

Diana Maria Cerces

Diana Maria Cerces, born in 1985, lives in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. She is a student in the third year at the Faculty of Environmental Science, Environmental Geography profile.

Hungary 1956 – a chapter from Arpad Deak's life history

Motto: " We just claim for our happiness"

Angyal Istvan (Hungarian group leader,
executed)

*"When justice does not succeed in being a form
of memory, memory itself can be a form of
justice".*

Ana Blandiana, Romanian writer

Step by step Arpad Deak, a History teacher at a Hungarian High-school, tries to detach his mind from what he has seen, several hours ago, at the new opened exhibition in memory of 1956 Hungarian Revolution at "The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance"¹.

He reads, with every step he takes, the lines from The Memorial's book: *its aims are to rebuild the memory of certain nations, particularly the Romanians, who for half of a century have been misled with a false history.* In fact, after 50 years he does not know all the truth about what had happened then.

He remembers there were several days since his brother Attila has left Romania for going to Budapest, Hungary. It was at the end of September 1956, when the Romanian Communist Regime, after almost 11 years of leadership, permitted the Hungarian habitants from Romania to visit their relatives in Hungary.

He was just 15 years old, a new student at the Faculty of History in Cluj-Napoca, his native town. Back then, his family lived in the famous Hungarian district of Gardeners; Romanian neighbours always appreciated their specialities and their gift of gardening.

His 19 years old brother, Attila, student at the Faculty of Theology in Cluj-Napoca was in Budapest when the Hungarian Revolution on the 23rd October started. At the beginning, Arpad was jealous of his brother's chance to visit their relatives, their ancestor's country, but later on he was more preoccupied with Attila's safety. Both Hungarian and Romanian borders were closed and the information was limited. But after the 4th of November, when there was almost no hope left that Attila was still alive, he returned home safely. He was asked by the Romanian Information Service (called *The Security*) not to say any word of what he had seen in Budapest, and for a couple of months he kept all of this in his mind just to assure his family's protection.

Arpad Deak does not know so many things about the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Or maybe he does not want to remember what his brother used to say about it. Though he remembers his brother mentioning the night when the revolutionists were protesting near to Stalin's statue. Attila and his cousin were at the National Opera and they were not allowed to go outside until 12 pm when the protesters were gone. Later, on the 1st of November, the Day of the Dead, Hungarian people were searching their dead on the streets of Budapest. When he returned home by train, the Hungarian locomotive did not have the permission to leave the country. The Romanian passengers (mostly injured) had to push the train all the way to the Romanian custom house.

Arpad Deak remembers the meeting of The Communist University Union where he was invited as a freshman at the Faculty of History. Some students from the 3rd and 4th year of study were blamed for showing solidarity with the Hungarian Revolution and were expelled. Arpad Deak and the rest of the audience at that meeting admired their courageous attitude to stay upright. They cheered them when these left the room; these students were *silently* considered to be victims of the Communist regime and role models for teenagers.

The year 1956 was marked by the revolution in Hungary, liquidated through the brutal intervention of Soviet troops. Echoes of this anti-communist movement were felt in all the Eastern-European countries. In Romania, there were students who reacted immediately. Protests took place in some university centres resulting in numerous arrests and

*deportations. The most organized student movement was in Timisoara where almost 300 arrests took place. In Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca organized groups were set up which tried to make common cause with the anti-communist movement and coordinate activity in Hungary. The authorities' reaction was immediate - students were arrested or suspended from their courses; some teachers were dismissed, and new student associations were set up to supervise student activities.*²

Arpad Deak remembers Nicolae Ceausescu, who came to Cluj-Napoca in 1959 personally to unite the two universities (the Romanian called it Babes and the Hungarian Bolyai) into one named Babes-Bolyai University. Moreover, N. Ceausescu tried to reduce successively the Hungarian courses because he was afraid of the Hungarian ethnics from Transylvania to start a revolution similar to that from Budapest.

At the 50th Anniversary of the Hungarian 1956 Revolution, Arpad Deak was invited to different cultural events as he is considered to be a representative character of Hungarian ethnics. On Friday the 20th of October, he went to the Magyar Theatre from Cluj-Napoca, where The Hungarian Council organised a spectacle in memory of this anniversary. On Saturday, there was another meeting with Hungarian political, cultural and artistic personalities in the Chios Restaurant.

Pages and pages of newspapers are dedicated to this subject, a lot of people unknown till now became heroes in this Revolution. *Kronika*, *Uj Magyarszo* and *Szabadsag*, Hungarian newspapers discuss the topic since the 15th of November. Romanians also post some articles on this, but they focus more on what happens now in Budapest. It is definitely a large subject to debate on.



About 2 years ago, he read a book called *Budapest 1956 back then and after 44 years*, written by Tibor Meray.

It has a great importance for the Romanian public. First of all, it refers to the echoes which this revolution had in Romania for the young generation, who, as the author says, *was contaminated with the Budapest events*. Those who thought that time of freedom had come were condemned and executed.

Articles like: *Ungaria 1956-2006: revolutie si revolta* (Hungary 1956-2006: revolution and riot) from *Evenimentul Zilei* (Daily Event)³; *Ungaria 1956, prima mare revolta anticomunista din Estul european* (Hungary 1956, the first great anti-communist riot in Eastern Europe) from *Adevarul* (The Truth)⁴ and the documentary *Hungary 1956* at Romanian National Television, on the 23rd of October (European co production, 2006, director and producer: Mark Kidel) present the Hungarian moments of 1956, but they ignore the simple life and how these events marked some path of lives.



