
ABSTRACT

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„OUR PEOPLE IS YOURS, BUT ALSO MINE...”

Zoltán Kodály, János Kádár and Paternalistic Thought

This paper examines the personal relationship between the composer, musicologist and educator Zoltán Kodály and the communist politician János Kádár (1912–1989), who was the leader of the Hungarian party-state between 1956 and 1988. Their actual communication can be reconstructed with the exploration of archival documents from the period of 1959–1966. It appears, however, that Kodály’s personality and beliefs exerted a lifelong influence on Kádár – or, at least, Kádár claimed such an influence was exerted on him. Indirect evidence suggests that their correspondence can be traced back to the period of 1948–1950 during which Kádár held the position of Minister for Home Affairs. Apart from his worldwide reputation as a great musician, Kodály was regarded as a Hungarian national icon who was also nominated for head of state by some important organizations during the anti-Stalinist revolution of 1956. Kádár, who was installed as political number-one by the Soviets, directed the brutal repression of the revolution. Despite their differing world views, the two celebrities conducted a meaningful communication on the basis of their paternalistic approach to Hungarian society as well as their shared commitment to careful reforms and considerate modernization as opposed to the often traumatic and radical political and social changes which Hungarian people witnessed, suffered, or generated between 1918 and 1958.

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