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LISZT AND BARTÓK

by

BENCE SZABOLCSI

In recent months the world of music commemorated the fifteenth anniversary of Béla Bartók's death. All through his life this great Hungarian composer of our century was closely and directly linked to the art of Ferenc Liszt. It was by interpreting Liszt's works that the young Bartók attracted attention at the Academy of Music in Budapest; his inaugural lecture at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences dealt with the problems of Liszt's compositions; and in one of his most interesting articles he investigated the effect the music of Liszt had on our contemporary public. But over and above this, Bartók's whole art is imbued with impulses received from Liszt. What he learned from Liszt, what he drew from the example of his great predecessor is clearly to be seen only today, when the late period of Liszt's art—for a long time scarcely known and practically never analysed—is being investigated and clarified by musical science. Only today can we see clearly how much the music of the twentieth century owes to Liszt's late and bold compositions.

The reforms of harmony with which the great composers of our time have extended the possibilities of musical idiom are to a large extent rooted in Liszt's innovations; the vocabulary of musical impressionism and expressionism was mostly coined in his workshop. However, it was precisely in Bartók's music that Liszt's initiatives, the boldest ones at that, found a succession and achieved realization. This applies not only to the elements of the idiom or form of music but to the whole artistic attitude and, not least, to the international position and task of the composer in summing up the music of the various peoples—a task of very wide scope and, it is no exaggeration to say, of revolutionary importance, destined to renew the whole range of expression in European music. Beyond the traditions of Hungarian musical romanticism, *this* was the great example in which Ferenc Liszt preceded Béla Bartók.

Only gradually did Bartók himself recognize this significance of Liszt's art; for a long time he struggled with and for this art—first as a performing artist, then as a composer and finally as a thinker and humanist. The first time he rendered a conscious account of this music was an interesting and significant date. It was in 1911 that the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Ferenc Liszt was celebrated in Hungary, and on that occasion Bartók wrote a "festive" article about Liszt for one of the Hungarian musical periodicals. At that time the public at large did not yet know that in the same year Bartók had completed his piano composition, the "Allegro barbaro," as well as his first work for the stage, his only opera, "Bluebeard's Castle." At this stage of his career as a composer it was not yet at all obvious that there were secret, inner links that joined his art with the world of his great romantic predecessor. On the contrary, even several years afterwards only the new things that were different from Liszt were observed in Bartók's music: the difference of idiom, the discovery of genuine folk music and the evoking of the tone of the Eastern-European folk ballads, a style seemingly so very remote from Liszt's. Today, beyond these differences, we can also see clearly what in Bartók's art is related to or parallel with that of Liszt and even that which proved to be related already when Bartók's first paper on Liszt was published.

And for this very reason, in addition to its historical significance, Béla Bartók's first personal appearance as a passionate partisan of the music of Ferenc Liszt is bound to rouse interest even today. The musical world, which is preparing to commemorate in 1961 the common anniversaries of these two men: the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Liszt's and the eightieth of Bartók's birth, could scarcely choose a more beautiful and symbolic introduction to this double celebration than this, the fraternal homage of one great master to another.

LISZT'S MUSIC AND OUR CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC

by

BÉLA BARTÓK

It is strange what a great number, I might even say the overwhelming majority, of musicians have been unable, for all its novel and magnificent properties, to become fond of the music of Liszt. I do not speak of those who are *ipso facto* at loggerheads with everything that is new and unusual. There were, however, in Liszt's own time, as there still are even today, great and able musicians who absolutely abhorred his music or only accepted it with considerable reservations if, indeed, they went beyond just tolerating it. It is incomprehensible that in Hungary, while nobody for example dare utter a single word against Wagner or Brahms (though in fact there would be a thing or two to find fault with in their music, too), Liszt's music has been free prey to cavilling. From the man in charge of music at the Ministry to the student at the Academy of Music, everyone will find something in it to criticize.

We cannot say that the deterrent quality lies in the novelty and unusual features of Liszt's music, since, on the one hand, everybody has heard plenty of this music, and, on the other, the disapproving criticism stresses the point that it is "trivial and tedious." It may rather be Liszt's extreme versatility or multiplicity, his excessive susceptibility to all sensations from the most commonplace to the most extraordinary. Everything that he experienced in music, whether it was trivial or majestic, left a permanent mark on his compositions.

Even as a man he possessed heterogeneous features. His convictions led him to prepare to become a Catholic priest, yet he lived with a woman in a marriage unsanctioned by the Church; he was an enthusiastic admirer of ascetic Catholicism, yet loved the perfumed atmosphere of drawing-rooms; he was not loth to visit the dirty camps of the Gipsies in Hungary, yet felt at ease in the artificial life of the high aristocracy; everywhere he spoke of Hungary as his beloved motherland for which he was making

sacrifices, and treated the special music he had heard in Hungary with great devotion, yet he did not learn Hungarian although he was an excellent linguist. His musical life is similar. In his young years he imitated the bad habits of the commonplace artists of his time—by "improving, and arranging," polishing up masterpieces that should not have been touched even by an artist of Liszt's calibre. He was already under the influence of the more vulgar melodies of Berlioz, the sentimentality of Chopin and, even more, the stereotype effects of the Italians. Up to the very end the traces of these influences are noticeable in his work, lending it those traits that are called trivial. Later, when he had become acquainted with the pot-pourris of the Gipsies, he did not bother to distinguish between rarities and the commonplace; the Gipsy manner affected him, as such. Wherever he went he received musical impulses, through which his style became somewhat diffuse. Side by side with this triviality nearly all his works show a marvellous audacity of either form or invention. This audacity is an almost fanatical striving for what is new and rare. In his works, scattered among many stereotypes, he wrote much more that was new and ahead of his time than many other composers whose works are sometimes more highly esteemed by the general public. Let us illustrate this through some of his works. The earliest of his great compositions that offer so much is his Sonata for the Piano. Some dull introductory bars, the principal section of the exposition, the stops leading up to the recitativo-like music which precedes the development, the dark coda devoid of all exterior effects and—leaving the greatest to the end—the diabolically brilliant fugato... all this belongs to the realm of the most grandiose music. Side by side with this the sweetness of the andante in F-sharp major inserted in the development, or the sentimentality of the subsidiary theme formed from the principal theme, or again the empty pomp of the $^3/_2$ intermediate passage, naturally seem banal. In respect to form the work is absolutely perfect, which is rather rare with Liszt and is a revolutionary innovation.

