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# Intellectuals in a New Democracy: The Democratic Charter in Hungary

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This paper outlines the history of a political movement of intellectuals, the Democratic Charter. The movement which peaked from 1991 to 1994, served as different groups' umbrella organization to their various demands: a reawakening of a formerly politically active civil society that seemed to have been drained as a result of party pluralism (which came into being in 1989); an articulation of a democratic consensus that could surpass partial interests; an opposition to authoritarian tendencies; an emphasis on the idea of participatory democracy as opposed to the practice of an élitist democracy based on the idea of representation; and, finally, the creation of an experimental field for a possible socialist-liberal political alliance within a political movement. Social, cultural, and political goals were mixed in the movement, of which not only participants but also organizers were often unaware. This paper delineates and analyses these varied characteristics through an empirical analysis of the Democratic Charter.<sup>1</sup>

## The Need for the Democratic Charter

### PROBLEMS OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS

The Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the representative party of Hungarian liberal intellectuals, which had initiated the political change in 1989 and was considered its true advocate by many, lost the first free elections in 1990 and became an opposition party in Parliament. A coalition government took office in Hungary. Coalition parties included groups that actively opposed the János Kádár regime from 1956 to 1989, as well as groups, whose main strategy was that of survival at all costs and whose set of values was closer to those of pre-

1. This paper is closely connected to my earlier study, András Bozóki, "Intellectuals and Democratization in Hungary," in Chris Rootes, Howard Davis, eds. *A New Europe? Social Change and Political Transformation* (London: UCL Press, 1994), 149–75.

communist Hungary and its paternalistic policy led by the descendants of the landed gentry who wished to maintain state intervention in all walks of life. The leaders of the SZDSZ, many of whom had come from the democratic opposition to the totalitarian state, realized rather early that their party would have to change its stance of opposition to the *government* to opposition of the *system*. Signs suggested that centralizing efforts of the government, dominated by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) that took over in 1990, as well as the MDF extremists' antiparliamentarian, populist rhetoric might be leading to the build-up of a new nomenclatura, the acquisition of economic power, and the stabilization of a system that seemed democratic but was, in fact, semi-totalitarian. The fact that the idea of opposition to the system could resurface indicated that the group of intellectuals who had been extremely successful in 1989–90 in opposition faced difficulties in finding their places both in the new system and in the quickly forming political élite.<sup>2</sup> Members of the SZDSZ and part of the public could not understand why the party, having achieved considerable success with its anticommunism stance in 1989–90, concentrated on institutional rather than personnel changes and why it turned against both the new government and the new regime. In 1991, intellectuals, earlier sympathetic, now turned their backs on the party; the popularity of the SZDSZ was quickly waning.

The political heirs of the former democratic opposition who shared the principles of a liberal economic policy suffered additional setbacks when the majority of their adversaries from 1989, representatives (though not the first rank) of a "new technocracy" consisting of members of the then Communist party (MSZMP), found their places in the new hierarchy and built links with the first representatives of a slowly forming "new bourgeoisie" rather easily. These people would form the "new clientele."<sup>3</sup> The SZDSZ's main political adversary, the MDF proclaimed "a country of owners" and the creation of a national middle class and national bourgeoisie; following heavy internal fights and realizing that the program could not be implemented in the short run, they reconciled with some groups of the "new technocrats" who had at-

tained considerable influence during the last decade of the Kádár regime. The radical populist wing of the party, on the other hand, exerted strong pressure in a rather militant and discriminatory way to carry out the original program. Government policy fluctuated between permissive methods of embourgeoisement and aggressive interference, sometimes replacing one with the other at random. The opposition's playing field gradually narrowed in 1989.

In the 1980s, dissident intellectuals led an underground way of life. Their independence ensured that they had been the most outspoken critics of the Kádár regime. As a group, they served as an example for Hungarian journalists in the transitional period and efficiently mobilized the public in the autumn of 1989 to terminate Communist party privileges, by insisting on a referendum (which was an absolute success for the opposition), they blocked the way to a premature presidential election planned by those in power. This same group openly supported a four-day-long unrest following price increases during which taxi drivers blocked the main roads and bridges of the capital, bringing traffic to a standstill in Budapest; by supporting the taxi drivers, the group helped prevent the government's use of force against those taking part in the blockade.<sup>4</sup> The democratic opposition in the 1980s was able to stimulate a political, though rather isolated, public, creating the missing link between state and society.

When political changes started in 1988, the opposition did not establish a party but a movement called the Network of Free Initiatives (SZKH) in order to coordinate the activity of politically active civil groups that had been working informally. The Network later gave birth to the SZDSZ, while its leaders maintained an underground attitude for a long time. The popularity of the new party grew as long as it was able to give an underground interpretation to its politics. The taxi drivers' blockade was the last chance for that; being in "opposition to the regime" or demanding to take over the government did not prove to be effective in this respect—society was unimpressed. A professional political élite and bureaucracy slowly came into being, which hindered the development of a critical intellectual attitude. It was a painful experience for the party leadership to realize that the situation had changed and that a considerable number of party sympathizers had

4. András Bozóki and Eva Kovács, "A pártok megnyilvánulásai a taxisblokáid idején" (The Political Parties in the Media During the Taxi Drivers' Blockade), *Szociológiai Szemle* 1:1 (1991): 109–26.

2. József Böröcz, "Vanguard of the Construction of Capitalism: The Hungarian Intellectuals' Trip to Power," *Critical Sociology*, 18:1 (Spring 1992): 111–16.

3. Erzsébet Szalai, *Uvelágazás: Hatalom és értelmiség az államszocializmus után* (Road Junction: Domination and the Intellectuals after State Socialism) (Szombathely: Savaria University Press, 1994).

grown disillusioned with politics. As has been pointed out by Timothy Garton Ash, circumstances in a parliamentary democracy demand, so to say, the replacement of antipolitical diction with an openly political one.<sup>5</sup> Both the party leadership and liberal intellectuals were dissatisfied with the state of affairs because they felt that the principles so successfully followed in 1989 were disintegrating, falling victim to the struggle for power.

#### LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS AND THE MEDIA

Following the elections in 1990, the media, which regained its freedom only two years before, provided a major opportunity for former dissidents. A feverish political interest prevailed in the *intelligentsia*.<sup>6</sup> Despite a hitherto unseen proliferation of interesting studies in Hungarian magazines and journals after the fall of the system built on censorship and self-censorship, the majority of intellectuals, watched political programs on television and read daily papers rather than magazines and journals.

The liberation of 1988–89 offered an ethical revolution for the majority of the media. Young journalists came to the fore, and older ones tried to change their attitude and give up their past submissive practices. This meant that newspapers focused on news, interesting items, and sensations, not propaganda. Most of the papers were strongly critical of the new government, which the ruling coalition rather resented. Government politicians failed to realize that, given the new competition among newspapers, criticism would attract more readers than the apologies that fed-up journalists had been writing during the years of the dictatorship. Thus, a considerable part of the media became “opposition” naturally, due to the very nature of democracy.

On the other hand, cracks appeared among the groups of the liberal intellectuals, which had never been completely homogeneous. When some of those groups were organized as a government coalition and some, as political opposition, a difference between their norms and models became apparent. The parties and persons who had formed the

5. Timothy Garton Ash, *A balsors édes hasznai* (The Sweet Benefits of the Bad Fate) (Budapest: Századvég, 1991).

6. György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, “Ertelmiség és dominancia a posztkommunista társadalmakban” (Intellectuals and Domination in Post-Communist Societies), *Politikatudományi Szemle* 1:1 (1992): 9–28.

government coalition as “natural allies” could be divided further into two groups. One group was comprised of the followers of Prime Minister József Antall. They advocated a model of Western social market economy and multiparty democracy, but their rhetoric was that of prewar politics and their symbols those of the “good old times.” They used a language of “restoration-modernization” that expressed the conservative values of a return to democracy, which, however, was alien to the approach and, particularly, the language of the media after the political restructuring. No conservatism linked to modernity could come into being in Hungary; indeed conservatism in its traditional form appeared opposed to modernity. The part of the press called “liberal” was suspicious of the conservatism of the Antall government not because it could not accept a conservatism using a modern language, but because it could not believe, because of the traditional language, that it *was* a modern conservatism. Further, for historical reasons, its democratic grounds were felt to be rather unstable. In the second group were critical intellectuals turned into government politicians; they preserved their critical attitude, but it had been based on a romantic, antimodernist *Gemeinschaft* idea even in the years of the Kádár regime.<sup>7</sup> Between the media and some politician-intellectuals turning toward populism basic differences—not only linguistic and stylistic ones—existed.

These factors and a campaign against journalists by the MDF even before the elections strengthened the tendency of the majority of the media to sympathize with the opposition parties, who embraced modernity as a model and refused to use archaic symbols and language.<sup>8</sup> It was a question of two different approaches to history. One said that the four decades of communism had interrupted Hungarian history, involved a complete break with its continuity, and, therefore, history had to begin at the point where it had been broken. The other thought that communism had been a distorted kind of modernization, which—despite its catastrophic effects—resulted in modifications in the structure and values of the society, so that after its fall, the existing, postcommunist status quo had to be taken as a starting point for following Western norms. Both the media and the opposition parties in-

7. Ellen Comisso, Steven Dubb, and Judy McTigue, “The Illusion of Populism in Latin America and East-Central Europe,” in Gy.Szoboszlai ed., *Flying Blind: Emerging Democracies in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: HPSA, 1992), 27–57.

8. Zoltán Farkas, “Kis magyar magántörténelem. Öt levél” (Little Hungarian Private History: Five Letters), *Mozgó Világ* (January 1993): 5–21.

terpreted the 1989 political changes in the latter way. Although political restructuring ended by restructuring the country's institutions, a "fight of cultures" between norms and models continued, and some intellectuals turned politicians were especially sensitive to that.<sup>9</sup>

In the short run, all these causes resulted in a state of affairs sometimes described as an "interpenetration" of liberal intellectuals, politicians, and the media, which exerted an adverse effect on the functional differentiation of modern political life.<sup>10</sup> Maintaining that interpenetration served the interests of nonparty member critical intellectuals, who were trying to maintain their influence in the power structure, and of many politicians, who encouraged or accepted it as they thought they needed the *intelligentsia* to help them shape public opinion, because they felt their support too weak. A complete break, a real differentiation between politicians and intellectuals obviously needs a strongly pluralistic society to give time for the media and political institutions to crystallize their functional roles. Breaking down the alliance was not in the interest of either player then, though some political-minded intellectuals had become dissatisfied even with the opposition parties. A withdrawal from parties to a "political society" had begun.

Critical intellectuals had to set out new forms of action, a new strategy to enforce their political interests, one would not restrict them to different professional areas of politics or trade but would leave an open path for them to play both parts.<sup>11</sup> A specific intellectual movement, the Democratic Charter, was meant to serve that goal.

