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/// Civil rights activist, Centaur or the Thief of Baghdad?

The identity of György Krassó and the functioning of his samizdat publishing house between 1982 and 1985[1]

The production and distribution of uncensored—commonly known as samizdat—literature is generally understood as an exercise of one of the most fundamental civil liberties, freedom of expression. The dictatorial context in which samizdat emerges inevitably gives this activity a moral dimension: those involved in samizdat activities are champions of human liberties, resisters of dictatorship, advocates of dissident justice. However, the moral dimension often obscures the former contexts that have given samizdat publishing other meanings. In what follows, I will attempt to disentangle samizdat literature from this moral dimension and examine the phenomenon in its former social contexts, which will allow it to be seen from a new perspective, that of the practices of socio-cultural resistance.

Producing, distributing and receiving samizdat literature was integral to the activities of the opposition and generally to social resistance to state socialism in the 1980s.[2] In 1981, the 'second public sphere' significantly broadened and became institutionalised:[3] a so called 'samizdat boutique' opened in László Rajk Jr's apart-

1 = = Supported by the ÚNKP-20-4 New National Excellence Programme of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

2 = = For more recent literature on samizdat, see the thematic issues of *Poetics Today* (Winter 2008 and Spring 2009), and the following publications: Komaromi, 'The Material Existence of Soviet Samizdat'; Kind-Kovács and Labov, *Samizdat, Tamizdat, and Beyond;* Kind-Kovács, *Written Here, Published There;* Behrends and Lindenberger, *Underground Publishing;* Parisi, *Samizdat;* Glanc, *Samizdat Past & Present.* On the history of samizdat in Hungary, see the forthcoming monograph: Danyi, *Az írógép és az utazótáska.*

3 = = On this process and the impact of the Polish opposition on the Hungarian second public sphere, see: Danyi, 'Harisnya, ablakkeret és szabad gondolat'.

ment in the heart of Budapest, and the most influential independent newspaper, *Beszélő,* and the AB Independent Publishing House were founded. After these developments, a former 1956 revolutionary and an active figure of the democratic opposition of the time, György Krassó, also became involved in independent publishing under the name of Hungarian October Publishing House. Through this activity he consistently—almost obsessively—advocated the memory of the 1956 uprising suppressed by Soviet troops, historical truth, and civil liberties, all of which challenged the legitimacy of the Kádár regime. The publication of uncensored materials in the harsh conditions of state socialism demanded a high degree of ingenuity and creativity, while at the same time posed a very serious existential risk in the grip of state security. In this way, he represented a form of opposition that was very rare in Hungary. Krassó therefore deserves a special place in the memory of the era.

In the following I will focus on the period between 1982 and 1985, both to shed light on the informal social practices that enabled the effective representation of civil liberties, and to explore the patterns that characterised the identity of the contributors, especially György Krassó. In short, I will critically examine the room for manoeuvre of a committed oppositionist: how he used the possibilities of the second economy, the resources of the public sphere and his contacts to create the financial, technical and material conditions for freedom of expression, and how these practices were linked to identity constructions.

Since the operations that made independent publishing possible and enabled the circulation of samizdat texts are integrated into wider social relations, it seems essential to 'socialise' these operations. This can be done in at least two ways. Firstly, by seeing samizdat not as a discursive space or a static medium of texts, but rather as the intersection of practices, procedures and routines that created and operated this medium, which allows us to interpret samizdat culture as a performative act, a complex set of practices carried out by subjects acting in given social relations.[4] Secondly, inspired by the 'new economic criticism', we can see samizdat as a cultural product, which, in its distribution and consumption,[5] is interwoven with given economic practices and behaviours, creating a specific cultural-literary market.

In the following, I attempt to apply these two perspectives together. In doing so, I will first examine the meaning of samizdat publishing in Krassó's autobio-

4 = = For this above all see: Komaromi, 'Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon'; Zaslavskaya, 'Samizdat as social practice'.

5 = = On the exchange processes and dissemination mechanisms of samizdat texts, see Komaromi, 'Samizdat as Extra-Gutenberg Phenomenon'; Danyi, 'Az ajándékozás művészete'; Danyi, 'Sztuka obdarowywania'. There are very few studies on the economic aspects and financing of samizdat enterprises. A brief exception is, for example: Machovec, 'How underground authors and publishers financed their samizdats'.

graphical reflections (which I will return to later in an analysis of Krassó's relationship to money). I then focus mainly on the nature of the financial resources required to run the Hungarian October Publishing House and the informal economic practices that made samizdat publishing possible. Finally, I discuss the prices of individual publications in the light of the complex economic model of the Publisher. The study is predominantly based on state security documents relating to György Krassó, who was treated as the enemy of state socialist system. I matched the 'reality constructions' of the state security documents against information from samizdat materials, memoirs and interviews I conducted.

= = = The identity of a former '56 samizdat publisher

It is worth examining the figure of Krassó in terms of 'narrative identity'. It is well known that, in the theoretical framework of narrative identity, the identity of the self is not created by some core or substantive basis of personality, but by a story of the self that is retold and thus constantly reflected upon and reinterpreted.[6] In what follows, I will therefore focus on how Krassó's storytelling created his narrative identity, that is the narrative unity of his life, with particular attention to the life narratives that thematise oppositional activity and samizdat publishing.

In several interviews, Krassó described certain recurring elements of his own life as if he were 'guilty' or a 'perpetrator' who 'return[ed] to the scene of action'.[7] With this turn of phrase, Krassó was referring above all to the repetition of forms of activity such as duplication, printing, leafleting, flyering and posting bills. In Krassó's life, there were three distinct periods involving these forms of activity: firstly, the period of Communist-Party work in the second half of the 1940s; secondly, the 1956 uprising; and thirdly, opposition activity in the 1980s.

At this point, it is also worth shedding more light on Krassó's life. In his early teenage years, Krassó was influenced by communist ideas and even joined the party at the age of 15. In addition to the influence of his brother Miklós Krassó, who belonged to the circle of the Marxist philosopher György Lukács, the hope shared by broad strata of society that a new, more egalitarian world could be built on Marxist grounds also played a role. As a teenager, Krassó took part in Communist-Party work, gaining experience in communist movement activities, including posting bills and leafleting. Prior to this, in the autumn of 1949, Krassó had left school of his own volition and enrolled as an industrial apprentice at the Manfréd Weiss Iron and Metal Works (which was renamed the Mátyás Rákosi Iron and Metal Works in 1950).[8] In the first half of the 1950s, Krassó gradually

6 = = See Ricoeur, 'Le soi et l'identité narrative'; Ricoeur, 'L'identité narrative'.

7 = = 'A bűnös/tettes visszatér a tett színhelyére'. See e.g. *Krassó György-interjú*, 3.; Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988). Interjúk*, 49.

8 = = *Krassó György-interjú*, 1.

became disillusioned with communism, mainly as a result of his direct experience of the working class. In early 1953, he was expelled from the Communist Party for destructive behaviour.[9] It is therefore not surprising that in 1956 he was already enthusiastically involved in the overthrow of the Stalinist dictatorship. He took part in the demonstrations of 23 October 1956, fought with guns at the Hungarian Radio building and was almost court-martialled. After the Soviet intervention, he mostly printed manifestos, produced and distributed leaflets denouncing the new Kádár government supported by the Soviets and calling for a strike by the workers. After decades in prison following the suppression of the uprising, and then decades of justified fear of state repression, these forms of activity returned in the 1980s in the framework of the Hungarian October Publishing House, founded by Krassó.

