

**UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE**  
**Fakulta sociálních věd**  
**Institut mezinárodních studií**

**PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ Magisterki PRÁCE**  
**(Posudek oponenta)**

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Xiaopeng Ding

Název práce: “Alone Amid the Storm: The Hungarian Uprising and the Western Powers”

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Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce): György Tóth, PhD, Department of American Studies

I corrected and commented on the thesis in pencil in the bound hard copy thesis. Here I will only provide a glossary and a list of my most substantive comments and critiques.

My evaluation of this thesis is based on the widely used and standard Anglo-American argumentative essay writing style and academic practice, which I have acquired in my training at Eötvös Loránd University of the Sciences in Budapest, Hungary (MA, 2003) and subsequently at The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, U.S.A. (MA, 2008, PhD, 2012).

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle): [From the Abstrakt:] “The purpose of this thesis is to review and revise all historical evidence hitherto available concerning the international aspects of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. Its scope includes several layers, including how the peoples of the West, as well as their leaders, behaved during the crisis. It will look at the international arena in 1956 from the Hungarian perspective, as well as attempt to come to a historical explanation for Western, and specifically American actions during the uprising, and the precepts which led to them. In doing so, it shall in particular take a careful revision of the long-standing charges leveled against the West, concerning its alleged passivity, hypocrisy, or willingness to escalate the crisis via the controversial broadcasts of Radio Free Europe.

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):

#### Focus and scope

The author’s genre (MA thesis – length), his scope and focus are so big that they do not really allow for in-depth research of *primary* sources. The author should have explicitly explained that his thesis is primarily a study of *secondary* sources / the current body of scholarship on the topic.

#### Title

Since the title of any essay is one of the most important things in it (it gives an immediate sense to the reader about the topic and the thesis argument), the author should have taken better care in creating a suitable title.

A title needs to give information that can be easily identified. “The Hungarian Uprising” is simply too vague to denote the specific historical event that occurred in October – November 1956. If the author cares to present the Magyar perspective of the event, he knows that any Hungarian would give him a long lecture on how many different events in Hungarian history could be called “The Hungarian Uprising” – the list may include uprisings by the peasants headed by György Dózsa in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; the war of independence led by Ferenc Rákóczi, the 1848 revolution and war of independence, and perhaps even the Hungarian Soviet commune of 1919. Thus, the term without a year is simply too general and vague to denote the events in 1956.

#### “Introduction”

2 – “the Hungarian nation and the Hungarian people were unambiguously hostile to the ideology of Communism” This is such a general (and ideological!) claim that it is impossible to prove. In many countries, some segment of the population at some or other point in history was hostile or receptive to one or another ideology. I suspect that such statements come from the author’s sources, who may have projected their own anti-Communism back in time and generalized it for the whole of the Magyar population. This is presentism and ideological bias in scholarship.

3- The author uses the Hungarian Soviet commune/proletarian dictatorship of 1919 as proof that Hungarians had been hostile to Communism – but he could just as logically use it to support the claim that they have been friendly to it! In other words, the author’s argument lacks logic here.

2-4 – It is understandable that the author has to set up the wider historical context of Hungary with a broad stroke. Yet he makes claims/statements (such as about the widespread crimes against civilians by the Soviet Red Army during the liberation of Hungary) that are serious enough that they require the citing of sources. The lack of sources puts into doubt the author’s objectivity as an historian – and his use of sources.

4- In the Anglo-American academic essay writing tradition, the author should craft his thesis sentence carefully. I highly recommend using the formula “In this paper I will argue / prove that...” or “This essay will argue / prove that...” The thesis sentence should make a scholarly claim that the rest of her essay will prove. This sentence should occur (in some version) both in the various abstracts of the thesis AND in the first few pages of the actual thesis – on page 4 at the latest. A lack of such a thesis sentence severely weakens the thesis.