## The History of the Democratic Charter

### FROM NEED TO ALLIANCE: THE FIRST MONTHS

Some editors of former samizdat Eastern European journals met in Budapest at the beginning of August 1991. At the conference, the author György Konrád, then the president of International Pen Club and

9. Zoltán Farkas, "Állóháború" (Trench Warfare), in Sándor Kurtán et al., eds., *Magyarország politikai évkönyve* (The Political Yearbook of Hungary) (Budapest: Ökonomie Alapítvány—Economix Rt. 1991), 207–12.

10. Béla Pokol, *Péna és politika* (Money and Politics) (Budapest: Aula, 1993).

11. György Konrád and Iván Szelényi, *The Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1979).

a member of the SZDSZ National Council, proposed a Central and Eastern European Democratic Charter setting forth in a joint statement the minimum requirements of democracy for the postcommunist countries of the region.<sup>12</sup> Konrád wished to model the Charter on previous solidarity initiatives of the opposition in order to ease newly arising ethnic tensions that were about to bring armed conflict in several places. Participants, however, rejected the proposal saying, "it's no use enforcing a romantic role of intellectuals that used to be topical in the past but is not so any more." They argued that "key issues are now in the hands of professional politicians and the whole idea would come to some aborted drive of the highbrow."<sup>13</sup>

What did not seem a feasible international project became topical in Hungarian domestic policy a few weeks later. A few days after the failed Soviet coup, Imre Kónya, the head of the parliamentary faction of the largest government party, the MDF, published a paper urging "a stricter" policy by MDF regarding privatization, the mass media, and punishment of the past regime's guilty persons.<sup>14</sup> The paper caused a shock because Kónya, who had not been known as somebody to agree with the views of MDF extremists represented by István Csurka or those of the center of the government and the MDF, identified himself with views regarded earlier as radical. He emphasized that those steps had to be taken even if the majority of Hungarian society was against them; further, he said, Western responses should not be feared as Europe had already recognized Hungary as a democratic state.

The Kónya paper was interpreted by SZDSZ leaders as a threat. János Kis, the president of the party, proposed and the executive body of the party decided, in order to prevent a shift to the right by the government coalition and authoritarian tendencies in the shift's wake, to appeal to democratic citizens by issuing an open Charter stating that democratic restructuring had not been completed. To support their proposal, two leaders of the party analysed authoritarian tendencies in the MDF in a lengthy article.<sup>15</sup> Although some intellectuals, especially

12. Mihály Kornis, "A Demokratikus kártya" (The Democratic Card) (interview with András Vágvölgyi B.) *Magyar Narancs*, 11 January 1992.

13. György Konrád, interview with author, 23 November 1992.

14. Imre Kónya, "Az igazat és csakis a tiszta igazat" (Truth, Only the Truth), *Magyar Hírlap*, 9 September 1991.

15. Tamás Bauer and János Kis, "A magyar demokrácia védelmében" (In Defense of Hungarian Democracy), *Magyar Hírlap*, 9 September 1991.

those close to the government parties but also others, doubted the correctness of their findings,<sup>16</sup> the authors refused to change their views.<sup>17</sup> On analyzing the situation, leading politicians of the former communist party, the Hungarian Socialist party (MSZP) joined SZDSZ leaders.<sup>18</sup> The arguments by SZDSZ representatives, however, included an important statement addressed directly to the critical intellectuals of 1989: "The group of liberal intellectuals, who have done so much in the press, in clubs, and other public forums to prepare the ground for restructuring during the late Kádár period, split as soon as political changes took place and have been unable to recover from the split to this very day. Some of them have been absorbed by the opposition parties. Some stayed out and turned their back on party politics. Those who are in often fail to see what is outside Parliament, those who are out are increasingly antagonistic to Parliament and the whole new political structure." In order to bridge the gap between insiders and outsiders, Bauer and Kis proposed a division of labor. "Intellectuals working within the parties should realize that, lacking support of independent intellectuals shaping the public view, their voices are crying in the wilderness. Nonparty member intellectuals should realize that their fate is also at stake in political struggles, and it is no use maintaining their independence by saying six of one and half a dozen of the other."<sup>19</sup>

This proposal still used the old language of dissidents by speaking about insiders and outsiders and not making a distinction between intellectuals and politicians. If one accepts a definition of an intellectual as one who secures his given social position by his transcontextual knowledge alone politicians can no longer be considered professionals. A politician's social-political position is legalized by the voters rather than by his professional knowledge.<sup>20</sup> It is true even if 90 percent of the Hungarian M.P.s elected in 1990 had a professional university degree,<sup>21</sup> and often behaved as political minded intellectuals rather than

16. András Körösnéni, "Fenyeget-e a diktatúra?" (Is There a Danger of Dictatorship?), *Népszabadság*, 4 October 1991.

17. Tamás Bauer and János Kis, "Vakok legyünk vagy szabadok?" (Shall We Blind or Free?), *Népszabadság*, 10 October 1991.

18. Judit N. Kosa, "Az MSZP a Democritus Charta mellett (The MSZP to Support the Democratic Charter), *Magyar Nemzet*, 12 September 1991.

19. Bauer and Kis, "A magyar."

20. Konrad and Szelényi, *Intellectuals on the Road*, 49.

21. Akos Róna-Tas, "The Selected and the Elected: The Making of the New Parliamentary Elite in Hungary," *East European Politics and Societies* 5:3 (Fall 1991): 357-93.

politicians. Kis and Bauer's paper, however, was not a sociological analysis but a political article aiming to mobilize people. "All who *are for freedom* and against totalitarian rule by communists or anybody else shall join forces to defend democracy" (underlined by A.B.).<sup>22</sup> Feeling a growing political apathy and disillusionment in the country, the authors wanted professionals who were increasingly distancing themselves from politics to return to the ranks of supporters of democratic, especially opposition, politics by taking part in the proposed public demonstration. Party executives emphasized that their initiative was not antiparliamentarian and lay stress on the collaboration of individuals committed to the same cause rather than on party politics. Iván Pető of the SZDSZ said, "although the idea of establishing a Democratic Charter was born in the SZDSZ, it is not intended to be apparently linked to the party. Alliance of Free Democrats' members would sign the Charter as individuals but the SZDSZ would not be signatory as a party, a political organization."<sup>23</sup> At the same time the Publicity Club, organized by journalists, published a statement condemning the principles of the Kónya paper, but their call did not have a major effect.

The document, completed two weeks later, was put together primarily by well-known members of the former democratic opposition with assistance from authors like György Konrád and Mihály Kornis. The title of the document was a reference to the Czech Charter 77, one of the outstanding initiatives of the struggle for freedom in Eastern and Central Europe.<sup>24</sup> It then was debated on two occasions in a hall of the Merlin theatre in Budapest; a wide range of intellectuals participated. During the debate a difference of opinion arose between liberal and socialist-minded participants on whether social rights could be regarded as an inherent part of democracy. In the end a proposal by journalist Katalin Bossányi, a former socialist M.P., demanding a minimum of social rights was included in the text while some antigovernment phrases in the introduction were omitted. The participants wanted to publish a generally acceptable document that could be signed by everybody, including members of the ruling parties.

22. Bauer and Kis, "A magyar."

23. Iván Pető, interview by Attila Farkas, "Demokratikus Charta a jövő héten" (Democratic Charter in the Next Week), *Magyar Hírlap*, 13 September 1991.

24. János Kis, interview by Attila Farkas, "A harmincnégyek levelével kezdődött" (It Started with a Letter of 34 Intellectuals), *Magyar Hírlap*, 9 January 1992.

The Democratic Charter was issued on 26 September 1991, signed by 162 mostly left-wing and liberal intellectuals. The full text was published the next day in four national dailies: socialist *Népszabadság* and *Népszava*, liberal *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Pesti Hírlap*, which used to be close to the government but was basically independent at that time. The document listed seventeen criteria of democracy in different areas of society. The opening lines explaining the need for a Charter read as follows:

"We, signatories to the Charter, Hungarian Democrats, independent of our party politics, believe that the democratic process is held back in our country. Many have turned away from politics not only as a result of our declining living standards, but also because they do not believe this to be a democracy. We know that, as in all historical transformations, this is a decisive period in our history that brings not only hardship but benefits as well. We would like to safeguard them, and thus we deem it necessary to make public the sort of Hungarian Republic we want." (see Appendix 1 for full text.)

The declaration was signed by 4000 people by early December. Although its text was not openly antigovernment, Prime Minister Antall thought it was. He called it "a collection of elementary constitutional theses" that could be signed by practically anybody and was therefore meaningless; on the other hand, he considered it an opposition action directed against the government that coalition sympathizers could not stand for. He took the stance that *there is* democracy now and not that *there will be* when the conditions in its seventeen points were met; and if *there is* democracy, whoever doubts its existence questions indirectly the democratic legality of the government and existing institutions and is antidemocratic. Democracy was a political concept for the prime minister and his supporters, based on institutions and representation, while for the signatories of the Charter it was a wider, social concept based on civil participation in a process that "can never be ended by nature."<sup>25</sup> The existence of political democracy in Hungary was not questioned by the signatories, they themselves had fought for its birth in the 1980s. They, however, felt a need to identify with the role of a *critical intelligentsia* and to maintain that identify by

25. Iván Vitányi, "Egy mondat a demokráciáról" (One Sentence on Democracy), *Magyar Hírlap*, 6 December 1991.

changing from being advocates of political democracy to advocates of social democracy.