In Krassó's interviews, linking of elements of the Communist-Party work of his youth with the forms of anti-regime activity in the eighties functioned above all as a self-ironic and deheroising rhetorical figure. At the same time, the figure of 'returning' to the scene of the action in the context of oppositional activity in 1956 and the 1980s was saturated with meaning in several ways.[10] It is obvious that 'return' can be understood as a performative-operational action, since it implied the restoration of the former space of operation, and the repetition of specific forms of action. This means that the 1980s, when the samizdat publishing house was run, saw the return of the same—or at least very similar—practices as in 1956. It is also clear from the publishing 'portfolio' of 'Hungarian October', Krassó's samizdat publishing house founded in 1983, that he also reached back to the 1956 activities in terms of the politics of memory. As an actor cultivating and socialising memory, his aim was to rehabilitate the repressed memory of the uprising. It is characteristic that Krassó not only named his samizdat publishing house, but also his later enterprises—his telegraph office, established in London in 1986, and his party, which was established legally in 1989—after the Hungarian October of 1956.

Moreover, the topos of 'the perpetrator returns to the scene of the act' suggests that Krassó had fully managed to incorporate the 1956 experience into the narrative of his own life. It is characteristic that this rhetorical figure does not present Krassó as a traumatised victim of the post-1956 reprisals (which Krassó would have had 'every right' to do after his long years in prison), but as an active agent of the revolution (all the more so because Krassó was averse to 'martyrdom').[11]

9 = = *Krassó György-interjú*, 25.; Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988). Interjúk*, 50.

10 = = For this see Krassó, 'A "Magyar Október" előzményei'.

11 = = On this point, I dispute Gabriella Kinda's assertion that Krassó's 1956 trial 'shows the struggle of a powerless man against the immense repressive machine', and that although 'Krassó did not surrender, he should not be made a victim, or even

Victims of trauma are unable to make the untold trauma part of their identity and biography, where memories return again and again in the form of compulsive and passive action, as if the victims were unable to detach themselves from the scene of the act and were involuntarily stuck in the moment of trauma.[12] In contrast to the traumatised victim, the 'perpetrator' is able to act as a conscious and active agent, who is more the agent of his memories than the sufferer, and whose return may be motivated by the positive emotional state he or she has experienced, or by the anger caused by a damaged sense of justice. In Krassó's case, this 'return' was therefore an imaginary act of a conscious and capable subject, which, firstly, made it possible to relive the euphoric, adrenaline-fuelled days of the 1956 uprising and, secondly, was linked to the need for recompense for the former grievances: revenge. Including both emotional and cognitive elements and which can be understood as 'the first manifestation of a sense of justice',[13] this vengeance was enacted in Krassó's case 'as a kind of diverted legal defence mechanism'. Since revenge against the repressive regime was not part of the regime's playbook, it was displaced and took on a form of critical resistance: the act of samizdat publishing. In the summer of 1984, according to a state security report, Krassó expressed his motivation for this by saying that he had been 'imprisoned for a few leaflets, got 10 years, served seven of them, and now feels like he is retaliating for this long prison sentence, and [it] is fair and that is why he is doing it'.[14] This is reinforced by the fact that in the phrase he repeatedly quoted, he ironically referred to himself as 'guilty'.

Krassó thus succeeded in creating a narrative construction—or rather a narrative identity—which reflected both permanence and change, continuity and discontinuity. In addition to linking the revolutionary acts of 1956 with the oppositional activities of the 1980s, his life narrative integrated and resolved the tension between Communist-Party work and oppositional activity, without jeopardising the narrative unity of his life. In the life narratives that he retold again and again, certain elements of his life were reinforced and the fault lines bridged: for example, the totality of action established a link between agitational work and the samizdat publishing.[15]

a hero'. (Kinda, *Krassó György 1956-os pere*, 120.) In my view, Krassó was clearly a victim of the post-1956 repression, a sufferer of political injustice, who at the same time did not rebuild his identity according to the narrative of victimhood.

12 = = Cf. Pintér, *A nem múló jelen*, 41–42.

13 = = Hadik, *A bosszú*, 11. Quoted in Kuminetz, Egy tomista jog- és állambölcselet, 313.

14 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 June 1984, 348., O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

15 = = Krassó formulated the 'totality of action' in such a way that one 'devotes absolutely all one's time to this purpose and that it pervades one's whole life', by which he meant both agitational party work and samizdat publishing. *Krassó György-interjú*, 1.

= = = The activity of the Hungarian October Publishing House

Imprisoned for his participation in the 1956 uprising and released by amnesty in 1963, György Krassó[16] remained the focus of the authorities' attention for many decades. Almost from the moment of his release, on 10 September 1963, the state security service kept him under operational control, under code-name 'Lidi', as part of the interception of persons convicted of crimes against the state, and thirteen massive dossiers were compiled on his activities and daily life up to December 1985. Over the decades, he was prosecuted several times, placed under police supervision or cautioned by the authorities. Numerous secret agents worked to obtain as much reliable information as possible for the authorities in order to prevent or at least limit his 'anti-state' activities. It is also telling that there have been instances of several independent agents staying at the same time in Krassó's apartment and reporting on each other.[17]

Although Krassó never hid his (political) views, which were 'not exactly in line' with the system,[18] his oppositional behaviour became more open and public from the second half of the 1970s, in parallel with the emergence of the Hungarian democratic opposition. In the summary reports,[19] it was noted that in 1979 he signed a solidarity declaration with the members of the Czechoslovak opposition movement, Charter '77; that he was the organiser and supporter of several symbolic actions in support of the Polish Solidarity movement, and even sought to establish contacts with representatives of the Polish independent trade union; at the end of 1981, he organised a solidarity action in support of Tibor Pákh, who protested against the unlawful withdrawal of his passport by going on hunger strike; and he regularly attended lectures at the unofficial Flying University organised by the opposition. The authorities deeply resented that some of his writings

16 = = For literature on György Krassó see: *Krassó György-interjú.;* Hafner–Zsille, *Maradj velünk!;* Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó;* Keresztes, 'Krassó György kizárása a Közgazdaságtudományi Egyetemről 1955-ben'; Pécsi, 'Baklövés'; Kinda, 'Krassó György 1956-os pere'; Kinda, 'A Nádor utca-akció'; Nagy, 'Krassó Györgyről'.

17 = = On 14 March 1984, and again on 22 March 1984, for example, secret agents with the code-names 'László' (civil name Gyula Lugossy) and 'Költő' (civil name Lajos Mózes) were in Krassó's apartment at the same time. (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 28 March 1984, 148., O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 12 April 1984, 224, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. See also Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó,* 233).

18 = = According to Ferenc Kőszeg, a member of the democratic opposition, 'Krassó did nothing but berate the system. It was simply impossible to catch a single ten-minute moment in his agenda when he wasn't berating the system.' *(Kőszeg Ferenc-interjú,* 306.)

19 = = See e.g. Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 29 November 1984, 129–142, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

were sent to the West and published there—including his article on the violations of travel and passport policy, which appeared in the Parisian émigré journal *Magyar Füzetek* in 1981, and Bill Lomax's book Hungary 1956, which Krassó translated into Hungarian and annotated. To add to his list of 'crimes,' in 1981, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the 1956 uprising, he organised a commemoration in a private apartment in Budapest, and two years later, in June 1983, on the 25th anniversary of the execution of Imre Nagy, the former communist prime minister of the uprising, he also held a commemoration. The authorities were also aware that he had started his own publishing activity under the name of 'Hungarian October', publishing 'six different enemy samizdat materials' by October 1984, according to their records.[20] The number of these publications multiplied the following year.

