Glanz, Susan. “Kiss, Réka and Attila Viktor Soós, eds. 2015. *Keletről Nyugatra. A kommunista mozgalom titkos pénzei* ('From East to West - the Secret Money of the Communist Movement'). Budapest: Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága. 144 pp..” *Hungarian Cultural Studies.* e-Journal of the American Hungarian Educators Association, Volume 9 (2016): http://ahea.pitt.edu DOI: 10.5195/ahea.2016.256

Kiss, Réka and Attila Viktor Soós, eds. 2015. *Keletről Nyugatra. A kommunista mozgalom titkos pénzei* ('From East to West - the Secret Money of the Communist Movement'). Budapest: Nemzeti Emlékezet Bizottsága. 144 pp.

Reviewed by Susan Glanz, St. John’s University, New York

The Fourth Amendment to the Fundamental Law of Hungary passed in 2013 included the establishment of the Hungarian National Remembrance Committee, whose mission was to preserve “the memory of the communist dictatorship” and its “operation of power in the communist dictatorship” (https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpC1UFRi.pdf). As an agency established by law, the Committee's funding is provided by the government's budgetary appropriation and part of its budget is regularly directed to the publication of a research series studying various case-studies of the exploitations of communism in Hungary throughout most of the second half of the twentieth century. The present volume is the sixth publication in the series and it consists of two lengthy articles written by historians Gábor Szilágyi of the Hungarian National Remembrance Committee and Stefano Bottoni of the Hungarian Academy of Science (M.T.A.).

Gábor Szilágyi’s article, "Az MDP és az MSzMP a 'guruló dollárok' rendszerében" ['The Hungarian Workers’ Party and Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party during the "Rolling Dollars" Regime'], delineates the methods used by Soviet-ruled Hungarian communist parties to support their abroad *kommunista testvérpártok* ['sibling communist parties']. Szilágyi’s article starts with the 1992 Prosecutor Bureau's investigation of the actions of Dr. Mátyás Szűrös, a politician who had formerly held various high offices in the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party and who was elected in 1990 to parliament as a representative of the Hungarian Socialist Party. Szűrös was accused of taking part in facilitating an annual payment of six hundred and fifty thousand dollars back in 1984-1985 and in 1987 to the International Solidarity Fund run by the Soviet communist party. Moreover, he was accused of having been involved in such currency transfers since the 1950s, and needless to say that these actions took place during a period of chronic shortage of hard currency holding in Hungary. Although the newpaper headlines at the time of the investigation talked of "rolling dollars," the case was eventually closed a year later, in 1993, without any criminal charges against Szűrös. Following his discussion of the Szűrös case, Szilágyi explores the various methods by which, for decades, the Soviet-ruled Hungarian communist parties financially supported several Western, Latin American and Middle Eastern communist parties. Although documented evidence of all these transactions is far from complete, Szilágyi did find some proof that such payments were indeed made on a regular basis and kept secret even from the majority of the Hungarian Communist Party leadership.

Four methods were used to aid communist parties outside Hungary and organizations and persons affiliated with them or aiding their actions. The first, which supplied the largest amount

New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

This journal is published by the University Library System of the University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing Program and is cosponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press

ISSN 1936-8879 (online)

