

# I. Introduction and Historical and Theoretical Context

## 1. Aims and Objectives

This study is an investigation of the life and work of émigré artists who arrived in Great Britain as refugees after the 1956 revolution in Hungary and after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968. Key issues that will be considered include the relationship between art and politics, exile and identity, cultural exchange and issues of communication with a foreign audience, to name only the most obvious. A central thread will be the human aspect, that is, how exile affected individual artists and their lives and altered their perception and artistic output.

The topic has clear connections to the socio-political phenomenon of migration in twentieth-century Europe. Although this study does not intend to reflect on the topical problems of immigration and asylum seekers in Great Britain today, it will add to the discussion by stressing Britain's historical position in admitting refugees and migrants and by highlighting the continuity and importance of migration and its benefits to British society.

The research also intends to contribute to the relatively new, but growing field of exile studies in visual culture. As the majority of these studies have been carried out on the period of the 1930s and 1940s focusing on exiles from Nazism (predominantly German-speakers), the current thesis intends to open a new perspective by examining refugee movement from a different region and from a different time period.

A primary objective of this study is to validate exile as a relevant topic for the study of art history; in particular, the context of twentieth-century European developments where traditional forms of social order, culture and artistic creation have been disrupted and altered as a result of monumental social and political upheavals. A major consequence of this chaotic and unsettled period was a vast population movement within Europe. Economic migration and mass exoduses - triggered by civil war, war, revolutions, genocide, ethnic cleansing and repressive totalitarian regimes describe twentieth-century history during which the feeling of dislocation came to be regarded as a fundamental human condition. In the words of philosopher

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976): “Homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world.”<sup>1</sup> In the modern era, the artist in exile became a familiar phenomenon. Artists who were forced to leave their homeland experienced the hardship which all exiles shared, and communicated this through evocative and perceptive artworks which provided a special insight into and examples of uprooted existence.

The purpose of this study is to identify and account for Hungarian and Czech/Slovak artists, who left their country as a consequence of the events of 1956 and 1968, and settled in Britain for a considerable period of time while they continued to work as artists. The artists selected for examination represent different aspects of cultural production and range from painters through graphic artists and designers to filmmakers. The selection of artists from various backgrounds and media was intentional, offering a rich and diverse picture in the context of a wider visual culture rather than just fine arts. This study will pay tribute to these artists, commemorate their resilience, courage and determination and draw attention to the work of lesser known émigré artists.

The artists will not be discussed in isolation, but in a wider cultural, social and political context against the backdrop of Cold War Europe, another fundamental aspect of fractured twentieth-century history. While this thesis is an art history study, politics cannot be overlooked when discussing art production in communist Hungary and Czechoslovakia. As Polish art theorist Piotr Piotrowski claims: “in such a system as in communist Europe, everything was political.”<sup>2</sup> The wider subject matter of the events of 1956 and 1968 will provide an opportunity to explore the relationship between art and politics in detail, and contrast artistic production in the two opposing social systems: communism and capitalism. Artists who arrived in Britain as refugees from communist Europe were accustomed to particular social and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> D. F. Krell, ed., *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper&Row. , 1977). p. 219

<sup>2</sup> Mayer, Antje: Art Histories, Plural. Interview with Piotr Piotrowski In *Kontakt The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group*, (online journal) ed. Erste Bank Group. 2006 <http://www.sponsoring.erstebank.at/report/stories/Kunstgeschichten+in+der+Mehrzahl/en> (26/01/2007).

conditions which inevitably affected their relationship to British art and culture and determined the way that they perceived their function as artists in society. The experience of settling in the West presented these artists with a profound culture shock and the thesis will look at individual artists to investigate how they dealt with such experiences in their lives and their work.

Modernism was a major cultural force in the region of Central Eastern Europe during the early twentieth century, and the movement acquired a special, almost mythical, status under communism, because it represented rebellion and freedom in contrast to the rigid cultural policies of the regimes. Unlike in the West, where the principles of Modernism were subjected to scrutiny, in European communist societies they survived in a progressive format in the subcultures of the region. The connection to aesthetic and social modernist ideals is apparent in the works of many of the examined artists and one of the main objectives of the thesis is to persistently explore and analyse this connection. As a result, the complex influence of Modernism can be recognised as an underlying theme of this study.

The thesis will also draw more attention to cultural production in Central Eastern Europe, often referred to as Eastern Europe in everyday and even academic language because of the socio-political connotations which the term carries. This area has often been viewed as a blank from a Western perspective because of the political division of the world during the period of the Cold War and this is especially relevant to art production in the region. As Russian artist Ilya Kabakov (1933-) explained, this region virtually did not exist on the artistic map of the world until the 1980s<sup>3</sup>. Until the political changes of the late 1980s, this area was also viewed as culturally and sociologically somewhat uniform, even though "Eastern Europe" - a relatively undefined region from east of Germany and south of Scandinavia - "comprises many different traditions and languages and furthermore it is liberally subdivided into inner borders that shift hither and thither as nowhere else."<sup>4</sup> This study will question this long established Western belief of uniformity by concentrating on

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<sup>3</sup> Ilya Kabakov in the Foreword of Laura J. Hoptman and Tomas C. Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents : A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art ; London : MIT Press [distributor], 2002). p.7

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 9

two culturally and even politically diverse countries of the region, Hungary and Czechoslovakia (from 1993 the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic).

This study will also outline the artistic background of three different countries, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Britain in relation to the examined time period, and present the work of the selected artists against the wider context of these varying cultural backdrops. Highlighting the difference between the circumstances of the 1956 and 1968 refugees prior and after their emigration and contrasting their experiences of British culture and the art world can capture a more complete picture of the Cold War refugee situation.

## **2. Methodology**

The methodology adopted for the purpose of this study includes the following main areas:

1. an examination of the socio-political background and the relationship between art and politics together with its effects on artistic production.
2. an identification of émigré artists relevant to the study and discovering their individual experiences in relation to the historical background. From this aspect, the narrative presented is biographical and includes personal accounts of the refugee existence based on my own interviews with the artists, relatives and friends.
3. an examination and comparison of works of art created in exile; exploring the importance of national identity and cultural heritage, including Modernism, in the process of viewing and understanding artworks by émigré visual artists.
4. analyses of selected artworks in relation to exile and national and personal identity with emphasis on the issues of national and personal identity, in order to arrive at a general argument supported by the synthesis of the findings.

## **3. Research**

The main focus of this study is visual culture and the artistic production of selected artists. However, the nature of the subject involves the investigation of relevant social and political forces and their impact on cultural developments. The socio-political framework of the thesis was developed

using critical literature on the historical account of the 1956 and 1968 happenings, the overview of contemporary press and public opinion and the analysis of data collected in relation to the Hungarian and Czechoslovak refugees who entered Britain following the aftermath of the events. Printed material in English, Hungarian, Slovak, Czech and, on occasions, other languages such as Polish was used.

The main aspect of the research involved the identification of Hungarian and Czech/Slovak exiled artists and the collection of relevant information in connection to the individual artists. Artists have been identified from a variety of sources, such as exhibition catalogues, art dictionaries and Internet citation indexes. In addition, Czech and Hungarian cultural organisations in Britain<sup>5</sup> and individual researchers as well as already identified artists and other members of the Hungarian and Czech / Slovak émigré community were able to name exiled artists relevant to my research subject. This thesis is largely based on primary research and information collected through personal contacts, correspondence and meetings.<sup>6</sup> The assistance and material received from artists, friends and family members were vital in supplying the foundations of this work. The final thesis is based on the combination of data from printed and unpublished sources. In addition, other types of material, such as selected artworks, films, television and radio broadcast were used either as primary or secondary sources.

### ***3.1 Difficulties with Research***

The most difficult aspect of the research was to discover reliable information about lesser-known artists. Some of the exiled artists of this study lived in relative obscurity in Britain and their work is often untraceable. In general, artists, friends and family members were helpful in providing research material, which also includes some of the reproduction of artworks utilised in

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<sup>5</sup> These include: The British Czech and Slovak Association; Emmy Destinn Foundation and The Hungarian Freedomfighters Federation in Great Britain.

