

CONSTRUCTING THE HOMO SOVIETICUS

Júlia Vallasek, PhD, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: The process of constructing a new type of man (often referred to as homo sovieticus) started from the earliest years and through the educational and child-care system followed the children of the Stalinist era into young adulthood. Print media directed to young consumers proved to be a highly efficient tool in the hands of state propaganda, reaching virtually every child in Romania. My essay presents a case study on the children's magazine Pioneer (Pionír), focusing on the general Stalinist agenda setting pattern of the magazine and on the particularities arising from the fact that this magazine was designed to serve as a propaganda tool in the education of the children of Hungarian minority in Romania.

Keywords: propaganda, child education, media, Stalinist pattern.

Motto

“However young, a small child, (s)he is building communism”

(Zoltán Veress)

1. The Pioneer

The weekly magazine *Pioneer* (Pionír), dedicated to children of the age 9–14, was first released on 10 June 1951 in Bucharest by the Central Committee of the Young Workers' Association (Ifjúmunkás Szövetség). From September 1953 to February 1956 it was published in Marosvásárhely, the center of the newly established Hungarian Autonomous Region, by the Provincial Public Council as the provincial magazine of the pioneer organizations. Thereafter it was published in Bucharest again as the magazine of the National Council of Pioneers until 21 November 1967 when it was replaced by the new magazine *Sworn Friend* (Jóbarát).

Being a magazine propagating a movement, its purpose was not to entertain or to educate through entertaining the young readers in the spirit of the classical principle *docere et delectare*, but to tendentiously form children according to the prevalent ideology. In his salutatory preamble published in the first issue, János Fazakas (the secretary of the Central Directorate of the Young Workers' Association) formulated the objectives of the magazine in the spirit of the contemporary militarist rhetoric in the following way: “By means of this magazine our organization provides our Hungarian pioneers and pupils with a new *weapon*, a weapon that allows them to successfully *fight* for accomplishing their tasks” (emphasis mine). He also formulates the main principle of raising children: “We must raise our pioneers in the spirit of unlimited devotion to our party and our organization.”

One year later, András Bokor (also a member of the Central Directorate of the Young Workers' Association) contentedly acknowledges in an editorial: “In its first year of appearance, *Pioneer* educated its tens of thousands of readers to love the Party and to join with devoted affection its struggles in leading working people towards building socialism. The magazine has never forgotten to explain how much the children of the Party owe the workers of our country, to explain the fact that happy childhood, the opportunity to learn, pioneer life, pioneer camps, the Pioneers' Palace in Bucharest, the pioneer houses and many, many other things are all results of the Party's striving. *Pioneer* can only fulfil the task of

children's patriotic education, if it continues to progress this way, if the spirit of its infinite love towards the Party, the Soviet Union and comrade Stalin continue to pervade each of its articles, each of its lines."

The three basic means of forming personality (turning children into self-conscious party members) are: making people give up their independence and achieving blind obedience through disciplining; abolishing differences and separateness through standardization; and teaching people the ideology of the party (Manolescu 2004, 215).

The values and mentality conveyed with (varying degrees of) aggressivity by *Pioneer* practically reached each and every 9–14 year old child, since subscription was mandatory both for pioneers and for the so-called "pupils" who were not yet members of the organization (or were excluded from it on account of their descent). Some of the papers published in the magazine included specific instructions and technical descriptions concerning the organization of pioneer activities, while other articles had to be discussed and "processed" during "squad or group meetings".

As a magazine propagating a movement, initially *Pioneer* had only a certain degree of independence; its materials – especially at the beginning, until the magazine moved to Marosvásárhely – were almost literally identical to those of its Romanian counterparts, *The Pioneer* (Pionierul) and *The Spark of the Pioneer* (Scanteia Pionierului) which were also published by the Central Committee of the Young Workers' Association. Practically the only exceptions were the Hungarian readers' letters and some poems (written by Sándor Kányádi, Erik Majtényi, Géza Páskándi). Most of the articles published in *Pioneer* can in fact be regarded as double quotations, since a significant proportion of the materials taken over from the Romanian magazines were, in turn, taken over from *Pionerskaya Pravda*. The Soviet pioneers' magazine was all along considered a model regarding the choice of topics and redaction; as it was formulated in a salutatory article on the 25th anniversary of its existence, the Soviet magazine decorated with the Order of Lenin was one where "guiding, educating and encouraging articles can always be found" (1950/3).