Between 1982 and 1989, György Krassó's initiative, sometimes called Hungarian October Publishing House [Magyar Október Kiadó] and sometimes called 'Hungarian October' Freepress [„Magyar Október" Szabadsajtó], brought out more than thirty publications, and in addition, there were publications that Krassó reproduced and distributed without a publisher's label. The publisher's profile was mainly dominated by works related to the memory of the 1956 uprising, but Krassó also 'launched' other banned works that did not belong to the genre of political history, and historical works. Between 1982 and 1985, Krassó was engaged in compiling, reproducing and distributing unofficial publications, amidst increasing attention from state security and at great existential risk to him. From 1986 onwards, after Krassó had emigrated to London,[21] publishing activities were

20 = = Intézkedési terv [Operational Plan], 16 October 1984, 279, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

21 = = At the end of 1985, Krassó received a telegram with the news that his brother Miklós Krassó, who had been living in London since 1956, had set fire to his apartment while smoking a cigarette and was hospitalised with severe burns. In order to visit his brother, who was hanging between life and death, Krassó applied for an emergency passport to Western countries on 10 November 1985. Unlike in previous cases, this application was not immediately rejected by the authorities, but the possible consequences were considered. They found that while Krassó would mobilise international public opinion and launch a 'propaganda campaign' against the Hungarian political leadership if his passport was refused again, his departure would result in the Hungarian October Publishing House's 'activity being reduced to a minimum,' while they also reckoned that Krassó would return to his subversive activities with a wider network of international contacts and more favourable opportunities. (Jelentés [Report], 11 November 1985, 214–216, O-19619/13., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) In the end, the threat of an international press campaign was more important to the authorities, and Krassó was granted the first Western passport of his life at the age of 53. (See Modor, *Célkeresztben Krassó,* 246.) Ágnes Háy and György Krassó—as accurately recorded in a State Security daily report—'left the country by train at Hegyeshalom at 18:42 on 22 November 1985.' (Napi jelentés [Daily Report], 25 November 1985, 251., O-19619/13., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) In London, Krassó decided that he could better help the opposition from abroad, and did not return home for the next few years.

relegated to the background, but he still tried to organise the publication of samizdat works in Hungary from abroad.

In contrast to the samizdat publishers using homemade techniques,[22] most of the publications of the Hungarian October Publishing House were produced on the black market, in state-operated printing factories.[23] In the midst of the increasingly severe economic crisis of the 1980s, workers in state-operated printing factories (e.g. in factories or state companies) were keen to take on illegal printing jobs for the 'black market' as a form of wage supplementation. By using more professional printing techniques, the publications of the Hungarian October Publishing House undeniably brought a breath of fresh air to the second public sphere in that 'both in terms of their editing and their technical execution, they demonstrated a quality that was previously unusual in independent publishing'.[24] The pursuit of 'good quality', 'good design' and 'cheapness' were part of the publishing programme.[25] Many of the over thirty publications published by Krassó approached the quality of products of official publishing. The publishing programme of 'Hungarian October' required basic capital to run the publishing house, as well as the skills to exploit the resources of the second economy.

22 = = Until the 1980s, Hungarian samizdat consisted almost exclusively of typewritten texts copied using typewriters and carbon paper (Danyi, 'Az ajándékozás művészete'). However, the early 1980s saw the emergence, largely under Polish influence, of home printing techniques that resulted in larger print runs: the so-called 'ramka', screen printing and stenciling—to which the underground art scene also contributed significantly with their skills (Danyi, 'Harisnya, ablakkeret és szabad gondolat'). In addition, the emergence in the 1980s of officially licensed copying shops in Budapest and larger cities, open to the public, created further opportunities for the reproduction of unofficial documents, as previously only state institutions or factories were allowed to use copy machines (Dalos, *Viszlát, elvtársak!*, 78.).

23 = = Krassó's preference for illegal professional printing over homemade techniques was also influenced by a previous experience. In 1979, Krassó's partner, the artist Ágnes Háy, wanted to publish a book of her prints entitled *Sex—40 drawings*. The way to do this, at Krassó's suggestion, was to publish it privately, for which an application had to be submitted to the General Department of Publishing. To facilitate a positive decision on the application, Háy asked the highly respected psychologist, Ferenc Mérei to write a foreword. The application also had to specify the printing costs of the publication, so Krassó simply walked into a printing house to ask for a quote. After 'the letter of the competent review committee refused to publish the work' (Feljegyzés [Note], 17 October 1978, 34, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary), Krassó went back to the printing house, where he managed to arrange for the book to be printed without permission. It was then that it became clear to Krassó that 'the printers were very happy to print for money, illegally' (Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021).

24 = = Kőszeg, 'Az M. O. kiadó', 67.

25 = = 'Bemutatkozik az M.O.', 38.

= = = The financial situation and incomes of György Krassó

There are many indications that Krassó had the necessary capital to run the publishing house smoothly. Krassó could pay for the materials he bought from abroad in the currency of his choice: he would ask the purchaser 'whether he would give the amount requested in dollars, Deutschmarks or French francs'.[26] Krassó regularly lent money to other samizdat 'enterprises'.[27] In addition, 'he repeatedly stated that he had an advantage over his 'co-publishers' because he could pay printers immediately and in cash.'[28] On several occasions, Krassó gave the printer ten thousand Hungarian forints in advance.[29] The printing costs of an average publication were about three to four times higher than the advance paid by Krassó: around 30-40 thousand forints.[30] This also meant that Krassó had (at least) enough working capital to cover the entire printing costs of a given publication. To put this in perspective, in the 1980s, this meant an average income of about one year, and Krassó's official disability pension was well below average.[31] It is clear that Krassó would not have been able to generate the financial resources to run the publishing house on his pension alone.

It is therefore worth taking a closer look at Krassó's sources of income—which, trying to catch him, is just what the state security services did. Krassó is known to have been perfectly happy to receive a disability pension, and did not wish to take on a full-time job, either because of his lifestyle or because of his convictions. Krassó considered the political and economic system to be corrupt and immoral,[32]

26 = = Jelentés [Report], 12 June 1984, 333, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

27 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021.

28 = = Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 17 June 1985, 239, O-19619/12., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. Krassó's assertion that, unlike other samizdat publishers, he was immediately solvent did not mean that he did not often run into financial difficulties, partly due to his passion for horse racing, partly due to his business adventures.

29 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 9 January 1985, 242, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 22 January 1985, 253, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

30 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 9 January 1985, 242, O-19619/11.

31 = = In 1982 the average monthly income per person was 3385 forints, while by 1987 it had risen to 5262 forints. (Andorka and Harcsa, *A lakosság jövedelme,* 97–117. Krassó's pension in December 1982 was 2218 forints (Jelentés [Report], 3 December 1982, 92, O-19619/8., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

32 = = Jelentés [Report], 19 June 1979, 53, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. It is important to note that Krassó made this statement in connection with János Kenedi's satirical sociography *'Tiéd az ország, magadnak építed'* ['You own the country, you build it yourself'], which exposed the shadow side of the real socialist economy and casted light on the mechanisms of the illegal 'black economy'. Kenedi, *'Tiéd az ország, magadnak építed';* Kenedi, *Do it Yourself.*

and to the state security services he 'seemed to be a principled non-worker, not wanting to participate in the "building of socialism"', and 'often jokingly annoyed his acquaintances who were employed by making similar statements'.[33] In addition to his disability pension—which he received as a hearing impaired person—Krassó also earned some income as a technical translator, with a specialisation in English.[34] Krassó also worked on Fridays and Sundays at the Lottery Board, where he was involved in the evaluation of lottery tickets, a job he had done since his university days.[35] In 1980, the state security services hatched a plan to deprive Krassó of his income and thus make him existentially vulnerable: they wanted to attack his pension payments under the existing legislation[36] and to exclude him from the evaluation of lottery tickets.[37]

However, making a targeted person completely bankrupt was not so easy, as Krassó had other sources of income. It is worth noting that Krassó had not only an innate affinity for finance, but also a background in economics: he wrote his dissertation on the redistribution of money. It is therefore not surprising that he also seems to have put his knowledge to good use as a 'businessman', alert to market failures and exploiting the opportunities offered by the second economy.[38] Anna Vágner, a typist who also worked for Krassó, remembered him thus: 'Because you could always do business with him. So he was always open for business. [...] He had a thousand business things that he did.'[39] And the 'business' included everything from gambling and betting on horse races to selling smuggled jeans and privately produced toys and distributing samizdat.

