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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Science under changing ideological conditions: Hungarian psychology in the twentieth century

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Abstract Creative academic thinking and research are inconceivable without academic freedom. This applies to all academic disciplines, including psychology. A concrete example that illustrates this fundamental idea is the history of academic psychology in Hungary. Apart from a few brief exceptions, Hungary was ruled by more or less autocratic or dictatorial regimes throughout the twentieth century. Their political orientation changed repeatedly—and with it the criteria according to which academic freedom in general was restricted and the course of psychological research in particular was dictated. The paper traces the key fractures in these developments through concrete biographies and through institutional as well as thematic shifts. It shows that political conditions function like sorting machines that determine who can conduct what kind of research and who is pushed to the margins of the discipline or even silenced.

Keywords History of psychology · Hungary · 20th century · Fascism · Communism

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Zusammenfassung Kreatives universitäres Denken und Arbeiten sind ohne Wissenschaftsfreiheit undenkbar. Das gilt für alle Wissenschaftsdisziplinen und somit auch für die Psychologie. Ein konkreter Fall, an dem sich dieser Grundgedanke veranschaulichen lässt, ist die Geschichte der akademischen Psychologie in Ungarn. Von kurzen Ausnahmen abgesehen wurde Ungarn während des gesamten zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts von mehr oder minder autokratischen beziehungsweise diktatorischen Regimen beherrscht. Deren politische Ausrichtung änderte sich wiederholt – und somit änderten sich auch die Kriterien, nach denen die Wissenschaftsfreiheit im Allgemeinen beschnitten und der Gang psychologischer Forschungen im Besonderen diktiert wurde. Der Aufsatz zeichnet die entscheidenden Bruchlinien dieser Entwicklungen an konkreten Biografien und institutionellen ebenso wie inhaltlichen Verschiebungen nach. Dabei zeigt sich, dass die politischen Rahmenbedingungen wie Sortiermaschinen funktionieren, die bestimmen, wer welche Art von Forschung betreiben kann und wer an den Rand der Disziplin gedrängt oder sogar zum Schweigen gebracht wird.

Schlüsselwörter Geschichte der Psychologie · Ungarn · 20. Jahrhundert · Faschismus · Kommunismus

Résumé La pensée académique créative et la recherche sont inconcevables sans la liberté académique. Cela s'applique à toutes les disciplines académiques, y compris la psychologie. Un exemple concret qui illustre cette idée fondamental est l'histoire de la psychologie universitaire en Hongrie. À quelques exceptions près, la Hongrie a été gouvernée par des régimes plus ou moins autocratiques ou dictatoriaux tout au long du XXe siècle. Leur orientation politique a changé à plusieurs reprises, modifiant ainsi les critères selon lesquels la liberté académique en général était restreinte et le cours des recherches psychologiques en particulier dicté. L'essai retrace les lignes de fracture décisives de ces évolutions à travers des biographies concrètes et des changements institutionnels et thématiques. Il montre que les conditions politiques générales fonctionnent comme des machines à trier qui déterminent qui peut mener quel type de recherche et qui est poussé à la marge de la discipline, voire réduit au silence.

Mots-clés Histoire de la psychologie · Hongrie · XXe siècle · Fascisme · Communisme

Creative academic thought and scientific inquiry depend fundamentally on freedom of research and expression (for a nuanced conceptualization of academic freedom, see Levy 2026). Without such freedom, universities and research institutions risk becoming extensions of political power rather than spaces of intellectual exploration. Political systems, however, are never neutral: for instance, they profoundly shape the direction of the scientific discourse by allocating funding to some areas of research rather than others or by the way in which they organize and structure their academic institutions. More generally speaking, they can broaden or narrow the horizons in which scientists and scholars operate. In doing so, political systems become—to

borrow a term from the sociologist Steffen Mau (2023)—*sorting machines* that determine who is allowed and able to do what kind of research, who gets silenced and relegated to the fringes of academia, and who is maybe even persecuted or forced into exile.