The changes in the place of publication and the publishing organization roughly coincide with the changes of the fifties and sixties which influenced the dominant discourse of the period. Although the period between 1950 and 1964 will be discussed here as a single one, below I present a more detailed outline of the particular sub-periods. In order to analyze the parameters under which *Pioneer* fulfilled its agitational role in these intervals, I use the following factors as starting points: the general aspect of the magazine (including photos and visual materials, as we are talking about a children's magazine putting a greater emphasis on visibility; choice of topic and rhetoric); the agenda transmitted by *Pioneer*; and the role of literature in the magazine.

1. At the beginning the magazine fulfilled the role of political education in the strict sense, as it transmitted the expectations of the Party towards the readers with sectarian rigour. Literature practically played a decorative, symbolical role: poems (prose was almost completely absent in these issues!) mostly appeared related to certain illustrious feast days belonging to the range of communist festivities. The illustrative materials of the magazine presented children primarily while taking part in parades celebrating victory or in some kind

of communal work (e.g. harvesting). References to the Romanian leaders of the Party (primarily to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej), to the heroes of the illegalist period and to persons like Stalin and Lenin were constantly present, not only in the articles, but on the level of visualization as well. The visual representations based on creating contrast accurately indicate the mythicizing approach of the period of Stalin's cult of personality: children in pioneer's neckties, usually represented by full-body portraits, stand next to enormously magnified portraits of Stalin, Lenin, Gheorghiu-Dej (or, less frequently, portraits of the anonymous soldier of the Red Army or of Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, the "guerrilla heroine") looking up to them. Mythicizing also plays a role in creating a visual representation of the enemy: in the articles, the hate-poems and in the short stories of similar emotional motivations and propagandistic purposes, the external enemy (imperialists, Tito, etc.) and the internal enemy (kulaks, reactionists, the clergy, etc.) are all endowed with the attributes of the mythical evil (physical deformity, animalistic features, etc.).

The aggressiveness of the contemporary rhetoric is also shown by the obsessively recurring metaphors based on bio-physical processes, which were meant to serve the acceptance of the propagated values. The readers were required to "learn", "internalize" and "process" the instructions of the Party transmitted by the Young Workers' Association and the Pioneer Organization, published in the magazine. Added to the "unlimited devotion" and adjectives like "enthusiastic" and others, all these created the ideal of the passive reader who is unable to think and act independently, a person who could later be activated in favour of the right purposes, against the external or internal enemies.

2. Between 1953–1956, when *Pioneer* was published as the magazine of the Hungarian Autonomous Region, regional specificities came into prominence. The coverage and the photos of different events that implicated great masses of people (e.g. 23 August, May Day parades, etc.) were primarily focused on this region and on its centre, Marosvásárhely. The reports were also primarily concerned with the events of the Hungarian Autonomous Region and the Hungarian inhabited regions; moreover, the news of pioneer life in the capital mostly presented information about the pioneer activities of the Hungarian school from Bucharest. The illustrative materials were characterized by an icon-like combined representation of the Hungarian/Szekler folk costumes and the pioneer's necktie.

The rate of the articles attacking the enemy gradually decreased in this period, while the previous militarist rhetoric also became somewhat softened. The topic of patriotism measurable by the amount of work came into prominence; beside sizing up the country's richness and beauty, the laudation of the beauties found on the native land and in the narrower home region also appeared. By means of local historical writings, folk tales, folk poems, etc., an attempt was made to create a new version of the communist worldview and value system based on specific regional values and traditions, a version that was at the same time considered to be of secondary importance.

3. After being returned to Bucharest, *Pioneer* became the children's magazine of the period called the era of "melting" or "ease". Educating children in the spirit of pioneer life and discipline required by the Party, of course, continued to have a very important role. The rate

of topics of regional interest decreased, in turn, the notes, reports and articles matching the children's/subteens' field of interest (writings about scientific and technical novelties, space exploration, arts and some "party-neutral" programs, like carnivals, sporting events, etc.) became relatively frequent.

