important fields of scientifically analyzed interpersonal relations, a key terrain for fashioning successful individuals capable of managing themselves and their social productivity in both the workplace and the family.

Child psychology underwent a great expansion in postwar Hungary too. Yet here, the expertise of developmental psychology was oriented to a leftist class policy. After 1945, the earlier established small therapeutic institutes grew into huge state-operated institutions, and the enthusiastic volunteers of prewar philanthropic associations became public servants. The widespread institutionalization of the discipline was interlinked with the communist party’s educational reform plans, most importantly the introduction of eight-grade compulsory public education. Political power strove for the mass mobility of workers’ and peasants’ children by leveraging the public educational system.
The radical postwar transformation of public education equally served to mitigate the extreme labor shortage that resulted from industrialization, modernization, the reorganization of the state bureaucracy, and the socialist society’s egalitarian project. These factors were mutually reinforcing. New industrial jobs required higher general rates of education and professional qualification. The labor shortage was further aggravated by the fact that after the years of transition, the new Soviet model of a bureaucratic single-party system was in dire need of educated working class and peasant cadres loyal to the socialist political system. In the language of ideology, this claim was phrased as the creation of the “new elite” and “new intellectuals.” The school became one of the most important fields of class struggle (Kovai and Neumann 2015).

In the discourse of psychology, the same political force prompted an interest towards the psychological links between ability and class position. The main task of child psychology was to develop an educational system and curriculum actually capable of reducing social difference. The communist party still considered psychology to be the most important expert knowledge for the formulation of public education policy in the year of the turn (to Stalinism) in 1948. The National Pedagogical Institute, which, under direct party control, provided expertise for educational reform, was established that same year. Its director, Ferenc Mérei, was called “the communist pope of psychology.” This refers to his professional and political powers, as well as to the contemporary prestige of psychology and the prophetic role of the intelligentsia in party bureaucracy. Citing him here:

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Ferenc Mérei (1909–1986) was born in Budapest to a Jewish petit bourgeois family. His parents were photographers. At the end of the 1920s, he joined the literary circle of the avant-garde worker poet, Lajos Kassák. Because of the *numerus clausus*, he graduated from the Sorbonne. Initially he studied political economy, literature, philosophy, and sociology; later he became the disciple of the Marxist psychologist Henri Wallon and developed an interest in child-psychology. He obtained a degree in psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and vocational guidance. In 1930, he joined the French Communist Party and carried out illegal activities under the pseudonym “Poppy.” His circle of friends (the “Tribe”) were dissident artists and intellectuals. In 1934, he worked for János Schnell’s institute as a volunteer, and later he also volunteered in Lipót Szondi’s research about “fate analysis.” After the anti-Jewish laws were issued, he worked in the psychotherapeutic ambulance of the Jewish Patronage Association directed by Júlia György. In 1942, he was ordered to forced labor and sent to the Soviet front. In 1944, he escaped and joined the Red Army where he served as a captain. Having returned home in 1945 as a committed and by then “legal” communist, he became one of the main organizers of scientific research.
I felt that I was one of the few with a revolutionary soul who were oriented to the pedagogy of childhood. I seriously prepared myself for this. I knew that a moment would come when the school system could be changed. I had not known yet what a school system was like. I had never been involved in public activities before. I only had experience from the illegal movement where I’d seen five people, ten people, twenty people. I read. But I had no idea that a Ministry was a big apparatus, actually, that deals with the affairs of the whole mankind or at least a country. (Szilágyi 1972, 285)

Apart from this, grassroots psychological laboratories, psychological parent counseling courses, and vocational guidance centers were established across the country, and the staff consisted of enthusiastic educators who volunteered their spare time. These initiatives were soon organized into a national network under the coordination of the National Institute of Child-Psychology, which by then gained status in an academic research institute. Besides its guidance and therapeutic activity, through its regional networks, the Institute carried out research commissioned by the Ministry of Education in order to pre-assess reform plans. This research, just as the other services provided by the centers in the networks (ability tests, day care centers, training for parents and teachers), was aligned to the principles of the educational reforms, the chief aim of which was the enhancement of overarching social mobility (Barra 1947; Baranyai et al. 1947; Schnell 1968; Neményi 1979).