Both political and critical intellectual motivations were inseparably mixed in the Charter from the minute it was born. Politicians supporting the Charter were probably endeavoring to widen the political base of opposition politics and regarded the Charter as a *means* to that end, while the critical intellectuals were unwilling to interpret it in terms of party politics (or if they were, they did not reveal it) and regarded the Charter as a new "public social" form of a critical intellectual identity—as an opportunity for the *intelligentsia* to break away from partial party truth and continue to be a representative of some "universal truth." In this sense the Charter gained an independent life, turning from a means to an end. As one of the signatories, Sándor Radnóti said, "The Kónya paper made the Charter a topical issue, but it did not merely intend to be another topical response given to a topical issue but a call to mobilize people and lay down some basic principles."<sup>26</sup>

In addition to shared ideals and a critical attitude, the Charter had another, less explicit but important generational relevance. Tivadar Farkasházy one signatory, and later a spokesman, said in an interview: "I feel some anger inside, as it is my generation that should be governing the country now. The group of people termed "the Big Generation" should shoulder the burden and the responsibility. Instead, what happened was that an even older group of people said it was their turn in the dodgem."<sup>27</sup>

Following Antall's response, whether to sign the document turned into a political, moreover, a loyalty issue: therefore, the representatives of the government coalition and their sympathizers did not sign. The action seemed to be "highbrow" intellectual initiative that was going nowhere. When some of the Charter signatories held a press conference on 29 October 1991, only a dozen people were interested. On 30 November however, when Antall dismissed the president of the independent National Bank of Hungary György Surányi, an extremely well-qualified economist, because he had signed the Democratic Charter, the slumbering initiative was given a new impetus. Antall

26. Sándor Radnóti, interview, *168 óra*, 15 October 1991.

27. Tivadar Farkasházy, interview by László Kisbali, "A remény udvariatsága" (The Unpoliteness of Hope), *Beszélt*, 23 November 1991.

thought Surányi's signing an act of disloyalty: "If somebody is crying for freedom at a place where there is freedom, that person has become the victim of a misconception or is lying. Neither the president of an independent National Bank, nor any member of the government can give their name to such a document."<sup>28</sup> Csurka, the leader of MDF radicals, used harsher wording: "It should be realized that the Hungarian people authorized the MDF at free elections to govern the country. Overemphasizing a need for professionalism is a dirty trick by the Bolshevik."<sup>29</sup> The signatories to the Charter, however, thought their earlier fears had come true: "The Prime Minister proved there was no freedom of speech in the country by relieving from his position the President of the National Bank for his doubts about the freedom of speech in Hungary", said Konrád.<sup>30</sup> He believed the government ruthlessly wanted to implement antidemocratic goals. Both parties thought they were true democrats and wanted to protect democracy against each other.<sup>31</sup>

The cashiering of Surányi caused a scandal in domestic policy. It is of secondary importance to us whether his signing the Charter was the real reason or only a pretext.<sup>32</sup> In response, the leading bodies of the opposition parties joined the signatories of the Democratic Charter, which enhanced its political weight. Signatories protested against the government valuing economic players by their political loyalty rather than by their performance. Dailies published the seventeen points of the Charter again. A group of economists turned to M.P.s in an open letter warning against "the independence of the National Bank being endangered by political interests."<sup>33</sup> At an impromptu press conference of some signatories on 2 December, following a strategy meeting, Konrád made three proposals: 1) the Democratic Charter should be established as an organization with spokespersons to speak out on topical issues from time to time; 2) neighboring Central and East European

28. József Antall, "Fel kellett menteni" (*He Had to Be Dismissed*), *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 December 1991.

29. István Csurka, interview, *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 December 1991.

30. György Konrád, interview, *Magyar Hírlap*,

31. András Bozóki, "Democrats against Democracy? Civil Protest in Hungary since 1990," in Gerd Meyer, ed., *Die politischen Kulturen Ostmitteleuropas im Umbruch* (Political Cultures of East Central Europe in Transition) (Basel and Tübingen: Francke, 1993), 229–48.

32. Tamás Bauer, "Változik a kormány káderpolitikája" (The Cadre-Policy of the Cabinet is in Change), *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 December 1991.

33. Declaration of Tamás Bácskai, et al., *Népszabadság*, 3 December 1991.

countries should start their own Charters; and 3) collaboration between such movements should be launched.<sup>34</sup>

A group of Charter signatories, including a number of journalists, issued a protest statement on the following day condemning the way the President of the Bank had been relieved, calling Charter sympathizers to join, and announcing a rally to clarify appropriate further actions.<sup>35</sup> They also published a full-page political advertisement, whose words *It can be your turn tomorrow* reminded people of the symbolic import of the removal of Surányi.<sup>36</sup>

This rally took place at the Budapest Town Hall on 7 December 1991. The Mayor, Gábor Demszky of the SZDSZ, one of the democratic opposition of the past, let Charter organizers use the Town Hall free of charge—as he would on many future occasions.<sup>37</sup> More than 1,000 people (not only intellectuals) took part and agreed that the Charter, which had started as a single move of protest, needed to be changed into a movement initiative. In his opening address Konrád identified the Charter not as a party or political movement but as "a spiritual alliance of democrats," which, he said, was a kind of "*shield of the mind*", an exchange of views among citizens, a "genre for self-arrangement of the civilian society." Several speakers reiterated that the Charter was not an opposition move but a *common denominator* of the principles of democracy and reminded the audience of the intellectual movements of the 1980s. It was declared that former dissidents and their sympathizers did not wish to be subjected to power again and might achieve their goal: to unite the parties that had lost the elections. Two politicians, M.P.s remarked on the relationship between the Charter and the political institutions: "The Charter is gaining importance as the crisis of parliamentary democracy is growing in Hungary" (Miklós Tamás Gáspár of the SZDSZ); "The Charter cannot replace either parliamentary opposition or any element of the political institutions"<sup>38</sup> (Gábor Fodor of the Federation of Young Democrats).

Spokespersons of the Charter were elected by open ballot for a year, and participants adopted Konrad's proposal that the Charter should

34. Interview with György Konrád *Reggeli Kurír*, 3 December 1991.

35. "Declaration of Endre Babus, et al." *Magyar Hírlap*, 4 December 1991.

36. "Political Advertisement," *Magyar Hírlap*, *Népszabadság*, *Reggeli Kurír*, 4 December 1991.

37. Katalin Bossányi, interview by author, 28 September 1992.

38. See the reports about the foundation of the Charter in the dailies *Nagyár Nemzet*, *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Népszava*, 9 December 1991.

have signatories and spokespersons rather than members and leaders, though all signatories were, in effect, spokespersons.<sup>39</sup> Elected spokespersons included four journalists, two sociologists, a psychologist, a chemist, a film director, a high school teacher, and a professional politician of the MSZP; It was important to include as many journalists as possible to ensure publicity for the Charter. It was also important to choose people close to the (mostly) opposition parties. "The three parties were trying to delegate people who were close followers. So they could not be said to belong to one or another party, while they could be influenced by a party to a certain extent."<sup>40</sup> The majority of the spokespersons were intellectuals who had stepped into the limelight at the time of political restructuring but had later quickly withdrawn from politics, as well as sympathizers, but not members, of the opposition parties. No one from the first group of former dissidents acted as spokesperson.

A newly organized group of intellectuals achieved their goal in the enthusiastic atmosphere of the rally at the Town Hall. Intellectuals "hesitating" between political and professional roles found in the Charter an arena (and the opportunity to) withdraw to shape a spiritual and political alliance. And professionals who had withdrawn from politics could again get closer to decision making without being forced to join the rank and file of politics.

#### A "GENTLE POWER"—CHARTER ACTIONS

Following the rally, the influence of the Charter grew among intellectuals. The number of signatories rose to 7000 in the following week;<sup>41</sup> (Horányi, 1992c). Spokespersons daily received dozens of supporting letters and declarations of intent to join, eighty thousand HUF (approximately 1,000 US dollars at that time) was collected at the rally or transferred to the Charter's account.<sup>42</sup> The mood was a bit like that of the revolutionary times of 1988–89, though the government press

39. György Horányi, interview by the author, 2 December 1992.

40. Konrád and Bossányi, interviews by the author, 1992.

41. György Horányi A Charta dokumentációja. Horányi György tulajdonában (The Documentation of the Charter: property of György Horányi) (Budapest: MTA Központi Kémiai Kutatóintézet, 1992).

42. Katalin Bossányi, interview by the author, 28 September 1992; and Konrád, interview, see n. 13.

were, naturally, unenthusiastic,<sup>43</sup> pointing out that the Charter was an opposition movement and asking "whose freedom has been endangered by a democratically elected government, who would like the public to share their own fears, and why do they openly wish a change of the system without personnel changes?"<sup>44</sup> The Federation of Young Democrats (FIDESZ) was the opposition party that openly criticized the Charter for becoming something different from what they had joined. Its parliamentary faction stated that "by signing the Charter, they did not wish to approve of the establishment of a political movement and do not wish to participate in it";<sup>45</sup> The other two opposition parties, the MSZP and the SZDSZ, did not mind. In response to the FIDESZ position of separation, spokesman Farkasházy remarked that the Charter "does not wish to become a branch office of any party"; the Charter does not wish to become a party, it is merely a "citizens' appeal" independent of any parties.<sup>46</sup>

Elected Charter spokespersons initially wanted to arrange a Christmas peace demonstration or collection of signature,<sup>47</sup> but the idea was given up for lack of time. Instead, an open letter of self-identification was addressed to the signatories; avoiding the term "political movement," it identified the Charter as a citizens' initiative and emphasized that "the Charter is not directed against any party" and "the Charter is not backed by parties."<sup>48</sup> At the same time, thousands of signatories were sent sheets to collect further signatures, the number of signatories increased at a record speed, from 7,000 in December 1991 to 20,000 in mid-February 1992.<sup>49</sup> The Democratic Charter Foundation was set up during the winter, and the Charter's own database was separated from that of the SZDSZ, though a separate post office box

43. Katalin Faggyas "Weimarosodunk?" (Are We on the Way of Weimarization?), *Uj Magyarország*, 9 December 1991; Attila Bánó, "Kinek a Chartája?" (Whose Charter?), *Uj Magyarország*, 12 December 1991; Imre Szönyi-Virág "Aláírás helyett" (Instead of a Signature), *Uj Magyarország* 3 January 1992; and László Menyhart, "Elvlicselő vén Európa? Szabad Magyarország kontra Demokratikus Charta" (Old Europe, Abused Principles? Free Hungary versus the Democratic Charter), *Heti Magyarország*, 3 January 1991.

44. Bánó, "Kinek."

45. "A Memorandum of the Parliamentary Faction of FIDESZ," *Magyar Hírlap*, 9 December 1991.

46. Tivadar Farkasházy, "Megütkezés a négyzetben" (Squared Indignation), *Magyar Hírlap*, 11 December 1991.

47. Bossányi, interview, see n. 37.

48. "An Open Letter," *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Magyar Nemzet*, 21 December 1991.

49. Horányi "documentation" see n. 41.

could not be rented for lack of money, and new signatures were still addressed to the SZDSZ.<sup>50</sup>

The spokespersons decided to issue reports from time to time on the current state of democracy in Hungary. The first (and last, as it turned out) occasion for that arose at a press conference on 13 February 1992, where Charter signatories talked or circulated short reports on certain phenomena in the press, the economy, and the political scene that seemed to be endangering democracy. The press conference was poorly attended and went unnoticed; the reports were not published.<sup>51</sup> A conservative signatory, Béla Pomogáts, caused a sensation with his report on a meeting of the World Association of Hungarians held in December 1991 where he was publicly accused of high treason for signing the Charter.<sup>52</sup> The spokespersons decided the press conference was a failure and turned to arranging open political actions.