<sup>6</sup> During research, interviews were conducted with Jiri Borsky, Csaba Sajo (Gyula Sajo's son), Marianne Gordon (György Gordon's widow), Robert Balazs (Edma's husband), Jan Mladovsky and Oldrich Asenbryl. In addition, phone conversations with Laszlo Acs, George Roman and John Berger (personal friends of Robert Vas) Katalin Pinter (Hungarian friend of Gyula Sajo) and Maria Gibson (Erno Szegedi's first wife) helped with gathering the necessary information. I have also maintained e-mail contact and correspondence with the artists Victor Ambrus, Marketa Luskacova, Alex Brychta, Liba Taylor and Mirek Lang.

the thesis. However, on occasions, and for personal reasons, people found it difficult to talk about the past and preferred not to get involved in the research.

#### **4. Selection of Artists**

Following the initial research, the following Hungarian artists have been recognised as refugees who came to Britain as a result of the 1956 uprising and the Soviet invasion of Hungary: graphic artist Laszlo Acs (1931-), book illustrator and graphic designer Victor Ambrus (1935-), painter and sculptor Endre Boszin (1923-2006), cartoonist and ceramicist Edma (1924-1997), painter György Gordon (1924-2005), printmaker and painter Felix Gluck (1923-1981), painter Zoltan Herpai, architect and painter Andras Kaldor (1938-), photographer Les Puskas (1937-), painter Gyula Sajo (1918-1989), printmaker, watercolourist and sculptor Agathe Sorel (1935-), printmaker Gabor Sitkey (?), sculptor Erno Szegedi (1933-1987), filmmaker Robert Vas (1931-1978) and graphic artist and stamp designer Julian Vasarhelyi (1929-). Artists of Czech origin, relevant to the current survey because they left Czechoslovakia either soon after the military occupation of the country by Warsaw Pact armies in 1968 or as a result of the post-Prague Spring political situation, include ceramicist Oldrich Asenbryl (1943-), painter and graphic artist Jiri Borsky (1945-), graphic designer, animator and book illustrator Jan Brychta (1928-), painter and book illustrator Lida Brychta (1931-), book illustrator Alex Brychta (1956-), photographer and conceptual artist Pavel Büchler (1952-), sculptor Peter Fink (1948-), painter Milan Ivanic (1947-), architect and interior designer Eva Jiricna (1939-), architect Jan Kaplicky (1937-2009), painter Samuel Koska (1947-2004), photographer Josef Koudelka (1938-), photographer Ivan Kyncl (1953-2004), animator Mirek Lang (1918-2005), animator Peter Lang (1955-), photographer Marketa Luskacova (1944-), painter, photographer, video and installation artist Jan Mladovsky (1946-), sculptor Irena Sedlecka (1928-), photographer Liba Taylor (1950-), glass artist Jaroslav Mykisa (1950-), ceramicist Helena Giras-Kozakova (?) and puppet-maker Jan Zalud (1955-).<sup>7</sup> Following the initial research, no artist

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<sup>7</sup> The amount of published sources varies greatly depending on the individual artist. While plenty of sources deal with the work of György Gordon, Josef Koudelka and Marketa Luskacova, other artists are rarely considered in art criticism (for example Edma, Ivan Kyncl,

of Slovakian origin was identified. This does not mean that people (and artists) were not leaving Slovakia<sup>8</sup> as well as the Czech parts of the country<sup>9</sup>, although there is no available data to verify the number of escapees from the two distinct parts of the federal state.

Once these artists became settled in their new country, they sometimes altered their names to suit the new environment, for example Győző Ambrus decided to use the English version of his Christian name, Victor, and Agáta Szűcs changed her name to a more Western sounding Agathe Sorel. The conventional Hungarian and Czech spellings of names would include “accents” which are not customarily used in the English language and British art critical and historical references habitually rely on simplified, anglicised versions of names in relation to the identified artists. For this reason, the use of the artists’ names will follow the same practice in the thesis because these are the names under which the artists of this study became known to the British audience. Most of the artists chose to keep the Hungarian / Czech versions of their first names even if those names existed in the English language: Gyula instead of Julian, Jan instead of John, Pavel instead of Paul, Laszlo instead of Leslie, Josef instead of Joseph, Andras instead of Andrew and György instead of George.

The selection of artists follows particular criteria, although the applied method and approach was different with regard to the events of 1956 and 1968 due to the dissimilar social and political situation in Hungary and Czechoslovakia; the most obvious difference being the time period considered in relation to the flight of these artists. All the Hungarian artists chosen for consideration arrived in Britain at the end of 1956 or the beginning of 1957,

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Felix Gluck and Mirek Lang). Czech-born conceptual artists Pavel Büchler and Jan Mladovsky, not only participate in exhibitions, but practise autobiographical writing and voice their views as art critics. Some personalities achieved recognition and commercial success beyond their profession – Victor Ambrus is a well respected figure known from the television programme *Time Team*.

<sup>8</sup> Koloman Sokol, Tibor Kovalik and Stano Filko are among the most recognised Slovak artists who escaped to the Americas during the Cold War.

<sup>9</sup> Slovak intellectuals and politicians (including Alexander Dubček and Gustav Husák) played a major part during the 1968 happenings. However, the Czech capital did retain a centralised status in the country’s social and political life and was more in the centre of international interest than Bratislava, the capital city of Slovakia throughout the existence of the federal state.

soon after the uprising was crushed by foreign military force. By contrast, a number of Czech artists discussed in the study left their country of birth years after the Soviet Intervention of 1968. For example, Ivan Kyncl escaped Czechoslovakia in 1980,<sup>10</sup> and Pavel Büchler in 1981<sup>11</sup>, but the reason for their emigration still strongly connects them to the Prague Spring and its aftermath. The majority of the artists settled permanently in Britain, with the exception of Boszin and Koudelka who only stayed in the UK for ten years before moving permanently to Canada (Boszin) and France (Koudelka). However, both these artists were included because of the relevance of their artistic work to the main themes of this study.

Out of all the identified artists four Hungarian (Robert Vas, György Gordon, Edma and Gyula Sajo) and four Czech artists (Josef Koudelka, Eva Jiricna, Jiri Borsky and Jan Mladovsky) were selected as subjects for in-depth examination in individual case studies. The choice of artists for the case studies was determined by pragmatic factors such as the amount of available literature (printed and archive material) and the level of assistance received from artists, friends and relatives with the research. Artists were also selected according to the nature of their work as they exemplified diverse and differing aspects of visual culture in exile, which provided an opportunity to contrast and consider the main theme from various perspectives. I was also conscious of the importance of including female artists as case studies because their examples opened up new avenues for debate and presented exile from yet another point of view.

## **5. Images**

The quality of the reproductions varies throughout the thesis, due to the different sources upon which the research relied, and the obscurity of some of the included artists and artworks. However, every possible measure was taken to ensure the inclusion of good quality material. The images chosen for analysis came from various sources, such as exhibition catalogues, newspapers, magazines and other publications and books and websites.

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<sup>10</sup> Information from National Art Library, "NAL Information File: Ivan Kyncl."

<sup>11</sup> Desa Philippi, "Sunday February 30," *Afterall (U.K.) Pilot* (1998). p. 27



Some images were provided by artists themselves or family members in the form of traditional or digital photographs. Occasionally, it was difficult to determine the original size and/or current location of the artworks.

## **6. Structure**

This thesis is structured around six major parts and includes five chapters and the *Conclusion*. The main objectives and methodology, together with the definition of key contextual aspects are outlined in the first chapter, *Introduction and Historical and Theoretical Context*. The second chapter is *Art in Exile - Literature Review*, which includes an overview of the most relevant sources utilised by this study in connection to the subject of art in exile.

The next chapter is entitled *The Socio-Political and Cultural Context* and it provides a summary of the relevant social and artistic background which influenced the lives and creative aspirations of the examined artists. The first part of this chapter examines twentieth-century art progression in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the second part offers a concise comparison of the 1956 and 1968 happenings with special interest in how artists related to and reflected on these events.