of funds, was an indirect mechanism by which all East-European communist parties were made to send annual payments to the Moscow-based International Solidarity Fund. The sum allotted to each country was determined in Moscow and the money was sent mainly to Western-European communist parties, especially to those of Austria, France and Italy. As for eastward payments to this Fund, Szilágyi estimates that some sixteen million dollars were passed from Hungary to Moscow in the forty years between 1950 and 1990. The second method was by regular aid to the communist parties of still other countries that the communist-bloc countries were made to send them. For examples, up until 1980 Hungary had to annually pay ten thousand dollars to the Greek communist party, of which eight thousand dollars were passed directly to Greek communists living in Hungary and only two thousand dollars were sent abroad. The communist Greeks living in Hungary could then send dollars to their relatives back home, but in that case they had to compensate the Hungarian communist party according to the official exchange rate. Quite similarly, between 1954 and 1971the Spanish communist party received from Hungary annual payments of ten thousand dollars each. A smaller-scale payment example is that of an Argentinean journalist working for his own country's communist-party newspaper, whose salary between 1971 and 1989 was likewise paid by the Hungarian communist party. The third method was by making the bloc countries provide several foreign countries with curious services, like sending a printing press to the Moroccan communist party or a complete radio studio to the Portuguese communist party. The Hungarian communist party also had to give so-called pocket money to visiting foreign communist-party members, as well as cover their entire trip expenses. The fourth financing method was by setting up trade deals between Hungarian companies and pro-communist Western firms, with the Hungarians paying commission to the Western parties. To illustrate the impact of this mechanism, Szilágyi cites data showing that in 1979 alone eight percents of all Hungarian Westward exports, worth some three hundred and forty million dollars, were sold to companies owned by Western pro-communist firms (56), with their local communist parties being paid commissions on this trade.

Following Gábor Szilágyi's delineation of the four ways by which the Hungarian communist party was for decades made to send out funds to foreign communist parties, organizations, individuals and causes, the second article of the sixth volume of the National Remembrance Committee series, written by Stefano Bottoni, further explores one specific, on-going trade deal carried out within the framework of the forth method described in Szilágyi's article. Bottoni's article, "'Kölcsönösen előnyös üzlet', magyar-olasz gazdasági pártkapcsolatok a hidegháború korszakában" ['"Mutually Beneficial" Business: Inter-Party Hungarian-Italian Economic Relations during the Cold War'], describes the economic relations and transactions between Hungary and Italy and the ways in which these relations facilitated the movement of funds between companies owned or supported by the communist parties of the two countries (this article is available in Hungarian and in English on the author's website at: http://mta.academia.edu/StefanoBottoni; https://www.neb.hu/asset/phpX5xkyX.pdf, 245-270; as well as in Italian at: http://storicamente.org/bottoni). The two companies activating the economic and political Hungarian-Italian relationship were Terimpex, the holder of the monopoly on meat and livestock export from Hungary, and Soresco (formerly called Socofin), an Italian communist party-controlled company. While the trade relations between the two companies was up-front, the flow of funds and commissions from Hungary to Italy remained secret. The article traces the expansion of trade between the two companies citing the following sums: ”the value of bilateral goods exchanges between Hungary and Italy increased from 100 million dollars in 1964 to 230 million dollars in 1969, and 440 million dollars in 1973” (89). Problem first arose in the late 1960s, when Italy as a founding member of the European Economic Community (EEC), the forerunner of the EU of later decades, started regulating agricultural import of EEC member states from non-EEC countries. The impact of this regulation was a sharp decline of both the trade and the flow of funding and commissions from Hungary.

The new Italian law of party financing passed in 1974, which limited public funding of electoral expenses as well, practically required that commissions paid through Swiss bank accounts move underground, so payments from Hungary from this time and on were delivered personally to party officials. In 1977 while the previously set EEC quotas were removed due to the heavy diplomatic pressure of the Italian communist party, new and higher tariffs were imposed on Hungarian agricultural products and this imposition impacted Hungarian exports, too. The solution for all these constraints was the founding of a new joint Hungarian-Italian company but the ongoing political detente of the 1970s made trade relations between the two countries ever more complicated, and in addition competing markets all over the world were opening up and offering opportunties that could hardly be contested by the Hungarian-Italian limited-power old alliance. Throughout the 1980s small and medium sized new Italian firms supported by the Italian government were encouraged to enter the changing Hungarian market until finally the new market conditions created in 1989 forced Terimpex and Soresco to found a new joint company that ceased their former illegal party-financing activities. In post-1989 Hungary, once its decades-long monopoly on meat trade was cancelled, Terimpex was unable to cope with the new conditions and finally went out of business in 2001.

Both articles of the 2015 volume of the National Remebrance Committe series are very informative, detailed, widely accessible and thus add to our knowledge of the political and financial reality of Soviet-dominated Hungary and its neighbors in the communist bloc and their intricate political-economic relations with communist parties in other European and non-European countries throughout the Cold War era.