The first major demonstration of the Charter took place on the national holiday of 15 March 1992. For the first time supporter parties were faced with a *fait accompli* when the spokespersons announced a separate Charter rally and demonstration in downtown Budapest along a traditional route of former dissidents. An event to be held on the day of Free Press had become relevant because the government were trying to exert increasing pressure on the presidents of the independent Radio and Television and wanted to purchase the only liberal daily, *Magyar Hírlap*. The arrangements for the demonstration gave rise to the first confrontation between Charter spokespersons and the SZDSZ governing the capital. Mayor Demszky (a member of former underground opposition) did not think the separate rally was justified because it competed with his festive address. At a Town Hall reception on the eve of the holiday, the Mayor reprimanded Charter spokespersons: "How dare you make a revolution against us; organize a movement against me who have fought for your freedom!"<sup>53</sup> The parties reconciled at that time, but the weekly *Beszélő*, edited by SZDSZ sympathizers, attacked the Charter later questioning "why did they not coordinate their plans with their friends in advance."<sup>54</sup> The demonstration, the first occasion

50. Horányi, interview, see n. 39.

51. Press Conference, *Magyar Nemzet*, *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Népszabadság* 14 February 1992.

52. Béla Pomogáts, "A Charta körül" (Around the Charter), *Beszélő*, 2 May 1992.

53. Bossányi, interview, see n. 37.

54. Ortilia Solt, "Uj márciusi frontok" (New March Fronts), *Beszélő*, 21 March 1992.

when the Charter brought masses to the streets, had about 15,000 participants. In addition to Charter spokespersons and sympathizers, two symbolic figures of the movement, Konrád and Iván Vitányi (MSZP), addressed the crowd, emphasizing that it was not an opposition demonstration and that the Charter had an umbrella, "para-party" identity: "We are not supposed to defend one party, one way of thinking or one kind of taste alone but every taste, every party, and every thought, even ones we dislike."<sup>55</sup> Their political opponents, however, were of a different view. A few members of a rightist group demonstrating in front of television crews insulted nearby Charter sympathizers, including Konrád and a journalist.<sup>56</sup> After the demonstration, the Charter published a statement in protest against government threats to the political neutrality of the public media.

Following the demonstration, Charter spokespersons arranged two meetings in Budapest in an endeavor to set up a permanent, informal nationwide network. Spokespersons at the meetings met the most active supporters, most of whom urged that the Charter be organized into a formal movement. Participants included representatives of the Democratic Trade Union of Researchers (TDDSZ), the League of Citizens' Rights, and the Young Socialists. Clubs of the Democratic Charter were formed in the country, and spokespersons often visited country towns and cities on the invitation of such clubs or to mark their opening. Nevertheless, the Charter did not become a viable social movement and on only a few occasions was its influence felt beyond groups of the *intelligentsia*. A few socialist spokespersons proposed an antifascist demonstration on 8 May to mark the end of the Second World War, but the proposal was rejected on the grounds that 8 May meant something else in the countries of the former Soviet bloc.<sup>57</sup>

A Charter-arranged action for May Day, however, was a success. Spokespersons had gotten hold of a government draft of the Social Act. As it was believed unsuitable to ensure adequate social support, in collaboration with social politicians a call went out in defense of social minima.<sup>58</sup> Issued in a period when 15 percent of the population were

55. Gáspár Miklós Tamás' public speech at celebration, *Magyar Hírlap*, 16 March 1992.

56. György Konrád "Az ünnep visszanéz" (The Holiday Looks Backward) *Magyar Hírlap*, 15 March 1992; and Sandor Szénási, "Félelmek márciusa" (The March of Fears), *168 óra*, 19 March 1992.

57. Bossányi, interview, see n. 37.

58. Social Charter, *Magyar Hírlap*, 28 April 1992.

living under the poverty line and the number of the unemployed exceeded 500,000,<sup>59</sup> it referred point five of the Charter, which said, "there will be democracy if the state guarantees all its citizens basic social welfare." Although this point had been opposed by liberals from the start (who argued that welfare/social demands should not be confused with a demand for democracy), it had found its way into the Charter. The Social Charter containing it was published for May Day and embraced by all trade union associations, Pensioners' Association, and youth organizations—the representation of five million people. An overall support by the trade unions was sensational, as it was the first occasion in the postcommunist history of the trade union movement that all trade unions agreed on an issue. The Charter people and major trade unions agreed to collaborate; the former communist trade union association (MSZOSZ) and an independent trade union, organized following political restructuring (FSZDL), printed Charter leaflets in their own printing houses and distributed them jointly.<sup>60</sup> Charter spokespersons took part in May Day arrangements in Városliget and Népliget [two Budapest parks, traditional scenes of May Day celebrations] collecting hundreds of signatures for the Democratic Charter. The Social Charter, however, created the first conflict between liberal and socialist members. Liberals warned that the Charter was going to shift too far to the left and fall prey to MSZP ideologues.<sup>61</sup>

Increasing attacks by the government coalition against the presidents of the public Radio and Television occasioned another Charter event. In the cultural committee of the Parliament, government coalition M.P.s alone voted for a proposal to fire the two presidents, who had been appointed by a consensus of coalition and opposition parties. In an open letter on 18 May, Charter spokespersons protested against "government policy violating the consensus."<sup>62</sup> Then, President Árpád Göncz refused to sign off on Antall's firing of these presidents; the government coalition responded by proposing that Parliament condemn the president for his anticonstitutional action. Göncz was caught in the crossfire of political attacks by the ruling coalition parties. As stakes

had risen, the Charter issued a solidarity statement on 26 May to support Mr Göncz: "The coalition parties consider the Head of State Árpád Göncz's move made in defense of democracy and the freedom of the media anticonstitutional. We protest against the unjustified series of attacks against the Head of State. A threat to constitutional order is posed by forces trying to evoke hysteria, to disturb the order of society, and to divert attention from an economic and social crisis." The statement also called for another rally.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, twenty-five sympathizers (mostly authors and artists and one of the leaders of the taxi drivers' blockade in 1990) published a full-page paid advertisement to support Árpád Göncz, starting another wave of signature collection, which was promoted by the Publicity Club.<sup>64</sup>

By the time Charter signatories and supporters gathered on 3 June 1992 in the crowded Budapest Town Hall, 12,000 people had already signed a statement to support the President of the Republic.<sup>65</sup> Konrád was the leading speaker of the rally; Vitányi and others also addressed the participants. All of them spoke about the disintegration of the consensus that had tacitly joined the government parties and the opposition despite their differences of opinion. Unlike previous occasions, open criticism of the government coalition was dominant. "The President of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Prime Minister has found the time ripe to set out rules for the mass media, an attack has been launched against the presidents of the Radio and Television, who are trying to maintain their relative independence. The President of the Republic has also been attacked as he was unwilling to take part in such an attack and remained true to his oath to defend the freedom of the press, of speech, of thought, and of belief, refusing to play a subordinate role to the Prime Minister's censorial will," said Konrád.<sup>66</sup> Later in June the constitutional crisis seemed to quiet down, and the draft statement condemning Árpád Göncz was not submitted to Parliament by representatives of the government coalition. Thirty-two thousand signatures had been collected by the end of June to support the President of the Republic, with active participation from MSZP and

59. Csilla Machos, "Demokratischen Charta '91: Von der 'alten' zur 'neuen' ungarischen Opposition" (Democratic Charter: From the Old to the New Hungarian Opposition), *Berliner Debatte INITIAL*, 4 (1992): 57–68.

60. Gyula Hegyi, interview by author, 4 October 1992.

61. Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "1994," *HVG*, 4 July 1992.

62. "An Open Letter," *Magyar Hírlap*, 19 May 1992.

63. "A Declaration," *Magyar Hírlap*, 19 May 1992.

64. Tamás Ascher, et al. A Political Advertisement in Defence of President Árpád Göncz, *Magyar Hírlap, Népszabadság*, 28 May 1992.

65. Horányi, "Documentation."

66. György Konrád "Egy gesztus vizsgálata" (An Examination of a Gesture), *Magyar Hírlap*, 4 June 1992.

the MSZOSZ,<sup>67</sup> the number later increased to 35,000. That was the end of the campaign.

Nonetheless, spokespersons continued to receive letters, and a debate on the Charter's future held in the second part of the Town Hall rally made it clear that sympathizers were far from being satisfied with their achievements and wanted the Charter to become a wider movement or an active network. Debates on the Charter's future also increased. Members who emphasized the Charter's (party) political function viewed it as a framework for political alliance between liberals and socialists.<sup>68</sup> Others believed that the Charter should maintain its independence from party politics and be socially oriented instead.<sup>69</sup>

The most important event in the history of the Democratic Charter took place on 24 September 1992, triggered by a provocative political analysis by István Csurka, a vice president of the ruling MDF, published in the weekly *Magyar Fórum* in August 1992. Analyzing the failure of coalition parties at by-elections and the stalemate of the "media war" between government and opposition, Csurka drew the conclusion that the extreme right of the MDF should either force the government to step down or demand that political conflicts be settled by force rather than by compromise. Csurka openly used some terms of German fascism, such as *Lebensraum* and the "genetic degradation" of the population on ethnic grounds.<sup>70</sup>

The Csurka paper outraged the intellectuals, and when the issue was debated in Parliament and Csurka reiterated his views on television, the public was shocked. Antall was hesitant to distance himself from the paper, stating merely that he "did not identify with it." Fear was growing that the largest government party would fall into the hands of extremists, and pressure increased on Charter spokespersons to do something. Their meeting on 30 August resulted in a statement that Csurka's extremist views could not be tolerated by the democratic forces. A mass demonstration was decided upon, and cooperation began

67. Gyula Hegyi, "A Charta színeváltozása" (The Charter in a New Light), *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 July 1992.

68. Ibid.; and, Hegyi, "A szociálliberális koalíció" (The Social-Liberal Coalition), *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 March 1992.

69. Tivadar Farkasházy and Mihály Kornis, "A pártok és a Charta" (The Political Parties and the Charter), *Magyar Hírlap*, 22 July 1992.

70. István Csurka, "Néhány gondolat a rendszerváltozás két esztendeje és az MDF új programja kapcsán" (Some Thoughts about the Past Two Years of the Regime Change and the New Program of the MDF), *Magyar Fórum*, 20 August 1992.

with the opposition parties, trade unionist organizations and other social groups turned up in growing numbers to help organize it. The Charter published an appeal on 10 September urging the government to condemn anticonstitutional views and announcing a "grand demonstration" in defense of democracy at an appropriate time.<sup>71</sup> It was already known that Csurka was going to speak at a rally of his followers, and Charter spokespersons wanted to time their demonstration for afterward. As they could not foresee what effect the Csurka rally would have, two versions of the demonstration were prepared: a rally, if Csurka did not have a major effect, and a spectacular mass demonstration in case of a major threat.<sup>72</sup> In the end, the latter version was used. The rally of the right-wing radical, Csurka, did not only attract marginal groups but also modest, middle-class people—15,000 in all. It was then vital to organize a much larger demonstration of the Charter. Initially it was thought, with the agreement of the opposition parties, that speakers at the Charter demonstration should be independent of parties, and the Federation of Young Democrats announced that their support of the demonstration depended on that. In the end, however, it turned out differently. Following the Csurka rally, SZDSZ leaders believed that the Charter demonstration should be given major political support and convinced spokespersons, with support from Konrád, about the need for party speakers.<sup>73</sup> Spokespersons' opinions on the change varied; some were pleased to enter major politics, while others felt they had been faced with a fait accompli on the part of SZDSZ, which ignored their independence.