Take another very well known composition, the Piano Concerto in E-flat major. As far as form is concerned, it too is a bold innovation, it too is perfect. Nevertheless in its contents it does not satisfy us at all, since its glitter is mostly empty indeed, some of its thoughts—however splendidly clad—descend to the level of a drawing-room piece. Diametrically opposed to this Piano Concerto is his gigantic Faust Symphony, with its host of wonderful thoughts and the planned development of the diabolic irony*

* Liszt was the first to express irony by means of music. His Sonata was written about 1850. Similar traits (Siegfried, Meistersinger) are to be found in Wagner's music only much later—possibly due to Liszt's influence. (Note of the Author)

(Mephisto), which first appeared in the fugato of the Sonata. These qualities render the Faust Symphony immortal, and yet something else disturbs us here: certain imperfections of form, particularly the hackneyed repetition of certain parts, the so-called "Liszt sequences." Scattered among similar sequences there are many new things to be found in the symphonic poems. In his utterly misunderstood Danse Macabre Liszt produces profoundly moving music, and we are greatly enriched by his B-A-C-H Prelude and Fugue and by the passacaglia-like Variations written on a Bach theme. The Années de pélerinage series, one of the smaller, less appreciated piano-pieces, contains some marvellous thoughts mixed with vulgar ones. The compositions that ought to be closest to us, his Hungarian Rhapsodies, are less successful works (perhaps it is for this very reason that they are so widespread and held in such high esteem). Despite a great many marks of genius, these Rhapsodies are mostly stereotypes; they represent Gipsy music—sometimes even blended with Italian music (the Sixth)—and as regards form, they are sometimes veritable conglomerates (the Twelfth).

The Liszt sequences mentioned above lead us to another point of criticism. It is these repetitions, after the same pattern and to be found in almost every work of his, that lend colour to the charge of tediousness. In this respect the trouble was that Liszt was far too much alone in his work. So much did he stand out from among his surroundings that nobody could criticize what he had composed but had to take everything as a divine present. Those who kept a greater distance and criticized him would say stupid things, so that Liszt was cut off from all acceptable and clever criticism that might have guided him. Not all composers are granted the gift, as Beethoven was, of breaking through all difficulties by themselves and creating perfection in each of their compositions. Only one person would have been worthy of the difficult post of criticizing Liszt—and that was Wagner. But Wagner returned Liszt's affection with neglect; he did not care whether another person's work would turn out more or less successful*, though it was surely from Wagner, if from anybody, that Liszt would have accepted advice. Thus it can to some extent be explained why Brahms, for instance, made such sharp statements about Liszt's music. That which was new in Liszt and in advance of his own age was unacceptable to Brahms, who had never composed anything reaching beyond his own period. That which in Liszt's work was perfect in form was generally a revolutionary innovation and therefore objectionable anarchism to the apostle of traditional forms. What

* In a letter of his to Frau Wesendonk he cannot find more to say about the Faust Symphony than: "I have heard Liszt's Faust Symphony; it is the Second Part, if any, that I like best." (Note of the Author)

would be left of Liszt? Trivialities both in form and in content—and that is why Brahms, in virtually raving fury, called Liszt's Dante, for instance, "Unmusik" suitable for the garbage heap.*

But, by its attitude of rejection, the public, which in the meantime has reached the age for which Liszt wrote his audacities, merely shows that it cannot distinguish between form and essence, that it does not possess a hearing keen enough to separate what is important from what is superfluous. When a composer is to be judged as a personality in musical literature, not all the stress should be laid upon forms, while great beauty—set ineffectively behind forms that may be imperfect—remains unnoticed.

In this connexion let me tell of a personal observation. I was student when I first came across the Liszt Sonata. I tried it, but at that time I did not take to it. I found the first part of the exposition dreary and felt it to be empty; nor did I notice the irony of the fugato. Of course, this was at a time when I did not understand Beethoven's last sonatas either. Soon after I heard the Sonata performed to perfection by Dohnányi. In spite of this I failed to understand it completely. Some years later I took the work up again —I was interested in its piano technique and in surmounting its difficulties. And while learning it, I gradually came to like it, though not without reservations. Later I once talked to Dohnányi about this Sonata, and it turned out to my greatest surprise that he had had the same experience with it.

This also shows that a certain kind of music needs getting used to; yet our public has not become used to Liszt's music to this day.

(Népművelés, 1911)**

* See Brahms' correspondence with Joachim. (Note of the Author)

** *Népművelés* was a periodical edited by István Bárczi and Ödön Weszely before World War I.

THE RESULTS AND PROBLEMS OF BARTÓK RESEARCH IN HUNGARY

by

JÁNOS DEMÉNY

As the years pass, and the great composer increasingly takes his place among the classics of music, the stream of literature dealing with Béla Bartók's life and works grows ever broader. Bartók's art today belongs to all mankind, so that the study of his art cannot be confined to any particular geographic or cultural limits. Eloquent proofs of this fact are provided by the significant studies from the pens of Belgian, American and other musicologists which are appearing one after the other. On the other hand, it should obviously not require special proof that the natural centre of Bartók research is Hungary, where the great composer was born, grew up, taught and worked, where his fellow artists and friends still live, and where even today fresh, hitherto unknown documents concerning his life and work are coming to light.

Profound and intensive Bartók research is at present being done in Hungary, the results of which are being condensed in ever newer studies and compilations of documents. However, due mainly to the isolation of the Hungarian language, only a fragment of the Hungarian Bartók literature is known abroad. An occasional volume published in French or in German is all that has reached the world at large. This is why the editors of THE NEW HUNGARIAN QUARTERLY have felt it necessary to ask János Demény, the noted Bartók scholar, to give an account in our periodical of the Bartók literature of Hungary over the past fifteen years. His study, which we publish below, discusses the Hungarian Bartók literature in chronological order from 1945 to the present day and outlines the problems and results of Bartók research.

I

The first publication[1]—a thin booklet—which contains five studies by Bartók from five different periods, appeared in a selection by Mrs. Lili Almár-Veszprémi. We may read here Bartók's autobiography of 1918—1921, a study on Hungarian folk music and one on Liszt's music written in 1911, a paper on Hungarian folk music and new Hungarian music read in the United States in 1928, and finally

an article written in 1937 on the problem of folk-song research and nationalism. This was the first—somewhat sparse—bouquet of Bartók's studies.

The pamphlet was printed in a series embracing a ramified range of subjects. The editor of the series, Béla Hamvas, published Bartók's writings among studies by John C. Powys, André Gide and Paul Valéry, and he thus endeavoured also to give expression to the eminence of Bartók's spirit. It is worth noting that he was the only Hungarian literary critic who wrote a sharp criticism of Bartók from the standpoint of abstract art, in the yearbook of the Hungarian Aesthetics Society "Mouseion," published in 1946. According to him Bartók shrank back from the form-dissolving methods of Stravinsky, Picasso and Joyce, which had opened up newer depths, and, losing his composure, had written new classical music. "Bartók," he said, "had a very great theoretical knowledge of music, but he was only slightly informed on the modern situation. He was a blind artist, who lacked the ability and the perspective to judge his own works. The newer music not only can, but must go beyond Bartók. The attempt to place the classics under lock and key must be regarded as never having taken place, the lock must be opened anew for the sake of the great questions..." Later[a] he does admit that Bartók built a whole system of reverberations which recall the primeval world, and that this system represents the greatest value of his classical art.