The chapter *Hungarian Refugee Artists in Britain* provides an overview of the Hungarian artists' situation in the context of the 1956 refugee crisis and the wider Hungarian émigré community and considers aspects of British art and culture that typically affected the Hungarian exiles. This chapter also intends to evaluate the legacy of the 1956 exiled artists in the context of British art. The main elements of this chapter are the case studies which examine the work of Hungarian artists, Robert Vas, György Gordon, Edma and Gyula Sajo in detail. This chapter is the compilation of primary research in relation to the creative output of the selected Hungarian artists.

Chapter five, *Czech Refugee artists in Britain*, examines the work and legacy of Czech exiled artists mirrors chapter four in structure and objectives. This section compares and contrasts the experiences of the Czech émigrés to those of the Hungarian refugees and focuses on the particular artistic fields in which the Czech artists excelled, such as animation, photography and architecture. It also includes four case studies which focus on the life and

career of selected Czech artists, Josef Koudelka, Eva Jiricna, Jiri Borsky and Jan Mladovsky.

The overall aim of the eight case studies is to provide relevant biographical data with an outline of the selected artists' work and examine the place of these artists in the British art world. However, each case study is designed to explore specific aspects of the uprooted experience and existence in the context of art in exile, either in consideration of novel subject matters and media that emerged in the work of artists after exile or with regard to issues connected to cultural differences. The major themes which the individual sections focus on are: questions of identity and loss explored in the medium of film (Vas), the feeling of dislocation and alienation expressed through a series of self portraits (Gordon), the problems of gaining artistic acceptance examined in the context of caricature art and gender (Edma), the transposition of Hungarian landscape painting traditions into English art (Sajo), the origins and artistic benefits of a wandering existence (Koudelka), forms of Czech Functionalism in British design and architecture (Jiricna), the notions of nostalgia and memory in painting (Borsky) and conceptual explorations of Eastern and Western cultural identities (Mladovsky).

The *Conclusion* synthesises the findings of the main chapters and highlights the common artistic, philosophical and theoretical threads which connect the visual responses of the examined artists to the wider subject of art in exile.

## **7. The Social and Political Context**

The connection between art and politics is one of the major objectives of the primary investigation and the coexistence between political thought, social development and culture is a principal theme of this study. Although the scope of this thesis does not allow for a detailed analysis of the complex political situation of 1956 and 1968, and the relevant social forces that shaped history, it is important to examine the wider socio-political framework and define key dates and social and cultural concepts within this framework to present a thorough and inclusive understanding of the subject.

## 7.1 The Cold War

Major historical events relevant to this study occurred during the period of the Cold War which lasted from 1945 (the end of World War II) until 1989 (the disintegration of the Warsaw Pact). This era can best be characterised as an ideological and cultural war between the Soviet and American world systems, dominated by the ongoing power struggle between the communist East and capitalist West. David Caute referred to it as the time of “cultural Olympics”<sup>12</sup>, using a fitting metaphor to describe the fierce competition between the two superpowers for supremacy in all aspects of culture, science and sport.<sup>13</sup>

Cold War politics created a world divided by ideological considerations; on the European continent this division was marked by the symbolic existence of the Iron Curtain, a fortified frontier between the Soviet satellite states and Western capitalist countries. This segregation had implications for the population on both sides of the Iron Curtain and the artists of this study (and all escapees from the Soviet Bloc) were especially affected by this – once they defected to the West, they were regarded as traitors and criminals by the communist authorities and risked prosecution and even imprisonment if they returned. This assertion is especially relevant to the examined Czech artists many of whom did not dare to return to Czechoslovakia until the fall of the communist state in 1989. The Hungarian artists were in a slightly more favourable situation following the 1963 general amnesty to all participants (in and outside Hungary) of the 1956 uprising.

Cold War politics and social conditions also impacted on culture on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Artistic production during the Cold War cannot be comprehended without the context of the binary opposition of the two superpowers and the ideologies they represented and the artists examined in

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<sup>12</sup> David Caute, *The Dancer Defects : The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). p. 5

<sup>13</sup> Countless books, articles and studies have been written about the political, historical and social aspects of the Cold War, examining its origins, development and long-term effects. Sean Greenwood’s (2000) book, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1991, British History in Perspective* focuses on Britain’s political position and role at the time; other sources which discuss the era provide Eastern European perspectives: Jane Leftwich Curry (1983) concentrates on political opposition behind the Iron Curtain in her study *Dissent in Eastern Europe*. Similarly, Laszlo Bohri (2004) offers an Eastern European focus by selecting only one country and giving a detailed account of the political and economic forces which determined Hungary’s position as a Soviet satellite “client state” in his work *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956 : Between the United States and the Soviet Union*.

the thesis experienced firsthand the divergence which this opposition created when they transposed their art from one ideological background into another.<sup>14</sup> The main chapters explore in more detail the difficulties this situation presented for individual artists as their perception of the West in general and Great Britain in particular varied from appreciating the freedom available in a democratic system to questioning the highly commercialised aspect of art production.

## **7.2 Significant Dates and Events**

### *1945 and the Yalta Agreement*

1945 not only marked the beginning of the Cold War but signalled a turning point in the existing power share on the European continent. The areas of influence set out by the Yalta Conference agreement led to communist parties gaining full power in the region of Central Eastern Europe. In Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Communist Party (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ) led the country from 1948 until the Velvet Revolution triumphed in November 1989. The Hungarian Workers Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, MDP), the equivalent of KSČ in Hungary, came to power in 1949. The Party changed its name to Hungarian Socialist Labour Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP) in the midst of the revolutionary happenings in 1956. In the thesis, these parties will be referred to as the communist parties of Hungary / Czechoslovakia for the purpose of clarity and simplification. KSČ, MDP and later MSZMP fulfilled the same political role of sole authority in

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<sup>14</sup> The comparison of the official, state supported art forms of the Soviet Union and the USA in the 1940s and 1950s provides a somewhat simplified, although accurate description of the two systems. While American democracy advocated freedom and free expression, Soviet-style Marxism was about restriction and censorship. Socialist Realism propagated unity, while American Abstract Expressionism underlined individualism. Socialist Realism was rigid, predictable, controlled, unemotional, restrictive but easily comprehensible regardless of education. In contrast, Abstract Expressionism was free, surprising, wild, emotive, subjective, and to a point, elitist. See sources on Socialist Realism and Abstract Expressionism: Zbigniew Folejewski, "Frustrations of Socialist Realism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 14, no. 4 (1956). pp. 485-488; Júlia Klaniczay, "Még Egyszer a Törvénytelen Avantgádról," *Új Művészet* 14 (2003). p. 44; Gabor Reider, "Szocreál Kritika, 1950-1953," *Valóság*, no. 5 (2005). pp. 67-82; Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism Freedom and the Cold War* (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1983).; Ann Demaitre, "The Great Debate on Socialist Realism," *The Modern Language Journal* 50, no. 5 (1966). pp.263-268

Czechoslovakia and Hungary as other communist parties did in the rest of the Eastern Bloc countries.

### *The 1956 and 1968 events*

1956 and 1968 stand out as significant dates in the history of communism. The 1956 disturbances in Poland and the Hungarian Uprising signified the first crisis in the communist system while the reform movement known as the Prague Spring in 1968 marked the last attempt to liberalise the existing communist regime. These two events shook the foundations of communism but also proved that without the consent of the Soviet Union, no social change was possible in the region of Central Eastern Europe.

The 1956 and 1968 events were chosen as the key landmarks for the purpose of this study because both dates signalled an influx of Cold War refugees as a direct consequence of the events connected to these dates. There are clear similarities between the 1956 and 1968 happenings, including the Soviet response of military intervention on both occasions.<sup>15</sup> However, on close inspection, 1956 and 1968 present some fundamental differences which offered an opportunity to compare and contrast the two events, especially in relation to the refugee situation and the lives of the selected artists. The similarities and differences between these two events will be highlighted throughout the study and examined in close detail in Chapter I.