Social expectations increased day by day. More and more organizations joined the demonstration, some of them providing financial support as well. In the end, FIDESZ also supported it, though it appointed no speakers. MSZP did not object to party speakers. All three parties and the major trade unions helped print leaflets. The Democratic Charter made another public appeal on 21 September announcing the place and time of the demonstration and stating, "in Hungary the extreme right have been pushing forward over the past few weeks. Racist, antiminorities, inciting views supporting fascism were publicized at different forums. The vice president of the MDF announced a nationalistic program called *Magyar Út* (Hungarian Road), different from the

71. "Manifesto," *Magyar Hírlap*, 10 September 1992.

72. Bossányi, interview, see n. 37.

73. Konrád, interview, see n. 13.

coalition program and antagonistic to national endeavours to join a civilized Europe. . . . The Democratic Charter is warning. This is not what we voted for in 1990! Let us defend the achievements of a peaceful political restructuring, let us protect jointly the freedom and democracy we have attained in heavy struggle!"<sup>74</sup>

The long list of organizations joining the appeal showed all the shades of political opinion. It ranged from anarchists to an evangelical youth organizations, from former communists to liberal democrats, from greens to Christian sports clubs. (see Appendix 2). The list of speakers was announced at a press conference arranged by the Charter on 22 September, where different organizations expressed their views. With the cooperation of sympathizer journalists, opposition politicians, and critical intellectuals, major dailies reported daily on the event to come. A political "action-unity" of critical intellectuals and leftist-liberal journalists was again apparent, an important element of the Charter at the beginning.

Over 80,000 people, by reliable estimates, took to the streets on 24 September 1992. It was the largest mass demonstration in Hungary since 16 June 1989 when Imre Nagy (executed prime minister of the 1956 revolution) and fellow martyrs were ceremonially re-buried. Demonstrators marched along their traditional route in the City. Speakers addressed the crowd in front of the House of Parliament, while the crowd listened with flowers and candles in hand, calling for a joint move against an antidemocratic right wing and emphasizing the importance of a quiet but firm response to aggression. Vitányi again suggested that it was not an opposition demonstration but a meeting of the "friends of society." Konrád reiterated, "if there is democracy, being Hungarian is not forbidden. If there is not democracy, it is difficult to be a Hungarian minority in neighboring countries. Hungarians, then, have a vested interest to see democracy prevail all over the Carpathian basin."<sup>75</sup> The demonstration had a definite antifascist character. Participants included pensioners who said that they had last demonstrated against fascism fifty years ago in 1942. Charter sympathizer actors also performed. Major funding was provided by a religious community called the Community of Belief.<sup>76</sup> At the same time,

74. "Manifesto," *Magyar Hírlap*, 21 September 1992 and *Népszabadság* 24 September 24 1992.

75. György Konrád: "Hölgyeim és uraim!" (Ladies and Gentlemen!), *Magyar Hírlap*, 25 September 1992.

76. Konrád, interview, see n. 13.

Charter demonstrations took place in Miskolc and Debrecen with a few thousand participants. Pál Forgách, a former president of the League (FSZDL), addressed the Miskolc rally.

Although the government press tried to discredit the Charter demonstration because of the participation of an alleged leftist extremist group,<sup>77</sup> it was peaceful and dignified, free from extremism. A large banner with the words *Fearless for Democracy* was carried by spokespersons; there were few other banners.<sup>78</sup>

The success of the demonstration pushed the Charter on to the level of major politics. The initiative, started as a loose association of intellectuals, was able to mobilize crowds that had been passive for a long time. It is true that the number of signatories was increasing slowly, but their composition had changed; after the Social Charter in May; the proportion of the unemployed and pensioners increased.<sup>79</sup> The Charter did not change into a permanent social movement, but it functioned as a symbol of democracy that could mobilize a large number of people if need arose. The demonstration also meant another step toward closer cooperation between the Charter and the opposition parties.

A month later a conference, "Revolutions and Restorations," organized by the editors of the international journal *Lettre Internationale* and other European intellectuals, was held at Town Hall. György Konrád reiterated there his idea of setting up an international democratic charter, which was supported by an overwhelming majority. Following the conference, the *Budapest Appeal* was compiled by Konrád, Miklós Mészöly, and Vitányi, proposing to set out an international democratic charter in order that "the state of affairs in the world" could be continuously judged against democratic ideals. After identifying their joint values, they suggested an international dialogue on the issue.<sup>80</sup>

In the meantime, radical right groups including uniformed skin-heads disturbed celebrations on 23 October (Republic Day and the day of the outbreak of the revolution of 1956), preventing by whistling and shouts President Göncz from delivering his ceremonial address. Since there were off-duty border guards on the scene, who had been taken there on trucks, and the police did nothing to prevent the disturbance,

77. Mihály András Beke "Illegalisták a Chartában!" (Illegalists in the Charter!), *Heti Magyarország*, 9 October 1992; and Zoltán Speidl "Parlamentí folyosó" (From the Parliament), *Heti Magyarország*, 2 October 1992.

78. Ferenc Erös: "A holnap elmarad?" (Is Tomorrow Off?), *HVG*, October 3, 1992.

79. Horányi, "Documentation."

80. "Budapest Mamifesto," *Magyar Hírlap*, 26 October 1992.

a suspicion arose of organized forces being in the background. Suspicion grew when Prime Minister Antall said only in his first statement he "is not pleased with" the disturbance but failed to condemn it. By the time Charter spokespersons gathered to express their protest, Lettre conference participants had already compiled a protest statement joined by the Charter. Charter spokespersons next published a full-page political advertisement in protest against the appearance of neo-Nazi ideals with two photos: one recalled the takeover of the Arrowed Party (Hungarian fascists) in 1944; the other showed a neo-Nazi youth photographed on Kossuth Square on 23 October, with the caption *Again? No!*<sup>81</sup>

President Göncz was to inaugurate a restored Hungarian national symbol at Tatabánya on 29 November. Fearing a repetition of disturbances, Charter spokespersons asked supporters to attend and, if need arose, physically protect the President of the Republic. About 100 people responded. Police, however, were careful this time and skinhead groups gathering on the scene had no chance to disturb the inaugurating ceremony. Many people felt by that time that the Charter remained the last force to safeguard democracy in the country.

The number of signatories increased steeply in the first months from 8 December 1991 to 13 February 1992; in addition to the enthusiasm of a beginning, Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) organs also actively participated in collecting signatures. Based on Horányi's data (see n. 40), nearly 12,000 of the 27,000 signatures were collected with the participation of the MSZP. The rate of joining slowed down later, which can be explained by the fact that initially the act of signing represented "an action" for people, it was replaced with other opportunities for action later, including demonstrations and petition campaigns. No systematic collection of signatures went on after July 1992.

A comparison of social profile of the first 10,000 signatories to a list of 2,000 collected exclusively by the MSZP (see n. 40), shows a significant shift on the MSZP list to blue-collar workers, unemployed, and pensioners. The Charter list collected in a spontaneous action by sympathizers contains many more intellectuals. (The 2,000 sample of the MSZP has been based on data of signatories from 12,000 to 14,000, therefore it does not belong to the first 10,000).

Over 27,000 people joined the Charter in one year. It should be

81. "Political Advertisement," *Magyar Hírlap*, *Népszabadság*, and *Kurír*, 28 October 1992.

noted that the proportion of the unemployed and blue-collar workers grew after May 1992, following the Social Charter, though the rate of increase at that time was considerably lower than at the beginning. The Charter mobilized about 15,000 people on 15 March 1992 and over 80,000 at its mass demonstration on 24 September. Each of two rallies at the Town Hall were attended by 1,000 people, and 35,000 signed an appeal supporting President Árpád Göncz.

#### CHANGES IN THE CHARTER FUNCTION

The one-year mandate of Charter spokespersons expired in December 1992. In discussing the future of the Charter at several meetings, some proposed that it suspend its activity for a year, because with elections nearing it might be used by some parties for their own campaigns endangering its very existence.<sup>82</sup> Konrád, however, proposed with some support from others that spokespersons stay on for another year.<sup>83</sup> At a meeting in December, following a lengthy debate, spokespersons decided to postpone their elections but meet again,<sup>84</sup> a political statement was also adopted in defense of the President of the Television who had been suspended from his position by the Prime Minister by means of a disciplinary procedure based on an anticonstitutional regulation that had accidentally survived political restructuring.<sup>85</sup>

The spokespersons and their friends met again on 10 January 1993. By that time the Radio and Television presidents had resigned under pressure from the government. In the wake of a MDF National Conference right-wing extremists of the party had become increasingly outspoken.<sup>86</sup> Because of these tensions in domestic politics the Charter meeting opened in a rather desperate mood. It looked as if the Charter were in a critical situation. Some participants voiced fears that the ruling MDF might postpone the 1994 general elections. A lengthy debate followed on the relationship between the Charter and political parties, in which two alternatives for the Charter's future were outlined: to be an independent organization of citizens with its funds separated from party funding, or not to be independent of parties and accept

82. Horányi, interview, see n. 39.

83. Konrád, interview, see n. 13.

84. Erzsébet Szalai, interview by author, 15 December 1992.

85. "Declaration," *Magyar Hírlap*, 14 December 1992.

86. István Csurka, "Keserü Háterszág" (Bitter Hinterland), *Magyar Fórum*, 31 December 1992.

party funding. The “independents” remained a minority so the dilemma ended in an open victory for political parties.<sup>87</sup> A new, sixteen-member body of spokespersons was elected, which included four former spokespersons; altogether ten of the founders of the Charter were elected. The spokespersons occupations were as follows: four party politicians (including Konrád and Vitányi), three journalists, seven well-known scholars, and one high school teacher. The basis of choice was their intellectual performance and former activity in the opposition; it was also important that they be sympathizers of one of the opposition parties and should have access to the mass media. It was no accident that intellectuals of the humanities were dominant, who were masters of description and illustration.