The reduction of the regional character and the weakening was observable in the visual representation of people as well: folk costumes almost entirely disappeared, while, beside the mandatory school uniforms and pioneer uniforms, "civilian" street wear also appeared in the pictures. The range of activities became more diversified, not only on the level of fiction (in the case of the heroes of different short stories or fragments of novels), but also in the case of the identifiable characters referred to in the reports. While in the early fifties the characters were practically captured while fulfilling some kind of public role (they were exclusively represented as taking part in pioneer activities, learning or communal work), here private life plays a part as well. Young people relaxing, practicing their hobbies, having fun (moreover, young people dancing to twist or rock music – the new trends of the sixties, often considered deviant and condemnable) also appeared in these articles and visual materials, photos. Literature here starts to be regarded as a service too: in preparation for important events (primarily for 23 August and 30 December, but even for events of lesser importance like camp celebrations, class days or pioneer assemblies) *Pioneer* published full-page compilations of poetry, playlets, programs of dance and music, and scripts for reciting choirs.

2. A sketch of the reader

Being an openly propagandistic magazine, the issues of *Pioneer* presented an idealized pioneer image to its 9–14 year old readers (who were not necessarily members of the organization), instead of their own genuine portraits. Communist propaganda in fact functioned as a substitute for reality (Pipes 1998, 289–290), its purpose was no longer to extenuate or to deform reality, but to create a fictitious world that was inconsistent with the individual's everyday experiences, even so, people had to behave as if they accepted it as reality. The poems, short stories and even the newspaper genres (articles, reports) presented a typical image of the ideal of a pioneer. They wear school uniforms with the emblematic pioneer necktie, the activities they are engaged in are only partly studying (assumed on the basis of their age and status of pupil) and – to a small extent – helping out with the work around their home, while their main occupation and pastime is taking part in different types of communal works. They have no interest in anything else, individual initiatives are taken only when they invent and carry out new methods of doing the communal work in question. With the exception of sleeping, they are practically always in the scope of the community (i.e. they are never out of sight), they do not have any free private time. (Even the essentially solitary activity of reading is done in reading groups and guided discussions of literature.) Pioneers have a permanent compulsion of activity; according to one of the photos, the first day of vacation is spent with discussing the "vacation work plan". This kind of emphasis on the importance of work was in full accordance with the pedagogical ideal developed by Makarenko in order to be used in actual labour camps for children who had been orphaned during the world war and who had sometimes committed greater or lesser crimes as well.

The often mentioned camps and weekend programs, considered the benefaction of the Party, were in fact the means of unification and supervision at best, or simply the forms of institutionalized child labour at worst, which was strongly connected to the way that the regulations of the Pioneer Organization of the Romanian People's Republic confused the notions of obligations and rights, obligations being continuously classified as rights. Thus the child image contoured by the writings and set as an example to the potential readers of the magazine, in fact, impersonated the Regulations of the Pioneer Organization of the Romanian People's Republic.¹ The blind spots of the reality simulated by the propaganda literature were brought into attention by a writer. The author of the contemporary success novel *The Street of the Youngest Son*, Lev Kassil describes the method of reality- and character-representation at a Bucharest book signing event as follows: "The writer has to know the people, the good and the bad ones. (S)he has to select an outstandingly good one to write about, who will be taken as typical. Accordingly, this will not always be a real-life child" (1955/111; emphasis mine).

While discussing the ideal figure the readers could become following the instructions presented in the magazine, we also have to mention the cult of the body parallel to the ideological education. In the articles of *Pioneer*, sports, competition and generally the cult of physical strength were as important as encouraging children to learn and to work. The relation of physical and spiritual values is formulated in a poem as follows: "Having only good marks doesn't bring glory. / Your muscles must also be tight like a sword! / Your necktie obligates you: / be brave, loyal, happy, clever, / be noble in strength / like hammered steel!" (Mária Tamás: *On the riverside*, 1956/151.)

3. The pioneer literature

3.1. Infantilism, emancipation, intimidation

Before the linguistic and thematic survey of the literary works published in *Pioneer*, we have to draw a picture of the worldview these poems and short stories were meant to shape. Examining the child-image created by the children's literature of the Gheorghiu-Dej era, it is conspicuous that it was based on two conflicting tendencies: the intent of infantilization and emancipation.

