

Consumer and consumerism under state socialism: demand-side abundance and its discontents in Hungary during the long 1960s

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Can consumption in state-socialist societies constitute a relevant field for the student of social issues related to overflow situations? So skeptical readers may wonder, and I cannot blame them. Of course, the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about these societies is shortages rather than excesses, insufficiency rather than plenty, a lack of almost everything rather than abundance.

Indeed, shortages and their consequences were a prime subject for Eastern Europe's social scientists of the Cold War era. János Kornai rightly observed in 1978 that the idea of a demand-constrained capitalist v. a resource-constrained socialist economy was almost as old as the state-socialist economic order (Kornai, 1978). As early as 1924, Lev Kritsman noted that 'while the capitalist commodity[-producing] economy is characterized, in general, by excessive supplies, the [typical state of affairs in the] proletarian-natural economy is general shortage' (Kritsman, 1924). Kornai devoted significant effort to theorizing about the phenomenon of sustained shortages in socialist economies. In his *Anti-equilibrium* (Kornai, 1971), a critique of the general (Walrasian) theory of equilibrium, he suggested an alternative framework for thinking about economies in general. His claim was that modern economies were typically non-equilibrium economies; their normal state was either that of 'suction' (sustained shortages of goods and services) or that of 'pressure' (sustained overflow [supply in excess of effective demand] of goods and services). In his *Economics of shortage* (Kornai, 1980), then, Kornai took a major step toward offering a system-related explanation for the reproduction

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of shortage in the socialist economy. The culprit he identified was the *soft budget constraint* within which the producers – the firms owned by the state – operated.

Significantly, and in spite of the fact that Kornai and his younger associates did devote some attention to aspects of household (consumer) behavior under conditions of shortage (Lackó, 1980; Kapitány et al., 1982), Kornai's discussion remained firmly within the world of production. One of his enthusiastic Soviet reviewers, R. G. Karagedov (see Dénes et al., 1987), praised Kornai's work, for it had accorded primacy to production. Iván Szelényi, like a number of other reviewers, welcomed *Shortage's* focus on production, for Szelényi believed that it enabled the author to discard weak explanatory strategies that related shortages to imperfections in retailing and/or planning. As Szelényi put it:

Unlike most economists who study the problem of shortage, Kornai moves beyond the sphere of consumption and develops his theory from the analysis of contradictions in the system of production/reproduction. Consequently, he chooses the firm as his basic unit of analysis. With probably too much modesty, Kornai calls his approach 'microeconomic', but of course he uses the firm – as Marx used commodity in the case of the capitalist mode of production – as a 'crystal ball'. By looking into it, one can see and comprehend the complexity of macroprocesses in the socialist economy. (Szelényi, 1985: 285)

But the 'productionist' perspective does precious little to thematize and problematize the consumers' actual role, experience, and practices – even less to analyze how they had to navigate in a social world shaped and structured, among other things, by systemically contingent shortages. Serguei Alex Oushakine (2014) rightly emphasizes that the state-socialist economy could just as well be characterized as an economy of storage – an economy in which a vast number of products never find their way out of factories' or retailers' storage facilities, for the simple reason that no one needs or wants them. From the consumer's perspective, however, it makes little difference that, although their everyday experience was predominantly with quantitative and/or qualitative shortages, 'goods' (good for nothing) were filling warehouses.

Even the idea that the consumer should, by definition, have an agency in the sphere of economic activity seems to have been all too often absent from (or hardly reflected upon in) the writings and ideas of many of Hungary's reform economists.

The consumer citizen of state socialism

Although much less rigorous and meticulous in his economics than Kornai was, György Péter, the doyen of Hungarian reform Communism and reform economics, did seriously consider, as part of his critical assessment of the Stalinist system of economic management, the status of consumers (buyers) and its ramifications in the state-socialist economic and social order.

Péter's reform ideas had been prompted by, enabled by, and grown directly out of the rebellious 1950s – the era of the general crisis of state socialism, as it was known under Stalin. The series of workers' strikes and revolts in Bulgarian Plovdiv and Khaskovo (3 May 1953), in Czechoslovakian Plzen (31 May to 2 June 1953), and in East Berlin (17 June 1953) touched a nerve with the Moscow leadership. As Beria gave Malenkov to understand, 'what happened in Czechoslovakia could be repeated in other countries and lead to more serious undesirable consequences' (Osterman, 2001: 15ff). In a series of meetings, Moscow issued emphatic recommendations that East Central Europe's Communist leaders reorient their policies in the direction of a new relationship between rulers and the ruled, including the relaxation of terror and oppression and the abandonment of the investment mania prioritizing the development of heavy industry at the expense of consumption, living standards, and agriculture. New Course policies received a badly needed push forward in Hungary by the direct intervention of the Moscow leadership in major personnel decisions: in the course of the Hungarian leaders' visit to Moscow, 13–16 June 1953, they decided that Imre Nagy, sidelined by Mátyás Rákosi in 1949, should assume the position of Prime Minister. Although Rákosi and his hardline followers put up a fight, with temporary success in 1955, New Course policies held sway from that point on, preparing the ground for the reform policies of the 1960s.

As President of the Central Statistical Office, György Péter contributed substantially to an increasingly critical assessment of the Stalinist system of macro- and micro-economic management in a long series of highly classified papers in the early 1950s (Péteri, 1993). He went public with a devastating indictment of this economic order for the first time in a 'debate article' in the newly (re)launched *Közgazdasági Szemle (Economic Review)* in December 1954 (Péter, 1954). There has been a fair number of publications on Péter's essays of the 1950s and later, and on his contributions to the ideas underlying the economic reforms and reform economics of the 1960s

(Szamuely, 1986; Árvay et al., 1994). What I focus on here is what he wrote about the consumer. Péter thought it important to take a step beyond what was soon to become the ‘standard list’ of critical complaints against the Stalinist system of economic management: the arguments against excessive centralization in decision-making; the overwhelming predominance of bureaucratic coordination of all economic transactions; and, in general, the suppression of the ‘law of value’ (i.e., of market coordination) in economic activity.

Péter called the attention of his readers to the empirical observation that when Hungarian industries exported their products, they had a difficult time getting away with poor selection, substandard quality, and/or high costs and prices (which explains why, especially in the post-1956 world, the term *exportból visszamaradt* (remainder of export goods) meant high, ‘Western’-quality consumer goods and pretty good luck for the shoppers who could get them). By contrast, he wrote:

Domestic consumers are weak to assert their demands. This is the main reason for the sub-standard quality and poor selection of goods and for the disappointing development of production costs [...] *The workers – consumers – can hardly ever choose; they have no leverage [over the producers], for the supply of goods is poor even in terms of quantities.* Part of the consumption goods can seldom be acquired and at the cost of great effort. [...] Under such circumstances *the consumer is at the mercy of the retailers and, eventually, of the industrial companies producing the consumer goods; s/he is forced to make do with goods of inferior quality, offered at high prices.* (Péter, 1954: 309–310; italics added)²

Thus, Péter’s argument was that a functioning market was necessary, not for its own sake, but for the emancipation of the consumer – indeed, for the creation of the autonomous consumer citizen:

To ensure that the work of producer companies could indeed be controlled by those affected (the consumers or, in general, the buyers), it is necessary that those whose [...] needs are satisfied by production should not be exposed to those who are supposed to serve them. (ibid)

And he hastened to add:

One of the main preconditions for setting the relationship between producers and consumers (sellers and buyers) right is to have, in the

2 All translations from Hungarian in this chapter are by the author. All primary sources are listed at the end of the chapter.

sought-after quality and selection, *the appropriate amount of consumer goods in demand* [...] Whether the quality of the consumer goods [...] is as it should be can only be decided by consumers [...] The satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the consumers [...] with regard to quality and selection, on the other hand, can assert itself institutionally only if they can freely decide whether they [wish to] buy the goods offered or which product out of a selection of similar goods they want to buy. (Péter, 1954: 310–312, italics added)

Thus, in the early ideas of economic reforms, the autonomous consumer-acquiring agency in a new system of socialist economic order that combined planning and market with the generation of a sustained glut of goods (supply in excess of effective demand) went hand in hand with, and were premised on, each other. The move toward market socialism, the (re-)emergence of the emancipated consumer free to make choices, and a sustained supply-side abundance were thus but three sides of the same coin – and they remained at the core of the reform-Communist economic credo all the way to the final demise of the state-socialist project. The autonomous consumer as an organic part of the ideal economic world envisioned by reform Communists was confirmed by, among others, the chief architect of economic reforms, Rezső Nyers himself. At a meeting with board members of the Hungarian Alliance of Technological and Scientific Associations (MTESZ), Nyers responded to a question about insufficient imports of private cars by saying:

It might easily happen that life will sideline our plans and there will be a faster development. The general experience is that the will of the consumer supersedes the plans of the state. We have to yield to and follow the consumer. (Document 1, 1970)

The demise of state socialism in 1989 has, of course, a highly complex explanation and cannot be reduced merely to the failure of reform-Communist policies. Even so, it is important to observe that the changes occurring over the course of the 1960s did include the birth of the consumer citizen and some half-hearted steps toward an economic domain in which planning *and* market are integrated. The ‘New Economic Mechanism’ never succeeded in generating supply-side abundance, however.

The advent of consumerism and demand-side abundance

What, in fact, the long decade following 1956 brought with it was *consumerism*. Consumerism defined as values and desires, patterns of behavior focused on satisfying an acquisitive lust that defines,

as it were, the meaning of life (Bauman, 2007: 26ff) does not presuppose the presence of abundance as it is known from contemporary Western affluent or consumer societies.

Although it can be of genuine interest to study the various normative (ideological and/or political) attempts to tame, restrict, and/or harness consumerism under socialism, these attempts in no way justify talk of 'socialist consumerism' among students of state socialism. After the revolutionary experiment geared to building up an authentic socialist everyday life from below in Soviet Russia of the 1920s, and the short-lived Khrushchevian experiment at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s which purported to modernize Soviet everyday life from above, the history of state socialism in the 1960s and later was a history of a more or less planned and deliberate withdrawal from the earlier ideas of creating a 'socialist lifestyle' or the 'Socialist Man' (*Homo Sovieticus*) and of a gradual surrender to the forces of consumerism.

If the reader wonders why, in terms of lifestyle, the project of a state-socialist *Sonderweg* was given up and Western patterns were yielded to, I can list several closely interrelated and partly overlapping explanations:

(1) By the end of the 1950s, the peoples of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were tired of promises and especially of demands to subject their everyday (private) lives to solutions that were deemed systemically correct but consistently failed to deliver a better life. Following the rebellious 1950s, Communist leaders seemed to have understood the urgent need to deliver higher living standards and to upgrade issues pertinent to consumption on their agenda.

(2) What I term 'the rebellious 1950s' was particularly traumatic for the Communist leadership in Hungary. Kádár's counterrevolutionary consolidation had a crowded agenda, even without such ambitious projects as a 'socialist everyday life' would have entailed. After the Red Terror (actually, even while the terror was ongoing), they needed to pacify Hungarian society by way of: (a) proving themselves to be genuinely anti-Stalinist in all policy fields (excepting, of course, the political monopoly of the party); (b) retreating from people's private lives; and (c) accepting that people seek improvements in their living conditions and enabling them to do so, preferably in proportion to their work effort. It was no longer sinful, much less criminal, to seek to achieve what was considered a 'good life', and there was also an ever-expanding domain of lifestyle choices that were accepted or at least tolerated, if not necessarily or openly supported. This was also part of the meaning of Kádár's famous saying, paraphrased as 'those not against us are with us' (Rainer,

2001), directed as much toward Hungarian society as toward his own party's left-wingers with Stalinist nostalgias. The necessity of breaking with the Stalinist political and social order alongside the idea of telling people how to live, and what should make them happy, simply could not constitute a feasible combination for the Kádárist leadership (Simon, 2012).

(3) In October 1966, Kurt Hager, the cultural chief of the Communist Party of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), tried to impress upon his visiting Hungarian comrades that the ongoing 'propaganda' from West Germany and, above all else, the pull of West German soft power, the demonstration of the living standard and lifestyle of West German citizens, could lead to 'a war in the German lands not unlike the one in Vietnam'. He urged his Hungarian counterparts to understand that the situation of the East German cultural-political leadership was like sitting on top of an active volcano (Document 2, 1966). Document 2 does not reveal how the Hungarian high party functionaries reacted to Hager's complaint, but it can hardly be far from the truth to guess that they might have said something along the following lines: 'While, admittedly, the GDR may be closest to the hot lava and gases, we are all sitting on the top of that same volcano.' The pull of the West asserted itself through the growth of inter-systemic tourism and, just as important, by way of the increasing exchange of cultural products across the systemic divide. For example, within the totality of foreign television programs (e.g., feature films and documentaries) broadcast on Hungarian television, those originating from capitalist countries grew from 33.7% to 57.6% between 1962 and 1968, and although their relative share dropped to somewhat under 50% in the 1970s, their quantity as measured in minutes continued to grow, as did the number of channels and the total television broadcasting time over the years (Document 3, n.d.).

After all, norms, values, and lifestyles reflective of them travel across national and even systemic boundaries, which is why I suggested using the metaphor of 'Nylon Curtain' (Péteri, 2004) more than a decade ago. The Kádárist leadership was keenly aware of the soft power without, including the demonstration effects coming from the West. Indeed, this was a major argument propelling the economic reforms of the 1960s. As Rezső Nyers told his colleagues in the Political Bureau in 1966:

What can we expect from the reform? More than just a few percentage points of improvement. The alternative is that our economy will not

get the necessary investments, because we cannot find the resources, and that the population will not be satisfied. [...] *If we decided against the reform, we could actually continue working with these internal contradictions, had not there been such a desire in our people concerning its living standards, had not there been capitalist competition* [...] What I want to say is that there is no choice. If we really look at things in depth, there is no opportunity to choose; we can only choose that this [reform] has to be done. (Document 4, 1966; italics added)

Then came the economic reforms of the 1960s, expanding market coordination at the expense of bureaucratic coordination and tying individual incomes not merely to 'work effort' but to the profitability of one's enterprise, further promoting the adoption of Western patterns of everyday life.