Some of Krassó's business transactions can be reconstructed from state security documents. The state security services suspected that Krassó also traded in quartz watches, which he bought at the Keleti Railway Station, among other places,

33 = = Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék,ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

34 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021. Until the late 1970s, Krassó received these assignments partly from the philosopher Jenő Nagy, who worked at the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 132, O-19619/5.). At that time, Jenő Nagy used the opportunities of his position to provide translation and documentation work to many marginalised intellectuals and dissidents without a livelihood, in an extremely selfless way. (For this see Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968-1988). Interjúk*, 297–298.)

35 = = Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 9 August 1979, 59, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

36 = = Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 16 July 1980, 143, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

37 = = Összefoglaló jelentés [Summary Report], 16 July 1980, 144, O-19619/5.

38 = = Comp. *Vágner Anna-interjú*, 174.

39 = = *Vágner Anna-interjú*,173.

and then, after some minor repairs and maintenance, sold at a profit in the State Commission Stores [Bizományi Áruház] or within his circle of friends.[40] One state security source was also aware that Krassó had 'on previous tourist trips to socialist countries, bypassing tax authorities, imported large quantities of jeans'.[41] The smuggled jeans were sold by Krassó in Budapest, at the Second-Hand Market (commonly known as Ecseri market)—and he was caught.[42] The smuggling and sale of the jeans was a one-time operation, notable for the fact that Krassó tried to make a side profit from his journey abroad. In 1983, Krassó was considering having a yo-yo-like toy, modelled on a toy from the West, made on a small industrial scale and launched on the market—that is, sold on stalls—in the days before New Year's Eve.[43] Krassó hoped to make a big profit from the deal, which he commented would 'at least earn the opposition some money'.[44] Krassó also made some cash by selling inherited family possessions. These included the collection of stamps inherited from his father, all of which were of great value. Krassó sold the stamps in line with market trends: when he felt that the price of stamps was low, he stopped selling them, hoping that he would be able to sell them at a better price later, when the price of gold rose.[45] According to his partner, Ágnes Háy, when he was short of money, he would pawn family jewellery to get cash.[46]

40 = = Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131., O-19619/5.

41 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 23 December 1977, 7, O-19619/5., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

42 = = Kőszeg, 'Elkésett vita Eörsi Istvánnal', 236.

43 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021. The state security source also claimed to know that 'on New Year's Eve, 600 of the 5,500 Chinese yo-yos [sic!] were sold, which means a revenue of around 10 000 forints compared to the 35 000 forints invested. (Jelentés [Report], 19 January 1984, 27, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.) A similar statement was made by Róbert Szűts Pálinkás, member of the Inconnu Group, who said that the game did not live up to market expectations (A rendszerváltás lelkiismerete: *Krassó György)*. These sources contradict the recollection of Anna Vágner, the typist in charge of the sale, who says that they made good money. Ágnes Háy, who also sold the toy, shares the latter view, saying that the state security source is exaggerating the production costs, since all that was needed to make the toy was a loop stick, tracing paper and a drilling machine (used to roll up the tracing paper) (Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021). It is conceivable that after the unsuccessful 1983 campaign, the following year the goods were sold not only before New Year's Eve, but also at Christmas markets, such as Marczibányi Square, where they were more popular *(Vágner Anna-interjú,* 173–175). The final balance, however, is further affected by the fact that Krassó also paid the workers: he paid them 50-100 forints per hour, stating that 'in his opinion, you should neither work nor employ anyone below that.' (Jelentés [Report], 2 December 1983, 397, O-19619/8., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

44 = = Jelentés [Report], 2 December 1983, 397, O-19619/8.

45 = = Szubjektív jelentés [Subjective Report], 28 May 1980, 131, O-19619/5.

46 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

= = = Informal practices: kombinowanie, znajomości, expropriation

Typically, running samizdat publishing houses, including raising the necessary capital and resources to publish samizdat texts, involved a whole range of informal practices. As far as the concept of informality is concerned, it would be difficult to provide an exact definition, given the diversity of research directions (mainly sociological and cultural anthropological) and the local characteristics they reveal. It is worth noting, however, that the rise of research focusing on informality was accompanied by a structural change following the economic crisis of the 1970s, which on a global scale disrupted the hegemony of formal institutions and valorised the resources that were not regulated by the state, were locally available and could be exploited for livelihoods, and the practices and networks that provided access to them.

In the communist countries of Eastern Europe, informal forms of activity can be classified first and foremost as social responses to the shortage economy. In the midst of the deepening economic crisis of late communism, the role of the 'second' or 'informal' economy significantly grew,[47] with some estimates suggesting that in the 1970s and 1980s nearly 75% of Hungarian society was involved in some form of second-economy income making.[48] As early as in the 1960s, the practice of 'fusi' or 'fusizás' flourished, i.e. informal work or services performed by workers during or after official working hours, avoiding taxation, for 'personal, family or friendly' use, utilising state resources.[49] So called 'maszekolás', i.e. working without a trade licence, was also a common practice, as was 'trükközés', i.e. circumventing the rules in some way. Economic activity outside the state-organised economic framework was above all a wage supplement, helping households to manage, accumulate and earn a living. Informal practices also required the ability to navigate or to find a way around the conditions of the shortage economy, knowing where resources could be found, where goods should be resold, who should be bribed, etc. In the case of the smuggled jeans, Krassó's activities also fitted in well with the phenomenon of the 'tourism trade' in which large numbers of citizens of socialist countries travelled as tourists to sell their relatively easy-to-obtain goods in countries that did not have them.[50]

The practices used by Krassó played a major role in the running of the samizdat publishing house. Without exception, the publications required raw materials:

47 = = Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció'.

48 = = Valuch, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete*, 290.

49 = = Bezsenyi, 'Enyém, tied, mienk'. For this see also Miklós Haraszti's famous sociography, Darabbér which revealed the conditions in the Red Star tractor factory, Budapest. The manuscript reached the West where it was published under the title *A Worker in a Worker's State*. The book was also published by György Krassó in samizdat form in 1985.

50 = = Kochanowski, 'Pioneers of the Free Market Economy?'.

above all, large quantities of paper, printing ink, metal staples and glue. State security documents show that, from 1982 onwards, Krassó increasingly turned to his acquaintances for printing materials and reproduction possibilities. The agents meticulously recorded that Krassó asked for stencil paper,[51] black ink,[52] paper cutting machines,[53] staplers and staples for bookbinding,[54] while he was also interested in duplicating machines and their parts,[55] and tried to find out about photocopying and printing possibilities.[56] Certain materials, such as staplers and staples for stapling thick blocks of paper, were only available in the West, and Krassó tried to mobilise his contacts in Vienna. For home reproduction, the 'publisher' had to obtain all the materials, but in the case of illegal printing carried out in state-operated printing factories, the printer usually had the materials at his disposal.[57] These printers often fulfilled orders to private customers at the expense of state companies.[58]

51 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 163, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 19 October 1984, 255, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

52 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 10 May 1982, 199, O-19619/7., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 October 1984, 242, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

53 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 13 September 1984, 175, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

54 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 6 February 1984, 43, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

55 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 19 April 1983, 188, O-19619/8., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

56 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 15 February 1984, 57, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 17 August 1984, 118., O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

57 = = The failure of a state security operation is a case in point. When state security, through their contact 'Frederich', offered a large amount of paper to Krassó, who by then favoured professional printers, in the hope that the operation would lead them to the printing site, Krassó gave the contact person the address of Jenő Nagy, who ran the ABC Independent Publishing House and favoured the stencil technique. The failure of this operation was resignedly acknowledged by the state security. (Jelentés [Report], 17 December 1984, 165, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 18 December 1984, 170–171., O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. (It is worth noting that, of course, Krassó could not have known that his acquaintance who offered the paper was an agent of state security. And Jenő Nagy had done the printing at home without any conspiring, so such a 'delivery' was not unusual for Jenő Nagy.)