From the perspective of the individual artists, 1956 and 1968 had life changing consequences, regardless of the role that these artists fulfilled in the revolutionary happenings. A general observation is that only a handful of them had an active part to play; however, all of the artists were supportive of the reform initiatives and some, such as Edma, György Gordon, Gyula Sajo, and

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<sup>15</sup> A general disillusionment in communist ideals was a consequence of the 1956 and 1968 military intervention on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In Britain, a particular response to the 1956 happenings was the formation of the New Left, founded by intellectuals such as Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall. The New Left occupied a vital space in left wing politics, although it never became a permanent organisation such as the British Labour Party or the Communist Party of Great Britain. Its most far-reaching consequence was felt on the cultural scene – it helped to establish cultural Marxism in Great Britain and New Left theorists played a crucial role in conceiving the discipline of cultural studies, an interdisciplinary and critical approach to contemporary cultural practices. Reference: Stuart Hall, Dave Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, Comedia* (London: Routledge, 1996).

Jan Brychta, contributed to political and intellectual discussions that evolved prior and during the revolutions, and artists, who were still in education at the time of events, including Victor Ambrus, Erno Szegedi, Zoltan Herpai, Andras Kaldor and Jiri Borsky, participated in the mass meetings and demonstrations that marked the beginning of the social upheavals. Ambrus, Herpai and Szegedi also helped the revolutionary effort by actively joining the fight against the invaders and Hungarian landscape painter and university professor, Gyula Sajo was elected as a revolutionary committee member at the Budapest Academy of Applied Arts. Most artists left their home because of personal and professional considerations, although a few rightfully feared persecution (eg. Ambrus and Sajo) and some of the artists who left Czechoslovakia after the Soviet approved control was re-introduced in the country during the 1970s and 1980s can be regarded as actual political exiles (Büchler, Kyncl) because of their active involvement in the Czechoslovak dissident movement.

Josef Koudleka's case is quite extraordinary: the photographer recorded the invasion of Prague in a series of photographs that came to symbolise the tragic fate of the Prague Spring all around the world, but these images also condemned the photographer to exile. Koudelka is the only artist of this thesis who had to leave his homeland because of his direct artistic involvement in the revolutionary happenings.

### *1989*

The year 1989 marked the end of communist rule in the Soviet satellite countries of Central Eastern Europe. For some of the identified Czech exiled artists, such as Eva Jiricna, Josef Koudelka and Jiri Borsky this meant the first visit to their country of birth since their departure in the 1960s and 1970s. A number of these artists, most notably Mladovsky, Koudelka, Luskacova and Jiricna have since become actively involved in the artistic life of their home country helping to rebuild the severed cultural links between East and West. 1989 perhaps was less significant in the lives of the Hungarian exiles, although without exception they all welcomed the social and political

change.<sup>16</sup> A number of Hungarian exiled artists passed away before they could witness the end of the communist regime, including Felix Gluck, Robert Vas, Gyula Sajo and Erno Szegedi.

The changes of 1989 also significantly influenced the current thesis, because of the improved information flow and resource availability since the fall of the communist regimes. This study, although it relies on contemporary data in addition to new research, presents a post-1989 perspective in its evaluation of the historical importance of 1956 and 1968 and in its assessment of the impact of communism on art and artists.

## **8. Eastern Europe**

As previously mentioned, the term Eastern Europe is customarily used in political, historical and cultural research because of the connotations which the expression carries in relation to the period of Cold War and the division of the continent. As stated by Laura Hoptman and Tomas Pospiszyl, editors of a sourcebook on art in the region, "The concept of Eastern Europe as it has been understood in the past several decades, is neither geographic, nor social; it is economic and political."<sup>17</sup>

The term is inaccurate from a geographical point of view (a more accurate description for the location of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia would be Central Europe) and wrongly suggests a uniform regional entity culturally connected to the Eastern empire represented by Russia. Culturally, these countries tend to relate to other cultures and regions: parts of former Yugoslavia to Mediterranean culture; The Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary to the history of the Austrian Empire and the Baltic countries to Scandinavia. Ben Fowkes agrees with the inadequacy of the expression, however, he defends its continuous academic use because "for the historian, the term Eastern Europe is indispensable" as it denotes the part of Europe

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<sup>16</sup> Perhaps 1989 did not present such a dramatic change in the lives of the Hungarian artists as in the case of the Czech artists. Following the general amnesty in 1963, the majority of Hungarian artists made regular visits to their homeland and György Gordon and Victor Ambrus even received some professional recognition and participated in exhibitions.

<sup>17</sup> Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents : A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*. p. 9

which came under communist rule after the Second World War and allows the exclusion of countries such as Austria, Greece and Finland.<sup>18</sup>

Paradoxically and despite the term's close connection to Cold War politics, the origin of "Eastern Europe" relates to the period of Enlightenment, as argued by Larry Wolff who has systematically examined the origins of the concept.<sup>19</sup> In his work, Wolff claims that the division between Western and Eastern Europe was not a natural distinction; it was a work of cultural produce by intellectual artifice of the Enlightenment and served the ideological self-interest and self-promotion of Western civilisation. It was Western Europe that invented the term and the area as its complementary and less-developed other half - the process being similar to the invention of the Oriental other in nineteenth-century Europe<sup>20</sup> - to define and justify its superiority while measured against it. Wolff concludes that "The enlightenment had to invent Western Europe and Eastern Europe together, as complementary concepts, defining each other by opposition and adjacency."<sup>21</sup>

The term has carried a pejorative undertone ever since, suggesting poor economic conditions, underdevelopment and backwardness and also some kind of homogeneity, which rejects the notion of cultural and historical diversity.<sup>22</sup> This notion of uniformity has been challenged in cultural theories, and since 1989 there have been more clear attempts to provide the countries of the region with a more specific identity. As Homi K Bhabha stated: post-

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<sup>18</sup> Ben Fowkes, *The Rise and Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995). p. 1

<sup>19</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe : The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, California; London: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>20</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

<sup>21</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. p. 5

<sup>22</sup> There was an (unsuccessful) attempt to unify the societies of Eastern Europe following the political change in the region after the Second World War when the Soviet example of socialism was to be applied to all countries concerned. The major features of this included complete intellectual and cultural uniformity on the basis of ideology, single party control, the absence of the rule of law and predominant role of security organs, complete state control of economic activity and the creation of classless society. See analysis in Ben Fowkes, *Eastern Europe 1945-1969: From Stalinism to Stagnation, Seminar Studies in History* (Harlow: Longman, 2000). p. 46



1989, "people cannot now be addressed as colossal, undifferentiated collectives of class, race, gender or nation."<sup>23</sup>

It is true, that the region was somewhat indistinguishable, perhaps even socially and culturally identical between 1948 and 1953.<sup>24</sup> However, after the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956, during which Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971) criticised Stalin's (1879-1953) methods, the political and cultural atmosphere became less oppressive all around the Eastern Bloc and a period of "thaw" (1953-1964)<sup>25</sup> followed with the general aim of de-Stalinisation. An important legacy of 1956 was the rapidly growing differentiation between central European countries themselves, both in their art production and cultural policy. Despite Eastern Europe being viewed from the West as an integral part of the Soviet Empire, in reality, all the states in the region developed their own particular versions of communism resulting in different and diverse systems, which maintained signs of national character and were dissimilar to each other in respect to economic and cultural progress. Hungarian art theorist Éva Forgács voiced critical views about the tendency to view Eastern European art as a homogenous cultural unit divided from the rest of the continent: "while artists in Czechoslovakia, Hungary or Poland, saw themselves as Czech, Slovak, Polish or Hungarian and, in that capacity, as European artists who had been cut off from their larger intellectual homeland by an absurd turn of history, the Western discourse bundled them together as a regional entity, 'Eastern European', a term that they never used to identify themselves."<sup>26</sup>

As a result of growing critique of the term Eastern Europe, historians and theorists have been suggesting more correct and appropriate terms to use. Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski proposed the term Central Eastern

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<sup>23</sup> Homi Bhabha voicing his view on Eastern Europe in an interview. Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity : Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990). p.220

<sup>24</sup> Ben Fowkes, *Eastern Europe 1945-1969 : From Stalinism to Stagnation, Seminar Studies in History* (Harlow: Longman, 2000). p.52

<sup>25</sup> The period is deemed to stretch from the death of Stalin to the ousting of Khrushchev.