The great boom of Hungarian psychology was interrupted by the Soviet radicalization of education reform. In 1948, a class-based quota system was introduced in secondary and tertiary education. In 1950, again following the Soviet model, the institutions of psychology were almost liquidated without exception. The National Pedagogical Institute was the last one to be closed down. Since Stalinist ideology proclaimed that the bureaucratic single-party

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5 The predecessor of the National Institute of Child-Psychology was the Research Institute of Child-Psychology. The latter was established in 1927 as one of the successors of Pál Ranschburg’s institute. Before the war, this institute was one of the most important centers of Hungarian psychology, but it had only a few permanent job posts, and most of the work was carried out by young volunteers. After 1945, the institute received official academic status, which greatly increased its prestige. The former volunteers became public servants.

6 On Soviet child-psychology, see Fitzpatrick 1979; see also Joravsky 1989; and Etkind 1997.
system is the realized form of socialism, scientific inquiry about the relationship between class position and skills was regarded as ungrounded or possibly relevant only in capitalist societies. In these ideological attacks, psychology was argued to be a “bourgeois doctrine” for psychologizing social inequalities as “abilities” or “talents,” and thus legitimizing them. Echoing the same accusations, the former leaders and fellows of the liquidated research institutes were expelled both from the party and from the scientific public. The previously approved universalistic scientific discourse was debunked as the ideology and technology of Western capitalism, and it was relocated to the other side of the Iron Curtain and thus lost its scientific status.

1956: The Failed Program of “Socialist Enlightenment” and the Beginning of Re-Institutionalization

After the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Union’s Communist Party, a new chapter began in the Cold War. Scientific technology became the cornerstone of the military-economic competition aimed at catching up with the West on the Soviet side of the Iron Curtain too. Hence, following the Soviet model, psychology was rehabilitated in Hungary after 1956 as well.

In the period right before the revolution, the rehabilitation of psychology was framed as a public issue on the reformers’ agenda. The freshly rehabilitated, leftist, reform-communist experts (first of all Ferenc Mérei and his colleagues in the former National Pedagogical Institute) conceptualized the mission of psychology as they did before Stalinist extremism: as a discipline that served the genuine values of socialism as well as the public good.

The participants of the heated intellectual debates criticized the uncritical imitation of the Soviet model as well as ungrounded political decisions (see the debates of the Petőfi Circle VI. 1989; Szabolcs 2006; Zibolen 1989).

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7 From the point of view of child psychology, two significant events took place in 1956: the Petőfi Circle’s pedagogy discussion forum held in September and October, and the conference of the teachers’ union held in Balatonfüred in October. Following the direction of the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, the aim of the Balatonfüred conference was to draft the five-year plan for educational research commissioned by the party and to commit the legitimate leaders of the profession to drafting an educational policy proposal (Zibolen 1989; Szabolcs 2006).
The prime focal point of the criticism was that psychologists and psychological expertise (“pedology”) had been completely ignored. The program of “socialist enlightenment” announced in the field of pedagogy and public education explicitly defined itself as a rational, scientific, but morally committed, leftist project.