The history of Hungary in the twentieth century represents a paradigmatic case for studying the relationship between science and ideology. Few European countries experienced as many abrupt political transformations during the twentieth century: the fall of the Habsburg monarchy, the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic that was followed by a conservative counter-revolution, the fascist alliance with Germany during the Second World War, the Stalinist era that was concluded by the revolution of 1956, the "goulash communism" of the Kádár years, and finally the fall of the Iron Curtain. Each of these regimes imposed different limits and possibilities on intellectual work. In the present paper, I explore the tension between these political circumstances and scientific research using the example of psychology. When speaking of "psychology," I refer to both academic psychology and psychoanalysis, because both traditions play a major role in Hungary (for a short history of psychology in Hungary, see Fülöp and Holka, 2025; Szokolszky 2016). I dedicate one section to each phase of Hungarian history in the twentieth century. Each section begins with a brief sketch of the political context and then traces its impact on psychology.[1]

Overall, the aim of the present paper is interpretative rather than archival. That is, I do not introduce new sources but organize existing evidence and writings into a *meta-perspective in broad strokes*. Owing to length restrictions, I focus more on the institutions and exemplary individuals that embodied the discipline in changing political landscapes and—apart from some exceptions—less on the content of psychological research and theorizing. Note also that the fact that political systems act as sorting machines does not imply that individual researchers were devoid of agency: "Psychologists were not just victims of conditions, but also actors who participated in forming and maintaining those conditions" (Szokolszky 2016, p. 19). In any case, the following pages show that the evolution of Hungarian psychology cannot be understood without considering the recurrent tension between academic freedom and political influence.

1 Before the First World War

At the turn of the twentieth century, Hungary was part of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, a political entity marked by both stability and latent crisis. Hungary was

[1] To sketch the broader historical background, I rely on standard histories of modern Hungary (such as Lendvai 2004; Molnár 2001; Romsics 2016). These books are not further referenced in the respective sections of the manuscript to increase readability and because the mentioned facts and developments can be considered common knowledge. Of course, certain compressions of the historical events are inevitable as the narrative spans nearly a century. Note that I have tried to use sources published in English whenever possible to keep the references accessible to a broader readership; however, some materials are only available in Hungarian. For instance, a helpful overview of the leading figures in the history of Hungarian psychology can be found here (see also Szokolszky 2025): https://www.pszichologiatortenet.hu/archivum/.

undergoing steady modernization: the industry expanded, cities grew, and Budapest emerged as a vibrant metropolis. Yet much of the countryside remained rooted in traditional agriculture, with deep inequalities in landownership and widespread poverty prompting many to emigrate. At the same time, state-led Magyarization policies and competing nationalisms strained relations among Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Serbs, and other minorities, feeding political conflict that the Dual Monarchy's institutions increasingly struggled to contain. These tensions formed the background against which Hungarian psychology first emerged. Two figures can be used to illustrate the major developments of the discipline at the time: Pál Ranschburg (1870–1945) as a representative of academic psychology and Sándor Ferenczi (1873–1933) as a representative of psychoanalysis.

Ranschburg was born in the western Hungarian city of Győr as the eighth child of a Jewish rabbi (for details about Ranschburg's life and work, see the edited volume by Lányi 2013; for an overview, see also Szokolszky 2016; Vajda 2017). Interestingly, Ranschburg attended a Christian high school (the *Hauptgymnasium* of the Benedictine Order in Győr), which may serve as an example that Jewish members of society experienced an unprecedented era of social and economic upward mobility (and assimilation) after the emancipation law of 1867 granted them full civil rights. Although Ranschburg graduated as a medical doctor, it soon became clear that he was more interested in psychological and mental functioning. In the years following his graduation, Ranschburg spent some time in several Western European countries such as Germany, France, and Switzerland to familiarize himself with the latest developments in the emerging academic field of psychology. Among other things, he most likely also visited Wundt's laboratory in Leipzig, which had been founded some 20 years earlier. Ranschburg's fascination with empirical methods led to the establishment of what is nowadays regarded as the first experimental psychological laboratory in Hungary at the medical faculty in Budapest in 1899. After some internal disputes that were probably rooted in a mixture of antisemitism and skepticism toward the new kind of research Ranschburg was trying to introduce, he had to move his laboratory from the medical faculty to a training college for teachers of children with disabilities in 1902. This second laboratory laid the groundwork for the development of experimental psychology and special education in Hungary.