<sup>26</sup> Éva Forgács, "1956 in Hungary and the Concept of East European Art," *Third Text* volume 20 (2006). p.185

Europe when he evaluated the artistic significance of subcultures in the region in a major and so far unique study, *Awangarde W Cieniu Jalty; Sztuka W Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej W Latach 1945-1989* (Avant-garde in the Shadow of Yalta: Art in Central Eastern Europe 1945-1989).<sup>27</sup> The expression Central Eastern Europe is becoming more widely used, especially by theorists from post-communist countries. Because of its accuracy and historically less derogatory meaning, this study also supports the use of Central Eastern Europe instead of Eastern Europe in relation to the region that includes Hungary and the former Czechoslovakia.

## **9. Art in Central Eastern Europe**

Artists who left the communist regimes and settled in Great Britain following the 1956 and 1968 revolutions were faced with a drastically different art world, as they came from dictatorial systems where the state controlled all spheres of life, and dictated and restricted artistic production, creating an environment for artistic expression that was strikingly different from that of the West. Hungarian dissident writer Miklos Haraszti (1945-) accurately described the conditions under communism as a “velvet prison”<sup>28</sup> in which artistic creation was encouraged and supported within the ideological boundaries of the regime. Censorship, which regulated production, was not only a bureaucratic procedure enforced by the authorities, but also a self-imposed survival tactic developed and practised by artists themselves. It was a unique, paradoxical situation characterised by acts of restriction, self-restriction and reward. In general, art had an elevated status under communism as it fulfilled a more distinct political role than that of mere propaganda. Art served as an educational tool and exemplified an area of creativity which received wide support from the socialist regimes and the withdrawal of support also

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<sup>27</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarde W Cieniu Jalty; Sztuka W Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej W Latach 1945-1989* (Poznan: Rebis, 2005). Although the title refers to the region as Central Eastern Europe, when the book appeared in English translation in 2009, it was under the title of *In the shadow of Yalta : art and the avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989*. This major difference can only be explained by the expectations of the Western publishers/readers who might find the term Central Eastern Europe unfamiliar.

<sup>28</sup> Miklos Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison: Artists under State Socialism*, trans. Katalin and Stephen Landesmann (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1987).

presented an opportunity to control dissident ideas in society. As Hungarian art theorist Péter Kovács points out “In a totalitarian state art was the most obvious and practical weapon in the hand of the authorities to eliminate independent thought.”<sup>29</sup> Artists (writers, fine artists or filmmakers) who faithfully served the system, gained respect and eminent positions; at the same time artists who refused to conform to the ideological needs of the regime became marginalised, and, without state support, were forced to produce art underground.

### **9.1 Official and Non-official Art**

Recent studies written about art in the region of Central Eastern Europe emphasise the dual aspect of art production that existed throughout the lifespan of the communist regimes.<sup>30</sup> Under the surface of officially approved culture, or the primary discourse, art existed as a secondary discourse on the margins of society, outside the “legitimate” framework of the totalitarian state. The disjunction between the official and non-official created a unique artistic and cultural phenomenon in which approved art and subculture co-existed and resulted in a surprising diversity of styles and ideas in the Soviet Union and in all of its satellite states. Non-conformist art was a vital aspect of socialist culture. It opposed the politics and cultural practices of the system, rejected Socialist Realism and was associated with progressive social thought and the reform ideals of the 1956 and 1968 happenings.

Artistic resistance during communism did not primarily manifest itself in heavily politicized works of art, rather in the application of non-socialist realist styles. Art based on forward-looking avant-garde traditions such as Constructivism, Cubism and Expressionism, and influenced by new Western trends such as Abstract Expressionism, Informel and Tachisme thrived in the subcultures of Central Eastern Europe. However, these experimental and

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<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Hans; Knoll and Júlia Jolsvai, *A Második Nyilvánosság: Xx. Századi Magyar Művészet* (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2002). p.163

<sup>30</sup> Maria Orišková’s study of art in Czechoslovakia under communism is entitled “The Dual Voices of Art History” (Maria Orišková, *Dvojhlásné Dejiny Umenia*, Bratislava: Petrus, 2002). A major review of twentieth century Hungarian art was published in 2002 under the title of “Secondary Public” (Knoll and Jolsvai, *A Második Nyilvánosság: Xx. Századi Magyar Művészet*.)

modern forms of expressions symbolised rebellion and “came to be understood both by the authorities and the artists themselves not as something belonging solely to the sphere of aesthetics, but more as an act with political consequences.”<sup>31</sup> This point reasserts a previous statement that in a communist system everything had the potential to acquire a political meaning.

Non-official, underground art was tolerated within the boundaries of official cultural policy and radical artists were not fiercely persecuted as they were in Nazi Germany.<sup>32</sup> However, the progress of advanced aesthetic ideas was hindered as non-conformist artists had no access to state commissions (there were no private commissions), or public exhibition spaces and were ignored in art criticism.<sup>33</sup>

Dissident art in the region can be viewed as a positive aspect of the totalitarian communist regimes as it maintained the political and revolutionary nature of early twentieth-century avant-garde movements and possessed a subversive charge. However, the enclosed nature of unofficial art worlds also presents a number of problems. As they existed outside the official framework, artists often found it difficult to reach an audience and spread their ideas to the general public. Hungarian art historian Éva Forgács points out a lack of art criticism as the main downfall of Eastern European alternative cultures.<sup>34</sup> The official and censored art criticism ignored the existence of subcultures, and art theoretical debate among non-conformist artists and intellectuals was inevitably partial and sterile. There was no scope for fertile academic discussions which would have ensured the quality and influenced the direction of modern unofficial art. Czech-born conceptual artist, Jan

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<sup>31</sup> Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents : A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*. p.13

<sup>32</sup> There were many incidents when exhibitions of non-conformist artists were forbidden or closed down in the last minute and dissident artists were often subjected to close monitoring, harassment, surveillance and on occasions, imprisonment.

<sup>33</sup> The amount of official control and tolerance varied from country to country and depended on particular historical developments. For example, the period of thaw was thoroughly felt in the sphere of culture in Hungary and Poland in 1956, but did not reach Czechoslovakia until the 1960s.

<sup>34</sup> Éva Forgács: A kultúra senkiföldjén – Avantgárd a Magyar kultúrában in Knoll and Jolsvai, *A Második Nyilvánosság: Xx. Századi Magyar Művészet*. pp. 10-65

Mladovsky, who has resided in Great Britain since 1968, believes the isolationism of radical artists and their suspicion towards both Eastern and Western artistic practices after the fall of the Prague Spring led Czechoslovak underground culture to an aesthetic dead end.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the limitations of unofficial visual practices, non-conformist art enriched international modern culture. The politicised art of socialism, like socialism itself, ceased to exist, together with the regimes in which they fulfilled a significant political and cultural role. The full social, political and art historical evaluation of Central Eastern European subcultures is an ongoing process which started after the fall of the communist systems in the late 1980s. Finally, underground artistic productions and subcultures are receiving a long overdue focus. Theorists such as Piotr Piotrowski<sup>36</sup> from Poland, Mária Orišková<sup>37</sup> from Slovakia, Marta Sylvestrová<sup>38</sup> from the Czech Republic, Marina Grzanic from Slovenia<sup>39</sup> and Éva Forgács<sup>40</sup> from Hungary, examine how Central Eastern European art fits into Western art histories and try to map out and assess the official and unofficial arts of former communist countries.

## **9.2 The Issue of the Canon**

Although it is not the major aspect of this study, it is important to contemplate the status of Central Eastern European art in the canon of art history in light of

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<sup>35</sup> Adriana Kiss-Davies, Interview with Jan Mladovsky, London, 30 October 2007.

<sup>36</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, "Mapping the Legacy of the Political Change of 1956 in East European Art," *Third Text* 20 (2006) pp. 211-221, Piotr Piotrowski, "Modernism and Socialist Culture: Polish Art in the Late 1950s," in *Style and socialism: modernity and material culture in postwar Eastern Europe*, ed. Susan; Crowley Reid, David (ed) (Oxford: 2000). pp. 133-145

<sup>37</sup> Mária Orišková, "K Otázke Politiky Vystavovania: Príklad Slovenskej Národnej Galérie," *Ars* (2003). Mária Orišková, *Dvojhlasné Dejiny Umenia* (Bratislava: Petrus, 2002). pp. 201-214

<sup>38</sup> Marta Sylvestrová and Dana Bartelt, *Art as Activist : Revolutionary Posters from Central and Eastern Europe* (New York, Washington, D.C.: Universe Books ;Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Marina Grzanic, "Linking Theory, Politics and Art," *Third Text* 21, no. 2 (2007).pp. 199-207; Marina Grzanic, *Situated Contemporary Art Practices, Art Theory and Activism from East Europe* (Ljubljana and Frankfurt: Revolver, 2004).