(4) The middle classes of state socialism – by and large co-extensive with what we could rightly describe as the party-state apparatus class – acted as the prime social force yielding to and 'importing' Western consumerist notions of the good life, as I have shown with regard to the breakthrough of private automobilism in the 1960s (Péteri, 2011).

(5) Last but not least, the political class of Kádár's counterrevolution badly needed to achieve a new contract with Hungarian society, Kádárism's fundamental tradeoff between individual prosperity (or the chances to achieve prosperity) and political citizenship. Having crushed the revolution and having delivered a particularly cruel and bloody vengeance, János Kádár's counterrevolutionary regime had to achieve a new understanding with society – a social contract yielding improved legitimacy while leaving the political monopoly of the Communist Party intact. But the new social contract could be attained only at a price: the Communist Party and its central planners had to back out of people's private lives, leave it up to them to decide what a 'good life' constituted for them, and, in general, abstain from interfering with their choices concerning their dreams and desires, their lifestyle and consumption.

Of course, the tradeoff between political citizenship and the role of the consumer citizen was only seemingly a free choice for Hungarian society. Yet, it did work, which is well reflected in contemporary designations for the emerging reform-Communist social order describing the result of the compromise as 'gulyás socialism' or 'the happiest barrack in the camp'.

It needs to be emphasized that these and/or similar developments did not turn any of Eastern Europe's state-socialist countries into

‘consumer societies’. The consumer society as it emerged in North America and Western Europe after the Second World War was characterized by a sustained buyer’s market (the situation that György Péter and reform economists of the 1960s wished to achieve). The typical situation in these economies and societies is *supply-side abundance*: a systemically contingent overflow of goods and services produced and offered in excess of effective demand. By contrast, and despite the reforms of the 1960s and the 1980s, state socialism remained a centrally planned economy which was never really free from strong state paternalism, the consequent soft budget constraint, and the propensity to produce and reproduce shortages. The typical situation here was *demand-side abundance*: an overflow both in terms of effective demand and in terms of consumer dreams – a combination of unleashed consumerism (desires and acquisitive lust) and shortages.

Attentive minds were quick to recognize the potential or actual tensions generated in Hungarian society by demand-side abundance. Among the earliest signals was the leftist populist writer Pál Szabó’s ‘Literary letter’ from 1960. Szabó sensed where Hungarian society had been heading and thought it could easily prove to be an alley that one did not want to go down:

The socialist world order has hardly provided a sample of everything that is possible and might become reality, and we can already see that, obviously, material welfare in itself educates the urban population as well as the provincial masses [...] to become bourgeois rather than socialists. (Szabó, 1960: 4)

The debate on *fridzsider szocializmus* (refrigerator socialism) (Pótó, 1986; Horváth, 2008) in the early 1960s was only the beginning of a series of regular outbursts against ‘petit bourgeois’ attitudes and behavior throughout the Kádár era.

Far from being confined to Hungary within the ‘Eastern Bloc’ (Vihavainen and Bogdanova, 2016), the coming of consumerism and its consolidation can be traced and shown in the mirror of its critical reception by several shades of Kádár-era Hungary’s cultural and intellectual life. In the rest of this chapter, I present and discuss only two distinct streams of critical reception of the advent of consumerism and demand-side abundance in Communist Hungary. First, I present the contemporary satirical mirror held to advances of consumerism in Hungarian society by the cartoons published in the weekly satirical magazine, *Ludas Matyi*, in the first seven years of János Kádár’s counterrevolutionary regime (1957–1964). I then

discuss the reception of demand-side abundance through the critical sociology of András Hegedüs and Mária Márkus.

Consumers for export?

Ludas Matyi was a satirical weekly published throughout the postwar and Cold War eras (1945–1992). In the years after 1956, it was edited and published in offices neighboring those of the Communist Party daily, *Népszabadság*. Similar to its ‘sibling’ magazines in the other state-socialist countries (such as the Soviet *Krokodil*, the Czechoslovak *Dikobraz*, GDR’s *Till Eulenspiegel*, the Polish *Szpilki*, or the Bulgarian *Starshel*), it worked as the party’s weekly. Institutionally, its editorial office formed part of a Central Committee department, together with *Népszabadság* – under the control of the party apparatus, of course. This inevitably implied that many areas of social-political life were off limits to *Ludas*’s satirical commentaries; one could not make fun of individual leaders of the party-state, for instance. Yet, the magazine enjoyed considerable popularity, as readers scrambled for copies of every issue sold by the street vendors. In spite of the extraordinarily high number of copies printed, it was difficult to obtain a copy by late afternoon of the day a new issue appeared.

The popularity of the magazine, which always carried considerably more cartoons than text, can hardly have been a function of the messages it conveyed from the Agitation-and-Propaganda apparatus. Besides the unavoidable politically correct material, the magazine carried many of the cartoonists’ own commentaries on the contemporary world that were not necessarily sanctioned by party authorities. Indeed, as I emphasized in an earlier essay about this magazine (Péteri, 2009), if their bantering satire was to be efficient, the *Ludas* cartoons had to resonate with their readers’ experiences in their actual life-world, and that is exactly the reason why the magazine was so popular.

Few better contemporary illustrations could be found for what demand-side abundance is about than the cover page of the 21 April 1960 issue of *Ludas Matyi* (Figure 1.1).

It carries one of Sándor Gerő’s cartoons (Gerő, 1960a) featuring, in the background, the entrance and exit of a department store. In the foreground, we see an impressive US car and three men. Two of the three are in a dialogue with one another – a US businessman, ‘Mister Williams’, and a Hungarian official (perhaps from the Ministry of Foreign Trade, assigned to accompany Mr. Williams). The third



Figure 1.1 Sándor Gerő, cover of *Ludas Matyi*, 21 April 1960

man, probably Mr. Williams's companion, looks on with goggling eyes, as if unsettled by the scene unfolding in front of them: people streaming into the department store with little expression on their faces, and the masses streaming out, many of them smiling and happy. Clinging to their purchases, they leave the store in a state

of bliss. Significantly, with the exception of a few, we cannot quite see exactly what they have managed to buy. Many of the objects they hold are invisible – nondescript packages wrapped with string. What does emphatically transpire from the cartoon, however, is the joy that acquisition has brought them. The contrast between the faces of those entering and those exiting tells of an almost religious, transcendental experience in that department store. Mr. Williams understood all too well what he just saw – it was demand-side abundance – and when his Hungarian negotiating partner asked him ‘From a commercial point of view, what are you interested in, Mr. Williams?’ the answer was instantaneous: ‘A number of things. For example, would you consider exporting consumers too?’

The feeding frenzy evoked the American businessmen’s awe and envy. Coming from the USA, the archetype of Western consumerist civilization, they were shocked to find consumers in a Communist country more eager than their own consumers back home. David Riesman would not have been surprised, as is clearly shown in his amazing and amusing thought experiment, ‘The nylon war’. In this piece of scholarly fiction from 1951 (Riesman, 1993: 67–79), he suggested that the Cold War could be finished off with an ‘all-out bombing of the Soviet Union with consumers’ goods’; ‘if allowed to sample the riches of America, the Russian people would not long tolerate masters who gave them tanks and spies instead of vacuum cleaners and beauty parlors.’