Sándor Ferenczi was born into a liberal and assimilated Jewish family (for the biographical details described in the following, see Mészáros 2010a; 2012; Szokolszky 2016). After studying medicine in Vienna and receiving his degree in 1894, Ferenczi returned to Budapest, where he worked as a neurologist. His clinical interests and willingness to work with very disturbed patients brought him into close and sustained contact with Sigmund Freud, whom he met for the first time in 1908. In the following years, Ferenczi became one of Freud's closest and most innovative younger associates. Building on his engagement with the psychoanalytic movement and his leadership in Budapest's intellectual life, Ferenczi played a central role in founding the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society (*Magyar Pszichoanalitikus Egyesület*) in 1913, helping to institutionalize psychoanalysis in Hungary. In sum, the biographies of Ranschburg and Ferenczi—which will be continued in the following sections—reveal at least two important aspects of the state of psychology and psychoanalysis on the eve of the First World War. First, many of the lead-

ing academic and intellectual figures in Hungary during this period spent at least some time in Western European countries, which enabled them to keep up with the most exciting and most innovative developments in their field. Second, this enabled them to build up communities and institutions in Hungary that were on a par with the communities and institutions in the countries from which they had drawn their inspiration. Much of this was subject to change in the years to come.

2 The interwar period

The end of the First World War marked a political and intellectual rupture. The collapse of the Habsburg Empire led to a sequence of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary regimes. Initially, the Aster Revolution of October 1918 briefly established a liberal, independent republic. This government was replaced by a short-lived communist–socialist government under Béla Kun (the Hungarian Soviet Republic, March–August 1919), which attempted radical socialization but quickly collapsed amid foreign intervention and internal disorder. Its fall ushered in a violent counter-revolutionary period—the White Terror (1919–1921)—during which paramilitaries and state forces persecuted real and alleged leftists. Ultimately, the conservative restoration established a regency under Miklós Horthy. Over the following years, Horthy consolidated conservative, revisionist rule in the shadow of the Treaty of Trianon's massive territorial and economic losses, producing political stability of a decidedly authoritarian character throughout the 1920s. Notably, the regime also enacted antisemitic measures, including the Numerus Clausus Law of 1920, which limited university admission for Jewish students.

These events also had a profound impact on academic psychology and psychoanalysis. Once again, Sándor Ferenczi can serve as an illustrative example. During the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, he was appointed to the first university chair in psychoanalysis worldwide (for an overview of the events, including scans of historical documents, see Paukovics 2018). However, as the new conservative government annulled all appointments made during the communist–socialist regime, his tenure lasted barely 3 months and ended before he had had the opportunity to give his first lecture. Because of his political views and his Jewish heritage, Ferenczi must have feared retaliation but stayed in Hungary—whereas many other psychoanalysts with a similar background decided to leave, such as Mihály (Michael) Bálint (1896–1970) and Alice Bálint (1898–1939), who moved to Berlin (for an overview of this first wave of emigration, see Mészáros 2010a; for the Bálints, also see Borgos 2019). For the experimental psychologists, similar fates unfolded. To give but one example, Géza Révész (1878–1955) who had studied with Georg Elias Müller in Göttingen and who had been appointed professor in Budapest in 1918, left for the Netherlands, where he later co-founded the journal *Acta Psychologica*, which is still published today (Duijker 1955; Pléh 2009).

Although the historical events forced a significant number of psychologists into exile, psychological research continued in Hungary. In fact, academic psychology became more institutionalized and professionalized during this time, as evidenced, for example, by the founding of the Hungarian Psychological Society (*Magyar*

Pszichológiai Társaság) and its official journal, the *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle* (Hungarian Psychological Review), in 1928, with Pál Ranschburg serving as the society's first president. However, this does not imply that politics had no impact on psychology. At the very least, one can assume that those who developed into the key figures of the time possessed personal backgrounds compatible with the preferences of the conservative regime. This certainly applies to Dezső Várkonyi Hildebrand (1888–1971), a Benedictine monk, who is credited with organizing and establishing Hungary's first permanent institute of psychology at the University of Szeged in 1929 (Csomortáni 2009), and to Pál (Paul) Harkai Schiller (1908–1949), born into a Catholic family, who studied with Pál Ranschburg and then with Wolfgang Köhler in Berlin before establishing a modern experimental laboratory at the Péter Pázmány University in Budapest in 1936 (Dewsbury 1994; Pléh 2005; 2009). Later, Harkai Schiller was also involved in setting up institutes for aptitude testing in the Hungarian military forces. To avoid presenting too one-sided a picture, it should also be noted that the conservative atrocities had ceased by the mid-1920s and that the country entered a phase of political and economic consolidation, which prompted the return of some of those who had left the country. Among them were the Bálints, who contributed to the flourishing of Hungarian psychoanalysis between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s (Szokolszky 2016).