<sup>40</sup> Éva Forgács, "1956 in Hungary and the Concept of East European Art," *Third Text* 20 (2006).pp. 177-187; Éva Forgács, *Az Ellopott Pillanat* (Pécs: Jelenkor Kiadó, 1994).

the political changes of 1989 that also started the process of the re-evaluation of artistic traditions in the region. The isolated nature of communism and the limited information flow between East and West during the period of Cold War, deeply affected how art in the region was considered in the West. The region was seen as blank and even the international achievements of the Central Eastern European avant-garde were rarely commemorated in canonical art historical studies.<sup>41</sup> Art produced under communism outside the official cultural framework presents further problems in relation to the canon. Should this art be evaluated in the context of canonical art history? In recent years, efforts have been made to re-establish the visual arts of the region into western narratives of art history by means of either extending or by re-defining the canon. No conclusive solution to this problem has been found<sup>42</sup>; however, this process remains an ongoing task for art theorists and is open to further discussions and debates.

### **9.3 Socialist Realism**

After the establishment of communist states Socialist Realism was introduced “as the only real method of artistic creation and as the only scientific method of aesthetics”<sup>43</sup>. The notion of Socialist Realism - originally applied to literature<sup>44</sup> - was developed as a doctrine of cultural production by Andrei Zhdanov (1896-1948) under Stalin’s rule in the 1930s. However, the meaning of the term was rather elusive even at the time of its conception and communist propaganda sources gave a vague description, repeating empty slogans and general communist rhetoric. “The concept of Socialist Realism is

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<sup>41</sup> Art historian Steven A Mansbach criticises how the West had forgotten about the importance of the ‘Eastern European’ modernist heritage in the context of the development of the international avant-garde. See Steven A. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe : From the Baltic to the Balkans, Ca. 1890-1939* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> Recent concise art historical studies, such as *Art since 1900* (2004), still consider the Western perspective when discussing the period of the Cold War and Eastern European artists are only mentioned in the context of international Modernism.

<sup>43</sup> Olga Bradac, "Aesthetic Trends in Russia and Czechoslovakia," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 9, no. No 2 (1950). p. 99

<sup>44</sup> See reference in Christine Lindey, *Art in the Cold War : From Vladivostok to Kalamazoo, 1945-1962* (London: Herbert, 1990). p. 9

wide, and it includes many diverse artistic expressions; however, all these different styles are linked by the common cause to enrich and help the development of a new socialist society”<sup>45</sup> – wrote Czech art historian Viliam Marčok in 1985. There has been much debate over the meaning of the phrase and attempts have been made to clarify the concept of Socialist Realism since the 1950s.<sup>46</sup> However, even today the term is problematic and obscure and lacks a specific and universally accepted cultural and art historical definition. Christine Lidney understands Socialist Realism as a product of cultural policy and it is perhaps the most fitting definition for the purpose of this study. In Lidney’s words, Socialist Realism was “neither a style, nor a movement, but an artistic method applied to all the arts.”<sup>47</sup>

In practice, the vague characterisation of Socialist Realism meant that its interpretation could be fitted to specific circumstances, for example, noncompliance with the method was easily used to discredit artists not favoured by the authorities. On the positive side, the unfixed definition allowed countries of the Eastern Bloc to develop their own interpretation of the method which meant that the denotation of the doctrine differed in each country.<sup>48</sup> It is essential to emphasise that Socialist Realism had a local aspect, and in Central Eastern Europe the historical connections of Socialist Realism were often interpreted or perceived as related to nineteenth-century Realism or to local traditions of Social Realism of the 1930s.

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<sup>45</sup> Viliam Marčok, *Socialistický Realizmus Dnes* (Bratislava: Tatran, 1985). p. 19

<sup>46</sup> Referenced in Ann Demaitre, "The Great Debate on Socialist Realism," *The Modern Language Journal* 50, no. 5 (1966). pp. 263-268

<sup>47</sup> Lindey, *Art in the Cold War : From Vladivostok to Kalamazoo, 1945-1962*. p. 20

<sup>48</sup> In general, the forceful imposition of the strict academic doctrine of Socialist Realism was met with resistance and distrust in the newly formed socialist republics. The majority of these countries (perhaps with the exception of Bulgaria) had formidable avant-garde traditions which formed an integral part of international modernist discourse at the beginning of the twentieth century. These progressive traditions were vital in determining the perception, reaction and assimilation of Socialist Realism during communism. See further analysis and explanation in Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarde W Cieniu Jalty; Sztuka W Europie Srodkowo-Wschodniej W Latach 1945-1989* (Poznan: Rebis, 2005).

## 10. Refugees, Exiles and Émigrés

In the thesis, exiles, refugees and émigrés are terms which are used interchangeably even though they have slightly different connotations. Exile, (derived from Latin *exsilium* or *exilium*), means banishment, once used as a form of punishment to separate individuals from their familiar environment and community. Eva Hoffman states that in Medieval Europe exile was the worst punishment imaginable, because one's identity was so closely connected to one's place and status in society.<sup>49</sup> The concept of exile has undergone a significant transformation since the Middle Ages and in modern understanding no longer exclusively connotes "the political act of removing someone from society".<sup>50</sup> Exile can be understood as a voluntary act practiced by poets, writer and intellectuals to demonstrate dissatisfaction with their society (perhaps James Joyce is the best example). In a broader sense, exile can also be used as a suggestive symbol of our times and turbulent modern history.<sup>51</sup> However, in the majority of cases the term still suggests some unfavourable conditions and hostile situation 'exiles' are compelled to escape from.

The word refugee indicates some sort of crisis, or emergency that forces people to flee, emphasising their need for shelter, a refuge. It refers not to individuals, but to a group of stateless and homeless people. Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) was one of the first to theorise the definition of modern age refugees after seeing the mass exodus of citizens triggered by the First World War.<sup>52</sup> Arendt described how these people were reduced to a lonely, savage existence, hounded from place to place by national governments that alone could accord them elementary rights.<sup>53</sup> In his essay, published in *Reflections on Exile*, Edward Said (1935-2003) made a distinction between

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<sup>49</sup> Eva Hoffman, "The New Nomads," in *Letters of Transit*, ed. Andre Aciman (New York: The New Press, 1999). p.40

<sup>50</sup> Johannes F. Evelein, *Exiles Traveling: Exploring Displacement, Crossing Boundaries in German Exile Arts and Writings 1933-1945* (Amsterdam [etc.]: Rodopi, 2009). p.15

<sup>51</sup> Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001). p.2

<sup>52</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Deutsch, 1986). p.277

<sup>53</sup> M. R. Marrus, *The Unwanted : European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia Temple University Press, 2002). p.4



exiles and refugees, to define the concept of refugees as a creation of twentieth-century states. For Said, the main difference between the concepts is that the word exile carries a sense of solitary spirituality, while the term refugee is a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance.<sup>54</sup>

In accordance with Arendt's and Said's descriptions, the term refugee seems appropriate when used in relation to the Hungarians who escaped their country in large numbers during the turbulence of 1956 and also in relation to those who fled Czechoslovakia during or soon after the military occupation of their country in 1968. People who decided to leave Czechoslovakia in the 1970s or 1980s perhaps are best described as political exiles, although they were escaping a hostile social system and were in need of refuge or asylum. Political exile is a fitting terminology for all the artists discussed in this thesis, even though not all of them were politically motivated in their escape, but it signifies the political context of their situation. In addition, Hungarian and Czech/Slovak exiles fulfilled a political role in maintaining and protecting the ideals of the Hungarian uprising and the Prague Spring abroad – this point relates to the general exile community rather than individuals discussed in the study.