In this same series there appeared from the pen of the present author—in a booklet of hardly fifty pages—the first study[2] which could lay claim to surveying Bartók's entire composing activity and which also evaluates Bartók's exceptional human greatness in a tone of unconditional homage. In my silent debate with the editor of the series—as I see it today—I defined too strongly those spiritual limits into which I eclectically placed Bartók's lifework: "It was he," I wrote, "who discovered the essence of music. Behind the age of classical antiquity he tore open the age of prehistory, the archaic world, and at the end of his lifetime, he created music equal in value to the hymns of the Veda and the wisdom of Lao-tze." The booklet, which was intended as a contribution to the comparative history of ideas, is inadequate on the musical discussion of Bartók's works. Moreover, there are only allusions to three important compositions of Bartók's years in America. Finally, it does not portray the research scientist on folk music and the phenomenal pianist, not to speak of the lack of even the simplest biographical facts. It sees its task only in flaunting Bartók's exceptional greatness, at the prominence which was its due in the universal history of art. Mountain peaks without foothills. A criticism from Paris[b] stated with justification that the author of the work had, with loving admira-

tion, turned Bartók into a god, but had forgotten to write of him—where, for example, he lived, what his room was like, who his friends were, with whom he corresponded, and—horribile dictu—how he worked.

The publisher was responsible for compressing the two booklets just discussed into the form of a single volume[3], he placed in front of the sparsely compiled Bartók articles, printed in loosely composed type, an introduction in densely baroque style with a crowded train of thoughts.

In that same year Béla Kiss wrote and published an attractive little Bartók biography.[4] In its well-balanced chapters, he turns from the decline of our culture and the romantic folk ideology to Bartók's point of departure, his discovery of the folk song, to the new Hungarian musical culture. Bartók's pedagogical significance, the example he sets in friendly relations between peoples, and in a few chapters (New Cultural Viewpoint, Towards the Primeval Melos, The Lonely Bartók) he constructs the actual—realistic—foundations of Bartók's view of the world. The book is a fine document edited by of the Hungarian national group in Rumania about the musical genius who in his youthful years spent happy hours collecting folk songs—the happiest hours of his life!—among the Székely-Hungarian and Transylvanian Rumanian peasants. The Bartók publications of that year include an unsuccessful attempt at fiction: a journalistically flavoured biographical novel by György Láng.[5]

2

The first selected volume of Bartók writings was compiled and published by András Szöllősy.[6] Bence Szabolcsi wrote the preface to the volume and also prepared the notes. The volume ends with an epilogue by Szöllősy, dated from Rome.

There are 28 studies by Bartók in the volume—some very extensive—in five, cleverly arranged chapters.

The first chapter contains the writings of Bartók about the Hungarian folk song, the old and the new Hungarian music. We hear the passionate voice of the young—then thirty-year-old—Bartók in the year of the formation of the New Hungarian Music Society, in 1911, directing his wrath against the "superficial Magyar gentry," who evinced an aversion and incomprehension towards the "newly (i. e. 3 or 4 years previously) discovered, valuable ancient Hungarian Transylvanian melodies, because they have never heard anything like them before. This truly Hungarian folk music they neither like, nor understand..."

Bartók writes: "The oddities built upon the accustomed majors and minors and chromaticism of the West Europeans are closer to the Hun-

garian 'critics' than the Asian 'frightfulness' of a simple ancient Székely melody..."

In the second chapter, Bartók's science, comparative folk-music research, is revealed to us. The origin of the first article here is also quite early, dating from 1912. "This title," writes Bartók, "designates an entirely young branch of science, the domain of which is where the limits of musicology and folklore touch. It can hardly be called more than a few years old. Its purpose is to determine—on the basis of reliable collections from related or neighbouring peoples or territories, or rather on the basis of their comparison—the original types of folk songs of the given peoples or territories, the relationship or mutual effect of their folk music. Thus there is a certain degree of similarity between it and comparative philology..." Bartók goes on to deplore the lack of usable collections and outlines the tasks confronting the research worker. About this time there were already some three thousand Hungarian melodies awaiting classification and publication. "Now we must undertake to search the huge Rumanian-populated 'virgin' territory," he writes," a large part of which has never been explored by a collector; we must become familiar with Ruthenian folk song; we must make up for the lack of scope of the Kuhac (Croatian) collection. And then all the material necessary for scientifically determining the Hungarian folk-song types and their characters will be together." In this chapter we have pioneering and masterful summaries of the characteristics of Hungarian, Rumanian, Slovak, Turkish and Bulgarian folk music, and, with the exception of the Bulgarian, they are the results of the research expeditions of Bartók.

The three articles of the third chapter—apart from the fascinating character of their subject matter—are a successful portrait of Bartók the humanist. His "Folk-song Research and Nationalism" (1937) and "Music and Racial Purity" (1944) implied a militant stand in the period of preparation for, and during the course of, the Second World War. His "Mechanical Music" (1937) painted a frightening picture of the mechanization of life—as presented by an artist who had still heard and could register in notes the rivalry between the former bagpipers of Hont, and the music-making of the peasants in the villages of Csík and on the farmsteads of Csongrád.

The articles of the fourth chapter refer to Bartók's musical antecedents. His article on "The Performance of Works Written for the Clavichord," which appeared early in 1912, testifies to his exceptional attraction to, and understanding of, pre-classical works. His sense of kinship and pianistic discernment already at that time made him feel at home in a sphere which,

as regards the character of his compositions, he only reached fifteen years later! His two articles on Ferenc Liszt (1911,* 1936) were each a hidden self-confession, but even without divulging his innermost secrets they were an unconcealed reference to the identity of Liszt's and Bartók's artistic conceptions. A comparison of Liszt's late works with Bartók's early, so-called romantic period shows striking similarities, but, on the basis of a deeper understanding of Liszt's late works and Bartók's whole lifework, we are struck by the fact that many of Liszt's bold dreams were actually realized by Bartók. Without knowing the two relevant articles by Bartók, no real understanding of Bartók is possible. Once we are acquainted with them, the Hungarian musical heritage unfolds before us. It was in this sense that Aladár Tóth wrote his significant Liszt study while Bartók was still alive. And Bence Szabolcsi's recent book on Liszt's late works is also linked to this idea.

The documents of the fifth and last chapter present a startling picture of the chauvinistic controversies which flared up around Bartók. The Hungarian extremists accused Bartók of friendship with the Rumanians, and the Rumanian extremists accused him of Hungarian prejudice. They accused him because they hated each other: the dispute of the ruling circles of the two nations—particularly on account of the mixed population of Transylvania—was passionate and savage. Bartók's humanist voice was frail in this unfortunate hullabaloo of the Danube valley. Today it resounds beyond all others. The accusations which contradicted one another have shrunk to absurdity. Bartók's writings, exciting commentaries on his new and marvellous art, remain as immeasurable treasures.

András Szöllősy's first collection already well exemplifies that Bartók's articles are somehow similar to his music. As Bence Szabolcsi, in his preface to the volume, says of his literary style: "... it is pure and sober, steel-like and unflinching, but blazing with the fervour of discovery and the pure flame of conviction..."

In the year 1948 two Bartók biographies appeared, both of which gave a better picture of Bartók's lifework than any of the preceding attempts.