3 The Second World War

The late 1930s brought another period of tightening political control. Hungary's alliance with National Socialist Germany deepened as the economic situation became more difficult and as the government pursued revisionist goals to regain territories lost after the Treaty of Trianon. Hungary also participated alongside the Axis in wartime operations and sent forces to the Eastern Front, entangling the country further in the Second World War. Domestically, the government enacted a series of increasingly exclusionary anti-Jewish laws from 1938 onward that restricted employment, participation in public life, and civil rights. Yet, until the German occupation in March 1944, many Hungarian Jews experienced a legal and social situation that in some respects remained less catastrophic than that in occupied Poland or the Balkans. Once Germany took control of Hungary, however, Hungarian authorities willingly assisted SS-led operations: between May and July 1944, roughly 440,000 Jews were deported and murdered in concentration camps, most of them in Auschwitz. After a short interruption in the deportations, the fascist Arrow Cross Party was brought into power under German pressure and presided over further mass murder and terror until the country was defeated by Soviet military forces.

The introduction of increasingly restrictive anti-Jewish laws led to a new wave of emigration between 1938 and 1941 (for an overview, see Mészáros 2010a; 2014). Again, Mihály and Alice Bálint were among those who left the country—this time for Great Britain (Borgos 2019). Although Alice Bálint died of a ruptured aneurysm only a few months after the couple's emigration in August 1939, her husband was able to continue his successful career, later working at the Tavistock Clinic in London. However, Mihály Bálint not only lost his wife during this time but also his

parents, who committed suicide after the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944. Another notable example with a related but different fate is Lipót (Leopold) Szondi (1893–1986), who began his career as a disciple of Pál Ranschburg and later became not only a psychoanalyst but also the founder of the so-called "fate analysis" (see Kiss 2014; Szokolszky 2016). Szondi lost his professorship because of the anti-Jewish legislation in 1941. In June 1944, he and his family were sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. Following the payment of a substantial ransom, Szondi was among about 1700 Jews who were able to escape to Switzerland in December 1944, where Szondi settled permanently after the war (for the historical background of the rescue operation, see, for example, Braham 2004).

The complete drama of these years finds expression in the last chapter of Pál Ranschburg's life (see Lányi 2013; Szokolszky 2016). Although Ranschburg was the founding father of modern academic psychology in Hungary, a highly respected member of society and university life who had influenced several generations of scholars, had long converted to Christianity, and saw himself as a patriotic Hungarian, there was ultimately no way for him to escape the terror of his time. Over the years, Ranschburg was slowly but surely driven out of the university, had to move into the ghetto, and ultimately went into hiding together with his wife to avoid persecution and deportation. In this, he was supported—among others—by his former student Pál Harkai Schiller (Dewsbury 1994). However, Ranschburg died of blood poisoning in January 1945, just a week before the liberation of Budapest. His wife died soon after him from the same illness. Their deaths underscore how little protection social standing, professional achievement, or personal assimilation ultimately afforded during the Holocaust.

4 After the Second World War

The defeat of fascism and the proclamation of the Second Hungarian Republic in 1946 seemed to promise renewal. For a brief moment, intellectual and public life opened up toward pluralism. However, these hopes were steadily undermined by Soviet influence and communist "salami tactics," in which the Hungarian Communist Party used its control of key ministries, political policing, rigged elections, and legal pretexts to take an increasingly firm grip on the country. From about 1949 onward, the communist leadership under the guidance of Mátyás Rákosi imposed a Stalinist model: forced collectivization and nationalization (enacting 5-year plans and setting clear industrial priorities) combined with harsh political repression, show trials, and secret police purges. Rákosi's rule was encapsulated in the phrase "Whoever is not with us is against us" (in Hungarian: "*Aki nincs velünk, az ellenünk van*"). Economically, the early years of the communist dictatorship brought measurable industrial growth but also a general decline in living standards, causing widespread resentment and—especially after Stalin's death in 1953—a growing urge to become more independent from the influence of the Soviet Union.

Again, these developments were directly mirrored in the state of academic psychology and psychoanalysis (see Kovai 2019; Mészáros 2010b). In the years immediately following the Second World War, the academic journals and professional

organizations—such as the Hungarian Psychoanalytic Society and the Hungarian Psychological Society—resumed their work. Both psychology and psychoanalysis were reintroduced into university curricula and many representatives from both camps were highly engaged in public life, taking influential roles in the restructuring of mental health services and the education system. All this quickly changed after the formation of the communist regime. Both psychology and psychoanalysis were denounced as bourgeois pseudo-sciences that explained social problems in individualistic terms and that were incompatible with the dominant ideology. The Hungarian Psychoanalytic Association was dissolved in 1949, and psychoanalytic practice was banned until the early 1960s, during which time it was only continued in semi-clandestine ways. Likewise, the Hungarian Psychological Society was also dissolved, and the publication of the *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle* was discontinued. Although a few institutions and individuals managed to continue pursuing psychological work to a limited degree, the hopeful postwar visions were effectively brought to an end.