Differences in the expectations regarding the future role of the Charter dominated a Budapest rally on 7 February, where about 1,000 sympathizers confirmed the new spokespersons. Mayor Demszky delivered the first address. He criticized the government for its overemphasis on party interests and said of the Democratic Charter, “The Charter is wonderful, partly because its goal is to respect overall human rights and partly because it is a balancing, coherent power between different political ideas. It expresses a public feeling, a complete refusal of rightist views, and the demand to create the scope of true democracy.”<sup>88</sup> The question of how “a complete refusal of rightist views” could be coordinated with the demand to create the scope of true democracy points to the internal contradictions of Charter policies. Mihály Kornis, for instance, urged “an all-society union” of the opposition and envisaged the Charter in this framework;<sup>89</sup> Konrád, although he agreed with the necessity of action against a “fascist-smelling democtatorship,” emphasized that “social control over government” embodied in the Charter “will be needed even if a future government is made up of the parties whose members and leaders have signed the Democratic Charter.”<sup>90</sup>

Charter events had lost their drive by spring 1993. The extreme right led by Csurka had been driven out of the MDF, domestic politics had normalized in Hungary, and a dictatorship seemed less and less

87. Erzsébet Szalai, interview by author, January 1993.

88. Gábor Demszky, *Magyar Hírlap*, 8 February 1993.

89. Mihály Kornis, “A helyzet—töredékek ugyanarról” (The Present Situation: Fragments about the Same Problems), *Magyar Hírlap*, 23 January 1993.

90. György Konrád, “Mi a Demokratikus Charta?” (What Is the Democratic Charter?) *Magyar Hírlap*, 8 February 1993.

likely.<sup>91</sup> At 15 March celebrations the top speaker was the forced-out former President of Television Elemér Hankiss.<sup>92</sup> Konrád dealt with foreign political issues in his address.<sup>93</sup> A May Day Charter leaflet did not go beyond banalities, asking political forces “to stop useless fights with each other and rise above second-rate political issues.”<sup>94</sup> At about that time another movement started—“Act against Hate!”—which differed from the Charter in that fewer intellectuals were among its followers and it did not join and political group.<sup>95</sup>

The Democratic Charter arranged a collection of signatures in late August 1993 to protest against televising the re-burial of Horthy, the governor of prewar Hungary. The majority of these signers were socialists rather than liberals, many of whom had been prominent during the dictatorship and had lost credibility.<sup>96</sup> On the eve of the funeral ceremony, Charter spokespersons said good-bye to the Horthy regime with a cultural program in front of about 1,000 people, emphasizing that contemporary democracy could not be regarded an heir of the Horthy regime.

The last two mass events organized by the Charter took place in defense of the freedom of the press. The new management of Television wound up its last independent news program with reference to an allegedly biased presentation of an earlier political event—the disturbances on 23 October 1992, which prevented President Göncz from delivering his ceremonial address. On an initiative of the Chamber of Radio Employees, 15,000 people held a silent demonstration in front of the Television building on 30 October, followed by a mass rally at Budapest Town Hall organized by the Charter. Some of the speakers spoke of the threat of a political coup—following the coup in the media—while some proposed that “in the shadow of a coup that might

91. Flórián Mézes “Hisztériumjáték” (A Hysteria Game), *HVG*, 27 February 1993.

92. Elemér Hankiss, “A szabadság lehetőség és felelősség” (Freedom: Possibility and Responsibility), *Magyar Hírlap*, 16 March 1993.

93. György Konrád, “A megértés stratégiája” (The Strategy of Understanding), *Beszélő*, 20 March 1993.

94. “Mit kíván a Demokratikus Charta május elsején?” (What Does the Democratic Charter Want on May 1?) 1993 leaflet in Budapest.

95. György Iványi: “Nem csatlakoztunk egyetlen csoporthoz sem” (We Did Not Join Any Group), interview by János Zolnay, *Beszélő*, 15 May 1993. At that time Iványi was the president of the Inter-Europa Bank.

96. “A Protest against the Television Broadcasting of the Reburial of Miklós Horthy,” *Magyar Hírlap*, August 27, 1993.

become dangerous," the Charter should turn to international forums.<sup>97</sup> President Göncz emphasized in a letter addressed to Prime Minister Antall that because of these recent events "Hungarian Radio and Television have grown unable to meet their basic tasks," and therefore Hungarian voters . . . will be deprived of the opportunity to freely express their views."<sup>98</sup> Antall replied and disagreed: "A defence of the freedom of the press also means that an internal terror cannot be exercised by certain political forces and groups of journalists who sharply criticize everybody whose ideas are different."<sup>99</sup> Both parties acted as if they were guarding the freedom of the press, though Antall considered it an internal affair of the media. But Charter speakers emphasized, agreeing with Göncz, that the issue had outgrown the category of internal debate of intellectuals,<sup>100</sup> because oppression of the freedom of the press could lead to a red-brown dictatorship.<sup>101</sup>

The last phase of the "media war" began in autumn 1993, marked by a severe shift to the right of news programs (compared to the government center) and political purges in the radio and television.<sup>102</sup> Many outstanding authors, poets, and musicians, in protest, forbade the broadcasting of their works on Hungarian Radio and Hungarian Television.<sup>103</sup> At the same time, eighty-three intellectuals announced in an open letter the establishment of the Association of Independent Thinkers (FÜGE) aimed at reviewing news programs every week and publishing their findings.<sup>104</sup> One hundred sixty-two actors signed an open letter to the Prime Minister protesting against a "civil war of ideals" in radio and television, which had rendered "creative work im-

97. Miklós Mészöly, "Alkotmányellenes eszméletvesztés" (Anticonstitutional Loss of Consciousness), *Népszabadság*, 2 November 1993.

98. Árpád Göncz, "Levél Antall Józsefhez" (A Letter to József Antall), *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 November 1993.

99. József Antall, "Levél Göncz Árpádhoz" (A Letter to Árpád Göncz), *Magyar Hírlap*, 9 November 1993.

100. Péter Balassa, "Ez így nem fog menni!" (This Is Not Going to Work!), *Népszabadság*, 2 November 1993.

101. György Konrád, "Barna eső hull, vegyük elő az ernyőt!" (It's a Brown Rain, Let's Take the Umbrella!), *Magyar Hírlap*, 1 November 1993.

102. Zoltán Farkas, "Az Antall-kormány 'sikerágazata': a médiapolitika" (A 'Success Story' for the Antall-government: The Media Policy), in Csaba Gombár et al., ed. *Kormány a mérlegen, 1990-1994* (A Balance: The Hungarian Government, 1990-94) (Budapest: Korridor, 1994), 320-45.

103. "Declaration of Writers, Poets and Independent Thinkers," *Népszabadság*, 4 November 1993.

104. Ibid.

possible."<sup>105</sup> Some people were dismissed from radio positions because they had played an active part in the Democratic Charter.<sup>106</sup> The Executive Committee of Hungarian Pen Club expressed their solidarity with protesting authors.<sup>107</sup> Although the Hungarian Writers' Association also agreed that the freedom of the press had been violated, they did not support a boycott, but urged the government to ease the tension in radio and television.<sup>108</sup> Writers and artists of the coalition parties, however, published a statement condemning the boycott.<sup>109</sup>

There were less than two months to go until general elections in May 1994 when one hundred twenty-nine program editors were sacked from Hungarian Radio, after which the difference between coalition parties and politically active intellectuals (not only Charter sympathizers) deepened into an unbridgeable gap.<sup>110</sup> Although a political motivation for the dismissals was officially denied, it was obvious and the majority of the public found it revolting.<sup>111</sup> The procedure was legally unjustified and recalled the spirit of the 1991 Kónya paper and the 1992 Csurka pamphlet. Radio staff held a protest demonstration on 3 March, joined by the Publicity Club<sup>112</sup>; fifty-four intellectuals in an open letter demanded the rehiring of the dismissed. Democratic Charter spokespersons also published a protest letter condemning the government more harshly than ever before: "A government that violates openly and defiantly the constitutional and moral principles of the freedom of the press cannot be regarded a democratic government any more."<sup>114</sup> Similar, though a bit less harsh, wording was used at a press conference held a few days later at a mass demonstration organized on the eve of the National Day on 15 March in which 20,000 people took part. Konrád said, "The Democratic Charter will continue to regard the

105. "A Letter of 162 Actors to the Prime Minister," *Magyar Hírlap*, 26 November 1993.

106. Tivadar Farkasházy, Declaration, *Népszabadság*, 13 December 1993.

107. "A Declaration of the Hungarian Pen Club," *Magyar Nemzet*, 25 November 1993.

108. "A Manifesto of the Presidium of the Hungarian Writers' Association," *Magyar Nemzet*, 25 November 1993.

109. "Writers and Artists against Self-Silencing," *Magyar Hírlap*, 3 December 1993.

110. Ibolya Jakus: "Mit üzen a Rádió?" (What Is the Message of the Radio?), *HVG*, 12 March 1994.

111. TeleMedia Survey, *Magyar Hírlap*, 12 March 1994.

112. "Mit lehet és kell tenni?" (What Can Be Done and What Has to Be Done?), *Magyar Hírlap*, 5 March 1994.

113. "An Open Letter," *Népszabadság*, 4 March 1994.

114. "March Message," *Népszabadság*, 4 March 1994.

Hungarian Government as limitedly democratic until access to full information has been ensured for the public.”<sup>115</sup> Some of those dismissed from the Radio spoke, the seventeen Points of the Charter were read and a spokespersons statement on the freedom of the press followed. It demanded the withdrawal of the government from the media and the adoption by the next Parliament of a suitable Media Act immediately after the elections.<sup>116</sup> Opinion polls had already forecast that the government coalition was going to lose the elections because it had shifted too far to the right and had lost popular support, which was promising news for many Charter sympathizers. Some were actually looking forward to the elections in May to end a period of misery.

Results of the second free elections held in postcommunist Hungary justified the expectations for a change of government. The MDF-led coalition lost. In the first round of the elections the parties actively supporting the Charter received the highest number of votes (MSZP, 32.98 percent, SZDSZ, 19.76 percent). The second round of the elections ended in absolute majority for the ex-communist MSZP with 54 percent, while SZDSZ received 18 percent of the votes. The MSZP could have formed a government on its own, but it was clear immediately that they wished to form a coalition and the only serious coalition partner was the SZDSZ. Konrád supported the coalition in an article published after the first round of the elections and argued for a prime minister to be appointed from his party, the SZDSZ.<sup>117</sup> Although many people did not support the latter idea, there was a growing pressure on both parties to form a coalition, newspaper articles argued for an MSZP-SZDSZ coalition. The Democratic Charter, which used to launch events in defense of democracy and to call for a halt to extreme rightist trends, went further and claimed to shape party policy. On 31 May, two days after the second round of the elections, Charter spokespersons organized a public debate on the kind of government that should take over in the country. Although there were some opinions to the contrary, the majority of the speakers supported a coalition. Based on this, György Konrád, on behalf of the Democratic Charter, publicly asked the leaders of both parties to start coalition negotia-

115. Press Conference of the Democratic Charter, *Népszabadság*, *Magyar Hírlap*, and *Magyar Nemzet*, 11 March 1994.

116. On the Charter demonstration see the dailies of *Magyar Hírlap*, *Népszabadság*, *Népszava*, 16 March 1994.

117. György Konrád, “Május nyolcadika határozott ítélete” (The Definite Decision of May 8), *Népszabadság*, 11 May 1994.

tions.<sup>118</sup> Not only parties wanted to influence the movement; movement intellectuals wanted to influence their parties.