58 = = The testimony of one of the printers who was caught reveals that the paper and AGFA plates used for Krassó's publications were also the property of the cooperative, with a purchase value of around 14 thousand forints. (Jelentés [Report], 24 October 1984, 323., O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

In keeping with the public morality of the 1980s, Krassó did not consider such practices of expropriation and misappropriation to be a crime. '[N]icking from the state is certainly a useful thing', he once declared, 'and it can be facilitated by small-scale thefts'.[59] In fact, for Krassó, the film entitled *The Thief of Baghdad* was, according to Ágnes Háy's recollection, 'a metaphor for the natural alliance of those who suffer economic and political injustice'.[60] Produced by Sándor Korda and released in 1940, the English film was also popular in Hungary.[61] It was screened in cinemas after the Second World War and in the following decades it was often shown as a TV film on Hungarian television. In the film, which evokes the world of the Arabian Nights, the entrapped Prince Ahmed—the victim of political injustice—and Abu, the little thief from Baghdad—the victim of economic injustice—join forces to fight Jafar, the evil, usurping sorcerer who, not least, wants to captivate Princess Jasmine, Ahmed's love. Krassó probably identified with both characters at the same time, but with different intensities: he saw Prince Ahmed as the victim of political injustice, but his opposition to the elites also made him suspicious of such a figure; while Abu, who came from the lower strata of society, was a clearly positive example for Krassó. In this context, it is of particular importance that the thief in the story became a hero by being himself: Abu saved Ahmed's life by stealing the last thing he ever stole: the flying carpet. In the tale of the thief who became a hero and the prince who regained the power he deserved, Krassó saw a justification for his own practice: he, as the politically marginalised former 1956er, joined forces with economically marginalised workers, the small-scale industrialists in the private sector, the ordinary citizens who were able to make a living in the second economy, in order to exercise their freedoms.

Alongside the Baghdad thief, another metaphor emerges for the intertwined practices of (illegal) informal practices and civil rights activism: the centaur from Greek mythology. This is how Miklós Haraszti introduced János Kenedi, a member of the Hungarian democratic opposition, to readers in an interview published in the pages of a samizdat publication: 'In the second economy, you circumvent the state and in the second public sphere, you accumulate the moral capital to do so. In short, you're a centaur yourself [...] a civil rights champion from the trunk up, and your hooves are for treading the illegal roads.'[62] It seems that this metaphor can be used without irony in the context of Krassó's activities. It is these hybrid patterns of identity that have allowed practices of misappropriation, theft and the black market to become intertwined with civil rights activism in the independent publishing activity.

59 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK 64/3/3 April 1981, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

60 = = Ágnes Háy's email sent to the author, 18 June 2021.

61 = = 'Megérkezett Budapestre Korda Sándor új filmje', 8.

62 = = *Egy főkolompos délelőttjei*, 1.

This approach, which presented theft as a legitimate means of undermining the ruling power, can be paralleled with the social practices that characterised certain Eastern European countries during the deepening crises, which were embodied, among other things, in the private use and misappropriation of state properties. In the disastrous Polish economic situation, for example, a sharp distinction was drawn between private property and public property—the latter, because of its abstract and undefined nature, was seen by people as a form of property belonging to no one, or not considered as property at all.[63] These social practices, which thus provided access to otherwise inaccessible goods, also played a major role in the samizdat culture, which was constantly struggling with resource shortages. Krassó acknowledged in relation to one of his samizdat publications that it was 'produced on semi-stolen paper' and regretted that 'these resources have now dried up'.[64]

The strategies employed by Krassó are also eerily reminiscent of the social practices that the dysfunctional economic system in Poland had brought to life. Faced with a much more drastic shortage of goods than in Hungary, Poles were also forced to develop practices very similar to those of Hungarian fusi, maszekolás and trükküzés. In Poland, the social practices of kombinowanie and znajomości gained access to otherwise inaccessible resources and goods.[65] The term kombinowanie, which can be translated into English 'as 'to scheme', 'to finagle', or simply 'to sort out',[66] meant 'to scheme up an ingenious, creative, often semi-legal or illegal solution',[67] describing 'the process of manipulating legal, political or cultural rules in order to access a resource'.[68] Kombinowanie in this way allowed access to resources, including food, goods, labour, information or even power. In the case of znajomości (acquaintance, connections), which can be described as 'networks of horizontal exchange relationships among a circle of intimates', where the individuals 'use their personalized connections with one another to gain access to goods in shortage and to exchange information'.[69] In other words, 'when one uses znajomości to 'arrange things' (załatwiać sprawę), one is using personal connections to manoeuvre around immobile obstacles'.[70]

63 = = Tarkowska and Tarkowski, 'Amoralny familizm', 263–281. For a summary of the question in Hungarian, see: Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció'.

64 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 163, O-19619/9.

65 = = For a summary of the question in Hungarian, see: Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció'.

66 = = Makovicky, *'Kombinowanie'*, 1.

67 = = Kusiak, *The Cunning of Chaos*, 296–297.

68 = = Materka, *'Kombinacja'*, 222.

69 = = Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 119.

70 = = Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 126.

From this point of view, Krassó himself, who was exploring exploitable state resources and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the second economy, was also engaging in the practice of kombinowanie, while at the same time trying to influence the world around him through his assertive behaviour and personal relationships. It is easy to trace how, as an agency, Krassó constantly sought to use his connections to get things done, whether it was buying materials, managing printing capacity, typing headlines, smuggling Western publications or other things. Meanwhile, he was aware of the 'power of money':[71] he used his solvency to make his affairs prosper.

Several motives could be linked in terms of the identity of the printers who undertook the job of illegal printing, and the motivations for their activities. Printers were state-sector workers who also benefited from the second economy.[72] This tendency intensified after the introduction of the 1968 new economic mechanism in Hungary, when the printing presses were transformed into profit-making state enterprises, while lower prices were set for book and newspaper publishing, in respect of their cultural and political role. This encouraged printers to concentrate on more profitable work (such as printing corporate brochures, calendars, etc.) thus reducing the printing capacity available for book and newspaper publishing, which caused considerable tension in the system.[73] The shift in the interests of the printing industry towards free pricing also opened the way for informal, 'black' and 'illegal' printing. The printing of samizdat texts in state-operated printing factories can therefore best be seen as an individual strategy of 'symbiosis with the formal socialist planned economy', 'a self-evident daily practice of survival and wage supplementation'.[74] Krassó's uncovered contacts stated during police interrogation that they had taken the job for economic gain and that they were not motivated by any political motive. In the case of one of Krassó's printers, who happened to be a father of three children, who 'always did this fusi work after working hours',[75] it was apparently for supplementary income, a 'combination of formal and informal resources' that allowed for the maximisation of income, thus helping to accumulate household savings.[76] However, it is also true that printers may sometimes have been motivated by political convictions in undertaking such work. For example, another printer in Krassó's sights, who was 'not known for his left-wing leanings', enthusiastically accepted a request to reproduce illegal materials and expressed 'how happy he was that there was written opposition [sic!] in Hungary'.[77]

71 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021.

72 = = Andorka, 'A magyar társadalom rétegződése és mobilitása az 1930-as évektől napjainkig', 46–63.

73 = = Takács, 'A kultúra reformja – a reform kultúrája'.

74 = = Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció', 15.

75 = = Jelentés [Report], 24 October 1984, 324, O-19619/10.

76 = = Danyi and Vigvári, 'Túlélés, ellenállás, adaptáció', 15.