The former tendency was in fact the continuation of the tradition of children's literature which regarded children as readers with decreased mental abilities, a tradition that, in turn, was influenced by the approach intensified at the beginning of the 19th century, according to which children are not "savages" but "kingly children", irreplaceable values requiring protection (Badinter 1999, 174). The (often not even first ranked) literary works with a "babbling" voice, reflecting an infantile worldview instead of a childlike one, were

¹ See the *Regulations of the Pioneer Organization of the Romanian People's Republic*, III./104. 8 September 1955. The 2nd paragraph with the title *The Pioneer's rights and obligations* imposes the following obligations: fulfilling the vows, studying diligently, being disciplined both at school and outside of it, respecting grownups, considering work as being an honour and actively taking part in it, helping the parents, being honourable, fair, modest and good comrades, taking care of younger children, being concerned with physical education. In contrast, the pioneers' right is that they may carry all these out in an organized manner, that is: "they may take part in any kind of work of their group", they may participate in discussing the questions related to the activity of the pioneer organization and in the pioneer houses' functioning, they can ask for a recommendation for joining the Young Workers' Association, and, finally, they may vote and be voted for. As we can see, only the last one can really be considered a right.

based on the misapprehension and exaggeration of the above mentioned tendency. The propagandistic children's literature aiming towards shaping the new man preserved both this tendency and its specific language. Accordingly, the poems were addressed to the children waiting for this formation: "They are also lights / Cherished lights of the nation, / Little Suns of the country, the apple of the Party's eye" (Ádám Anavi: *The Party's heart beats in us*, 1955/119). The "strident, partial and didactic" voice present in the Hungarian children's literature of the interwar period also lived on, although in the opposite sense (Komáromi 2001, 30).

The characters presented in subordinate positions, passive situations and false naivety are generally girls or characters younger than the others.

The propagandistic message was often formulated hidden behind a naive childlike viewpoint, logic or behaviour. The language that was used was also marked by this type of false naivety, as it offered almost comic scenes and solutions. The Romanian delegation was greeted at the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin by Edith, the young East German pioneer in the following way: "The little girl spread her arms, / ran towards the Romanian delegation, / above the red wings of the flags flipped, / while the little pioneer girl / sang as if all her colourful dreams / and sweet smiles were in her song" (Erik Majtényi: *About a Berlin Station*, 1951/63). According to the propagandistic goals, but also in the spirit of the idyll of false naivety, after the greetings, she "cheerfully chatters" about East Berlin's rebuilding, the workers' joyful lives, the fight against imperialism and the fraternity of nations.

At the other extreme, children were presented as adults and they worked or fought in line with adults. (In the short stories that take place at wartime or in the illegalist period, children handing out leaflets or fighting among the guerrillas are recurring characters.) The pioneer organization with its military hierarchy also favoured this quasi-emancipatory game; the scenario of the assemblies and meetings (and often their topics too) call to mind the strongly politicized activities of the adult world. (E.g. discussing the actual election, the decisions of the congress of the party, etc.) The magazine was in principle dedicated to minors who did not have voting rights yet, however, it always attached special importance to political elections, more or less obviously encouraging its child readers to conduct campaign activities among their families and acquaintances. Sensitivity to public affairs overrode filial affection; in one of the poems, for example, the pioneer encourages his/her candidate mother to participate in patriotic activities, adding that: "If you are a candidate, mother / do as much good as you can / so you can be a good mother / to each and every little pioneer" (Géza Páskándi: *A Pioneer's letter to his/her candidate mother*, 1953/13).

The literature of *Pioneer* created the ideal of the child who goes to camps to "enjoy his/her sunny and carefree childhood" thinking and working like an adult at the same time. Covering up this paradox was achieved by poeticizing the communal works on the one hand, and by presenting the activities of children and adults as being equivalent, on the other hand. This way field-work, studying and fighting became synonymous: "To farmers / harvest is a treasure, / to pupils / exams are the pay-off. / The crops of their yearlong work / will be harvested now. / Line up joyfully / and go to exam – to battle!" (Erik Majtényi: *Exam*, 1951/53). The moments of challenge, the summer exams were portrayed in the magazine as

events of special importance to the whole country, especially in the first issues. Children are encouraged to prepare for their exams by important public figures (academicians, ministers of education, etc.) and eminent workers who symbolized the power of people.