A civil movement had turned into a “kingmaker,” or at least behaved that way.<sup>119</sup> Supporters of the Democratic Charter contributed to overcoming the hatred between communists and anticommunists that had been decisive in 1990 and to the cooperation of three social elite groups—political reformers of the Kádár regime, technocrats, and leftist-liberal intellectuals.<sup>120</sup> The common denominator of those groups, however, was not the social-liberal-democratic minimum represented by the Charter but a promise of modernization.<sup>121</sup> The Democratic Charter often, with true pathos, protested against the spread of a politics of ideologies though its supporters used value-centered politics. The socialist-liberal coalition that took over in 1994, gave up ideologizing and also refrained from a value-centered discourse. The language of the coalition returned to a peculiar mix of the neutral technocratic terminology of the late Kádár regime and a “task-oriented” bureaucratic language.

## Conclusions

The establishment of the Charter and the events it organized offered a chance for many to say “yes” to democracy and “no” to antidemocratic phenomena. When people were unwilling or unable to find their way in the labyrinth of party politics, the Charter simplified topical political issues to one single alternative. In this way, the Charter became a benchmark—here is “our” Hungary and there is “theirs.” Organized in order to restore a destabilized political consensus and in defence of a democratic minimum, (and partly in response to a pressure from the government coalition), the Charter elevated politics to a moral field.<sup>122</sup> It was not speeches in Parliament but peaceful Charter demonstrations that halted an advance by the extreme right.<sup>123</sup> In many respects the

118. György Konrád, “A polgárnak joga van tudni . . .” (Citizens Have the Right to Know . . .), *Magyar Hírlap*, 2 June 1994.

119. Zsolt Krokovay, “A Charta temetése” (The Burial of the Charter), *Magyar Hírlap*, 3 June 1994.

120. András Körösenyi, “Kényszerkoalíció vagy természetes szövetség?” (Forced Coalition or Natural Alliance?), in Gombár et al. ed., *Kérdőjelek*, 260–80, esp. 279.

121. András Bozóki, “Visszatérés a modernizáláshoz?” (Back to the Modernization?), *Liget*, 8:4 (April, 1995): 37–45.

122. Róbert Braun, “Charta(v)iszony” (Around the Charter), *Magyar Hírlap*, 27 July 1992.

123. János Kis, “A polgár mint varázsló” (The Citizen as Wizard), *Kritika* (April 1993): 46–47.

Democratic Charter has been one of the most successful political movements of Hungarian intellectuals because it organized the largest antifascist demonstration in Hungarian history.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand, the Charter and its actions increased the polarization of political life and deepened society's differences. "Popular-front politics" was the price paid for the defense of a democratic minimum, which probably contributed to the rapid return to power of the former communist party.

The extreme right suffered a severe loss in the 1994 elections. Csurka's radical right-wing party received only 1.59 percent of the party list votes. Still, it is not easy to tell, even in retrospect, whether the threat to democracy had indeed been as great as suggested by Charter spokespersons. Election results suggest that the "threat of fascism" had been exaggerated and had actually been less powerful than the antifascist response it triggered; that, however could only come to light following the Charter protest actions, and it is of course impossible to say what election results would have been without the presence of the Charter. In the event, by keeping the issue of a threat from the extreme right on the agenda, the Charter ensured a natural framework for social cooperation against such trends.

In sociological terms, duality was characteristic of the Charter. It became a clublike network in which intellectuals could talk politics. But, because of its openness, it also had served as a channel for elementary mass demands that erupt rarely. A real "umbrella movement" in more than one sense, the Charter covered different social groups that would not have communicated with each other otherwise; (see Appendix 2.) It was also an umbrella in the sense suggested by György Konrád: when it was needed it opened, and closed for a time when it was not. At all costs its members did not wish it permanently open. Therefore, some did not consider it a real movement. This is not true. It was a movement consisting of distinct actions, though it seemed to cease to exist from one action to the next.

The movement needed well-known, charismatic leaders in order to maintain its umbrella-like character, people who were able to catch and hold the attention of many. Such was the role played pre-eminently by György Konrád, an author known all over the world, the father and

magician of the Charter, its symbol, a member of the former democratic opposition, who was at that time the Chairman of International Pen Club and member of the SZDSZ National Council. Similar figures were the novelist Miklós Mészöly, the aesthetician Péter Balassa, the sociologist Elemér Hankiss, the director Imre Kerényi, and the film director Miklós Jancsó. Charter spokespersons often spoke up in defense of President Árpád Göncz (a former dramatist); they had been in contact with him and enjoyed his support. Iván Vitányi was another important figure who had a dual role in the inner circles of the Charter—as an intellectual and as a politician holding an important position in the MSZP—and bridged the gap between younger socialist intellectuals and the Socialist party. There were also differences between the parts played by Konrád and Vitányi. Konrád was in the Democratic Charter because he was the "magician" of democracy and sat on the National Council of the SZDSZ because of his fame and merits; he was first an intellectual and second a politician. After 1989, Konrád changed from an "antipolitician" to a "metapolitician," from a member of the opposition into a prominent figure of the Democratic Charter. (The relationship between him and SZDSZ leaders is somewhat similar to that between the German author Günter Grass and the German Social Democratic Party of the 1970s led first by Willy Brandt, then by Helmut Schmidt.) Konrád's links with SZDSZ leaders were close because of the long years spent together in the democratic opposition. Vitányi's credibility and movement legitimacy had different roots. He had been appointed the director of a research institute under the dictatorship (and was not far from the "cultural policy" of the Kádár regime) and offered "shelter," that is, job opportunities, to members of the opposition who had been removed from their positions. In 1989 he was an active participant in changing the former state party into a socialist reform party. He has been Chairman of the MSZP Board and an M.P. since 1990. Compared to these positions, the Charter was a kind of political hinterland for him. Unlike Konrád, Vitányi was a politician in the first place. He was hailed as an active member of the movement both by MSZP, preparing to break out from its isolation, and the Charter, in need of organizational support.

The Democratic Charter was represented by *established intellectuals* who had a past history in the opposition (or at least could not be considered supporters of the old regime), had been acknowledged profes-

124. Gáspár Miklós Tamás, "Két idegen szó: amnézia és normalitás" (Two Foreign Words: Amnesia and Normalcy), *Beszélő*, 15 September 1994.

sionals, were close to the opposition parties of the period (measured by influence rather than by membership), and had a chance to appear in the media often and effectively.

The Democratic Charter was a movement of the age of mass communication, where the image of a message is almost as important as the message itself. Major Charter events were designed by professional directors of theatre and film, and charismatic speakers were the chief spokespersons. A speaker's image and ability to communicate were more important than what he or she politically represented.

Another group of *movement intellectuals* appeared, consisting mostly of younger journalists or other intellectuals close to the party who had been selected (sometimes without being asked) by established intellectuals. Those people did not belong to the democratic opposition of the 1980s; on the contrary, most of them believed for a long time that a dictatorship might be reformed. Because of this reformist attitude, they were a step behind events when the political transition started. With their growing critical activity as journalists, they found it unfair that the politicians of the MDF-led coalition government treated them as they did the beneficiaries of the dictatorship. Most of them learned the role of critical intellectual in 1990-91 and became Charter spokespersons—media people turned into movement intellectuals by the Charter for a time. Their role was a belated compensation for what they had “missed” in the 1980s. The value of their opposition behavior was enhanced because it was modeled on the members of the former democratic opposition and “endorsed” by them. In a period when people seemed to have lost their illusions about party politics, the position of a Charter spokesperson enjoyed strong moral legitimacy in society. The democratic opposition of the 1980s symbolically “accepted” media intellectuals of the 1990s (or, putting it in another way, acknowledged their need for them) and continued to approach former party member intellectuals.

Movement intellectuals were identified by Eyerman and Jamison as people who had been “trained” to become intellectuals by a movement. Regarding the movement as cognitive *praxis*, they conceived intellectual activity as a process rather than a project.<sup>125</sup> Established intellec-

125. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 98.

tuals can operate in the context of a social movement, as speakers, ideologues, movement communicators, and so forth, but they are not “created” by the movement. Through the Charter, participant media intellectuals through movement discourse could reinterpret their intellectual existence, which was not created at that time and so was not exclusively bound to the movement. One of the reasons why the Charter lost force was that a government coalition took over that was emotionally closer to Charter activists. The other reason was that their identity was not bound to the Charter alone, so they did not need to hold on to it at any price. Charter spokespersons, temporarily in an intellectual position in the movement returned to the media in 1994 or became accepted as newly established intellectuals.

Another conclusion can also be drawn from the history of the Democratic Charter. Moralizing politics give an advantage to political intellectuals over party politicians, the language used is more familiar to them as a political discourse is their true field. The terminology, however, slowed down a desacralization of politics in the given situation, the process described by Max Weber as the creation of politics as vocation. The terminology of moralizing politics was used in reference to civil society, therefore, as pointed out by Lomax,<sup>126</sup> it was degraded into a means of self-expression for political intellectuals. On the other hand, a sociologist spokesperson of the Charter emphasized the necessity of directly democratic forms and a social acceptance of democracy. He said that “self-therapy” of civil society rather than the new political élite could be expected to achieve that goal.<sup>127</sup>

Debates of that kind *à propos* intellectuals were about democracy really. The most important condition for the stabilization of a new democracy might be the establishment and operation of democratic institutions, a professionalization of the new political élite. Concerns about a substantive, idealized concept of democracy being a threat to the new set of institutions based on representation seemed to be well founded.<sup>128</sup> But the intellectuals of the Democratic Charter were also

126. Bill Lomax, “The Not So Strange Death of Civil Society in East Central Europe: The Hungarian Experience” (Paper presented at the Conference on “Regime Change and the Transition to Democratic Politics,” Sofia, Bulgaria, 16–19 September 1995.)

127. Ferenc Miszlivetz, “A Magyar demokrácia válsága 1989 után” (The Crisis of Hungarian Democracy after 1989), *Kritika* (April 1993): 14–17.