It needs to be emphasized that Gerő’s cartoon and most of the others criticizing the consumerism that was more and more in evidence in Hungarian society had an ambiguous rather than univocal relationship with what the citizens had seen and commented upon. Hungarians did not seem to mind that many people were better off and could afford to indulge in ‘the pleasures of shopping’. They unambiguously condemned the malfunctions of state-socialist retailing, however: the exploitation by producers (and retailers) of their monopoly position and, in general, the weak and exposed position of consumers. Many cartoons commented on the negative effects of shortages: the need to stand in lines, the corruption (the need to pay considerable ‘tips’ to shop assistants in order to get commodities in great demand), and/or the lack of interest on the part of retailers and producers in pleasing the consumer (see, e.g., Gerő 1957; Réber 1957a; 1957b; 1957c; Szür-Szabó 1957a; Toncz 1957; Várnai 1957; Vasvári 1957; Mészáros 1967).

One can also sense a feeling of relief that the ‘ascetic’ Rákosi era had been left behind, as Tibor Kaján’s quip illuminates rather

well. His cartoon ‘At the lottery of Peace Bonds’ (Kaján, 1957) requires some explanation. In accordance with the Soviet (Stalinist) ‘model’, working people were expected to devote part of their incomes to buying so-called Peace Bonds in Hungary. These were state obligations, and their point was to force the population to save a chunk of their meager salaries and wages to promote the objectives of the Stalinist accumulation mania (increasing the share in the national income of investments at the expense of consumption). Failing to subscribe regularly to the Peace Bonds was considered a hostile act and could have dire consequences. After 1956, no new Peace Bonds were issued, but their amortization took longer – well into the 1960s. The debt of the state was settled in part by a lottery, whereby the lucky owner of a bond with the number that came up could receive more than the original price of the bond. Kaján’s cartoon shows one of these Peace-Bond lottery draws, wherein one man waiting for the results says to another: ‘If I win, I am happy because I won, if I don’t win, I am happy, because I no longer need to subscribe to new bonds.’

Nevertheless, the cartoonists also seemed to believe that consumerism brought worrisome tendencies along with it. In general, they were concerned about the perversion of human values: the disproportionate significance that *things* would assume in people’s lives – people’s fixation with goods in general and with certain ‘iconic objects’ of consumer desire in particular (fetishism). In Russian (Soviet) parlance, this was called *veshchism*, which had the connotations of ‘materialism’, ‘consumerism’, or ‘excessive devotion to material objects’ (Vihavainen and Bogdanova, 2016: xix, 17, 70, 170). Perverted hierarchies of preferences were found to be disturbing too – hierarchies that manifested themselves by people proving ready to deny themselves and their families the most elementary needs in order to acquire or carefully maintain a precious object, such as a private car.

As objects of desire started filling the shop windows, the lust to acquire them grew, as shown by Tibor Kaján’s cartoon, ‘Humans are steered by their desires’ (Kaján, 1959). The desire and will to acquire things, the ownership of which seemed to become the norm and the necessary means to project, establish, or reproduce social status, appeared to be a ubiquitous tendency. In another of Tibor Kaján’s cartoons (Figure 1.2), a husband and wife are sweating, while literally prying out of Fortune’s cornucopia the prime objects of consumer desire: a refrigerator, washing machine, television set

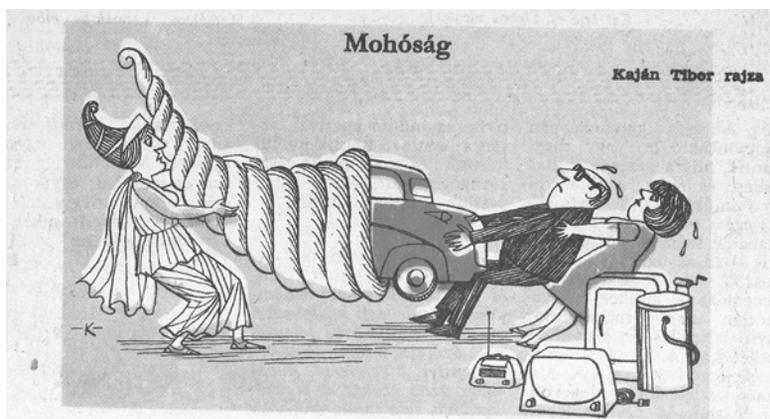


Figure 1.2 Tibor Kaján, ‘Mohóság’ [‘Voracity’], *Ludas Matyi*, 16 May 1963

and finally, the crown on a consuming life, the private car (Kaján, 1963a).

As another Kaján (1963b) cartoon suggests, the new consumerist era’s hero worship places on a pedestal the person who has succeeded in getting it all. With the posture of a proud general after a battle won, the hero stands on top of his major acquisitions – the car, the refrigerator, the television set, and a washing machine – and the monument is surrounded by worshippers standing in awe, with hats off, to pay their respects. No doubt they are trying to prove good disciples of their source of inspiration.

Radically changing norms and values were the focus of István Hegedűs’s (1964) ‘Family album’. He showed how, in two generations, love for and pride in one’s children and grandchildren is replaced by love for and pride in the acquisitions of a modern married couple who live on their own, have no children, but are the happy owners of a car, a vacuum-cleaner, a washing machine, a television set, and a magnetophone (reel-to-reel recorder). A similar commentary on the growth of an acquisitive society is László Réber’s (1958) work, although the family in this case included children.

Resonating with these cartoons was what grew through the 1960s to become a standard topos or at least something like a genre of its own: bantering the ‘*kicsi vagy kocsi*’ dilemma, ‘Shall we get a baby or a car?’ (Péteri, 2009: 10–11). No doubt the popularity of

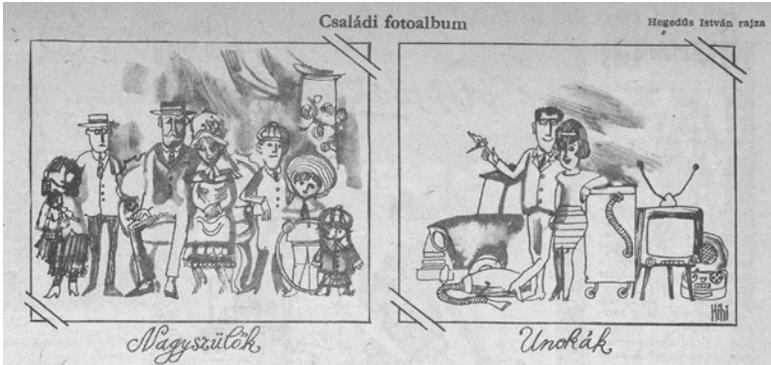


Figure 1.3 István Hegedűs, ‘Családi fotoalbum’ [‘Family album’], *Ludas Matyi*, 5 March 1964

this topos among cartoonists was the particular force with which it revealed how demand-side abundance drove people to negotiate (and oppress) their most natural and traditional needs and values (such as love, making children, and the cultivation of familial ties), for the benefit of satisfying their acquisitive lust.