The collaboration of state bureaucracy and science will not be productive unless we create vivid, hot-blooded scientific policy, which is equally Hungarian and modern. Its broad perspective points toward modern, automatized industrial production, yet does not lose sight of the humanity and democratic values of the socialist idea even for a brief moment. (Ferenc Mérei’s speech in Balatonfüred quoted in Zibolen 1989, 87; cf. Szabolcs 2006)

The future of the proposals intermingled with those who proposed them: the fate of reform-communist intellectuals. The protagonist—at least from the point of view of political power—was again Ferenc Mérei. After the 1956 revolution, the assessment of the reform plans was determined by the political assessment of Mérei. During the revolution Mérei neither took leadership positions, nor did he directly participate in armed resistance. Invited by the students of the faculty of humanities, he was elected the professor-president of the University’s Revolutionary Committee and was one of the leaders of the teachers’ subcommittee of the Revolutionary Committee of Hungarian Intellectuals. As the process of retaliation unfolded, Mérei was determined to be among the punishable “counter-revolutionary” communist intellectuals. The members of the “Mérei-Fekete Group” were arrested and charged with conspiracy against the state in October 1958. Later they were sentenced to ten years in prison; but he was released by the general amnesty of 1963.

With the repression of the revolution, the program of “socialist enlightenment” was doomed to fail as well. The psychologists did not become policy-making intellectuals, and psychology lost its political significance as well. In comparison to the Stalinist power relations of the Rákosi era, one of the most important characteristics of the Kádár era was political compromise. Centralized state power gradually amalgamated into the fertile soil of informality (detailed in Böröcz 1990). The system of personal relationships and mutual favors become just as central to the field of psychology, as it was in many other spheres of Hungarian society.
From Class Policy to Informality:  
The Network of Child Guidance Clinics

In the ten years that had passed between the liquidation and the re-launching of Hungarian psychology, the world as well as Hungarian state socialism had fundamentally transformed. The uni-directional colonial-style dependence on the Soviet Union was replaced by a dual dependence: although political dependency on the Soviet Union prevailed, it was complemented by the country’s economic dependence on Western states. In this context, the Hungarian communist party practically gave up its previous modernization project, which was originally framed as an alternative to Western capitalism. In a pacifying compromise, in exchange for people’s political passivity, the party gave up its mobilizing ambitions and guaranteed the freedom of the private sphere and a relatively high standard of living. The regime did not need “engineers of the soul” any more, and the program to create the “new man” and a “new society” became an empty political slogan. Hence psychology lost its former political relevance too. Apart from a few exceptions, psychologists abandoned the idea of creating a socialist discipline that is an alternative to Western psychology.

From the early seventies on, the most important dimension of the Hungarian psycho-boom was the intensive expansion of psychological expertise on childhood. In this, the development of child guidance played a crucial role. It was the psychologists’ deliberate strategy to institutionalize child psychology as distant and distinct from the school system as possible. In the light of history, this desire is understandable. However, it is much less clear how social inequalities or society as such faded away from the discourse of Hungarian (child)-psychology. It is especially surprising in light of the fact that the same psychologists who played a pivotal role in the reestablishment of child guidance in the early sixties had been employed in the National Pedagogical Institute (or in other, similar institutes) during the coalition era and had been enthusiastically involved in the development of psychological research committed to a more egalitarian school system.

To interpret this phenomenon, we need to consider four questions. Why was the problem of educational inequality addressed as a sociological and not as a psychological issue in the 1960s? What kind of interests and opportunities guided psychologists in the re-institutionalization of the field? What was the international scientific context of child psychology at the time and how
did it relate to the views, practices, and institutions of contemporary Hungarian psychology?

The postwar initiatives that attempted to create the “new elite” were recontextualized by the end of the fifties. On the one hand, as a final gesture of retaliation for the 1956 Revolution, the party proclaimed a new cultural policy. In order to reconcile with the middle class, the decision of the Eighth Party Congress abolished the registration of students’ class origin. On the other hand, to prepare for marketization reforms (the so-called New Economic Mechanism), the quality and productivity of education as well as its links to the labor market were reframed as a dimension of economic policy (Kovai and Neumann 2015).