Antal Molnár's biography[7], with recollections of the artist's life, consists of delicate psychological sketches, a profound background of cultural history and an ensemble of many minute personal experiences. In his youth Antal Molnár took part in the presentation of Bartók's first chamber works as the violist of the famous Waldbauer—Kerpely string quartet. Later, as a musicologist engaged in the explanation of the new Hungarian music, he reared

* The former appears on p. 5

generations in the spirit of the new Hungarian musical art at the Budapest Academy of Music. Here are a few interesting reflections from his little book:

"Bartók is the embodiment of the new brotherhood; his will to identify himself with the spirit of the people is synonymous with his will to achieve a new musical style. The two main types of task: turning to the depths of the soul in order to find truth, and forming close bonds of brotherhood with the people, are united in a single revolutionary will in Bartók's art... If Schönberg—taking the Baroque revolution of around 1600 as an example—can correspond to *Peri*, then Bartók's pendant is rather *Monteverdi*. He too radically reappraises the elements of musical art, but at the same time establishes a complete stock of the new mode of expression... Bartók's faith is not Rousseau's faith in the given goodness of man. According to him man is neither good nor bad, but infinite and unknown. Infinite as the ways of truth and unknown as the deepest secret. Bartók does not yearn for the pipe-dream of the Nietzschean superman. According to him, man may at any moment become his own fulfilment, if he can face the undisguised depths of his inner self... His works are metapsychological, final reckonings, the bible of complete absolution... Since Monteverdi no revolutionary genius was born in whom such a great innovator was united with such a great conscience."

My own more recent attempt[8] I feel unsuited for comparison with Antal Molnár's work, but it is very well suited for comparison with my own earlier biographical sketch, written in 1946.

In the newer work I succeeded in drawing a more realistic picture of Bartók's lifework, supplemented by the hitherto unpublished works composed while he lived in America; a separate chapter is devoted to the folk-music research worker and another to the pianist. I believe there is a fairly good exposition here of how the discovery of Hungarian folk music repeated the example of Finnish literature a few generations earlier, of its spiritual rejuvenation on the basis of the collection and assembly of the runes of the Kalevala. Bartók's and his great friend Kodály's jointly undertaken work—transposed to the world of music—repeated this related miracle: the birth of a myth at the dawn of the 20th century.

The most significant volume, however, which appeared in 1948, was a collection of hitherto unknown letters of Bartók's[9]—more than 100 letters with nearly fifty, equally unknown, photographs and the photographic copies of many letters, scores and concert programs.

The publication of this collection was decided upon by the Hungarian Art Council at the end of 1947. The Council was headed by Zoltán Kodály.

The present writer was commissioned to compile and publish the material of this volume. Perhaps it is worth saying a few words about its preparation.

On this occasion the first assistance I received was from Bartók's oldest son Béla, who contributed a dozen letters which his father had sent him during the first years of his emigration in America (1940—1941). I could not count on any further material here, since the members of the family had been unable, despite a careful search, to find the boxes in which Bartók's mother kept his letters. She had listed them among their war losses.

The first witnesses to Bartók's early years during the course of my collecting were the half dozen letters which the young artist wrote (1904—1906) to a compatriot living in Vienna, a conservatoire piano teacher, Lajos Dietl. The conductor Jenő Kenessey had begun to purchase these letters from the aged and impoverished Vienna musician in the middle of the 30's. Their transmission was, however, not continued and the approximately half a hundred Dietl documents may be considered lost today.

A single letter can hardly be treated as a turning point in the collection, yet I had to regard as such the letter, so exceptionally rich in content, which Bartók wrote from Paris in the summer of 1905 to a girl of his age in Nagyszentmiklós. In this letter Bartók not only wrote Irmy Jurkovics about the artistic beauties and other sights of Paris, but he also touched upon musical conditions at home. In it we find his criticism of the motley society of the Hungarian capital, and his confidence in the vitality of the provinces and the creative strength of their culture. We read his first avowal of the value of Hungarian peasant music. At the same time we are struck by philosophical lines of melancholy—and behind these lines, since he addressed them to a girl, we may suspect a hidden passion. The music critic Viktor Papp must have obtained this letter from the family which was breaking up for good in the Second World War.

However interesting a few letters are, they cannot make up for the lack of material for an entire volume. The result of some months of collecting work was hardly two dozen letters. Coming to a standstill, I called on my patrons for advice on what should be done now. Hoping only to supplement the photographic material, I took the decisive step when I went to Bartók's still living younger sister, Elza. After half an hour's conversation the elderly lady, taking me into her confidence, greatly surprised me by bringing the suitcases containing her mother's bequest—the Bartók letters which had been explicitly declared lost—and permitted me to select from them, under her supervision.

An amazing treasure-chest was here revealed to me. Moving, sometimes lustily gay and at others tragically painful documents of Bartók's years at

the Academy of Music and of his youthful struggles, as well as a great wealth of accounts about his concert tours in later years. Devoted as he was to his family and addressing his mother in a tone of liberated confidence, the letters of the youth clearly reveal the characteristic shown in the achievements of the artist: his genuine humanism. Already at an early age a wide intellectual horizon, a profound knowledge of human character, fervent patriotism and humanity, straightforwardness bordering on stubbornness, unwavering resoluteness, a style sometimes coarse to the point of awkwardness, at other times infinitely satirical, often irritable, but never rude, and finally a modest lyrical ardour hidden behind a cool intellect. Bartók is manifestly not a polished man and not a man of the world even in his letters! But he is a genuine man: a powerful character, with unbelievable energy and clear-sighted reason.

Of a young man enthused by Bartók's music it is difficult to conceive that, amidst so many fascinating documents, he should take the only "correct" course and leave these letters unread, lock their secrets (if such there are) in his heart and hand back his commission. These letters drew me towards them as into a whirlpool.

I therefore continued my work, or more precisely, I only really began it then.

The volume, consisting largely of family material, to which a few outstanding personalities (Mrs. Zoltán Kodály, Iván Engel, Gyula Kertész, Jenő Takács, Sándor Veress, Jenő Zádor) contributed one or two letters, had the effect of a revelation. Bartók's youthful declaration—"For my part, throughout my life in every respect, I shall always and in every way serve one aim: the welfare of the Hungarian nation and the Hungarian fatherland"—became a veritable creed. And Bartók's admirers read with a shock the sigh which the genius committed to paper a few weeks before he passed away, far from his country—"Yet I too would like to go home, and that for good..." This written evidence of Bartók's intention to return home, constituting the last line of the letter published at the end of the volume, is a resounding declaration even in the symbolic sense.

3

The most tangible evidence of the success of the first volume of correspondence was undoubtedly the fact that it very quickly and easily established the conditions for the appearance of a second volume. With its publication it veritably attracted to itself the raw material of a further collection of documents.

The volume, presented as a souvenir to participants of the First Bartók Festival in the autumn of 1948, was taken abroad in dozens of copies, and—acting on the advice of a number of people—I myself sent many copies to Hungarian devotees of Bartók living abroad, or, for that matter, to foreign admirers. In this volume, the adherents of the Hungarian master throughout the world could once again meet with that immortal man whose works they had so often played in his lifetime, the excitement of whose musical revolution they had experienced and of whom they were the first harbingers and had, in some cases, given the first performances of works dedicated to them. The volume called attention to the launching of Hungarian Bartók research and stimulated a number of people to contribute to the next volume photostat copies of unpublished letters written to them by Bartók.