Hegedűs was among the first to notice the paradoxical phenomenon that ‘gadgets of the day’ would make their way into Hungarian households, in some cases long before all other basic needs had been taken care of. In his acerbic comment on the new, consumerist understanding of the concept of ‘Civilization’ (Figure 1.4; Hegedűs, 1957), we see a shanty town of dwellings improvised out of whatever materials happened to be at hand – they have no running water and the roofs can hardly withstand the weather, but all are adorned with a TV antenna.

Indeed, the second half of the 1950s and early 1960s saw a sudden mushrooming of one of the main objects of desire: television. Having a TV became a matter of social status and reputation (one of the defining phenomena attendant to consumerism), as reported also by József Szűr-Szabó in a cartoon in which father and son, putting the finishing touches on the newly built family house, erect an antenna on the roof, saying, ‘The neighbors will go cuckoo with envy [...] believing that we even have a TV-set’ (Szűr-Szabó, 1957b). Another work of Szűr-Szabó addresses the same issue, using the Leninist concept of ‘uneven development’ as the title of the cartoon. It depicts a couple inhabiting a minimalist house; although they own all that belongs to a ‘modern household’, they are forced to

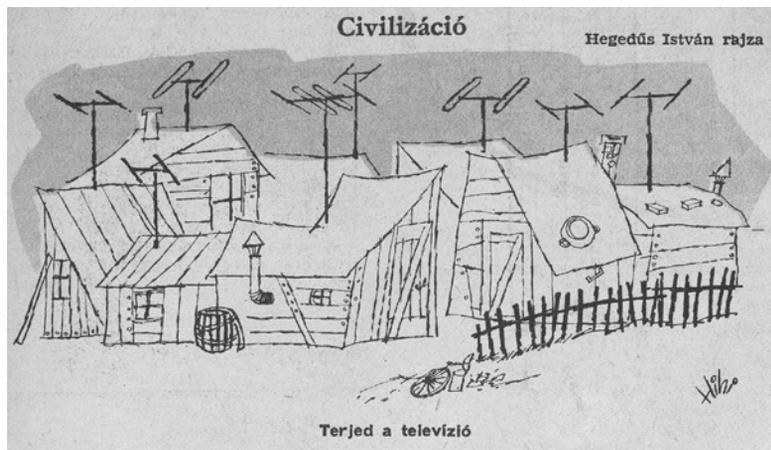


Figure 1.4 István Hegedűs, 'Civilizáció' ['Civilization'],
Ludas Matyi, 9 May 1957

place their television set, washing machine, and refrigerator outside for lack of space within (Szűr-Szabó, 1959a).

Trips abroad were one of the typical situations in which the consumer, driven by the passion to acquire, was caught and revealed. Such travels enabled the consumer to acquire things unavailable at home, or not available in a broad enough selection or qualities or prices. Smuggling, selling, and buying goods abroad hence all came to be present in the course of visits to other socialist countries or to the West, as the András Mészáros cartoon 'Hungarian tourists abroad' registered: of a large group of tourists, only one, named Kerekes, seems to be interested in the impressive sights offered by the place visited. The others are buying and selling and exchanging cameras, watches, salami, and underwear. One of these peddlers tells the other, 'I don't understand this Kerekes – why on earth would he come abroad to waste his whole day on sight-seeing?' (Mészáros, 1958). Lucky were those who could travel more often and with a *per diem* in their pockets, thanks to their jobs. Tibor Toncz's work (Figure 1.5) shows one of these happy travelers, explaining to his compatriot why he is sleeping under the bridge: 'You know, I am still saving for a magnetophone and a small car!' (Toncz, 1958b).

Assignments abroad of more than a few weeks (especially in the West) might even have enabled the purchase of a car. A review of

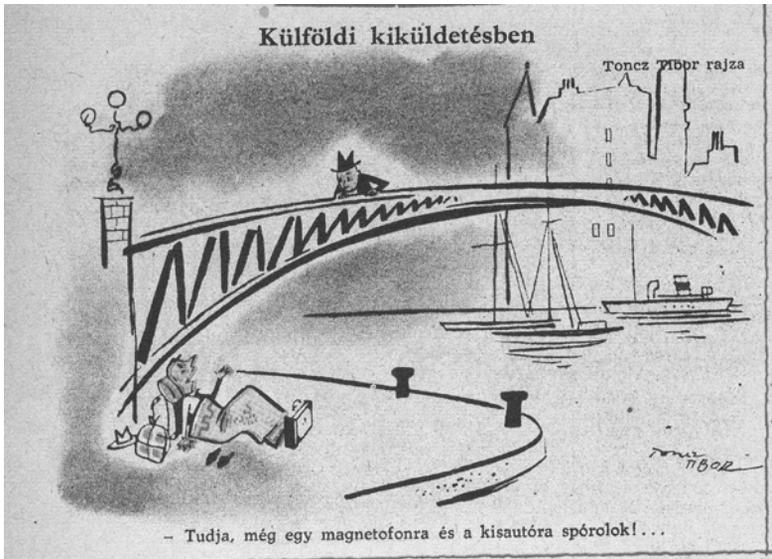


Figure 1.5 Tibor Tócz, 'Külföldi kiküldetésben' ['On assignment abroad'], *Ludas Matyi*, 12 June 1958

the 'Problems attendant to Hungarian-US cultural relations' by the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1966 bitterly reports that among Hungarian scholars receiving Ford Fellowships, only a minority used their stipends to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the USA or to acquire scientific literature and equipment. Most set aside even the grant earmarked for purchasing books to buy a car. '[With the same objective in mind,] some of them save to an extent that is detrimental to proper nutrition' (Document 5, 1966) – i.e., they don't eat enough and they eat junk food.

Just as the consumerist world presents a hierarchy of goods, so the wide world offers a hierarchy of places arranged by shopping opportunities, the high point of which, understandably, was the West. Joking about 'adoration of the West' (*Nyugat-imádat*), therefore, became one of the favorite occupations of the *Ludas* cartoonists. Gizi Szegő showed a clumsy waiter emptying the contents of a bowl of red (sour cherry?) soup into the lap of an elegant lady. As she is leaving the posh restaurant with plenty of red spots on her dress, another woman, passing by, remarks: 'What a beautiful pattern! No doubt, it must be from Paris' (Szegő, 1959). Tibor Tócz depicted a husband arriving from the West and disembarking from the train.

He has a red nose and a handkerchief at the ready. His wife, waiting for him on the platform, asks, 'Have you caught the flu?' To which he responds with a proud and triumphant smile, 'Not only that, but an original Western one!' (Toncz, 1960) The same strings are touched by Sándor Erdei's cartoon, in which a Hungarian tourist couple stand on a sidewalk in London, mesmerized, their jaws dropped at the sight of the overwhelming traffic. The husband explains to his wife: 'This is something, you see! Our traffic jam doesn't even come close to this!' (Erdei, 1963).