Émigré is another term frequently used in the thesis. Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new country. It connotes a more settled existence, rather than the distressing situation of refugees or the solitary suffering of exiles. The refugee and even the exile existence are temporary; once a refugee is permanently settled in a new country, he or she is no longer stateless in need of foreign aid. The question of how long exile lasts is more problematic and varies from individual to individual; no specific point can be identified from which someone ceases to be an exile. An artist such as Josef Koudelka who pursues an unsettled and wandering lifestyle can, in a philosophical sense, be regarded as an eternal exile.

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<sup>54</sup> Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Edward W. Said (London: Granta, 2001).p.181

## 11. Refugees from Hungary and Czechoslovakia

The arrival of the Hungarian refugees in 1956 and exiles from Czechoslovakia following the defeat of the Prague Spring are not areas frequently addressed in academic research in Britain and the few studies related to specific aspects of the 1956 and 1968 refugee situation are mostly completed by members of the émigré community.<sup>55</sup> In his overview of research carried out in the field of immigration and ethnicity in twentieth-century Britain, Panikos Panayi concludes that the vast majority of research has focused upon those who moved to the country from the Empire and Commonwealth,<sup>56</sup> and while refugees from Nazism attracted considerable scholarly interest, many significant émigré communities received disproportionately little attention; these include the Hungarians, who fled the failed uprising of 1956 and refugees from the suppressed Prague Spring of 1968.<sup>57</sup>

The lack of academic research means that the collection of reliable data and the determination of refugee numbers can be difficult. The nature of the subject, migration within the troubled area of Central Eastern Europe can also present problems when information is collated, argues Dariusz Stola in an article on the varying levels of migration in the region. Stola believes that even scholarly sources allow a five or six digit margin when establishing the number of escapees from the region.<sup>58</sup>

In relation to the main topic of the thesis, the Hungarian refugee situation is relatively well documented and the figures are consistent. Most academic and historical sources mention around 200,000<sup>59</sup> migrants, out of

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<sup>55</sup> Magda Czigány, *"Just Like Other Students": Reception of the 1956 Hungarian Refugee Students in Britain* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009). Gyorgy Gomori, "Magyarok Oxfordban Az 1956-Os Forradalom Után," *Europai utas* 12, no. no 4 (2001), pp. 77-78; Milan Kocourek and Zuzana Slobodová, *Cesko-Slovenská Británie* (Carpio, 2006), Robert Patkai, "Magyarok Angliában - 1956 Előtt Es Után," *Nyelvunk es Kulturánk*, no. 3 (2006). pp. 42-49

<sup>56</sup> Panikos Panayi, "The Historiography of European Immigrants in Britain During the Twentieth Century," in *European Immigrants in Britain 1933-1950*, ed. Johannes-Dieter Steinert and Inge Weber-Newth (Munich: Saur, 2003). p.39

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>58</sup> Dariusz Stola, "Forced Migrations in Central European History," *International Migration Review* 26, no. 2 (1992).pp. 324-341

<sup>59</sup> György Litván, Janos M. Bak, and Lyman Howard Legters, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 : Reform, Revolt and Repression, 1953-1963* (London: Longman, 1996), Katalin Soós,

which 18,000 to 20,000 crossed the border at Yugoslavia and the rest at Austria. It is believed that out of these, around 20-22,000 settled permanently in Britain.<sup>60</sup>

It is more problematic to determine how many Czechs and Slovaks left their country permanently as a result of the military intervention in August 1968. The official website of the Czech Republic<sup>61</sup> gives a figure as high as 250,000, although most academic sources quote 80,000<sup>62</sup> as the established number of Czechoslovak refugees who sought asylum in the West between 1968 and 1969.<sup>63</sup> Taking into consideration people who left in the 1970s and 1980s, Jiří Pehe estimated 150,000 people in his evaluation of the legacy of the Prague Spring published in 1988.<sup>64</sup> Jiří Voráč uses the same figure in his study of Czech film in exile – the author in this case relied on statistical data available from the Czech Academy of Sciences.<sup>65</sup>

The reason why the number of Czechoslovak refugees varies so greatly according to the different sources can be explained by several factors. Firstly, it is unclear how many of the holidaymakers already abroad opted to stay in the west once they learned about the Warsaw Pact invasion of their homeland.<sup>66</sup> Secondly, the immense political oppression during the period of

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"1956-Os Magyar Menekültek a Statisztikai Adatok Tükrében," *Levéltári Szemle* 52, no. No 3 (2002), pp. 56-60; Péter János Sós, *Magyar Exodus : Magyar Menekültek Nyugaton, 1956-1959* (Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó, 2005).

<sup>60</sup> Robert Patkai, "Magyarok Angliában - 1956 Előtt És Után," *Nyelvünk és kultúránk*, no. 3 (2006). Katalin Soós, "1956-Os Magyar Menekültek a Statisztikai Adatok Tükrében," *Levéltári Szemle* 52, no. No 3 (2002). pp. 42-49

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.czech.cz/cz/kultura/cesi-v-zahranici/cesi-v-zahranici/> (11/28/2007)

<sup>62</sup> Louise W. Holborn, Philip Chartrand, and Rita Chartrand, *Refugees, a Problem of Our Time: The Work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1951-1972* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1975). Pp 508-09; 517-18; M. R. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002). p. 362

<sup>63</sup> Paradoxically, the number of Czechoslovak citizens who chose to leave their country increased by the first anniversary of the Soviet Invasion.

<sup>64</sup> J Pehe, ed., *The Prague Spring: A Mixed Legacy* (New York: Freedom House, 1988).

<sup>65</sup> Jiří Voráč, *Český Film V Exilu. Kapitoly Z Dějin Po Roce 1968* (Brno: Host, 2004). p.9

<sup>66</sup> The invasion happened during the holiday season and as many as 80 000 Czechoslovak citizens were already abroad taking advantage of the Prague Spring reforms which opened up the borders of the country to the west for the first time in twenty years. Many of these holidaymakers decided to extend their stay and see how the situation evolved in

normalisation prompted a continuous and steady mass departure from Czechoslovakia, which was still closely connected to the events of the Prague Spring and lasted well into the 1980s. This is the main reason why artists who arrived in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s are still a focus in this study. The accepted number of refugees who sought asylum in Britain is around 5000<sup>67</sup>, however this figure only considers refugees who arrived between 1968 and 1969, so in reality the number of Czechoslovaks who settled in Great Britain as a consequence of the defeated reform movement could be considerably higher.

## 12. Theoretical Aspects

The research methods utilised in this study are not principally theoretical and no single theoretical approach could be identified as a major thread connecting the main argument. However, specific theoretical concepts have been used to support certain points within the discussion, these include semiotics and the concept of mythologies<sup>68</sup> according to Roland Barthes' understanding, theoretical writings exploring the modernist and postmodernist context<sup>69</sup>, and elements of Marxism and Leninism<sup>70</sup> which are used to develop

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Czechoslovakia; the majority eventually returned to their home country, but a considerable number decided to stay in the West permanently. See Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees from the First World War through the Cold War*. p. 362

<sup>67</sup> Robin Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: British and the Others*, ed. Robert Burgess, 1st ed., *Longman Sociology Series* (London and New York: Longman, 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000), Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: The Basics*, 2nd ed. ed. (London: Routledge, 2007), Deborah Lee Smith-Shank and Deborah Lee Smith-Shank, *Semiotics and Visual Culture: Sights, Signs, and Significance* (Reston, Va.: National Art Education Assoc., 2004). Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 2000).

<sup>69</sup> Hans Belting, *Art History after Modernism* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), Aleš Erjavec and Boris Groys, *Postmodernism and the Postsocialist Condition: Politicized Art under Late Socialism* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2003), Reuben Fowkes and Richard Appignanesi, eds., *Socialist Eastern Europe Special Edition*, vol. 23, *The Third Text* (London: Routledge, 2009), Serge Guilbaut, *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945-1964* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 1990), Hans; Knoll and Júlia Jolsvai, *A Második Nyilvánosság: Xx. Századi Magyar Művészet* (Budapest: Enciklopédia Kiadó, 2002), S. A. Mansbach, "Confrontation and Accommodation in the Hungarian Avant-Garde," *Art Journal* 49, no. 1 (1990) pp. 9-20, Mária Orišková, *Dvojhlavné Dejiny Umenia* (Bratislava: Petrus, 2002), Brandon Taylor, *Modernism, Postmodernism, Realism. Critical Perspective for Art* (Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1987).