76 = = Jelentés [Report], 20 March 1985, 67, O-19619/12., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

= = = Money as a game: circumventing the system

Looking through the bewilderingly diverse forms of Krassó's business activity, one would be forgiven for assuming that Krassó's business transactions and his relationship with money were driven by profit. But this relationship was much more complex than that. For example, Krassó's passion for gambling, which took the form of betting on horse races and buying lottery tickets, significantly nuances the picture, as he attached very specific meanings to money.

In the 1980s, with his 'shaggy grey hair and striped T-shirt', Krassó was part of the crowd at horse races.[78] In addition, Krassó had a close relationship with a jockey, István Papp, who often gave him advice on which horses to bet on at the races. Since the rules of the Horse Sport Company prohibited all employees from placing bets, the drivers, jockeys and other insiders often participated in the gambling through outside operators. This was probably the basis of the relationship between Krassó and István Papp. In January 1984, Krassó noted that he had 'big plans for him [the jockey] for the spring and summer' and 'hopes that they will be able to cooperate better than last year, which was a very loss-making year.'[79] The manipulation of betting or gambling conditions through personal contacts—a practice, incidentally, widely used throughout the history of horse racing under socialism—mirrored the practices of kombinowanie and znajomości discussed earlier.[80]

It is important to note that the social practices of gambling, both in terms of social reality under communism and the monetary function of money, have become vehicles of subversive meanings. After 1945, horse racing was a marginalised social practice deprived of state subsidy, as the socialist system, despite its nationalisation, could not cope with the aristocratic past and self-sustaining nature of horse racing. It is also true that, after the 1956 uprising, the various social practices of gambling were considerably strengthened, since 'gambling allows one to expect something even in the most unpromising situation'.[81] It is no coincidence that a sociographical book published in 1972 noted the following about the public attending horse races: 'These five thousand people in Budapest are professional miracle makers. Every minute, they grab the elusive by the cauldron and shakes it until it drops a hundred forints.'[82] It could be said that the horse-racing public's sense

78 = = Ungvári, 'Talpra magyarok, hí a hazátok', 13.

79 = = Jelentés [Report], 20 February 1984, 63, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

80 = = Tamás Ungvári also claimed to know that 'when his tip came in, [Krassó] took the money out in a brown paper bag and gave it to his opposition colleagues after careful counting', to finance the purchase of paper for publications (Ungvári, 'Talpra magyarok, hí a hazátok', 13.).

81 = = Hammer, *...nem kellett élt vasalni,* 48.

82 = = Csurka and Rákosy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!,* 5–6.

of reality was detached from objective reality, leaving behind the Freudian sense of the 'reality principle', and in essence creating the phenomenon of fantasising.[83] This social phantasy can be understood as 'a way of taming a hostile environment',[84] or in other words, as a 'defence against painful realities'.[85]

In parallel to this social practice of 'miracle-making',[86] for Krassó, horse racing and lottery were a symbolic rewriting or manipulation of the post-1956 socio-political reality, which could be interpreted as an imaginary transformation of the essentially hostile, oppressive and bleak communist environment. It is important to note that in the context of horse racing, the imaginary-symbolic meanings of money came to the fore:[87] in the sense of 'miracle-making', money itself was fictionalised, its value changing from race to race in the light of the losses and calculable gains, sometimes taking on grandiose, sometimes almost intangible dimensions. Krassó referred to these practices of betting and 'miracle-making' as 'taking revenge on money' and 'humiliating money by making it into a game'.[88] In the process of playing with the existence of resources, where it oscillated between the extremes of reclassifying money as a plaything (i.e. ignoring it as a valid monetary instrument) and its potential multiplication as a means of payment,[89] 'the intermediary reality if this sort of "survived world"' or, to another way, a 'mental reality' came into being, creating 'fragile and fantastical shapes of the world'.[90] This 'mental reality' could function as 'a sense of contact with the outside world'.[91]

83 = = Here I follow Tomasz Rakowski's train of thought based on Agata Bielik-Robson's and Hanna Segal's works, among other texts. This interpretation is included in Rakowski's cultural anthropological analysis on the practices of managing economic and social crisis, occurring during the post-socialist transition in Poland (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 163–172. See also Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzchni*, 154–157.).

84 = = Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170.

85 = = Segal, *Marzenia senne*, 32. (Quoted in Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 169.)

86 = = This practice of 'miracle-making' was 'immortalized' in Róbert Koltai's 1993 film *Sose halunk meg* [We never Die].

87 = = Comp. Hites, 'Gazdaság, pénz, piac', 481–482.

88 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 6 July 2021.

89 = = Comp. 'That part of the Hungarian currency which has once entered the environment of a horse-race arena, as long as it circulates in this environment, is not simply a change, a pecunia, a currency, but a cell that is eternally dividing, a self-breeding kelp-animal, which is incessantly hovering between life and death, ready to multiply and disappear at any moment.' (Csurka and Rákosy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*, 57–58.).

90 = = Bielik-Robson, *Duch powierzchni*, 152-153. (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170–171).

91 = = For this social practice, see: Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 163-172. As Rakowski writes: 'Our precise aim is not to separate phantasy from reality. The mechanisms of phantasy, defense, and projection are, in this case, far more problematic. They serve rather to engender a sense of »contact with reality«, or, in general, a sense of contact with the outside world.' (Rakowski, *Hunters, Gatherers*, 170.)

However, Krassó treated both horse racing and lottery as separate systems, for which he devised winning strategies. In the case of lottery, Krassó's theory was that there are popular numbers that the majority of lottery players prefer to play, and there are less popular numbers. Since the prize was equally distributed among the lucky tippers, the amount of money that could be won for the popular numbers was much smaller than for the unpopular numbers.[92] So Krassó tried to play the unpopular numbers using statistical data.[93] As for horse racing, Krassó's theory was based on his own experience, but he also drew inspiration from István Csurka and Gergely Rákosy's book Így, ahogy vagytok! [Just as you are!], which paints a sociographic picture of horse racing after 1945.[94] Krassó's theory was based on the fact that horse racing itself was a fraud: jockeys who participated in the betting through their intermediaries and who talked to each other from time to time would bring out the horse that the bettors could not expect as the winner. Krassó thus sought to place bets by following the thinking of the jockeys, or rather by predicting it.[95] What is remarkable about these strategies is not their degree of efficiency (Krassó lost a lot in horse races),[96] but the common feature that they essentially sought to identify and exploit the weaknesses of the system. For Krassó, gambling thus took on the connotations of both an intellectual game and a symbolic way of exploiting and circumventing the system.

To clarify Krassó's relationship with money, it is also important to add that he regularly lent various sums to his friends, acquaintances and business partners. Krassó kept regular accounts of these, ensuring that the amount lent was repaid. However, in some cases he was also able to forget the 'recovery' of debts. One of the notorious borrowers was the economist Tamás Lipták, who was known 'to owe half the world', including Krassó. In order to relieve the tension of unpaid debts, Krassó came up with an imaginary Christmas donation to Lipták, so that the next time he borrowed money, he would actually receive the money Krassó had imagined giving him. With this theoretical transaction, Krassó transformed the business of lending into a gesture of friendly gift-giving, or, to put it another

92 = = This logic also applied to horse racing: 'If the favourite wins: the amount is divided into many shares, if the outsider wins: less, and the dividend is bigger'. (Csurka and Rákosy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*, 17.)

93 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

94 = = Csurka and Rákosy, *Így, ahogy vagytok!*. Compare: 'the horse race was already gutted, so there was not much to win, because everything was basically cheated. I had the sense to see that everything was being cheated all the time. I didn't go into the little details of how and why it was worth it for who and why it wasn't worth it, when to hold back, why to hold back the horse, but you could know and you could see it' (Hadas, 'Férfitempó', 14.).

95 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

96 = = Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 8 July 2021.

way, he playfully changed the valid frame of reference of money, debt and loan without the knowledge of the other party.