The emergence and growth of the 'acquisitive society' (Tawney, 1920) and of fetishistic attitudes toward commodities hence appear to have been the feature that Hungarian cartoonists found most troubling and that figured most frequently in their work. The impressive wealth of cartoons thematizing this issue in the course of the relatively short period observed here corroborates this notion beyond doubt.³

The advent of consumerism and the phenomena engendered by demand-side abundance were obviously noticed and discussed by sociologists as well as cartoonists.

Critical sociology and the acquisitive society

In the opinion of those approaching the consumerism of the 1960s and 1970s from a scholarly platform, there was a bright side as well. For example, Márta Nagy of the Hungarian Institute for Public Opinion Research believed that the obsession with things 'democratized' the understanding of what it meant to be rich. Her representative survey (N = 784), conducted in 1973, asked the question 'Who are the rich?' and allowed entirely free responses with no limits to the length of the response or to the number of explanatory motives it could include. Content analysis revealed the most frequent motive among the responses to be the acquisition of durable goods (41%). Thus, when identifying rich and poor in a given society, respondents differentiated them in terms of the quantity and quality of durables acquired, rather than by social class and strata (28%) (Document 6, 1975).

Others, like Tamás Szecskő, director of the institute where Márta Nagy worked, came to think of a darker side of this issue when

3 In addition to those I have already discussed, here is a selection of more cartoons pertinent to this topic: Toncz, 1958a; Várnai, 1958a, 1958b; Pusztai, 1959; Szür-Szabó, 1959a, 1959b; Gerő, 1960b; Kaján, 1960; cover; Balázs-Piri, 1962.

asked (probably by some high-level party authority, in preparation for the XIth Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party in March 1975) to produce a forecast of 'The ideological-political problems of our society' for the coming 15 years. In his first draft, Szecskő predicted a strengthening of 'individualistic orientation toward consumption; [and] growing doubts as to the [possible] emergence, [or even] the need for a socialist type of morality' (Document 7, 1974).

Before finalizing his text, Szecskő asked for the comments of two highly influential personalities of the time: Iván T. Berend, rector of the Karl Marx University of Economics, and Imre Pozsgay, deputy chief editor of the party's theoretical journal, *Társadalmi Szemle*. Berend jotted his comments by hand onto Szecskő's draft – and on the passage quoted from Document 7 above, he wrote in the margin:

This is all very one-sided! [...] the inverse of these problems will also present themselves. [...] what is predictable: [is] 'anti-economism' turning against the 'growth orientation', [...] social models starting out from 'moral' platforms, demands for a socialist structure of consumption in forms torn off realities. [...] [as for the 'individualist orientation toward consumption'] [...] *reactions* can be expected too: the other side of 'petit bourgeois [tendencies]': namely asceticist-anarchistic revolutionism, hostility toward 'consumption', egalitarianism and strong collectivist tendencies among the young.

There is a complex background to Berend's remarks, with an obvious, sharp edge toward the left. For one thing, the date is just about a year after the so-called 'Philosophers' Trial', a political-ideological purge directed against a circle of social theorists (like Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, and Mihály Vajda) and critical sociologists (like Mária Márkus and András Hegedüs), a circle often referred to as the Budapest (or Lukács) School. I am rendering the story in a nutshell. Hungarian reform Communism was facing a conservative backlash after the invasion of reform-Communist Czechoslovakia in August 1968. To save themselves and their achievements, and to show Moscow that they were still on the ball and had control over ideological-political developments at home, they decided to take the initiative and deliver a blow to what was considered to have been a (new) leftist tendency in Budapest intellectual life: critical sociology and its background in critical Marxist social theory (as cultivated particularly by Ágnes Heller and György Márkus). By May 1973, seven scholars had been removed from the party membership (if they had still been members at the time) and from their

academic jobs. In 1975, as a result of their joblessness and of the deliberate ‘nudging’ of the state security police, Heller, Ferenc Fehér, György and Mária Márkus left Hungary for the West. Sociologist Iván Szelényi soon joined them; he was forced to leave on account of his book (written in Hungary in 1973–1974, published in the West in 1979), *The intellectuals’ road to class power* (Lehmann, 1998; Papp, 1989; Csizmadia, 1995).

Indeed, the official accusations against them (their close intellectual and personal relationship to Western New Left ideologues, their alleged condemnation of the economic reforms as a retreat to capitalism, uncritical adoration of various Western forms of collectivism from below, like the hippie communes, etc.) resonated significantly with Berend’s comments on Szecskő’s draft (Document 8, 1973: fols. 37–59).

Second, in the wake of Brezhnev’s Thermidor (from August 1968 onward), the positions of reform-Communist politicians and policies and the positions of the so-called reform economists came under siege by the conservative Communist network in the party-state’s higher- and lower-level apparatuses. Even though critical social theory and sociology had nothing to do with this conservative backlash, from a reform-Communist point of view they came to be treated under the same umbrella as the reform Communists’ conservative challengers (Péteri, 2016).

Tamás Szecskő’s first draft and its prediction, then, were no doubt inspired by the works of András Hegedüs and Mária Márkus.⁴ Critical sociology was Hegedüs’s professional credo; he believed that the role of social science scholarship in a socialist society was not merely to provide instrumental knowledge to those in power and to help people, in general, to understand things social. Also,

4 Szecskő did make a revision, however, with a new title (‘A socio-political outline, 1975–1990’), which became radically more optimistic, upon the encouragement of Berend and Imre Pozsgay. Following Berend’s suggestions (actually including Berend’s commentary in the text, verbatim), he emphasized that one could expect ‘a growth of trust in the fair and humanistic nature of socialist society, the emergence of a structure of consumption [...] promoting better the development of socialist personality, and a healthier relationship, subjectively, to consumption goods; on the other hand, we will probably encounter, in some circles, an individualistic orientation toward consumption and, as a reaction against this, the budding of asceticist-anarchistic hostility toward consumption (probably, among the young)’ (Document 7, 1974).

and most important, it should critically assess the direction in which political, social, and economic developments were taking the country in light of the professed values and visions informing the socialist project (Hegedüs, 1967; Document 9, 1968). Having been a Socialist himself, Hegedüs emphasized, the idea of socialism had never been to enable the development of only the productive forces, but of the ‘the many-sided rehumanization of social relations’. Although he understood how important it was to achieve dynamic growth through ‘marketizing’ reforms, he wanted to raise a finger of warning lest ‘optimization’ (economic growth) should compromise and squeeze out the objectives of ‘humanization’ from the socialist agenda (Hegedüs, 1965). His hope was that

[t]he times are not far away when the advantages of socialism over capitalism are measured not in terms of the growth of material-economic indices, but in terms of the humanization of social relations, when the decisive fact will be the existence of the possibility for the human personality to develop. (Document 10, n.d.)

But, as Hegedüs also emphasized:

Material affluence in itself does not lead automatically to the broadening of the possibilities of human self-realization. [...] we [socialist societies] still tend to be enchanted by economism and to be inclined to prove the high development level of our social system exclusively by the successes we think we achieved or desire to achieve in the economic sphere.

He warned that, on the platform of the same economism, ‘it appears more and more as if the only civilizational path available for the further development of our society were that of the Western highly developed industrial societies in the past and the present’ (Document 11, 1971).

