

MODELS OF SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN HUNGARIAN AND  
U.S. PRESS ACCOUNTS OF THE POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS  
IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE; A COMPARATIVE STUDY

I. Nature and Significance of the Research Problem

This is a research proposal for a comparative study of models of society reflected in U.S. and Hungarian press accounts of the political transformation taking place in East-Central Europe. By "models of society" we mean descriptions or projections more specific than "democratic," "free," "liberal," "private," etc., explicit or implicit in news coverage.

The problem underlying this study is the unpredictability of long-range social development in East-Central Europe. The collapse of communist rule, the subsequent discrediting even of most of those responsible for the transition, and the growing disillusionment and alienation of the electorate leave a socio-political vacuum that will be difficult and troublesome to fill. This study proposes to develop some indicators of future development in two ways: first by reflecting some assumptions about the society of the future held by journalists and editors, and secondly by investigating models of society to which most readers are exposed. The comparative dimension is necessary to gain further insight into each press system and how they see each-other in the media-mirror.

The background

Hungarian society is in a period of rapid and often chaotic transition. The direction and objective of that change is generally considered to be some kind of "democracy." News accounts often carry explicit policy statements dealing with general directions and specific measures. But in reporting events, news accounts also select, slant, observe, and comment from a particular vantage point of the press itself. Implicit in these and other characteristics of news reporting is a usually unarticulated conception about the kind of society that is envisaged by the writers of these accounts. That vision is also shared with readers and may provide important clues to the direction of change.

For the development of a thoughtful and lasting cultural policy it is important to understand what models of society, the role of media in society are, both explicit in policy development and implicit in media coverage of such development.

objectives American media reporting about those developments reflect in their coverage of Hungarian development. This is important not only for the American public and for informing American policy towards Hungary but also from the point of view of all Western media approaches to the issues of media privatization and democratization in Hungary.

The recent changes in the political climate of Hungary provide a unique opportunity to investigate the evolution of the Hungarian mass media and how it can condition the public agenda by influencing the interpretation and significance of events. The direction and extent of change in the structure and content of news may also effect the social utility of information. News is simultaneously both global and domestic. Cultural differences can impact print news on many levels: social and political sanctions, structures of the production process and the audience interpretation all work together. Given the increased global nature of news, single-country studies of print news effects will be less fruitful than cross-cultural research.

### Message system analysis

Message system analysis provides a useful perspective from which to investigate the composition of media coverage and its impact on public awareness. Message system analysis posits that "Such analysis is not a substitute for the study of policies and effects. Rather it is a source both of hypotheses for those investigations and of independent results that can help illuminate, support or counter them. But it can also yield strategic intelligence and results that cannot be obtained in any other way, such as explaining why certain issues, problems, courses of action, etc. become salient to large number of people at certain times. Message system analysis of mass media discourse is one leg of the three-legged stool of comprehensive cultural indicators, including three types of investigation; institutional policy analysis, message system analysis, and cultivation analysis." (George Gerbner, "Mass Media Discourse: Message System Analysis as a Component of Cultural Indicators." In: *Discourse and Communication*, edited by Teun A. van Dijk. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1985. pp. 16-17). The dependent variables in message system analysis are "the aggregate and collective premises presented in mass media discourse", "the 'facts of life' and dynamic qualities represented in the systems". "Its purpose is to describe the symbolic 'world', sense its climate, trace its currents, and identify its functions." (See Gerbner, p. 17).

### Goals of the research

The goals of the proposed research are two-fold: 1. to gain an understanding of what models of society American and

Hungarian media reflect in their coverage of East-Central European social and political developments; and 2. to investigate the specific role of news media in forming these models of society.

In order to gauge the extent and direction of any change in the manner in which Hungarian news is presented, the U.S. print news and Hungarian print news will be content analysed. This will allow a comparison of the degree of similarity of the two media systems with regard to the models of society and the role of news media in society.

## II. Methodology

Traditionally, there have been two predominant ways of approaching the analysis of messages - quantitative and qualitative. The former involves the use of content analysis strategies that offer reliability and consistency while dealing with the surface level of messages. The latter involves the use of more interpretive procedure that are less reliable but reach into "deeper" levels of meaning. We have devised a procedure that appropriates the major strengths of both these approaches: the message system analysis methodology that is sensitive to the different, layered levels of meaning in news. The challenge of this research project is to construct such a coding instrument that is capable of being applied to news messages from a cross cultural perspective.