Because of the abolition of the educational quota system and the “economic turn,” the problem of educational inequalities had become one of the most important issues on the education policy agenda. Yet the new educational policy had taken shape in a completely new force field, inhabited by new, previously non-existent positions, actors, and dynamics. Most notably, the relationship between politics and sciences had been transformed. From the beginning of the early sixties, it was not just psychology that started to reinstitutionalize, but also empirical social sciences, which had been similarly marginalized during the Stalinist years. In this era, sociological research was typically expected to provide evidence for political and economic reforms.

The sociological stratification surveys carried out in the framework of preparations for economic reforms rendered educational inequalities empirically measurable. As part of the same process, sociologists entered the field of education policy and established a new professional legitimacy and intellectual identity precisely by “revealing” the interrelation between the education system and social inequalities. In the field of education policy, the preparations for market reforms created demand for such policy-oriented research, which was capable of approaching macro-level systemic problems. Hence, the social justice aspect of the school featured as an ideological, pedagogical, economical, and sociological problem simultaneously.

Skill-based selection and the equalizing function of education appeared as conflicting expectations in light of the results of sociological research. Meritocratic selection must be ensured, yet all research proved that the school favored middle-class children, and the achievements of working-class children significantly lagged behind. In terms of concrete political proposals, the question remained: how can we raise the level of working-class children’s achievement to that of middle-class children?
The education policy decisions of the era aimed to find a compromise between the contradictory political expectations of egalitarianism and economic efficiency and to reconcile the diverse interests of particular professional groups (pedagogues/educators, sociologists, economists, vocational training experts, etc.) (for details, see Halász 1984, 1988, 1988–89). Hence educational reforms in 1961, 1965, and then in 1972 did not radically change the system but only attempted to mitigate its dysfunctions, and the problems identified in the sixties—from the quality of education to counter-selection—also prevailed in the seventies despite the reforms.

Returning to child-psychology, it becomes clear that the field was absolutely neglected by public education policy in the sixties. There may be several possible reasons for this. On the one hand, the re-emergence of the problem of educational inequalities on the education policy agenda was due to the economic reforms, and, as we have seen, policy-makers expected a reform knowledge base from the discipline of sociology, which was in the midst of reinstitutionalization. The conceptualization of sociological problems and reform solutions at the time (Ferge 1972, 1976; Havas 1972; Gazsó and Várhegyi 1975; Gazsó 1971, 1979; Pataki 1968) resembled the way Ferenc Mérei and his colleagues approached the same issues in the former National Pedagogical Institute. Yet the pedagogy of the time “forgot” about the aspect of social inequality throughout the rigorous elaboration process of curricular reforms. At the time, psychologists were preoccupied with the celebration of their recently regained independence and, bearing in mind their previous experiences, they were working hard to separate themselves from educational experts both institutionally and disciplinary.

In short, during the sixties, everybody seemed to have “forgotten” about the vast expertise on pedagogical methods that ameliorated educational inequalities accumulated by psychologists before the introduction of the educational quota system. In addition to the processes described above, Ferenc Mérei himself may have played a pivotal role in this. In the period between 1945 and 1949, he oversaw or directed the research on the psychological factors of educational inequality conducted by the National Pedagogical Institute. After Mérei’s imprisonment, he was persona non grata both as a person and as a scholar, and references to his name were banned from psychological journals. Mérei, like most of the other communist intellectual prisoners, was released in the general amnesty of 1963. Due to his criminal record he was banned from university posts and research institutes. He became the director of the psychological lab of the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology. His name slowly reemerged
in scientific publications, but he was banned from the domains of child psychology and educational research. He primary concentrated on the reinstitutionalization of clinical psychology and published widely in this area.

Thus education policy did not need psychologists any more, but neither did psychologists need education policy. Contemporary psychologists intentionally sought to re-institutionalize child psychology as psychotherapy and not as pedagogy, and thus to separate it from the educational system.