Although Hegedüs had no quarrel with the basic ideas of reform economists, with their wish to dynamize economic growth by increasing the role of the market at the expense of bureaucratic coordination, he did object to turning economic growth into a ‘value’ (something to be pursued for its own sake). That was why he and his colleague, Mária Márkus, insisted on the need to define a civilization model different from that of the West, in that it would enable the values of humanization to rule supreme. With the contours of this new civilization in mind, he and Mária Márkus were offered the opportunity to undertake a critical assessment of the work of the Committee for Long-Term Planning of Labor Force and Living Standards in 1968–1969 (Péteri, 2016).

Hegedüs and Márkus were aware of the pull exercised by the soft power without:

[I]n long-term planning, one must account for the system of values prevalent in society, in its various strata and for the ongoing changes of these values, as they will largely define the aspirations, needs, and, consequently, the structure of consumption of this society. In shaping the latter, the consumption model of more developed societies plays a role, in that it affects the mind of the people as a desirable pattern of civilization. The intensity of this effect will be partly a function of the extent to which socialist societies become open, which is an ongoing process that is impossible to stop, thanks to the fast development of the means of mass communication. The other factor influencing the intensity of the [demonstration] effect is the capability of socialist societies to posit their own model against [Western civilization], a model that preserves and includes the true values and achievements of [Western] civilization, but rejects the idea of taking on board the distortions of the Western consumption models caused by manipulation. (Document 12, 1969)

Without pretending that they knew exactly what the socialist model of civilization should look like, and, within it, consumption, Hegedüs and Márkus did not hesitate to spell out some fundamental distinctions and criteria relevant to the model. They believed that it was not only necessary but also possible to develop a systemically specific, socialist model of consumption. To achieve that model, they believed that not only income distribution but also needs and the ways in which needs were satisfied had to be actively influenced. They suggested that any discussion of a socialist model of consumption required the distinction between basic and aspirational (or differentiated) needs. Although both types of needs were informed and shaped by the general level of economic development, basic needs were such that their satisfaction had to be secured for everybody in society. Hegedüs and Márkus asserted that in Hungary, in the second half of the 1960s, healthy diet, clothing, housing, and cultural and educational opportunities, independent of and unlimited by one's income and wealth, should be regarded as basic needs, and they hoped it could be possible to secure them for all citizens of socialist Hungary within 15 to 20 years. In an even longer-term perspective, however, they believed that aspirational needs would assume an increasingly prominent role. Aspirational needs represent consumption over and above the level of basic needs or ways of satisfying basic needs, but in a non-standard manner (e.g., to have a roof over one's head is a basic need, but satisfying the basic need

for housing by buying a 400-square-meter villa in one of the most appealing green areas of the city is no doubt catering to aspirational needs).

Hegedüs and Márkus did recognize that aspirational needs had a legitimate place in a socialist society, as their satisfaction was important for the many-sided development of personality, for catering to individual expressivity – individual variation in needs and taste. But they also realized that, in stratified societies, differentiated needs tend to become attached to social position and status, generating consumption considered to be appropriate for and proportionate to the imagined or desired prestige. As they observed,

in societies where, on account of significant shortages and/or the relatively low level of national income, broader masses are unable to buy commodities they would otherwise wish to obtain, prestige consumption is primarily focused on commodities not accessible to the masses. As the abundance of commodity supplies increase, living standards become higher, prestige consumption will target different types of the same commodities and, thus, objects performing by and large the same function will be produced in strongly differentiated ‘classes’, satisfying not merely individualized needs, but needs springing from status orientation. This tendency affects such services as luxury shops and high-class restaurants as well, of course (Document 12, 1969: 41).

Their socialist model of consumption could therefore include efforts to satisfy individualized needs serving the many-sided development of personality, but not status-oriented, prestige consumption.

From the point of view of my discussion, the key observation is the awareness among critical sociologists of the presence and significance of demand-side abundance. In a presentation written for a conference on industrial sociology, Hegedüs formulated the problem: ‘the prevailing situation [in our society] is that the desire in people for commodities and services belonging in this category [the category of aspirational needs] grows faster than the rate at which society can meet these needs effectively’ (Document 13, 1969).

This type of discussion received a further nudge from economist Éva Ehrlich, rightly famous for her work on the methodology of international and inter-systemic comparative studies of macro-economic structures and performance. Based on her calculations to show the co-relation between the level of economic development (per capita GDP) and the size of personal consumption (in terms of its share of the GDP), Ehrlich made the interesting observation that, ‘in general, the gap in terms of personal consumption between

Table 1.1 Economic development of Hungary and economic development of the USA, Sweden, and the Federal Republic of (West) Germany (FRG) in 1965

Per capita	Hungary/USA	Hungary/Sweden	Hungary/FRG
Level of GDP	1: 4.5	1: 3.3	1: 2.4
Level of personal consumption	1: 3.8	1: 2.7	1: 2.2

Source: Ehrlich (1970, 1176–1177).

countries, both with regard to capitalist and with regard to socialist countries, tends to be smaller than the gap in terms of levels of economic development' (Ehrlich, 1970: 1176). Ehrlich's summary of the differences between the economic development of Hungary and the economic development of the USA, Sweden, and the Federal Republic of (West) Germany in 1965 are shown in Table 1.1.

Ehrlich's data and inter- and intra-systemic comparisons reveal that a highly potent international and inter-systemic demonstration effect (the very source of demand-side abundance) has been, in general, part of the relationship between the developed core and those lagging behind in the world system – all the way to the periphery. As she modestly put it, 'That this tendency asserts itself [so generally], is certainly to some extent due to the emerging intertwining of economies within and across the regions of the world' (Ehrlich, 1970, 1176).

In their paper for the International Sociological Conference on Modernization at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, 11–18 June 1972 (Document 14, 1972), Hegedüs and Márkus further elaborated on this aspect and its ramifications in terms of 'consumption model' and consumerism under state socialism. Indeed, they devoted a whole chapter to '[t]he impact of the consumption model of acquisitive society upon needs'. Their starting-point was articulated in the following manner:

Today, partly because of the development of mass communications and partly because countries are less closed than they used to be (i.e., the world is increasingly becoming an open system), the influence exerted by the highly developed countries upon the other societies, among them the European socialist countries, is becoming greater and greater every year. (Document 14, 1972: 16)

They observed that consumption patterns prevalent in highly developed (capitalist) societies exercise a particularly strong influence upon the semi-developed socialist countries. Because of the relatively low living standards in these socialist countries, needs are generated that can be met only partially and at the cost of perverting the structure of consumption, leading people to sacrifice the satisfaction of some of the basic needs of their families and themselves. This perversion hits particularly hard in the lower strata, in which people, reaching out for the latest commonly pursued objects of desire, tend to omit from their consumption a number of 'transitional' civilizational achievements (things having to do with personal hygiene and a higher comfort level of housing – like running hot water) (Document 14, 1972: 17).