The message system analysis will be combined with interviews with media executives on both sides. The content analysis will use a sample of one or two elite papers and one or two papers with the highest circulation for a period of six months after the commencement of this project and a comparable sample in the U.S. consisting of covering the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times and one high circulation newspaper (probably the New York Daily News).

Interviews with the media executives in the U.S. will focus on asking them to articulate their models and concepts of media development in East-Central Europe. This will then be compared with the result of the content analysis.

The reliability of the analysis will be guaranteed by multiple codings and the measured agreement of trained analysts. (See George Gerbner, "Cultural Indicators: The Third Voice." In: *Communications Technology and Social Policy: Understanding the New "Cultural Revolution"*. George Gerbner, Larry P. Gross and William H. Melody (Eds.) New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973, p. 41)

II46 Budapest, Abonyi u. 27.

Tel.: I4I7-388

Education:

Holder of Candidate's degree in Comparative Linguistics /Hungarian equivalent of Ph.D./, 1978.

Doctor of Linguistics, 1978.

Graduated from the Budapest University of Arts and Letters /Hungarian and Russian language and literature/, 1978-82.

Graduated from the Lomonosov University of Arts and Letters /English and French language and literature/, 1974.

Employment:

Academic experience

1978- Professor of Linguistics and senior research scientist at the Budapest University attached to the Department of Contemporary Hungarian Language. Senior research fellow in various research groups on stylistics at the University and at the Academy of Sciences. Participates in a team directed by Professor dr. István Szathmári of the Department of Linguistics. Works on the theme of newspaper style at the turn of century and during the period of the First and Second World Wars. Co-author of textbooks on stylistics /special topic: nonverbal communication, paralinguistic features of style and speech/. Special research interest: comparative study of mass media messages from the point of view of sociolinguistics and stylistics. Published a monograph entitled the Structural and Stylistic Typology of Newspaper Texts /on the material of American, English, French, Russian and Hungarian daily papers/.

Honors or Awards for Scholarship

1991 Short study trip to England /visiting 8 universities/, participation on the Fourth International Television Studies Conference /reading a paper/

1990 Study trip to Ljubljana University /to the School of Communications, Yugoslavia/, and to the School of Communication at the Pennsylvania State University /USA, financed by George Soros Foundation/

1985 Short study trip to Padua University /Italy/ and to the Helsinki University and to the University of Jyveskyla /School of Speech Communication, Finland/

1987 Short study trip to London University and the University of Edinburg /Scotland/

Personal data:

Citizenship: Hungarian

Married to: Arpád Beviz

Children: Petronella Nóra Beviz /1981/, Dénes Mihály Beviz /1985/

Languages: English, Russian, French, some German.

Róka, Jolán /1986/ "Structural and Stylistic Typology of Newspaper Texts". Akadémiai, Budapest.

ARTICLES

Róka, Jolán /1977/ "Semiotic Studies in the Soviet Union". In: Magyar Tudomány, No. 3, pp. 208-216.

Róka, Jolán /1977/ "Semiotic Study of Mass Media in the Soviet Union". In: Jel-kommunikáció-kultúra. TK, pp. 287-322.

Róka, Jolán /1977/ "Semiotics and Culture". In: Helikon, No. 4, pp. 454-457.

Róka, Jolán /1977/ "The Aesthetic and Stylistic Features of International Herald Tribune". TK, 12 pp.

Róka, Jolán /1977/ "Stylistic Typology of Mass Information". Moscow, 26 pp. /in Russian/

Róka, Jolán /1978/ "The Aesthetic and Stylistic Characteristics of American Newspapers /International Herald Tribune/". MGU, 12 pp. /in Russian/

Róka, Jolán /1978/ "The Problems of Text Theory". In: Magyar Nyelv, No. 2, pp. 237-245.

Róka, Jolán /1979/ "Research Program of Life Style". TK, 28 pp.

Róka, Jolán /1979/ "Forming a Nation-wide Sample". TK, 18. pp.

Róka, Jolán /1983/ "The Methodology of Studying Media Messages". In: Tanulmányok a mai magyar nyelv szövegtana köréből". Budapest, pp. 213-319.

Róka, Jolán /1983/ "Language Processes of Modern Russian Fiction". In: Helikon, No. 1, pp. 102-03.

Róka, Jolán /1983/ "Kiss József and A Hét". Mezőcsát, 107 pp.

Róka, Jolán /1984/ "Impressionistic Stylistic Features of Ignóty's Literary Criticism in Bródy Sándor' ". In: Magyar Nyelvőr, No. 2, pp. 146 -53.