In the paradoxically complementary processes of infantilization and emancipation, a new family-model overrode the traditional parent-child relationship, a family-model in which the Party fulfilled the role of the caring parent. At the same time, biological parents were represented as idealized members of the party in stories taking place in the present, while they got the role of illegalist heroes in the stories taking place in the past. Parallel to the process of collectivization, we can also rarely find the image of the errant parent holding on to the past, who has to be guided towards the right path by the conscious pioneer, which means that the roles are reversed in this case. There are no intellectual parents, only workers, peasants and soldiers. The Party playing the parent role is an androgynous phenomenon: it simultaneously has protective, caring attributes which are considered “maternal” features, and educating, disciplining ones (represented as paternal features). The party’s parent role appears at a very early age: “it takes care / of your toys, / it watches over / your joy, / it tells you the most beautiful tales...” (Erik Majtényi: *Do you know what to thank the Party?* 1961/47). Its presence accompanies the process of gaining self-awareness: “I know the Party looks after me, / Like a parent looks after his/her sweet child, / Following the example of Soviet pioneers – / I live for you, my beloved country” (Jenő Szikla: *Oath*, 1953/11). Then the growing child naturally identifies with the spiritual parent replacing the biological one. “It gave you life, it is your life!” (Tauta Nicolae: *The Party*, 1961/10.)

The metaphor of plant-like existence indicates the effectiveness of infantilization, the birth of “the perfect pioneer”: “I’m a leaf of my country’s tree. / Neither the hot sun, nor the wind tears me away / because I shield inside the budding sprouts / the most treasured issue of my life. (...) As I give you my body and soul, / my cherished blooming Republic!” (Zoltán Hajdu: *Confession to the Motherland*, 1956/27 December.)

A role similar to infantilization was played by intimidation, the means of which was mainly the horroristic description of “here” and “abroad”, respectively the description of the negative pole of the East–West dichotomy. News (often accompanied by photos/illustrations) about orphaned, tortured, mutilated and poverty-stricken children were frequently published on the last page of the magazine, especially until the year 1954 (e.g. during the Korean war or the anti-Tito campaign). Child characters “tortured with bestial cruelty” are frequently present in the poems and stories taking place at the time of the guerrilla wars or the illegal communist activities. Due to the morbid hero cult, rich in horror elements, the magazine’s child readers faced each year the details about the deeds, especially the death of the young – international, national or regional – heroes of the communist pantheon (e.g. Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya, Vasile Roaita, András Tyukodi).

Other methods of intimidation were constant surveillance and punishing even the smallest mistakes. A certain column of the magazine (with an often changing title, like *The Pioneer’s telegraph reports*, *Frankie Photo saw it*, *In private*) was meant to create a forum for public accusations and humiliation: the failures, mistakes and their perpetrators were revealed by the “accusation letters” of classmates, teachers or even parents, in such a way that

everyone could identify the person in question (the names, localities and schools were all given in these letters).

3.2. Tempo di marcia

In accordance with the magazine's openly propagandistic goals, most of the poems were marches celebrating the anniversaries of socialist events of national (23 August, 30 December) or international (7 November) importance. (Poems were quite often set to music and published accompanied by tones, the tempo markings attached to the songs pulsed through the entire repertoire of poems!) Some of these were aimed at strengthening the team spirit, the strong, warrior community's authority was poeticized by a first person plural narrative voice in the name of the imaginary "We". The natural and gradual generational changes are presented in the form of military guard-mounting: "We take over from our fathers' / heroic teams, / Our faithful hearts and strong / Squads, / Warriors / Are all Stalinist heroes" (Sergey Alimov: *The dawn shines above us*, 1951/72).

The military preparedness perceptible in each area of life and the use of militarist forms were the defining feature of the era, as reflected by the term "peace-war" invented in order to maintain passivity, constant controllability and intimidation. Remaining alone on the stage, the winner force, the communist party, bearing different names, maintains and generates the sensation of constant endangeredness in order to preserve its own authority by means of obsessively sustaining and adjusting the self-created notion of enemy. On the level of the children's world, this is present even in the motto of the pioneer organization: "Be ready!"²

The structure of the pioneer organization consisting of teams, squads and units; the specific rituals (raising and lowering the flag); the presence of trumpeters and drummers; the different distinctive marks on the uniforms imitating military badges and chevron patches; the ways of greeting and saluting ordered by the "pioneer etiquette"³ regulating behaviour – all these indicate the military origins of this organization. For that matter, the above mentioned external features, the body cult, the discipline, the loyalty to the leaders and the domineering political ideology are all the same features that previously characterized the main fascist youth organization, Hitlerjugend (Guyot–Restellini 2002, 171–174).