Two examples suffice to illustrate these abstract patterns. Although Pál Harkai Schiller initially stayed in Hungary after the end of the Second World War, he quickly realized that there was no future for him in his home country (see Dewsbury 1994; Pléh 2005; 2009). Together with his wife, he emigrated to the United States in 1947, where he enjoyed 2 more productive years before tragically dying in a skiing accident. A somewhat mirror-image case is that of Ferenc Mérei (1909–1986), who was born into a Jewish lower-middle-class family (see Borgos et al. 2006; Kovai 2019; Pléh 2020). Owing to Hungary's antisemitic Numerus Clausus Laws during the interwar period, he pursued his studies in Paris and earned his degree at the Sorbonne. In 1930, he joined the French Communist Party and became involved in underground political work. He later returned to Hungary, where he worked under Lipót Szondi. In 1942, he was sent to forced labor on the Soviet front. Two years later, he managed to escape and joined the Red Army. After returning to Hungary in 1945 as a devoted communist, he played a key role in reorganizing the country's education system in the years between 1945 and 1949. In 1950, following the campaign against psychology, Mérei was removed from all his professional posts. His case demonstrates that even enthusiasm for socialist ideals was not enough to shield one from suspicion and repression (for a similar, perhaps even more tragic case—because it ultimately ended in her suicide—see the life and work of psychoanalyst Lilly Hajdu, as portrayed, for instance, in Borgos 2021). As is so often the case, the revolution devoured its own children.

5 The Revolution of 1956 and its aftermath

The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, which was brutally ended by Soviet intervention, constituted both a national tragedy and a turning point. The revolution produced thousands of imprisonments, led to executions, and caused another massive wave of emigration. Yet, the subsequent regime of János Kádár pursued a more liberal form of socialism that traded strict ideological rule for improved living standards and limited freedoms. Economic reforms introduced market-oriented incentives and greater enterprise autonomy, raising consumption and expanding Western contacts while

retaining one-party rule. Although censorship and surveillance persisted, cultural life loosened and the public space broadened. These changes can be summarized by the reversal of the phrase quoted above, which now read: "Whoever is not against us is with us" (in Hungarian: "*Aki nincs ellenünk, az velünk van*"). By the 1980s, growing fiscal strain, foreign debt, and stagnating productivity eroded the regime's social contract, making space for opposition and for the negotiated transition of 1988–1990.

The emigration wave in the revolution's immediate aftermath is embodied, for instance, by András (André) Haynal (1930–2019) and Imre Szecsődy (1928–2021). Both were students at the time of the uprising, actively participated in the revolt, and then left the country. Haynal went to Switzerland, where he became a professor in Geneva as well as the president of the Swiss Society of Psychoanalysis (*Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Psychoanalyse*; see Griffin 2020); similarly, Szecsődy emigrated to Sweden, where he later served for 4 years as president of the Swedish Psychoanalytical Association (*Svenska Psykoanalytiska Föreningen*; Schubert and Werbart 2021). Within Hungary, the situation for psychology slowly changed from about 1960 onward (for an overview of this period, see, for example, Erős 2017; Kovai 2017; Laine-Frigren 2016; Máriási 2019; Pléh 2017). For instance, the Hungarian Psychological Society was reorganized, and the *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle* resumed publication. In 1963, the first psychology degree program was launched at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, albeit with small cohorts, typically consisting of only a few dozen students. As far as Hungarian psychological research is concerned, the number of publications in Russian and German declined after the late 1950s, whereas the number of publications in English increased significantly and continuously (Pléh 2017), indicating that Hungarian psychology was (re-)integrated into the broader international community, even as the discipline continued to operate within a socialist framework.