The first larger consignment of material for the new volume[10] was sent by Mrs. Pál Kecskeméti née Erzsébet Láng (d. 1959), a harpsichordist, who had lived in New York since 1940. These letters, written in the last years of Bartók's life, are a testimonial to the way the great musician preserved his sense of humour even when he was suffering from his fatal illness. Off hand I cannot recall a series of letters which so radiantly reflects the pacified optimism of the Bartók of the Third Piano Concerto.

The Bartók postcards sent to Etelka Freund, a pianist living in Washington, are old documents; whether they bring news of the mountains of Transylvania, or Switzerland, or of the seaside in Southern France, or the excitement of a première in Berlin, all of them recall the youthful portrait of the Bartók of the Second Suite and the First Quartet.

Ottó Gombosi, a Hungarian musicologist who lived in the United States (d. 1959), happened to be in Switzerland in the spring of 1949 when the copies of the first volume of correspondence arrived there. As the result of his enthusiastic cooperation I was able to obtain the important material in the hands of Mrs. Oscar Müller-Widmann, an art patron in Basel, consisting of an extensive series of sombre Bartók letters written in the darkening years of the 1930's. From these letters there emerges the fragile figure of a humanist turning against the barbarism of German and Italian fascism. It was well known how intense Bartók's hatred of the Nazi poison was, but it was quite a different thing to read in these letters his ominous, gloomy pessimism that later became reality. These letters were written in German and thus represented the first set of documents from abroad, written in a foreign language.

On the very same day, József Szigeti, in the United States, posted the photographic copy of his own most esteemed Bartók letter. From Belgium

Denijs Dille, Bartók scholar, sent the photographic copy of a letter Bartók had written to him in French.

In the summer of 1949 Mrs. Wilhelmine Creel sent me particularly valuable material from Seattle; from March 1936 till June 1937 this outstanding pianist had been Bartók's pupil in Budapest. She sent not only her own rich collection, but also the complete correspondence which the heads of the University of Washington, Seattle, had carried on for years in order to persuade Bartók to become a professor at the University. These letters gave news of Bartók's serious illness and also of his difficult lot in America.

This tremendous English language material was supplemented by Yehudi Menuhin's and Douglas Moore's valuable contributions.

In transmitting Fritz Reiner's documents Ottó Gombosi was once again the benevolent collaborator. Géza Frid's material from Holland and André Gertler's from Belgium arrived in time to enrich the material of the volume. I must pay special acknowledgement to the important letter contributed by Max Rostal then living in London, a letter which Bartók had sent him in Berlin in the early thirties, containing the exact metronome changes for the correct performance of the First and Fourth String Quartets, and very many tempo indications. Artists performing Bartók's quartets may draw a great deal from it.

Much is revealed of Bartók's humanism and his philosophical world concept by the few very extensive letters which—also on Ottó Gombosi's initiative—Stefi Geyer, the violinist, sent from Zürich in July 1949. These letters date from the late summer and early autumn of 1907. The humorous "Gyergyőkilyénfalva dialogue" is a parody of the many vexations of folk-song collecting. The aged peasant woman sings only city songs and church hymns, although the collector is interested in folk melodies. The next letter though pure philosophizing, is essentially none other than a profound confession, the bold undertaking of a free-thinking youth—a modern Perseus—to liberate his ideal—the Andromeda of the Greek myth—from the shackles of theology. The intellectual intention, however, was broken on the girl's unshakable faith, and in the following letter there appears Stefi Geyer's "Leitmotif", the first formulation of the signature of the ideal portrait, D, F-sharp, A, C, which returns again and again in many of Bartók's works.

Together with her letters Stefi Geyer also sent me the last two pages of the score of a violin concerto composed and dedicated to her in Bartók's early years and carrying Bartók's own annotations, with the understanding that she was not to make the whole composition public. Her death at the

end of 1956 broke the ban, and the first performance of this composition—which had remained in manuscript form—took place in Basel on May 30, 1958, exactly half a century after it was born.

To this rich material from abroad, there was added, here in Hungary, the bequest of István Thomán, Bartók's piano teacher at the Academy of Music, from which I selected a few interesting items, as well as a few letters which I had preserved from the maternal legacy.

As a result of all this, more than two hundred letters awaited publication—twice as many as there were in the first volume.

However, a delay occurred because for a long time there was a controversy over Bartók in Hungary. Certain of his works were considered to be formalistic. The sharpness of the debate is shown by the fact that finally the Hungarian Communist Party had to close it with a positive evaluation of Bartók.

The manuscript consequently could only be taken to the printers at the beginning of 1951, and it was released with a theoretical preface by András Mihály.

I regret that the chary publisher induced me to blot out sections of a few letters which he considered awkward but which I did not regard as such. However, I particularly deplore the fact that I could not include the foreign language texts at least as an appendix, because this diminished the work's scientific value. (Of 202 texts, 33 in English, 24 in German and one in French had to be omitted.)

In other respects the volume met the critical requirements that were raised in connection with the first volume. My first volume necessarily served as a basis for the second one, and this, at the same time, complements the first with a profile of the globe-trotting Bartók, the fighting humanist. The tones of passionate love also ring from it and—together with the earlier volume—it will surely become a source for an authentically written Hungarian biography.

*

Hungarian Bartók research emerged strengthened from the difficult years of unclarified ideas. With the support of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences there began, in 1952, a systematic study of Bartók's life work and the collection and arrangement of the contemporary press material. The work went on at full speed in 1953.

The first results of this research appeared in 1954 in the Second, so-called Erkel-Bartók Volume[11] of "Studies in Musicology", edited by Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha. This was an outline of the first part of a

projected great Bartók monograph, "The Student Years and Romantic Period of Béla Bartók," which elaborates the six years Bartók spent at the Budapest Academy of Music from the autumn of 1899 to the end of 1905, and the following two and a half years that constituted his romantic period under Liszt's influence. In the intellectual centre of this period was Bartók's legendary work that aroused exceptionally great attention: the "Kossuth symphony", the patriotic declaration of a Bartók fired by the ideals of Hungarian freedom.

The press material is not selected. That is, the majority of the articles are published in full. The reader is left to select from the texts what he finds most characteristic, what interests him most. It is gratifying that even thus, this work has not become dry. Endre Illés, the discriminating and fastidious critic, calls it "exciting, gripping reading" in his report designed to "recruit disciples, readers." According to him, "every item referring to Bartók immediately possesses some kind of violent characteristic: just like a bit of sodium picked up unsuspectingly, within seconds it begins to blaze in our fingers."

In this same year multifold preparations were made to ensure that Hungarian Bartók research should make an outstanding contribution to the tenth anniversary of the artist's death.