128. András Körösényi, “Intellectuals and Democracy in Eastern Europe,” *The Political Quarterly*, 65:4 (October-December 1994): 415–24.

right to believe that a new system born out of radical political change demands not only institutional but also moral legitimacy. Social movements are as an integral part of democracy as political parties or legislative, executive, and legal power. Debates around the Charter were, then, of two kinds: theoretical ones about different interpretations (representative versus participatory) of democracy and pragmatic ones about what action would threaten or strengthen democracy in a given political situation. Some denied the necessity of making politics in the streets in a given situation, although they accepted it in general; others generally denied the necessity of direct participation in the operations of a democracy but in a given situation (with reference to an exceptional threat) supported the policy of mass demonstrations. Some, failed to agree with movement politics either in general or in actual cases, others agreed on both issues. The debates were further complicated by differences in interpretation of whether the intellectual or the mass movement character of the Charter was to be emphasized and of whether its dependence or independence of political parties was more desirable.

Major studies by Alvin Gouldner and Konrád-Szelényi of the expected arrival of the class power of the intellectuals made a great impact when they were published in 1979.<sup>129</sup> The feverish months of the changes in 1989 seemed to confirm that feeling. Nevertheless, the ideas represented by Fehér and Heller have proved more solid: "The time has come for mass democracy rather than the class power of intellectuals."<sup>130</sup> With respect to the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, this statement may sound either over optimistic or normative even today. Until there is an unquestioned consensus in society that democracy has no alternative, intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe will have a chance to play another gig as "civil magicians" of democracy<sup>131</sup> or as a nationalistic counterpoint to it.<sup>132</sup> The paradox of the Democratic Charter was that it was a kind of prodemocracy, civil rights movement, whose slogans and terms were compiled by a hierarchical

129. Alvin Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.); and Konrád and Szelényi, "Intellectuals on the Road."

130. Ferenc Fehér and Ágnes Heller, *Kelés-Curópa "dicsőséges forradalmi"* (The "Glorious Revolutions" of Eastern Europe) (Budapest: T-Twins, 1992), 7.

131. Kis, "A polgár."

132. Dijana Vukomanovic: "Democratization and Nation-State Building in Post-Communist Europe" (M.A. Thesis, CEU Political Science, Budapest, 1995.)

group of privileged intellectuals who were gradually losing their political influence. In the movement a confusion of roles by intellectuals, which could be interpreted as a "counterattack by the Estates of the Realm" against an institutionalized world of politics, existed alongside intellectual identity based on continuous critical discourse and the maintainance of civilian control over the institutions.

## Abbreviations

FIDESZ	- Federation of Young Democrats
FSZDL	- Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions (in short: The League)
FÜGE	- Association of Independent Thinkers
MDF	- Hungarian Democratic Forum
MSZMP	- Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party
MSZOSZ	- National Alliance of Hungarian Trade Unions
MSZP	- Hungarian Socialist Party
SZDSZ	- Alliance of Free Democrats
SZKH	- Network of Free Initiatives
TDDSZ	- Democratic Trade Union of Researchers

## Appendix 1.

### THE DEMOCRATIC CHARTER

We, the signatories of the Charter, Hungarian Democrats, independent of our party politics, believe that the democratic process is being held back in our country.

Many have turned away from politics not only as a result of our declining living standards but because they do not believe this to be a democracy.

We know that, as in all historical transformations, this decisive period in our history brings not only hardship but benefits as well.

We would like to safeguard these benefits, and, thus, we deem it necessary to make public the sort of Hungarian Republic we want.

1. There will be democracy if we respect the Hungarian Republic's legal system and democratic institutions in compliance with the constitution.
2. There will be democracy if the law is upheld by the independence

of the private sphere opposing the power of the state, and citizens need not fear the authorities.

3. There will be democracy if the state withdraws from the most important parts of the economy without delay; if privatization is speeded up, and state-owned enterprises and banks are not subordinated to the government; and if their directors do not act according to the political ambitions of government parties but on the basis of their own expertise.
4. There will be democracy if new enterprises trade according to neutral and supportive regulations, and their existence does not depend on the patronage of civil servants and state officials.
5. There will be democracy if the state guarantees all its citizens basic social welfare.
6. There will be democracy if trade unions, established by the workforce, independent of the state and employees, protect the workers' interests; and if the legal safeguards within the trade unions protect the workforce from all kinds of reprisals.
7. There will be democracy if the current political forces abstain from influencing the authority of the independent judiciary; if the state guided by a wish for social cohesion rejects the notion of autocratic and exceptional laws; and if there are no political reprisals in the Hungarian Republic.
8. There will be democracy if the current governing majority recognizes that legitimate legislative and executive power must be bound to the Hungarian Republic's constitution safeguarded by the Constitutional Court.
9. There will be democracy if sovereign government elected freely by the population is not strangled by central control and does not try to avoid having its affairs constantly examined and controlled by its electorate.
10. There will be democracy if all citizens in the Hungarian Republic can, if they wish, count themselves as members of the Hungarian nation.
11. There will be democracy if the legitimate legislative and executive powers always guard against blurring the concepts of nation and state; if they are also responsible for those members of the Hungarian nation who live outside Hungary and do not deny that these people are also citizens, although they are bound to a different state; and if they see East Central Europe as a reality in which

all of the nations living here affected by the changes can exist in concord and community in the spirit of international agreements.

12. There will be democracy if the rights of minorities in Hungary are observed and protected in the same way as those of the other citizens; and if the state and current majority actively contribute to this process.
13. There will be democracy if the state respects the convictions and views of all citizens as long as they do not threaten others.
14. There will be democracy if the current authorities denounce the promotion of any kind of system of thought, either openly or secretly, whether it is a state religion or a state ideology; if, further, state educational institutes do not impose any sort of world view on their students; and if the authorities support educational pluralism in an unbiased way.
15. There will be democracy if the authorities guarantee scientific and cultural freedom and do not evaluate scholars on the basis of political loyalty or their own desire for power; and if the relevant expert bodies have the decisive say in the patronage of science and culture and in choosing the leaders of the cultural institutes, which are still in the hands of the state.
16. There will be democracy if public radio and television become completely independent of the government, the parties, and local government.
17. There will be democracy if press freedom is not restricted by a state monopoly, by the financial predominance of the independent banks, or by the intimidation of journalists; and if the present authorities supply the legal press organs with information.

Freedom alone cannot safeguard the law or the institutional system; citizens must act to protect the law and civil freedom in the most determined way.

We, the signatories of the Democratic Charter, speak out against the threat to constitutional democracy and against impatient and exclusive power groups seeking to render obsolete the Republic's constitution, so that we Hungarians will be free citizens, not submissive underlings!

Those who agree with this Charter should sign it and indicate whether their names should be made public.

26 September 1991.

## Appendix 2.

ORGANIZATIONS WHICH TOOK PART AT THE 4 SEPTEMBER 1992. PROTEST MARCH OF THE DEMOCRATIC CHARTER:

Wallenberg Egyesület (Wallenberg Association)  
Romaparlament (Romas' Parliament)  
Nyilvánosság Klub (Publicity Club)  
Országos Diák Unió (National Student Union)  
VE-GA Szövetség (VE-GA Federation)  
Martin Luther King Egyesület (Martin Luther King Association)  
Szegényeket Támogató Alap (SZETA) (Fund for Support the Poor)  
Helsinki Polgárok Gyülekezete (Helsinki Citizens' Assembly)  
Új Márciusi Front (New March Front)  
Antimilitarista Csoport (Anti-Militarist Group)  
Nyomor Anarchista Csoport ("Misery" Anarchist Group)  
Magyar Zsidó Kulturális Egyesület (Hungarian Jewish Cultural Association)  
Marxista Ifjúsági Szövetség (Marxist Youth Federation)  
Május 1. Társaság (May 1. Society)  
Feminista Hálózat (Feminist Network)  
Zöld Nők (Green Women)  
Zöld Liga (Green League)  
4-6-0 Csoport (4-6-0 Group)  
Magyar Radikális Párt (Hungarian Radical Party)  
NAP Anarcho-Punk Csoport (SUN Anarcho-Punk Group)  
Ifjú Demokraták (IDE) (Young Democrats)  
Keresztény Sportkör (KSK) (Christian Sport Association)  
Zsidó Diákok Magyarországi Szövetsége (Federation of Jewish Students in Hungary)  
Teljes Evangéliumi Diák- és Ifjúsági Szövetség (TEDIE) (Evangelist Student and Youth League)  
Társadalmi Erdekegyeztető Tanács (Social Interest-Coordination Council) Its members:  
- Keresztény-Zsidó Párbeszéd Kör (Christian-Jewish Dialogue Circle)  
- Baloldali Ifjúsági Tömörülés (Left Youth League)  
- Ifjú Szocialisták (Young Socialists)  
- Baloldali Alternatíva Egyesülés (Left Alternative Union)  
- Dolgozók Népi Demokratikus Szövetsége (Workers' Popular Democratic Alliance)

Erőszakellenes Fórum (Anti-Violence Forum) Its members:

- Alba Kör (Alba Circle)
- Budapesti Anarchista Csoport (Budapest Anarchist Group)
- FIKSZ Egyesület (FIKSZ Association)
- Jogsértettek Egyesülete (Association of Legally Infringed)
- Hívő Szocialisták Tagozata (Branch of Believer Socialists)
- Magyarországi Református Egyház Kallódó Ifjúságot Mentő Missziója (Mission for Saving Threatened Youth of the Hungarian Protestant Church)
- Magyarországi Romák Liberális Szervezete (Liberal Organization of the Hungarian Romas)
- Magyarországi Zöldpárt (Hungarian Green Party)
- R-Kert Szolgáltató Társulás (R-Garden Service Association)
- Budapesti Szociáldemokrata Ifjúsági Mozgalom (Budapest Social Democratic Youth Movement)

# The Party That Never Was: The Rise and Fall of the Solidarity Citizens' Committees in Poland

Tomek Grabowski\*

There is no stable liberal democracy without an institutionalized party system.<sup>1</sup> In the first few years following the collapse of authoritarian rule, many—though not all—young democracies in southern Europe and Latin America made significant strides in the process of party building and institutionalization. After an initial period of oversupply of new political groups, the process of elimination and coalescence led to the emergence of larger-scale political organizations. Patterns of party competition began to show some regularity. The major parties acquired, or reacquired, deeper roots in society: linkages developed between parties, citizens, and organized interests. Parties became leading actors in determining access to power. Finally, party organizations grew relatively more solid: parties gained some autonomy vis-à-vis the movements or organizations that initially created them, their organizations became territorially comprehensive, and the political loyalty of elites to parties grew as well.<sup>2</sup>

In Poland, when the peaceful transfer of power from the Communists to democrats had become an accomplished fact in late 1989, many observers expected a similar process to occur. The events of the subse-

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2. Scott Mainwaring and Timothy Scully, "Institutionalizing Party Systems in Latin America" (Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., 2–5 September 1993.)