The above statements can also be paralleled with the operation of the samizdat publishing house set up and run by Krassó, which was simultaneously integrated into the informal economic forms of activity and took on the meanings of 'playing with the system' and 'circumventing the system'. Samizdat publishing, which was closely linked to Krassó's identity as a 1956er, has already been discussed earlier, but this time it is worth focusing on the economic aspects. It is not an exaggeration to say that, after the sale of Krassó's publications, the costs invested were in principle recouped and could even have resulted in higher profits—but the risks were considerable, as the balance sheet could have been heavily affected by printing press busts, confiscations and fines imposed by the authorities. To better understand the operation of the Hungarian October Publishing House, it is worth taking a closer look at the nature and pricing of its publications.

= = = Pricing

The pricing of samizdat publications was a (context-)sensitive and not at all self-evident operation. Generally speaking, it is true that from the moment a price tag was attached to a samizdat text, production costs made it much more expensive than the products of state publishing, which received a substantial state subsidy. This was true even if only the typists (in the typewriter era of samizdat texts) and the printers (after the samizdat publishing houses were established) were paid for their work, and in neither case was there a royalty for intellectual work. Customers were generally sensitive to the price of the materials, and this was something that the gradually emerging independent publishers had to take into account.[97] The price of a publication was the subject of a series of debates, and several models of pricing emerged. The price of some of the publications sold in the 'Rajk boutique', including the magazine *Beszélő,* was set at production-cost price,[98] i.e. reflecting the average price 'one page/one forint'.[99]

97 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-56-87/4/30 April 1982, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. Published in Krahulcsán, 'A hazai szamizdat "hőskora"', 323.

98 = = In the case of the production cost price, it was common practice to increase the price of shorter publications by a few forints, so that the resulting profit could reduce the price of larger publications (Sajtórendészeti vétség ügyében folytatott eljárás dokumentumai [Documents Relating to the Procedure for a Press Offence], 14 December 1982—18 April 1988, 218, A-1361, Background materials for state security work, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary).

99 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], BRFK-56-87/4/30 April 1982. Published in Krahulcsán, 'A hazai szamizdat "hőskora"', 323.

The pricing of the AB Independent Publishing House, founded by Gábor Demszky in 1981, was a shift from production-cost pricing, as the price of publications included a profit margin of about 20% in addition to production costs. The reason for this was, above all, that Demszky did not want to slow down the pace of publication by waiting until all the copies of a previous publication had been sold out, thus creating the financial resources for the next publication. The profit margin was also justified by the increase in production costs, caused, firstly, by rising inflation and price increases, and, secondly, by the attention paid to samizdat publications by state security and the related political danger (the higher risk taken by printers also pushed up prices). The economic risk of house searches and confiscations also justified the creation of reserves. Of course, these factors also had a major impact on the operations of the other samizdat publishers that were set up in the 1980s.

Jenő Nagy, the founder of ABC Independent Publishing and the publisher of the samizdat journal Demokrata, believed in the principle that samizdat publications were in short supply, so the price could be named freely.[100] This meant that the publishers could ask for their publications essentially as much as they were not ashamed to, or as much as people were prepared to pay for them. The profit orientation was justified by the service of the 'sacred ideal of press freedom' and the fact that the profits could be reinvested in the publication of new publications.[101] It should also be remembered that Jenő Nagy and his wife, Mária Vétek, ran the publishing house full-time, with no other regular source of income.[102] The combination of 'serving a sacred ideal' and possible 'profit' can be paralleled with the term of the Polish historian Mateusz Fałkowski, who described the production and distribution of unofficial materials in Poland as a 'patriotic business', since it was both a way of making a living and a way of opposing the existing system.[103]

Krassó, who was 'not a hypocrite' when it came to finance, fully agreed with these principles. He wanted to run a profitable publishing house, so his publications were not sold at production-cost, but included a profit margin. At the same time, the economic model operated by Krassó was a new one. Although the translators and authors did not usually receive a remuneration (as in the case of other samizdat enterprises), Krassó not only paid the printers but also gave the distributors a commission of around 10-20%, thus giving them a vested financial interest, albeit modest, in the distribution of the publications—unlike, for example,

100 = = Interview with Jenő Nagy by the author, 16 August 2021.

101 = = Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968-1988). Interjúk*, 309.

102 = = Interview with Jenő Nagy by the author, 16 August 2021.

103 = = Fałkowski, *Biznes patriotyczny*.

the system of the *Beszélő* journal or the *Hírmondó,* which did not pay a commission for distribution.[104]

The need to be profitable has pushed the focus on high-interest, best-selling publications. A state security report noted that 'György Krassó is almost constantly thinking about what else could be published (reproduced) that would sell well, for two reasons. Partly for his own profit, and partly to cover other important political samizdat publications.'[105] The sale of commodities which, due to their high demand, were sure to make a profit, and which above all had an 'economic' or 'commercial' value, thus helped to promote works for which 'political value' was the primary consideration. The application of the dual value system greatly increased Krassó's scope for publishing.

The two values rarely coexisted, but in Orwell's emblematic work, for example, the 'commercial' and 'political' aspects were closely intertwined. Krassó, who was fond of pointing out the political significance of Orwell's 1984,[106] according to some sources, 'expected to get about 200 thousand forints net from the sale of 1984' and 'hope[d] to solve his financial problems'.[107] Krassó wanted to print one thousand copies of Orwell's work for 50 thousand forints,[108] and would have probably asked around 250-300 forints per copy.[109] (For comparison: the price of a best-selling Western in Hungarian at the time was between 50-90 forints).[110] In this case, he would have been able to sell the publication at a very high profit margin, which—not counting the additional costs over and above printing—could have been as high as 70-75%.

104 = = Compare with the words of Béla Gondos (Gulyás, 'Szamizdatos évek I.', 119.); Ágnes Háy recalled that according to Krassó's system, after ten copies, the eleventh was free (Interview with Ágnes Háy by the author, 21 June 2021). This system was also adopted by Jenő Nagy, the founder of ABC Independent Publishing, who distributed his periodical *Vakond* [Mole] along similar principles: 'whoever buys more than 5 copies, gets a 20% discount or an honorary copy' *(Vakond, 2.)*.

105 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 14 December 1983, 420, O-19619/8., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

106 = = Comp. e.g. Jelentés [Report], 16 April 1985, 140, O-19619/12., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

107 = = Kombinációs terv [Combination Plan], 29 January 1985, 254, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

108 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 12 December 1984, 159, O-19619/11., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

109 = = Krassó charged 300 forints for a typed, Hungarian-language copy of Orwell's *Animal Farm.* (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 5 October 1984, 198, O-19619/10., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.)

110 = = The 1984 Hungarian edition of Robert Merle's historical novel *En nos vertes années* cost 85 forints, Hermann Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game* 71 forints, and Agatha Christie's *The Pale Horse* cost 48 forints.

A good example of the 'commercial' aspect of publishing is the volume of the French poet François Villon's ballads containing adaptations by the Hungarian poet, György Faludy, which was very popular reading and had been legally published several times before 1945. Krassó tried to sell the book of poems through private distribution chains and antiquarian bookshops 'between a lower limit of 120 forints and an unspecified upper limit'.[111] The latter could reach 300 forints.[112] According to information from a secret agent under the code-name 'Költő' [Poet], the production cost of these Villon volumes was around 30 forints, but Krassó sold them for 100. So, the deal was 'quite profitable', according to a state security source,[113] as the profit margin could be as high as 60%. 'Költő', i.e. writer Lajos Mózes, reported that on the last Sunday before Christmas in 1983, for example, Krassó sold 30 of them, and 'he could have sold more, but that was all he had'.[114]

From 1983 onwards, Krassó published a number of documents, memoirs and analyses relating to the 1956 uprising, which were essentially important from a 'political' point of view.[115] These included reconstructions of the newspapers published in the days of the 1956 uprising: the issues of *Népszabadság* and the *Irodalmi Újság* from 2 November 1956. This issue of *Népszabadság* was extremely important because it contained a speech by János Kádár, Minister of State in the

111 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 14 December 1983, 420, O-19619/8.