4

In the collecting of Bartók letters there was hardly any essential progress for years. Hardly more than a few dozen letters accumulated, but then I did not wish to tread any further on the already travelled paths. The Western sources still trickled, as though they could never run dry. Hans Priegnitz, the pianist sent documents from Western Germany, Storm Bull, a pianist of Norwegian origin and a former Bartók pupil—sent some from the United States. József Szigeti delighted me with fresh Bartók letters, Zoltán Székely's rich material was sent to me by Halsey Stevens, the American musicologist (author of a weighty book on Bartók). However, in these quiet years I turned my eyes towards South-East Europe, more specifically I was now seeking for the Rumanian and Slovak material. The librarian of the Slovenská Matica, Antal Ágoston Banik, sent me Bartók's letter offering his Slovak folk-song collection for publication, and I corresponded with Ion Busitia, Bartók's Rumanian friend of those times—the versatile schoolmaster of Belényes who supported the work of folk-music collecting in Bihar. These were the first heralds from Bartók's broader realm of the Hungarian-Rumanian-Slovak triple folk-music idiom.

At the beginning of 1954 there unexpectedly opened up the prospect of a new volume of correspondence[12], entirely as the result of the brotherhood stemming from this Hungarian-Rumanian-Slovak folk music, in other words, of scientific cooperation. Ladislav Burlas, a musicologist of Bratislava, and Viorel Cosma, a Bucharest scholar, almost simultaneously suggested the plan for a surprisingly extensive collection of Bartók's correspondence.

It turned out, in these same elevating days, that Professor László Rásonyi, who was the custodian of Bartók's correspondence during his folk-music collecting expedition to Anatolia and whom so many letters of mine had sought to locate in far away Turkey, was to be found in the Eastern Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and that I could see him at the cost of a few minutes' stroll. Rásonyi's documents became valuable material for the Hungarian collection of the planned volume.

The unforgettably wonderful journey I made to Rumania during the summer of that year was undertaken for the purpose of arranging the Bartók material found there and to seek new material for the volume. I was able to supplement this work in respect to Czechoslovakia during the visit of my Slovak colleague to Budapest that autumn.

Some 124 Rumanian, 72 Slovak and 92 Hungarian documents were thus compiled, to which the American material from the University of Washington in Seattle that had remained over from the earlier volume was added as an appendix. To complete the collection, the foreign language (French, German, English) texts were also included, as a result of which the book assumed imposing proportions. The reason why the Rumanian letters are first in this enumeration is that since they contain the most interesting newer data illuminating Bartók's personality, I agreed with my Rumanian friend when he asked that this material be placed at the head of the compilation.

The volume appeared. Further work, however, is still being obstructed by unfortunate circumstances.

The Third Volume of Correspondence, which is the work of Hungarian, Slovak and Rumanian research workers, placed Bartók, the folk-music scholar in the centre of interest. Sons of each of the three countries which had once been set against one another by the poison of nationalism made use of the new, peaceful atmosphere to cooperate in scientific research with the encouragement of official circles.

From the exceptional richness of the collection I have selected, by way of example, just one of the letters in the Rumanian material, which Bartók addressed to Octavian Beu early in the 1930's. A section of this letter

throws Bartók's humanism into particularly sharp relief: "My true ideal . . . of which I am perfectly aware since I found myself as a composer—is the brotherhood of peoples, a brotherhood despite all wars and all dissension. I am striving to serve this ideal—as far as my strength permits—in my music. . ."

The volume attracted great attention, not only in musical, but also in literary circles. As a matter of fact it affected the whole of Hungarian intellectual life.

The appearance of the Third Volume of Correspondence was soon followed by a new section of the great Bartók monograph, published in the Third Volume of "Studies in Musicology", the so-called "Liszt—Bartók" Volume.[13] The study entitled "The Years of the Unfolding of Béla Bartók's Art" follows Bartók between the years 1906 and 1914 on the steep path he blazed for himself to the wild heights towards which the aversion of leading strata of Hungarian society had driven him. Bartók entered into a fraternal community with the Hungarian, Slovak and Rumanian peasants, and a whole new world opened up before him. Bartók's later work, the train of thought of his "Cantata Profana", composed for tenor and baritone solo, choruses and orchestra, faithfully preserves every psychological moment, all the stormy passion of this drama. In this composition, in the language of the youths who have turned into deer, Bartók tells the story of his own transformation. The new biographical chapter follows the life of Bartók to the outbreak of the First World War—this dreadful shock, in which he had to experience the conversion of a large part of his dear villages into battlefields, brought about a certain break in his career, and represents an external caesura in the unfolding of his art as well. Not only was his "approaching" folk-song collecting expedition in Moldavia abandoned, but his next expedition to Kabyl could not be realized either: his aim of roaming more and more distant regions in order to collect folk-music had became utterly unreal. In the final pages of the new volume we find the symbolical scene describing how in the spring of 1914, in the Rumanian village of Alsóorosz in Transylvania, Bartók at the "last moment" came across the "hunter-colinda", a folk heritage, the text to the "Cantata Profana. . ."

In this year a new biographical sketch[14] also appeared in Russian, for the purpose of satisfying the interest in Bartók's life-work aroused by the Bartók celebrations arranged in about twenty large towns in the Soviet Union. In this work I made use of the latest results of Hungarian Bartók research; moreover, some recently unearthed material relating to Bartók's late years was first published here.

András Mihály's Bartók booklet[15] was a serious and noteworthy publication. It was prepared for popular information, under the professional supervision of Bence Szabolcsi.

Péter Csobádi's booklet[16] prepared for a similar purpose was a work of no great ambition. Bartók's life-work obviously interested the author only ad hoc.

The most controversial Bartók book of 1955 was undoubtedly Ernő Lendvai's significant work on Bartók's style[17], in which the author analyses Bartók's music in the mirror of the "Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion" and his "Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta."

The extensive work contains a subtle analysis of the two Bartók works from the point of view of the tone, harmony and form of these compositions. Ernő Lendvai revealed the characteristic features of Bartók's tonal world, and through the numerical ratios of a specific Bartók harmonics he pointed out an ancient law of form construction: the golden intersection. He modelled the Schönbergian dodecaphony into various systems of axes and defined Bartók's laws of chromaticism and diatonism. In Lendvai's view the "Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion" is the culmination of that precipitous school of a hundred and fifty piano pieces, the "Microcosmos", the splendid artistic verification of his workshop studies; as a summary embracing the complete repertory of Bartók's technique, it is therefore eminently suited for the establishment of a Bartókian harmonics, the suggester of a new *Rameau-attitude.*

As was to be expected, there was an exceptionally violent controversy over Lendvai's book. The majority of the critics recognized its significance. Lendvai's work[17], they said, was a great event not only in the Hungarian but also the international history of Bartók literature. They correctly perceived that here it was not a question of revealing one or two elements of Bartók's style, not the explanation of a few rhythmic or melodic characteristics of folk music, but of the examination of the logic of Bartók's musical idiom through a most detailed analysis of style. They objected, however, to the fact that he referred to Bartók as a conscious magician, who "seated in an enchanted chair of five symmetrical parts, rests with one hand on the ruins of the City of Ur, and with the other turns crystal globes, listening to Cocytus with his inner ear, and the hyperspheres with the outer."[d]

5

Given the scope of this study we must, unfortunately, omit many valuable musical analyses which have appeared in the columns of Hungarian periodicals (Zenei Szemle, Új Zenei Szemle, Muzsika). Apart from Ernő Lendvai's work another ambitious study was János Kárpáti's interesting and useful analysis of Bartók's first two string quartets.[18] This work illuminates particularly the important role of Arab folk music which is deeply rooted in Bartók's music. Kárpáti convincingly points out that although Bartók did not borrow ready-made Arab melodic phrases, he nevertheless adopted more than one internal element of the melodic texture of Arab folk songs. Several other characteristics (the crowding of minor seconds, periodic scale episodes, the symmetrical circumscribing of certain melodic centres, etc.) indicate that the study of Arab folk music, particularly the research expedition to Algeria in the summer of 1913, represented for Bartók, in the form of a direct experience, that pristine music which enabled his modern music so triumphantly to resist the attracting influence of the Schönbergian dodecaphony.