As one can imagine, there were different ways in which individual researchers navigated these developments and positioned themselves within the political and academic system. Ferenc Mérei, who had already—as mentioned above—been removed from all his professional posts in 1950, was sentenced to prison because of his participation in the revolution of 1956 and was only released as part of a general amnesty in 1963 (Borgos et al. 2006; Erős 2017; Kovai 2019). Because of his "criminal" past, however, he remained banned from holding positions at universities. Nevertheless, he managed to establish a laboratory at the National Institute of Psychiatry and Neurology (*Országos Ideg-és Elmegyógyintézet*) that played a key role in the re-emergence of Hungarian psychology, making Mérei "an informal 'guru'" (Erős 2017, p. 209). The story of Pál Gegesi Kiss (1900–1993) is a different one (Máriási 2016; 2019): Gegesi Kiss had originally studied medicine but soon developed a keen interest in child psychology. At the time of the reinstatement of psychology, Gegesi Kiss was not only a well-regarded physician and head of a pediatric clinic, but also politically well-connected, which made him a suitable figure for a leading role in the process. For instance, Gegesi Kiss served as the first president of the Hungarian Psychological Society after its reorganization, as well as the editor in chief of the *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle*. A third mode of dealing with the political and societal circumstances, which can be placed somewhere between Mérei and Gegesi Kiss, is

represented by Lajos Kardos (1899–1985; see Máriási 2019; Pléh 2016). Kardos, who had studied with Karl Bühler in Vienna and later worked with Lipót Szondi, managed to retain a small research group even in the years when psychology was more or less banned from the curricula, and was one of the key figures behind the introduction of the psychology program at Eötvös Loránd University. Interestingly, Kardos managed to walk the thin line between ideological over-adaptation and intellectual independence, not only in his professional activities but also in his academic publications (see, for example, Kardos 1957): At a time when Pavlovianism was the state-imposed doctrine in psychology, he successfully integrated the latest (behaviorist) research into the ideologically demanded framework. In sum, these three figures—Ferenc Mérei, Pál Gegesi Kiss, and Lajos Kardos—exemplify some of the diverse strategies that Hungarian psychologists employed to navigate the political circumstances and constraints.

6 Discussion and outlook

Apart from a few brief exceptions, Hungary was ruled by more or less autocratic or dictatorial regimes throughout the twentieth century. As I have tried to demonstrate in the present paper, these political changes repeatedly reconfigured the institutional and personal landscape of psychology. To put it more strongly, resistance toward psychology (and particularly also psychoanalysis) was a general feature of the different autocratic regimes in Hungary during the twentieth century. Notably, this resistance was not always clear-cut in the sense that left-wing regimes favored one kind of psychology whereas right-wing regimes favored another kind of psychology. Although the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic promoted psychoanalysis and appointed Sándor Ferenczi to the first university chair in psychoanalysis worldwide, for instance, it quickly fell out of favor in the communist years under Mátyás Rákosi, severely damaging a school of thought that had always had a strong following in Hungary. In a similar vein, Ferenc Mérei—a committed leftist—was first persecuted by conservative–fascist forces during the Second World War, only to be harassed and silenced by the communists a couple of years later. At the same time, history also demonstrates that psychologists often found ways to continue their research even under difficult circumstances. As already mentioned in the introduction, the main purpose of the present paper was to provide a *meta-perspective in broad strokes*, which means that I focused on general developmental trajectories as well as individual biographies that helped to illustrate these trajectories. Nevertheless, taking a deeper look at thematic shifts could most certainly add nuance to the narrative that I have presented here.

In addition, history did of course not end after the fall of the Iron Curtain. With respect to Hungarian psychology, at least two further chapters would be of interest: first, the two decades following the end of communism, in which Hungary showed a clear tendency toward Euro-Atlantic integration (e.g., becoming a member of NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004); and second, the time since Viktor Orbán's return to power in 2010. As far as the first of these phases is concerned, one could debate whether this was a phase in which Hungarian psychology expe-

rienced an unprecedented boom that strengthened the international competitiveness and visibility of the discipline (see, for example, Pléh 2023), or whether taking international (Western) psychology as a role model might have also meant forgetting all too quickly about the intellectual traditions that Hungarian psychology possessed precisely because of its complicated history (see, for example, Kovai 2017). As far as the second phase is concerned, the nationalist and conservative policies of the FIDESZ government have had a massive impact on academia, as illustrated, for example, by the forced relocation of the Central European University to Vienna or the restructuring of the independent research institutions of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (for a view from within, discussing how academic freedom can be preserved in the current political context, see Kende and Pántya 2025). A systematic analysis of these recent developments, however, lies beyond the scope of the present paper and must therefore be reserved for future research.

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