Róka, Jolán /1985/ "Secondary Meaning in Newspaper Text". In:

- Róka, Jolán /1985/ "The System of Hidden Meaning in Print Messages".  
In: Annales, 8 pp.
- Róka, Jolán /1985/ "Semiotics of Mass Media Systems". In: Annales,  
pp. 220-232. /in Russian/
- Róka, Jolán /1986/ "Kiss József, the publicist". In: Magyar Nyelvőr,  
No. 4, pp. 449-57.
- Róka, Jolán /1988/ "About some of the Characteristics of Language  
Usage on the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries. In: A  
magyar nyelv rétegződése. Budapest, pp. 814-21.
- Róka, Jolán /1989/ "New Stylistics". In: ELTE Emlékkönyv. Studia  
in Honorem P. Fábrián, E. Rácz, I. Szathmári Oblata a Collegis  
et Discipulis. Budapest, pp. II7-I25.
- Róka, Jolán /1990/ "Ignotus and Impressionism". In: Tanulmányok  
a századforduló stilustörekvéseiről. Budapest, pp. 180-193.
- Róka, Jolán /1990/ "Soviet Literary Studies about the Stylistic  
Trends of the Turn of 19th and 20th Centuries. In: Tanulmányok  
a századforduló stilustörekvéseiről. Budapest, 78-90.
- Róka, Jolán /1991/ "Cross- Cultural Analysis of Hungarian Broadcast  
News". Paper Presented to the Fourth International Television  
Studies Conference, London, 8 pp. /in English/
- Róka, Jolán /1991/ "Cross-Cultural Approach to Communications".  
In: Hagymány és ujítás a mai magyar nyelvi kutatásban és  
oktatásban, Budapest, pp. 185-189.

#### REVIEWS

- Róka, Jolán /1978/ "Publishing History". In: Magyar Könyvszemle,  
No. 3-4, pp. 389-90.
- Róka, Jolán /1978/ "Mass Communication and Arts". In: Magyar  
Könyvszemle, No. 3-4, pp. 390.
- Róka, Jolán /1978/ "History of Russian Literature and Journalism  
in the First Half of 18th Century. In: Magyar Könyvszemle,  
No. 3-4, pp. 389-90.

- Róka, Jolán /1979/ "Rhetorika". In: Magyar Könyvszemle, No. 1, pp. 109-110.
- Róka, Jolán /1979/ "Oral Poetry". In: Helikon, No. 3, pp. 426-28.
- Róka, Jolán /1981/ "Language, Truth and Poetry". In: Helikon, No. 2-3, pp. 318-20.
- Róka, Jolán /1981/ "An Introduction to Literary Semiotics". In: Helikon, No. 2-3, pp. 218-20.
- Róka, Jolán /1985/ "Introduction to General Philology". In: Annales, pp. 251-52. /in English/
- Róka, Jolán /1985/ "Impressionism". In: Annales, pp. 251-52. /in English/

March 2, 1992

**COMMUNICATION**  
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA  
3620 Walnut Street Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104-6220

Dr. Jolan Roka  
Senior Research Professor  
Faculty of Humanities  
Eotvos Lorand University  
Budapest, Hungary

Dear Dr. Roka:

I am writing to express my strong support of your application for a scholarship to pursue our joint research on "Models of Society as Reflected in Hungarian and U.S. Press Accounts of the Transformation in East-Central Europe; a Comparative Study."

This project is more timely and important than ever. As we agreed, the problem underlying this study is the unpredictability of long-range social development in East-Central Europe. The collapse of communist rule, the subsequent discrediting of most of those responsible for the transition, and the growing disillusionment and alienation of the electorate leave a socio-political vacuum that will be difficult and troublesome to fill. This study proposes to develop some indicators of future development in two ways by reflecting some assumptions about the society of the future held by journalists and editors, and by investigating models of society to which most readers are exposed.

The study will be useful for the development of a thoughtful and lasting cultural policy in both countries. It is important to understand what models of society are implicit in Hungarian media coverage, and to understand what models and objectives American media reflect in their coverage of Hungarian developments.

As you know, I believe that you are uniquely qualified to conduct this study. I trust that the significance and relevance of this project will be evident to those considering your application and that you will be awarded the scholarship necessary to carry it out. Please let me know if I can assist you in any way.