János Kárpáti's work was prepared as a dissertation, and after writing it he went to North Africa and continued in Morocco the work begun by Bartók, the study of the folk music of the North African Arab nomads.

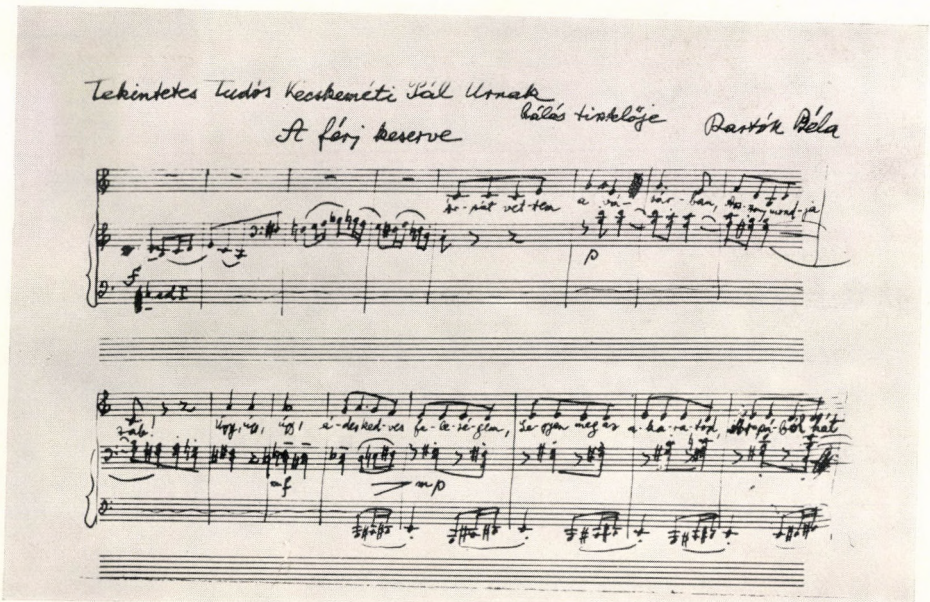
After Kárpáti's work we increasingly feel the absence of the two fundamental studies written by Bartók about Arab (Biskrian) folk music from Bartók's collected writings.

In 1956 a new selection of Bartók's writings, compiled by András Szöllősy, appeared.[19] The reason Szöllősy compiled and published Bartók's articles again was because the Bartók research pursued over a number of years had discovered the whereabouts of many new articles, and the requirements too had increased; thus there was need of a more complete and varied collection. Most of the writings accord with the material of the earlier volume published in 1948. Of the 28 articles to be found there 23 were also included in the new compilation, so that only five articles were omitted, mostly because he replaced them by a more recently discovered article dealing with the same subject matter.

The new volume comprises 47 writings of which 24 appeared for the first time in a compilation. Outstanding among the new material are Bartók's articles analysing his own works and his statements on contemporary composers, among them Richard Strauss, Schönberg and Ravel.

In this year a book in Hungarian by a Hungarian authoress appeared in the Rumanian People's Republic, entitled "Béla Bartók, the Folk-

Béla Bartók, while collecting folk music (1912)



Transcription of an ukrainian folk song
(Fragment)