Scene from *Hungary 1956* documentary

Back home he finds in newspapers left at the Teachers Chancellery the following lines: *this year celebrates 50 years since the first attempt of a subjugated people to relieve themselves of the totalitarian imposed ideology,*⁵ but back then the Hungarian Revolution was considered dangerous and a bad example for the communist system.⁶ He can not accept the fact that his brother had to keep secret about the Hungarian Revolution. His country should have protected him and assured him a framework for developing his ideas, education, rights ... instead he was threatened.

No one dear to him died due of the communist regime, but he lost a much precious thing: the free spirit of youth which knows no concern of words or behaviour. Today, he teaches History at the Apaczai Csere Janos High-school, a Hungarian one, near to Cluj-Napoca's center. In about 40 years of teaching he has tried to inspire teenagers believes; his own convictions and knowledge are now expressed freely in front of his pupils.

On Monday, the 23rd of October, he organized together with all the History teachers of the Apaczai Csere Janos High-school a contest for pupils from different high-schools in Cluj-Napoca named *Remembering 1956*. On the same day, at 8 pm, he took part along with his pupils at the march in memory of the *Past Solidarity Candle March* of Hungarian students from Cluj-Napoca. 50 years separate him from those times; a candle light was also taken by Arpad to the Central Cemetery: for his brother. He died several years ago.

On Sunday, the 29th of October, he received a call from a former pupil, now student at Environmental Science Faculty, named *Attila, too*. This Attila asked Arpad if he would accept to meet up with a young student on Monday, who is doing research on *Remembering 1956 Hungarian Revolution for a European History project*. Well, he accepted the invitation to tell about what he had experienced in 1956 and in the following years. He started his story with a simple voice as this story came from the depth of his memories and heart



Budapest 1956 ⁷



Arpad Deak, born on 8th January 1941



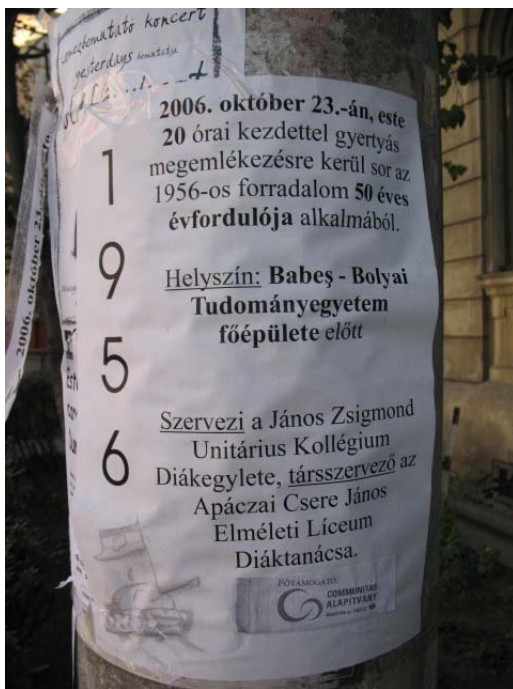
1956 in the Protestant Transylvania

In memory of the teachers and students from Theology Faculty, priests and parishioners who were arrested, deported, executed or persecuted by the communist regime and of those who fell victims in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

*We invite you at the ceremony of unveiling the commemorative monument in the backyard of the Protestant Theological Institute from Cluj-Napoca, on the **28th of October 2006**, 12 o'clock.*

This monument, first of its kind in Cluj-Napoca, will stand to remind us that in Transylvania under an atheist and illegal regime, many victims of Hungarian Revolution were Protestants.

“And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John, 8:3)



23 October 2006, 8 pm, the candle march of remembering the 1956 Hungarian Revolution events. It commences at the front of Babes-Bolyai University.

The organizers are Janos Zsigmund and Apaczai Csere Janos High-Schools.

Sources:

- witness Arpad Deak, History teacher, born on 8th 1946

- Websites:

<http://www.memorialsighet.ro>; <http://www.adevarulonline.ro>

<http://www.evz.ro/article.php?artid=277472>; <http://www.ziaruldemures.ro>;

<http://www.suplimente.trustulgazeta.ro>;

<http://www.romanialibera.ro/editie/print.php?idx=61&tabel=z23102006>;

<http://www.tvr.ro/tv/tvr-cultural/promo/ungary.php> (Last visit: 11 December 2006)

I have personally taken the photo of Arpad Deak and those of posters from the second document. The texts are the translation of the posters from Hungarian to English.

¹ The Memorial of the Victims of Communism and Resistance, from Sighetu Marmatiei, was initiated in 1992 by the President of the Civic Alliance, Ana Blandiana, together with Romulus Rusan, Romanian writer and an important group of historians, architects and designers. <http://www.memorialsighet.ro>

²<http://www.memorialsighet.ro/en/sala.asp?id=24>

³<http://www.evz.ro/article.php?artid=277472>

⁴ <http://www.adevarulonline.ro>

⁵ "Free Romania", 23rd of October 2006.

⁶ <http://www.ziaruldemures.ro>

⁷ <http://www.suplimente.trustulgazeta.ro>

Zitierempfehlung:

Diana Maria Cerceș, Hungary 1956 – a chapter from Arpad Deak's life history, in:
Zeitgeschichte-online, Themenportal Ungarn 1956 – Geschichte und Erinnerung, URL:
<http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/portals/_ungarn1956/documents/cerces.pdf >