As one concrete instantiation of the anomalies in consumption generated by Western patterns of an acquisitive society in Hungary, Hegedüs and Márkus mentioned a paradox: although less than 40% of Hungarian households had running water inside their accommodation, more than 50% of them owned a washing machine. Major survey research conducted by the Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Békés County found that 20% of the families living at a level *under* the statistically established existence minimum owned or were planning within the near future to buy a washing machine. The same measure was up to 60% among those living one level higher, but still in poverty (Document 14, 1972: 18).

These scholars also underlined the force with which the acquisitive model of consumption was asserted, given the aspirational needs generated. These needs were not only about use values, but were also expressive and projective of the illusions and hopes for a higher social status among members of certain strata. The characteristic examples of commodities the acquisition of which was allegedly motivated by the consumerist model of consumption of the developed capitalist countries are clothing, television, and private cars. Fashionable and 'correct' clothing can cost a great deal, and yet it is the cheapest way of projecting one's actual or wished-for social status, material situation, individual and familial success, and may therefore promote (or undermine) social integration. The project in Békés County found that parents would often accept serious economic sacrifices and allow their adult, actively working children to live with them at no cost, in order to enable them to clothe themselves 'appropriately' (Sas, 1972: 197ff). Even in state-socialist societies, the car was the iconic object of consumerism. There were plenty of instances of the

serious economic overstretch that consumer families were driven into by their acquisitive lust (Péteri, 2009: 9–11).

Hegedűs and Márkus concluded their discussion by revealing that the seeming historical choice was between the classic, Stalinist, ‘public administration model’ of socialism and the ‘main road model’. Following the ‘main road’ meant market-oriented reforms and the recognition that socialist societies, if they were ever to catch up with the highly developed West, would have to allow Western patterns of consumption, the ‘consumption model of acquisitive society’, to assert themselves. The authors admitted that the main road model would serve the dynamization of the economy more consistently and efficiently and, as a result of that dynamization, engender improvements in living standards. Within certain limits, they conceded, it might even promote democratization. They warned that the main road model, ‘even though it might not restore the private ownership of the means of production, would lead to an acquisitive type of profit-oriented society’ (Document 14, 1972: 23). They feared that that road would lead to the demise of the socialist project.

They shared their anxiety with a number of other professionals and intellectuals in the country. In 1969, the Committee for Long-Term Planning of Labor Force and Living Standards of the Central Planning Office published its Working Hypotheses for what was meant to be the Hungary’s 15-year plan for 1970–1985 (Huszár et al., 1969; Péteri, 2016: 255ff). Through that publication, the committee wished to invite the broader informed public to comment on their hypotheses. Showing how sincere they were in their intent to secure feedback, they even took the step of sending the Hypotheses to 209 people from various walks of life, with an accompanying letter asking for their opinion. They were sent to such intellectual professionals as economists, engineers, physicians, social scientists, writers, and publicists, as well as to people from the political-administrative class, such as politicians and public and economic administrators in leadership positions. They eventually managed to receive 71 responses, which eminent sociologist Zsuzsa Ferge was asked to process. In her report (Document 15, 1970), Ferge relates and quotes Respondent 58, with obvious sympathy and agreement:

According to [this respondent] the main issue is not whether or not we will be able to perform the planned growth – it is, rather, what it means if we will? [...] even at an optimal growth rate, the gap between us and the most developed capitalist countries will increase. [...] i.e., at the end of the long-term plan’s period, our place within the general tendency of ‘rich getting richer and poor getting poorer’

will be in the latter category. This will mean, according to the letter's writer, 'decent and struggling poverty', and this is what we should prepare our society for in education, literature, and popular enlightenment, [...] trying to make it understood [...] that while starvation and pauperism are an unacceptable state of things to be put an end to, decent 'poverty' can be the fundament of a worthier and happier life than the [Western] 'welfare state'. Comparisons with highly developed capitalist countries are misleading. Socialism is a qualitatively different world.

Conclusion

My survey of the discourses of critical reception of consumerism in Hungary yields a number of significant observations. First of all, it corroborates the headway made by a consumerist culture in Hungarian society from the second half of the 1950s and into the long 1960s. It has also enabled me to point out some specific aspects of demand-side abundance (a systemically contingent overflow of consumer needs and desires in excess of and beyond the constraints of resources at the household level and the national-economy level). Demand-side abundance is triggered by consumerism under the conditions of the state-socialist socio-economic order: various manifestations of the 'distortions of the structure of consumption', as the critical sociologists put it or, in other words, the ubiquitous *overstretch* characterizing consumer behavior. I have also shown that consumerism, demand-side abundance, and their ramifications in the state-socialist socio-economic order evoked highly complex reactions from contemporary observers and commentators.

These reactions were characterized by ambiguity. People welcomed the steps toward the emancipation (indeed, the creation) of the consumer citizen, toward recognizing people's right to seeking, working for, and enjoying what they understood to be a 'good life', toward market-oriented reforms that also held out hope for achieving a higher dynamism of economic-technological development and for securing higher living standards. But a number of tendencies that attended the advent of consumerism and demand-side abundance were feared, lamented about, and/or sharply critiqued: the sway of acquisitive lust over people, the fetishist adoration of commodities (especially of the prime objects of consumer desire), the erosion of some fundamental humanistic values, perverted hierarchies of preferences or priorities, and increasing social inequalities.

Many and various types of commentators (social-science scholars, ideologues, journalists, urban planners, architects, home economists) on modern society all over the world shared these fears for a very

long time. For example, one of the central concerns for the professionals, intellectuals, and politicians promoting the Tapiola housing project outside Helsinki, Finland, was exactly the expectation that with the progress of postwar reconstruction and increasing living standards, social developments in Finland would, to an all-too-great extent, be steered by demand-side abundance and consumerism rather than by Ebenezer Howard's, Lewis Mumford's, Patrick Geddes' and their contemporary Finnish followers' ideas about a good (healthy, cultured, well-balanced) life (Pantzar, 2013). Afraid of an overflow that would be detrimental in human-societal terms, they began the Tapiola project 'as an anti-urban, anti-consumerist and anti-individualistic utopia in the 1940s'. By the 1970s, Tapiola had developed 'into an urban, consumerist and individualistic community, heavily reliant on private transport. [...] In a sense we can say that utopian plans to create new types of citizens were never realized' (Pantzar, 2013: 13). Just as demand-side abundance (consumerism) manifested itself on the Eastern side of the Cold War divide, these fears, too, came to the socialist countries of Communist Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (Gurova, 2018). Indeed, the anxiety here must have been even stronger for many, because what appeared to have been at stake here was the wellbeing of the socialist-Communist project itself. For whatever joys and pleasures (at least for some) may have been springing from consumerist, Western patterns of modernity, whatever satisfaction may have been engendered by leaving the horrors, deprivations, and imposed asceticism of the Stalin era behind, it was hard to suppress the systemic anxiety that many felt over the strength of 'gravitation' toward late modern, capitalist civilization and the eventual demise of the dream of a socialist society. This anxiety was articulated in the most sophisticated and best-argued manner by our critical sociologists, which is why they came into the crosshairs of the first and last purge in the history of Hungarian Communism, in which both reform Communists and conservative Communists condemned the victim, although with some disagreement about what punishment that victim deserved.

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