As the works (especially the prose works) published in *Pioneer* teach us, this children's play could be transformed anytime into activities of public benefit due to the military discipline learned during the pioneer trainings. In György Méhes' novel *Three boys and a girl*, published in fragments, on their way to play, some children find out about the atrocious plans of a former house-owner and support an academic professor who is working on an experiment that helps the production of the factory from Vajdahunyad.

² 1956 – in the magazine the discussion is about the actual meaning of the motto. Most readers refer to being prepared for external/internal dangers, which proves that this interpretation was more obvious to the children than the more general version offered by Ferenc Szemlér who was asked to write the closing remarks of the debate. His interpretation simply emphasized the importance of being prepared for work/life: "Our country is the country of miners, locomotive drivers, oil-men, peasants planting corn, engineers, poets, and it is all ours. (...) So be ready, comrade pioneer, to become a working citizen of your country" (1956/143).

³ The difficulty of knowing one's way around the rules is indicated by the fact that, from time to time, *Pioneer* republishes the regulations of the "pioneer etiquette", with special emphasis on the way different people must be greeted at different occasions.

The end of the novel is an apotheosis of team spirit created with militarist rhetoric:

“– Comrade professor, on behalf of our squad, I respectfully report that the enemy’s attack has been prevented (...) From now on, we will run a permanent lookout service at the fortress. Tell us if you need anything.

Calamfir got up and went out to the porch leaning on master Iovan. At the stairway, the pioneers stood in double lines. The dog squad with Hannelore in front stood on the right side. (...)

– Thank you for your help, pioneers.

Thirty hands were raised at once to salute, and the greeting rang out: The pioneer salutes you joyfully!” (1959/191)

The marches with their bouncing rhythm and flow of optimism always fulfilled a mobilizing role as the incidental music of some activity, and were used in order to increase the efficiency of the activity (“Our cheerful group collects scrap metal / Give us, buddy, right away, if you’ve got / Curved nails, rings, bandy shovels!” – Zoltán Veress: *Metal-collector’s song*), or simply functioned as an expression of the aggressive community spirit which dissolved individuality.

“Today reading, tomorrow building / calls us, making mountains and valleys tremble. / Off we go, let’s learn! / Youngest troop of Lenin” (Erik Majtényi: *The youngest troop of Lenin*).

In the contemporary discourse, working was a synonym of fighting, and this way it was the method of initiation to adulthood, the means of emersion from an infantile life: “They pick it all up, don’t let it be wasted / and the grains are all bread. / They fight with spikes daily / for the wonderful peace” (Sándor Kányádi: *Collecting spikes*, 1955/85). Or: “Soldiers of freedom and peace, / pioneers are never cowards. // The pioneer – just like the flag, / is a foregoer in both battle and work (Zoltán Hajdú: *May song*, 1955/85). *Pioneer* published on a daily basis invitations to different (mostly seasonal) communal works (e.g. collecting spikes, harvesting, cleaning streets and houses, collecting paper, glass or metal, etc.), and to extracurricular works (e.g. rabbit-farming, sericulture, gadgeteering, etc.). As a result of conflating working and fighting, they organized working and studying competitions which were the domesticated versions of constantly fighting an imaginary enemy (also present in the literature of the period). These activities were endowed with the attributes of sports and games: “Come on, let’s go to the borders to collect lots of spikes! (...) Red corn-rose, lurid flower! / Which will be the winner team?” (Endre Nyárádi: *Let’s collect lots of it!* 1954/47.)

The fact that most of the short stories taking place at the time of their creation have transformation through work (i.e. the pioneer community helps the weak learners change and become diligent members of the community) as their central topic indicates that the working and learning competitions, organized in order to achieve and maintain permanent alertness and uncertainty, were the new methods of forming the new man. The unsigned poem about the fight against bad marks in fact represented the gentler version of the propaganda poems meant to attack and mock the (ever-changing) enemy: “I’m telling you about a strange campaign, / the theatre of war is the school, / lots of twos [bad marks] run away alarmed. // The pioneers chase them away / their weapons are their books and pens. / Look, a two goes sneaking! / Run, buddy, catch it! // Is the campaign over? Of course, not. You threes [bad

marks]! / In the new year you won't be tolerated here, / get out of our registers!" (*Campaign*, 1954/68.)