#### “Historiography”

17 – The author does an impressive job of surveying the (especially Hungarian) historiography of the 1956 Uprising, including the shifts in interpretation and emphases, and the major historiographical questions. At the end of his overview, he observes that the Hungarian history writing about 1956 seems to fit into the larger somber and rather disillusioned narrative of Hungary’s abandonment by the West at crucial point of that nation’s history. What is needed here is at least one sentence in which the author makes it specific and clear if his thesis confirms or contradicts this grand narrative of Hungarian history. He should be brave enough to make such a statement – after all, he has studied the historiography in sufficient detail to critique it!

#### “The Press, The Public, and the Crisis of Communism”

Especially in his introduction to this chapter, the author seems to equate the Western media’s image of the 1956 Hungarian events with the Western public opinion about them. These two have a tricky and debatable relationship: the media both reflects AND shapes public opinion. If the author seriously wanted to research public opinion, he should have attempted to access public opinion surveys from 1956-57 (perhaps the Eisenhower government or his presidential campaign conducted such polling?!), or check the readers’ letters/opinions published in some major Western newspapers. Otherwise, he cannot really make claims about 1956 in public opinion.

At best, the author should define this chapter’s topic as the Western media’s image of 1956, with indications of how the media may have shaped popular perceptions of the crisis.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

- Title: since the title of any essay is one of the most important things in it (it gives an immediate sense to the reader about the topic and the thesis argument), the author should have taken better care in creating a suitable title.

It is apparent that he took the pre-colon phrase from the Petőfi quote the author used (commendable use of a motto) - he should have placed the phrase in quotes even if he slightly modified it.

#### Text, footnoting, and bibliography

- It is obvious that the author really mastered the (especially Hungarian) historiography of the subject. He should take care to cite *each and every* idea and argument that is not his – everything that he takes from other scholars or primary sources. If he fails to cite someone else’s idea or argument, he will be vulnerable to accusations of plagiarism. Please cite everything. This is all the more important, because it allows the reader to see *your own analyses*, which, I think, are remarkable!

- The author should make sure to clearly indicate in his bibliography, which sources are primary sources. At the Master’s level, he is expected to use both primary sources and secondary/scholarly sources. It is not clear which

of his sources are primary, which are mixed primary and analytical (for example, a republication of primary texts with scholarly introduction or commentary), and which are purely scholarship.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

“Introduction”

This part seems to have been written in more of a hurry than the rest of the thesis – it needs refining in its language and claims (including citations)

Thesis Argument

4- In the Anglo-American academic essay writing tradition, the author should craft his thesis sentence carefully. I highly recommend using the formula “In this paper I will argue / prove that...” or “This essay will argue / prove that...” The thesis sentence should make a scholarly claim that the rest of her essay will prove. This sentence should occur (in some version) both in the various abstracts of the thesis AND in the first few pages of the actual thesis – on page 4 at the latest. A lack of such a thesis sentence severely weakens the thesis.

Analyses

- In his thesis, the author gives insightful and brilliant analyses. It is sometimes problematic that his text does not clearly distinguish between *speculative analysis* (reasonable scholarly assumptions based on historical and diplomatic context and patterns) and *documented facts* (recorded in primary sources or established by scholars). To clean up this ambiguity, the author should include more footnotes, citing either the source or explaining the logic of his analytical assumptions.

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

- Please formulate a clear thesis argument in a maximum of two sentences. Please make sure to actually make a scholarly argument. Please use the formula: “In my thesis I argue/prove that...” and finish the sentence with a scholarly claim that your thesis proves.

- How do you think the media analysis you conducted here can reveal popular opinion about the Hungarian events in 1956? Are there any other methods of research that can be effective in recovering public opinion?

- Please tell us what primary sources you used for your research, and what challenges these primary sources posed in your thinking and writing about the Hungarian events of 1956.

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA  
(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

Since the author’s thesis is overall impressive, well-organized and well-written, I wholeheartedly recommend it for a defense, with a recommended grade of “excellent” / “výborně.”

Datum: June 7, 2013

Podpis: György Tóth

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Pozn.: Hodnocení píše k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.