<sup>70</sup> Dennis L. Dworkin, *Cultural Marxism in Postwar Britain: History, the New Left, and the Origins of Cultural Studies, Post-Contemporary Interventions* (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke

an informed understanding of the cultural and social policies of communist states, especially in relation to official art practices and gender issues. Specific studies examining gender roles in society<sup>71</sup> are also used for the discussion of the position of female artists, Edma and Eva Jiricna in their home country and in Britain. Sources which explore the development of dissident ideas in Central Eastern Europe were utilised to gain a broad comprehension of the function of subcultures in the region and to place the revolutionary ideals of 1956 and 1968 into a wider social context.<sup>72</sup>

The study benefitted from ideas developed and expressed in Postcolonialism, in particular in the writings of Edward Said.<sup>73</sup> Said's personal experiences helped him theorise elements of the exile existence and many of his views are accepted and reasserted by the current thesis. Said's sentiments about the loss and geographical and philosophical displacement of exiles are mirrored in the works of Koudelka, Vas and Gordon. Writings by other theorists, such as Andre Aciman and Eva Hoffman<sup>74</sup> also contribute

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University Press, 1997), Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Etc.* [Marxist-Leninist Library. Vol. 20.] (London, 1943), Sally Ryan, "Women and Marxism," (MIA (Marxist Internet Archive), 1990).

<sup>71</sup> Stephen Brooke, "Gender and Working Class Identity in Britain During the 1950s," *Journal of Social History* 34, no. 4 (2001) pp. 773-795, Eva Fodor, "Smiling Women and Fighting Men: The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary," *Gender and Society* 16, no. 2 (2002) pp. 240-263, John M. Echols Iii, "Does Socialism Mean Greater Equality? A Comparison of East and West Along Several Major Dimensions," *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1 (1981) pp. 1-31, László Kürti, "The Wingless Eros of Socialism: Nationalism and Sexuality in Hungary," *Anthropological Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (1991) pp. 55-67, Sonya O. Rose, "Sex, Citizenship, and the Nation in World War II Britain," *The American Historical Review* 103, no. 4 (1998) pp. 1147-1176

<sup>72</sup> Václav Havel and John Keane, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe, Contemporary Politics* (London: Hutchinson, 1985), Laura J. Hoptman and Tomas C. Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents: A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art; London: MIT Press, 2002), Peter Hruby, *Fools and Heroes: The Changing Role of Communist Intellectuals in Czechoslovakia* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1980), Detlef Pollack and Jan Wielgoths, *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Eastern Europe: Origins of Civil Society and Democratic Transition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), Erika Rissmann, Ivo Bock, and Csaba Báthori: *Szamizdat: Alternatív Kultúrák Kelet- És Közép-Európában, 1956-1989*, (Budapest: Stencil Kiadó: Európai Kulturális Alapítvány, 2004), A. Tucker, *The Philosophy and Politics of Czech Dissidence from Patocka to Havel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

<sup>73</sup> Edward W. Said, Moustafa Bayoumi, and Andrew Rubin, *The Edward Said Reader* (London: Granta, 2001).

<sup>74</sup> Andre Aciman, *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York: New Press; London: I. B. Tauris [distributor], 1999), Hoffman, "The New Nomads."

towards the development of understanding of the exile condition investigated in the current study.

Cultural theories which explore the concept of identity and the connection between migration and identity are also frequently referred to in the study.<sup>75</sup> Contemporary understanding of identity has been shaped by feminist theories, deconstruction, psychoanalysis and postmodern critique, which continue to question the notion of integral, originary and unified identity. Postmodern concepts use a positional understanding of identity as opposed to an essentialist one; Stuart Hall is one of the leading theorists in Cultural Studies, who adopts this approach. According to Hall, “identity does not signal a stable core of the self and it cannot be fixed, stabilised or guaranteed as unchanging oneness or cultural belongingness underlying all other cultural differences”.<sup>76</sup>

The concept of cultural identity in this thesis is closely connected to specific historical developments, such as the experience of communism and forced migration following the upheavals in Central Eastern Europe. Under these circumstances, “identity becomes fragmented and fractured, not singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions.”<sup>77</sup> Stuart Hall’s understanding of fragmented and unfixed identity is especially applicable to Gordon’s continuous exploration of the self in portraits and Mladovsky’s playful use of artistic alter egos. The outsider is another notion central to theories exploring displacement and identity and this study utilises ideas

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<sup>75</sup> Lisa Appignanesi, *Identity, Ica Documents*; 6 (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1987), Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Maja Povrzanovic Frykman, *Beyond Integration: Challenges of Belonging in Diaspora and Exile* (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 2001), Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben, *Formations of Modernity, Understanding Modern Societies; Book 1* (Oxford: Polity in association with Open University, 1992), Stuart Hall et al., *Modernity and Difference, Annotations*; 6 (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 2001), Stuart Hall, Dave Morley, and Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, Comedia* (London: Routledge, 1996), Stuart, Hall and Paul du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), Jonathan Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 2nd ed. (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990).

<sup>76</sup> Hall and du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*. p. 3

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p.4

expressed by theorists such as Iain Chambers, Zygmunt Bauman<sup>78</sup>, Robin Cohen<sup>79</sup> and Jonathan Rutherford. When looking at diasporas in general, immigrant groups and individuals inevitably develop a specific consciousness - induced by the fact that they are viewed as outsiders in their chosen country - which leads to their exclusion from mainstream culture. This notion appears to be more appropriate when discussing racial immigrant communities and ethnic minorities in Britain. As explained in later chapters, the 1956 Hungarian and the 1968 Czechoslovak refugees were mostly regarded as freedom fighters and welcomed favourably by the British public due to the political situation at the time. Moreover, all the examined individuals were white Europeans with close cultural - and to some extent historical - links to Western Europe.

The development of the postcolonial discourse is closely connected to exile studies and elements of postcolonialism can directly be applied to the present study. It is easy to recognise the Soviet Union as a colonising power enforcing its political system and ideology on the satellite states of Central Eastern Europe. László Bohri argues that during the lifetime of the communist regimes, the Soviet Union behaved as a traditional imperialistic and expansionistic power and even though the socialist countries of the region were putatively sovereign, they satisfied Moscow's economic needs and served as its military base.<sup>80</sup> Since the fall of the regimes, the countries in question have entered a postcolonial state and now are in the process of rebuilding their own identities.

The artists of this study not only had to overcome the different social conditions but also had to negotiate their colonial past which inevitably affected their perceived identity in Britain. Their "Eastern European" origins distinguished them, marking them as arriving from a disadvantaged background. Artists who arrived in the UK from the former British colonies are

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<sup>78</sup> Zygmunt Bauman, "From Pilgrims to Tourists - or a Short History of Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage Publications, 2002) pp. 18-36

<sup>79</sup> Robin Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: British and the Others*, ed. Robert Burgess, 1st ed., *Longman Sociology Series* (London and New York: Longman, 1994).

<sup>80</sup> László Bohri, *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956: Between the United States and the Soviet Union* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2004).p.326

frequently stigmatised by similar distinctions, although their relations to the British historical and cultural discourse are more problematic. Studies that deal with African and Asian émigré artists in Britain predominantly explore the postcolonial context and focus on how the discrepancies between the culture of the colonised and the coloniser influence the identity and work of these artists.<sup>81</sup> The general ideas expressed in these studies in relation to art, displacement and the postcolonial existence shaped underlying concepts of the current thesis and their influence on methodology will be explored in more detail in the Literature Review.

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<sup>81</sup> Rasheed Araeen, "The Other Immigrant: The Experiences and Achievements of AfroAsian Artists in the Metropolis," *Third Text* Summer 1991, no. Special issue (1991) pp. 17-28, Rasheed Araeen, *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (London: Hayward Gallery, 1989), Eddie Chambers, "History & Identity," *Third Text*, no. Art and Immigration: special issue of *Third Text* (1991) pp. 63-70. Alex Rotas, "A Soft Touch: Visual Artists from Refugee Populations (UK) and Representations of Asylum in Contemporary Art " (University of the West of England, Bristol Bath Spa University, 2006).