Sincerely yours,



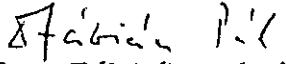
George Gerbner  
Professor of Communication and Dean Emeritus

Dr. Róka Jolán 1978. februárja óta dolgozik az ELTE BTK Mai magyar nyelvi tanszékén, előbb tudományos munkatársként, majd főmunkatársként. A nyelvtudomány kandidátusaként került a tanszékre, értekezését a "A tömegtájékoztató szövegek stilustipológiája" címmel védte meg. Eredeti kutatási témáján, azt továbbfejlesztve, azóta is dolgozik, amelyről számos megjelent tanulmánya, s monográfiája /"Az ujságszövegek szerkesztési és stilustipológiája", Akadémiai, Budapest 1987/ tanuskodik. Témája rendkívül fontos és időszerű. A felgyorsult információátadás korában a kommunikációs rendszer tökéletesítése Magyarországon is a figyelem előterébe került. Ezt bizonyítja az is, hogy az ELTE-n egy új szak alapítását tervezik, amely a hazai kommunikátor- és ujságíróképzés központja lenne. E szakalapítás előkészítésében Róka Jolán tevékenyen részt vesz: vállalta egy majdani előadássorozat tartását, valamint két további tárgy tanítását. A kommunikációkutatásban való jártasságát, alapos felkészültségét több elnyert külföldi tanulmányutja, s számos külföldi szakemberrel kialakított személyes kapcsolata, együttműködése is elősegítette. 1991. nyarán az ITSC /International Television Studies Conference/ meghívására előadást tartott Londonban a TV hírek kulturközi elemzésének tapasztalatairól.

Mivel a kommunikációkutatás Amerikából indult utjára, ott a legkiforrottabbak a hagyományai, s az egyetemeken kialakult számos kommunikációs iskola fémjelzi az ilyen kutatások hírnevét, elengedhetetlenül fontos a konkrét tapasztalatgyűjtés valamelyik amerikai egyetemen. Róka Jolán szakmailag felkészült arra, hogy egy ilyen lehetőséget megkapva, sokoldaluan hozzájáruljon a tömeg-tájékoztatás amerikai kutatási eredményeinek hazai hasznosításához.

Mindezek alapján a pályázó kérelmét megalapozottnak tartom, s melegen támogatom.

Budapest, 1992. március

  
/Dr. Fábrián Pál/  
egyetemi tanár  
a nyelvtudományok doktora

Dr. Róka Jolán, a nyelvtudomány kandidátusa több mint másfél évtizede oktat, illetve végez kutatásokat az ELTE BTK Mai magyar nyelvi tanszékén, tanszékünkön. Több idegen nyelvet kitűnően ismerő, az idejét következetesen beosztó szakember és eredményes kutató. 1987-ben jelent meg "Az ujságszövegek szerkesztési és stilustipológiája" című monográfiája, az Akadémiai kiadónál, a rangos "Nyelvészeti tanulmányok" sorozatban. Ezenkívül mintegy huszonöt dolgozata látott napvilágot a szélesebb értelemben vett szövegvizsgálat témaköréből. Vonzódik a modern, sőt a legmodernebb diszciplínákhoz és kutatómódszerekhez. Szívesen konzultál a legnevesebb külföldi szakemberekkel, illetve készséggel tanulmányozza az érdeklődési körébe tartozó eredményeket a helyszínen, a külföldi egyetemeken és intézetekben. Eddig négy ösztöndíjat nyert el rövid tanulmányútra: Angliába /kétszer/, Olaszországba és Finnországba, valamint 1991. őszén a Soros Alapítvány támogatásával két hónapot töltött el Amerikában a Pennsylvania State University, School of Communications dékánjának meghívására. Ott-tartózkodása során közös kutatási munkatervet dolgozott ki két amerikai professzorral a médiaszövegek kulturközi elemzésére /magyar és amerikai viszonylatban/.

Ezenkívül érvényes meghívása van George Gerbner professzortól, az Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania egykori dékánjától. Tanulmányútjának célja ezuttal is az Amerikában kidolgozott kommunikációelméleteknek, valamint a tömegtájékoztatás, mindenekeelőtt az audiovizuális szövegek /TV hírek, reklámok/ tipológiai vizsgálatának a tanulmányozása.

Mivel a kommunikációkutatás legfőbb iskolái Amerikában jöttek létre, éppen Gerbner professzor intézetében is, és mivel a tömegkommunikáció összehasonlító vizsgálatára ott minden technikai feltétel megvan, rendkívül hasznos lenne mind a pályázónak, mind a tanszéknek, ha Róka Jolán elnyerhetné a megpályázott ösztöndíjat.