



Revelation

IN THE FALL OF 1996, I was in Budapest doing research for my master's thesis. My topic was the transfer of the Hungarian press to private ownership after the fall of communism. Seven years after the dramatic events that changed the course of Hungary's future, the country was buzzing with energy and optimism.

While I was there, Hungarians celebrated the fortieth anniversary of the 1956 Revolution. It was on that occasion that I snapped this photo: two young boys waving the symbolic Hungarian flag of the uprising—the

Stalinist coat of arms cut from its center—next to a group of police officers. It was, to my surprise, a subdued celebration. Perhaps it was the dreary weather, but I look back now and think: Maybe it's more complicated than that.

As for my thesis, I discovered in the course of dozens of interviews with journalists, editors, and government officials that my assumptions had been all wrong. It was a disheartening realization for a young graduate student halfway through her program, but my work took a dramatic and exciting turn, and I knew I had been given a gift. I

discovered that when it comes to the democratic experiment, the U.S. model is not one-size-fits-all. As a native Hungarian, as much as I admire my adopted country, U.S. solutions are not necessarily the best for every nation. Each must find its own way.

URSULA OAKS

Director, Press Relations
NAFSA

The author emigrated from Hungary with her family in 1975. Her mother is a long-time NAFSA member.

YOU'RE INVITED! We invite you to submit your photos along with a brief (approximately 200 words) description of why these images are important in your understanding of a person, place, idea, or incident from your experiences in international education. The photos could be of a simple moment on your home campus involving international students, a major event in an exotic location, or anything in between. The editors of *IE* will run selections on this page throughout the year. Please contact us for submission details at elainal@nafsa.org.