The rhetoric of the so-called "hate-poems", so popular in the period (Buda 2002, 24; Osman 2004, 58) is detectable in the poems published in *Pioneer* as well. In the magazine, there is no typical hate-poem specifically meant to verbally extinguish the enemy, however, the hymnal laudation of the achievements of the present is quite frequently interrupted by describing the opposition to the past or present enemies threatening the presented idyll. The rhetorical technique characteristic to the period was the use of a dichotomist structure, which was applied in the case of the poems in which the worthless past and the treasured present were compared. The results of this comparison were formulated as moral lessons with a didactic overtone, usually in the imperative: "Your warm heart has to love it, / it has to beat for it night and day (...) And your lips also have to praise the party, our nation's star" (Erik Majtényi: *Shining star*. To the Constitution of the Romanian People's Republic, 1956/ 251).

The negative aspects of the past were often represented through the concrete description of the misery, physical deprivation and maltreatment that children had to go through (e.g. in Anna Hajnal's *Then and now*; or in Géza Páskándi's poem, *A song about 23 August*: "Fascists killed my father, / I ate once a day at most / I lived underground for two weeks, / I became skinny and pale"). At other times, it appeared in a more abstract form, as the objectivization of the self: "I was a product, I was creased like thread, / and everyone threw me away" (János Szász: *Anniversary*, 1957/65).

Due to the dichotomist structure comparing past and present (sometimes placing the idyll into the recent future), these poems and short stories functioned as stories of salvation. The narratives of salvation lead us from erring and orphanhood, through recognition, to finding the Party/Cause/Community presented as a deistic force and to physical and spiritual identification with it. The world organizing principle is usually captured through the metaphors of cosmic/natural renewal (dawn, blooming, sunshine, etc.). From time to time, concrete, even profane metaphors appear as well. One of the poems, for example, illustrates the process of losing the self and finding a new one through describing the disarrangement and rearrangement of a home: "They ravaged your soul, / your sad little room, / they pushed around its furniture. / It [the party] put everything back to its place, / and opened a window to the garden" (Jenő Kiss: *About the party*, 1961/47).

The Idea conceived as a Cosmic power, of course, requires messianic heroes described as culture heroes. The least individualized hero-type was the Soviet army and its representative, the soldier of the Red Army who put an end to the chaos of the world war. The encounter with him was usually captured by means of referring to some kind of cultural topos. In Zoltán Hajdu's poem, for example, he appears as a pseudo-Prometheus, as the bringer of light: "The day is unforgettable, / when following the Soviet hero / came the most beautiful dawn, / the eternal freedom of our slave nation! (...) We salute you, winner homeland, / the youth of the Romanian land salutes you! / Red star of August / shed your light on this warrior nation!" (*Pioneer salute*, 1955/101.) Gyula Domahidi resorts to rewriting the regional literary tradition: his poem, *I can still see his young face*, is a transliteration of an emblematic poem of Transylvaniam, Lajos Áprily's *On the summit*. The mountain – valley opposition is replaced here by the opposition of the "smiling soldier of the Red Army" and the "cowardly

Nazi hordes”. In accordance with the rhetoric of the hate-poems, the Nazis bear the well-known features of physical deformity and resemblance to repelling animals (Osman 2004, 59–60). “Their squint eyes were full of hate / the weapons in their hands killed”. The Soviet soldier, on the other hand, is a “young eagle” who “offers food” – a recurring gesture, a cliché in the poetry of the period, also known from Áprily’s poem. His appearance and friendly gestures put an end to chaos and create an idyll: “the sweet breeze of freedom came / and the valley was alive with happiness.”