Similar to clinical psychology and psychotherapy, the institutionalization of child guidance clinics and child psychotherapy was characteristic of this epoch. The recipe for whitewashing was as follows: an expert who was committed to psychology and was also politically well situated arranged the establishment of a professional group in a second-tier public institution such as a hospital ward or a social service office. The small information groups continued to lobby informally through their respective patrons and developed a formal institutional system from the ground up.

These professional communities were organized informally, typically around a charismatic authority. They gathered in private meetings, where one could only gain entrance on the basis of personal recommendations. For a few, these groups offered access to knowledge and skills (such as current Western literature, diagnostic and therapeutic methods, and supervision) that was only partly offered by a formal university education. These workshops were not illegal, but the fact that they were organized informally and that psychology had been considered a “reactionary,” “anti-systemic” doctrine just a few years earlier, gave them a status similar to the political opposition.

In the case of child psychology, the patron was the powerful cultural policy-maker of the era, György Aczél. In the 1930s as a teenager, he was aided by the psychotherapeutic clinic of the Jewish Patronage Association’s orphanage. By 1968, he held sufficient power to express his gratitude to his psychologist, Júlia György. His “gift” was the Capital’s Child Psychology Institute, established by the City Council for Júlia György personally. She could choose her colleagues and received a wide berth to create the professional profile of the Institute. Hence the Institute, known as “Faludi Street,” explicitly grounded itself in older psychoanalytical traditions. The staff came from the generation who had been marginalized for taking part in generating the psychological basis of the postwar equalizing educational reforms. Citing one of them:

Gyurka Vikár told me ten years later that back in the times when I had only started to work in the Faludi for a year and organized a sort of
“secret” psychoanalytical seminar—not the curriculum was secret but we concealed that is had a psychoanalytic character—so Júlia György asked Vikár “tell me, Gyuri, won’t we get into trouble for this?” But Vikár reassured her and indeed we did not get into trouble. (Lévai 2003, 70)

A few psychologists from this generation with good political connections to the Budapest City Council managed to negotiate the local government’s control over the maintenance of the newly established network of child guidance clinics instead of the oversight of the Ministry of Education. They also succeeded in making Faludi Street the professional training center for psychologist counselors employed at the child guidance clinics. Annabella Horányi recalled:

It had to be decided in which direction the child counselling network would be developed. Either it could have shifted towards pedagogy to become a diagnostic station with the task of guiding children to the proper institution and therefore complying with the pressure coming from the schools to free them from problem children; or in the unreasonable battles with the educational government, to improve professional conditions. Or we could master the knowledge and approach, which commits itself to the children who present symptoms of mental illnesses, and undertake psychotherapeutic work. It was at this time when Júlia György offered her help to train the psychologists of the child guidance clinics and the orphanages at the City Council. Once the head of an important institution accused me of selling the capital’s child guidance network to the Faludi. I do not deny it, and I am still proud of it. (Horányi 1997, 95–96)

The training, for which there was a fee, was held on so-called “Faludi Saturdays,” and participants attended the events in their free time. The course did not offer any official qualification, yet it had high informal prestige within the professional community. Faludi Saturdays were the sole opportunities to take part in supervision, clinical case study groups, and to become familiar with current Western literature.

Therefore the revival of Hungarian psychotherapy was more strongly connected to contemporary Western discourse than to its own disrupted past. This is mainly due to the fact that during this “lost” decade, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, the psy-sciences went through an unprecedented expan-
sion. By the second half of the sixties, this process produced a huge boom of scholarship, which reached Hungary with a ten-year delay. In the sixties, Hungarian experts aimed to catch up to the “international results” presented by the comprehensive and complex expertise, institutions, and practices that were the genuine products of Western welfare democracies.