112 = = R-ő, 'Faludy György bűne', 78–79.

113 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 167, O-19619/9.

114 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 166, O-19619/9. Although Krassó believed that 'up to 100,000 copies of Faludy's Villon could be sold, the interest in it is so great' (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 30 January 1984, 166, O-19619/9.), by the summer of 1984 distribution had begun to falter, so Krassó decided to 'no longer sell them for 100 forints, but for as little as 80' (Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 18 June 1984, 347, O-19619/9.).

115 = = The Hungarian October published the following publications related to the 1956 revolution: *A magyar forradalom hangja* [casette tape]. Budapest: 'MO.', 1982–1985; *A forradalmi város (Budapest, 1956. X. 23.—XI. 3. Húsz amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *A harcoló város (Budapest, 1956. X. 26.—XI. 11. Húsz amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *A lerombolt város (Budapest, 1956. XI. 4-e után. Húsz amatőrfénykép.* [no data available]; *Irodalmi Újság. 1956. november 2. Emléknyomat.* 'M.O.'; *Népszabadság. 1956. november 2. Emléknyomat.* Budapest: 'M.O.'; *Mi történt 1956-ban? Az ENSz Különbizottságának jelentése. (A magyar felkelés rövid története).* Budapest, 1983; Bibó István. *A magyar forradalomról,* Budapest: 'M.O.', 1984; Woroszylski, Wiktor. *Magyarországi napló* [translated by Grácia Kerényi]. Budapest: 'M.O.', 1984; Szász Béla. *Minden kényszer nélkül. Egy műper kórtörténete I–II.* Budapest: 'M.O.', 1984; Pongrátz Gergely. *Corvin-köz—1956.* Budapest: 'Magyar Október' Szabadsajtó.

second Imre Nagy government, which called the events of October 1956 a 'glorious uprising' and subsequently exposed the 'betrayal' of its author. The journal of the Writers' Union, Irodalmi Újság, owed its significance to, among other things, the fact that it published Gyula Illyés' poem *One Sentence on Tyranny,* written in 1950, which became an emblematic text of the Hungarian uprising (and was no longer allowed to appear in the official press). Also, it was the last issue of *Irodalmi Újság* to be published in Hungary before the journal was forced into exile. In the spring of 1984, Krassó completed a reconstruction of the issue of *Irodalmi Újság,* which, as he told a state security informant, 'took him a year to complete because he had to compile it from several incomplete copies.'[116] Krassó worked for a similar period—almost a year[117]—on a samizdat publication entitled On the Hungarian Revolution, which mainly consisted of the 1957–1958 writings by István Bibó, a Hungarian political thinker who was imprisoned after 1956 and marginalised after his release in 1963. Krassó sold copies of Bibó's publication for 60-80 forints,[118] and copies of *Irodalmi Újság* for 20 forints.[119] In these cases, the profit margin was also much lower, and the compilation of the publications required much more investment (as in the case of the Villon volume, for example).

Analysing the data obtained on Krassó's business plans, Hungarian state security concluded that Krassó 'saw a good business opportunity and source of income in samizdat'.[120] Given that state security sought to criminalise Krassó's activities and was also looking for evidence to prosecute him for economic crimes, it is worth treating the sources with some distance. There were several contradictions to the mere profitmaking from samizdat. Firstly, the profit margins for many of Krassó's other publications were much smaller: their publication was motivated more by a mission of political conviction and the discovery of historical truth than by profit. Secondly, Krassó also made a special effort to make his publications as cheap as possible 'despite the difficult conditions of samizdat production'.[121] Thirdly, Krassó was extremely meticulous in his business practices,

116 = = Napi Operatív Információs Jelentés [Daily Operative Information Report], III/III-83-87/7/4 May 1984, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary. See also Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 28 April 1984, 249, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

117 = = Jelentés Krassó Györgyről [Report on György Krassó], 29 March 1984, 200, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

118 = = Jelentés [Report], 17 May 1984, 284, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary; Jelentés [Report], 12 June 1984, 325, O-19619/9. 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

119 = = Jelentés [Report], 19 April 1984, 210, O-19619/9., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

120 = = Értékelő jelentés [Evaluation Report], 17 June 1985, 238, O-19619/12., 'Lidi', Operatív-dossziék, ÁBTL, Budapest, Hungary.

121 = = 'Bemutatkozik az M.O.', 38.

keeping regular accounts and trying to pay his staff fairly, which reduced his own profits.[122] Fourthly, as mentioned earlier, there was the risk of being caught and of confiscation, which made the samizdat publishing extremely risky from a business point of view. All in all, the business model of Krassó's samizdat publishing house was a curious mix of socially engaged non-profit and profit-oriented activities that allowed sustainability.

It is also clear that the samizdat publishers of the 1980s operated different business models and economic strategies. Further research may be motivated by the issue of the extent to which these differences coincided, or, to put it another way, shaped or deepened the political-ideological fault lines within the broadly defined democratic opposition.[123] It is enough to point out here that in the historical memory of the period, Krassó often appears as the 'internal opposition' of the democratic opposition and thus as a radical, dissident figure on the periphery of the democratic opposition, while the narrative of a circle of former samizdat activist operates the division into a plebeian/elite opposition.[124] It is perhaps not an exaggeration to argue that an economic perspective on the activities of the democratic opposition can make a major contribution to a more complex understanding of the oppositional culture and its internal relations of the period.

= = = Contexts of samizdat publishing

In the above article, I have tried to show, firstly, how, in the context of György Krassó's samizdat publishing, independent publishing took on meanings in terms of the identities of the actors involved in the production and distribution of the publications, and, secondly, the practices surrounding samizdat publishing. As we have seen, in Krassó's case, samizdat publishing can be interpreted as a personal revenge, in other words, as a manifestation of a sense of justice triggered by the post-1956 repression. This was closely linked to the profile of Krassó's publishing house, which aimed to revive the memory of the revolution as a social memory, and so samizdat publishing was in a sense a utopian social vision. It is also true that symbiosis with the second economy, in which the Hungarian October Publishing House drew resources from the state sector, took on the not-so-innocent connotations of both creative coexistence with the system and 'exploiting and circumventing the system', while for its participants, as we saw in the case of betting on horse races, it was able to transform the grey reality of state socialism in an imaginary sense.

122 = = 'He paid people well, so he wasn't that stingy,' recalled Anna Vágner *(Vágner Anna-interjú*, 174.).

123 = = For this see Csizmadia, *A magyar demokratikus ellenzék (1968–1988). Monográfia.*

124 = = A striking example of this is the documentary film by János Gulyás, for the script of which see Gulyás, 'Szamizdatos évek I.'; Gulyás, 'Szamizdatos évek II.'.

The hybrid forms of identity that underpin the practices of both 'circumventing and opposing the system' and the metaphors that express them—the 'centaur' or the 'Thief of Baghdad'—can be understood not so much as moral categories, but as effective forms of social resistance, creative adaptations to the socialist system, and effective advocacy of civil rights. It is worth adding that the symbiosis with the second economy, the income opportunities and hybrid forms of identity can be generalised to a certain extent, as they have also characterised other samizdat initiatives. Finally, Krassó's bottom-up business model, with its profit orientation, which sought to satisfy real demand, also represented a shift towards a market economy. György Krassó's independent publishing activity can thus be understood not only as a story of social resistance under state socialism, but also as a post-history of the 1956 revolution and a pre-history of the market economy and democratic transformation—although Krassó, as a socially sensitive, anti-elitist and radical intellectual, would certainly have some critical words to say about these developments leading up to today.

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