In addition to the poems about the anonymous Soviet soldier, beginning from the year 1948 the poems of personal cult become more and more frequent. These poems primarily poeticized the figure of Stalin, Lenin, the spiritual father, or the figure of the “local hero” (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej), endowing them with a messianic role. In Géza Páskándi’s *Exam song*, even Stalin’s picture becomes an inspirational muse helping pupils overcome the challenges of school life: “The school-gates are already covered with flowers / and among the flowers Stalin watches over you, / You feel, you know / this picture makes you brave” (1950/2). A natural consequence of this train of thought is that in an other poem a child offers himself/herself as a birthday gift, which fits well into the already mentioned infantilized world view: “If I were a flower – I’d bloom today, / for you – comrade Stalin!” (Kata Kászoni: *Salute*, 1951/81.)

After Stalin’s death and the 20th congress (in 1954) where the period of personal cult was criticized, the Stalin-poems disappear, and now Lenin becomes the new ideal. On each anniversary of Lenin’s birth and death, *Pioneer* publishes a couple of works about him. Being a children’s magazine, the writings are mostly about Lenin’s kind behaviour towards children and about his childhood, all described in the fragments taken over from Soviet books, where the little Volodya Ulyanov appears as an abstraction of the actual Pioneers’ Regulation. These poems do not concentrate as much on giving good example as on representing Lenin as the embodiment of the abstract concept of the Party and the idea of communism: “You may give him millions of statues, / I still see the living one: / A man went on from Russia, / since then his flame touches every heart. // If you have faith that never leaves you / and hope which means victory, / Lenin himself is the ever-flourishing tomorrow – / for me, He is the man of men” (Zoltán Hajdu: *Lenin*, 1956/136.)

As the magazine was dedicated to children who had restricted direct knowledge about the past, the poems and short stories put a greater emphasis on the present seen as idyllic than on the past.

The present with its several values appears rather as an intermediate stage than as the endpoint of a process. Maintaining this idyll requires a constant effort and equally important work and struggle from the children as well (“we stamp out worms and take care of the flower-bed” – says A. E. Baconsky in his poem *Children’s song to the People’s Republic*, 1951/82).

The visual representation of the positive pole of the past–present dichotomy is usually created by means of presenting an inventory of the achievements, the country’s wonderful natural resources and richness. This inventory sometimes becomes the method of an ode-like representation and veneration: “Motherland, you are the land of roaring factories: / ball-

bearings, fabric, paper – they all resonate your glory – / the pioneer salutes you joyfully!” (Aladár Lászlóffy: *The pioneer salutes you joyfully!* 1965/26.)

The increasing pressure built up by the successive waves of enumerations (which call to mind the expressionist rhetoric) creates the moral lesson formulated with didactic precision at the end of the poem. These enumerations can get semantic roles as well: they may have the function of giving a definition to certain concepts (Homeland, People’s Republic, etc.), also determining the scope of usage attached to these expressions: “It means mountains full of treasures / and endless fields of wheat, / it means prideful factories, / schools, mines, smelteries, / where the masters are workers / who fight for our future. // It means you ought to work, learn, / build and improve your free country – / because the word: Republic / gives you rights and obligations” (Domokos Szilágyi: *On the celebration of the Republic*, 1960/52).

The poems in which the idyll of the present is not (or not only) created by means of emphasizing material wealth constitute a separate category. These poems emphasize the peaceful coexistence of neighbouring nations: “In our beautiful country everyone is happy, / Romanian, Turkish, Bulgarian, Saxon and Hungarian, / they stick together in one great family, / they all want to build a peaceful future. // In our work, the great heroic fight, / our star – the winner party leads us, / and we sing joyful songs / about its miraculous power” (Gyula Domahidi: *A song about our country*, 1955/116). These types of poems (and visual representations!) concerned with the fraternity of the different ethnicities (especially of those who lived in Romania) were primarily published in the period when *Pioneer* was the magazine of the Hungarian Autonomous Region.

In accordance with the constant need for actuality specific to the printed media, a significant portion of the articles published in *Pioneer* fulfilled their purpose of shaping the homo sovieticus only at the time of their appearance or until the appearance of the next issue. On the other hand, a significant portion of the literary works published in the magazine were subsequently republished (with some modifications) in the authors’ independent volumes of poetry and short stories.

Taking the propagandistic goals into account, we can say that the works published in magazines had a potentially stronger effect, since – due to the mandatory subscription and the organized group activities – practically each and every child of the Gheorghiu-Dej era got the message: “However young, a small child, (s)he is building communism.”