The 1960s was the time of the psycho-boom, and psychology became the most important expertise and narrative that shaped personal and group identities in the West. In this discourse, the behavior and well-being of “psychologized” individuals was not influenced by his or her class position or public competencies, but by his or her private emotional relations, choices, and groups. Hungarian psychologists fully adopted this view. After 1956, psychology was no longer accused of individualizing social problems or serving the interests of the ruling classes. For psychologists, the cost of political opposition was the maintenance of a “second public sphere” and securing professionalism. From the perspective of psychology, the state was unable to see “real” individual and social situations, and consequently the public conversations around the public competence of individuals were regarded as empty political-ideological slogans. In the moral universe of psychologists, psychology was the alternative to politics: it focused on the “real problem” of “real people,” and not on empty public life.

This status was strengthened by the fact that contemporary Hungarian psychotherapy exclusively referenced Western expertise, and, through this, it proclaimed representation based on the binary opposition of the imaginary West and East (the countries of Soviet Bloc) such as: center-periphery, expertise-dilettantism, freedom-slavery, civilized-barbarian, illegal-legal, etc. Thus, the prestige of such expertise was associated with illegality, informality, “Westernism,” and made the workshops especially popular for a generation of young professionals.

On the other hand, child psychology became a morally exalted profession in the view of psychologists. Moving beyond the traditional values of the mental hygiene movement such as a sensitivity to social issues and the belief that treating children's mental problems makes future adults happier, more useful, and fully-fledged and less dangerous members of the society, this conceptualized psychoanalysis as a moral movement. The studious, half autodidact groups had close ties to the renaissance of the “Budapest School” of psychoanalysis, perceived as unjustly condemned. From this perspective, the worlds beyond and preceding the Iron Curtain coalesced. As György Vikár recalled in his memoir:
It was an honorable task for all of us who gathered on the ground floor of that house on Faludi Street 5 at the end of 1968 and at the beginning of 1969. Our undertaking was the resuscitation of a therapeutic stream within an institutional framework; we were convinced that it was necessary, not only for the sake of the children, but for the sake of Hungarian health care culture as such. This was a novel task for all of us, so much so that—although we followed our great ancestors’ tracks and we were already experienced—we needed to teach and learn from each other, and most of all, the only way to succeed was through learning collaboratively. (Vikár 1997, 20)

Conclusion

Importantly, the psychotherapeutic field in the sixties regarded informal organization as a temporary necessity and ultimately strove for formal institutionalization. Also during the sixties, the international scientific discourse, which had been divided by the Iron Curtain, reintegrated. The expertise applied in the mental health system of Western welfare states became the standard for Hungarian professionals. By means of political lobbying, the “second public sphere” of the health care system gradually infiltrated the psychological profile of public institutions, and the expansion of the scientific field also became possible. Since all the conditions necessary to develop professional careers were present, the psychologists of the time were not interested in changing society. Although at the time, these possibilities were perceived as the consequences of a compelled bargain with retrograde, dilettante politicians, retrospectively, this narrative rather appears as a moral argument for the practice of psychology and the organization of the scientific field.

The Hungarian psychotherapeutic discourse of the seventies no longer made a link between individual and social problems. Of course, this does not mean that psychologists did not recognize the social background of psychopathologies. In the seventies and eighties, the high frequency of neurosis, alcoholism, suicide, and juvenile delinquency (in contemporary terms, the “disorders of social integration”) was highly publicized and these problems were interpreted as symptoms of the crisis of society and the consequences of abortive welfare policies. But psychology, because of its historical antecedents, inevitably perceived and treated these symptoms as individual pathologies.
This story is precisely about how expertise centering on the inner world of the individual is determined by such antecedents. Psychology can be an innovative and sensitive technology used to eliminate social inequalities; but equally, it can be a daily spiritual practice for the individual assimilated into post-Fordist rules of production who is working perpetually on his or her identity. It can be a pseudoscience serving Western bourgeois interests; or a secret network of informal communities—and perhaps many other things as well. This all depends on the constraints and opportunities we have to remedy ourselves in particular times and places.

REFERENCES


The Social Roles and Positions of the Hungarian Psychologist-Intelligentsia