32 Park Avenue
Saranac Lake, N.Y.

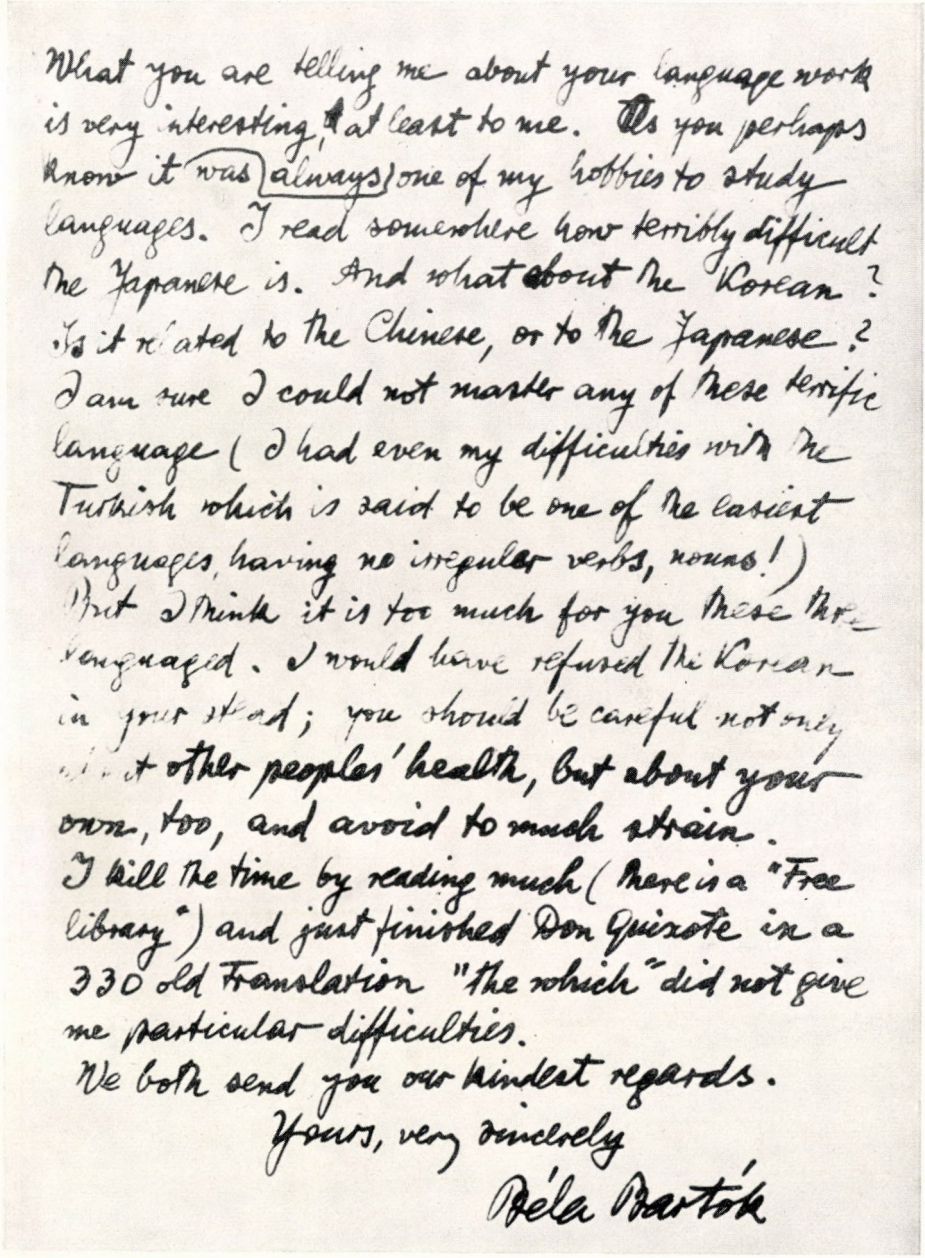
Aug. 17, 1943

Dear Mrs. Creel,

I was very much surprised seeing the content of your letter, and at the same time deeply touched by your care. Only I have to tell you, you must not do this again; I know you are not a well to do person, and am very much worried by the thought of your privations incurred by such acts. Under this condition I accept this time your offer, and if you allow me to give you a Ms. of one of my works as a souvenir. I succeeded to bring over many of them, but since they are now kept somewhere in New York, I can send it only after my return, ~~to~~ which probably will be in Oct.

The situation concerning my disease is practically unchanged. Further examinations, made in this place, remained unsuccessful: the doctors cannot find out what the trouble is; as one of them put it "it is a baffling case". But this is getting to be a rather annoying subject, so I leave it.

A letter of Bartók's...



What you are telling me about your language work is very interesting, at least to me. As you perhaps know it was always one of my hobbies to study languages. I read somewhere how terribly difficult the Japanese is. And what about the Korean? Is it related to the Chinese, or to the Japanese? I am sure I could not master any of these terrific language (I had even my difficulties with the Turkish which is said to be one of the easiest languages, having no irregular verbs, nouns!) But I think it is too much for you these two languages. I would have refused the Korean in your stead; you should be careful not only about other peoples' health, but about your own, too, and avoid too much strain.
I kill the time by reading much (there is a "Free library") and just finished Don Quixote in a 330 old Translation "the which" did not give me particular difficulties.
We both send you our kindest regards.

Yours, very sincerely

Béla Bartók

. . . TO HIS PUPIL, WILHELMINE CREEL

Béla Bartók (1928)

Music Research Worker."[20] The writer of this work, relying to a great extent on the collected correspondence, presented the life of Bartók in a popular and extensive form. Its special value lies in making public a study by Bartók ("The Musical Dialect of the Rumanian People of Hunyad"), which is not contained in Szöllősy's volumes, as well as a few original recollections.

In November 1951 a worker at the Bucharest Folklore Institute called on Onisan Petru, an aged Rumanian peasant in Transylvania and recorded his recollections of Béla Bartók. This old man recalled the time when Bartók brought a few Rumanian peasants—men and women—to Budapest as his guests, in order to provide singing and dancing illustrations for his lecture at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences on Rumanian music in Transylvania. Although he was not with them, Onisan Petru painted a remarkably living picture of Bartók in his thirties, busily at work among the people.

Even earlier days were recalled when Rumanian and Hungarian ethnologists paid a visit to Kőrösfő in 1954. Here a Hungarian peasant, Ferenc Péntek, a small boy in 1907, now in his 60th year, recalled Bartók. His father, György Gyugyi Péntek, had been a skilled maker of carved-wood handicraft furniture, and the young Bartók had furnished his home in Rákospalota (Budapest) with peasant furniture ordered from him. "...He was a man of simple habits and tastes... Bartók did not laugh, when a joke was made; he was always serious. He never forced anybody (to sing), but only used good humour... He was very well liked—old and young, everyone liked him, because he knew how to talk to everyone in his own language..."

Ferenc Bónis's booklet,[21] to which Bence Szabolcsi contributed his finest comprehensive essay on Bartók as a preface, recalls Bartók's life in more than a hundred photographs. Here we meet Bartók's parents, teachers, friends, see his places of residence, and naturally encounter Bartók himself at the various stages of his career.

The most significant accomplishment of the year was the Bartók volume in French[22] published by Corvina Press, with the collaboration of Bence Szabolcsi. This book told the world for the first time about the state of Bartók research in Hungary, and in this respect it may be regarded as a pioneering work.

Zoltán Kodály wrote the preface to the volume, and Bence Szabolcsi, Ernő Lendvai, András Szöllősy and the writer of this study collaborated by contributing articles, musical analyses, a bibliography and a selection of letters and photographs. The book also contains articles by Bartók

himself. Seven important writings of Bartók were on this occasion presented to the public abroad for the first time simultaneously. The book's eminence is heightened by the inclusion of three articles by Kodály dating from very different periods. Preceding the Kodály articles we find Bence Szabolcsi's study, and after them Lendvai's essay closes the chapter of writings on Bartók.

The writer of a review on the book, Jacques-Lonchampt,[e] considered that the confession to Stefi Geyer which is so full of the wisdom of life and so strikingly expressed Bartók's character should have been included among the letters. But at the time when the volume was compiled, the fact that the violinist was still living probably justified its omission.

In the following year (1957) this same work appeared in German. In a published review of this volume Heinrich Lindlar[f] writes with appreciation of the studies and, speaking of Bartók's letters, mentions that in reading them the most diverse legends that have sprung up around Bartók's career inexorably dissolve in thin air.

Two further books on Bartók, both of them consisting of reminiscences, appeared in 1957.

Júlia Székely's book "Professor Bartók"[24] gives little of Bartók, but all the more of a student's admiration for her teacher at the Academy of Music. The authoress had been Bartók's pupil, a teacher who to this day frequently appears as a pianist. She has written a useful study on Bartók's teaching method. However, in asserting her literary talents, she unfortunately overdid herself in this book.

Károly Kristóf's book "Conversations with Béla Bartók" presents records of talks with the great musician. However, he published his information not in the contemporary text, but in a revised, improved version, and it is precisely this modernization that has deprived his articles of their authenticity, their historical flavour. Nevertheless, the author, being a true journalist, faithfully followed the events of the world in which Bartók moved, and in his book many facts that had become obscure since then have been revived and light has been thrown on many unknown events.

In 1958 Ferenc Bónis's attractive little book of photographs with Bence Szabolcsi's Bartók outline was published again.

The year 1958 was one of the most enduring as regards Bartók publications. József Ujfalussy compiled his Bartók Breviary from ten years of Bartók research. The small-size bibliophile volume embraces extensive material in its more than 500 pages. The author's selection is tasteful, sound and reliable. One cannot sufficiently praise the accuracy and sense

of proportion with which he selected from the material that had been brought to light as a partial result of the scientific fact-finding work of Hungarian Bartók research. The breviary presents those documents (letters, articles), or at least the most important parts of the documents, which illuminate Bartók the man and artist, the composer, the pianist and folk-music research worker. It divides Bartók's life chronologically into four great chapters: his childhood, student years and the early stage of his career (1881—1906), the period of his unfolding as a man and artist (1906—1919), the years of growing world fame (1920—1940), and finally the story of his emigration (1940—1945). He has grouped his material skilfully within his main chapters too, but here—very properly—he does not cling to the rigid application of chronological presentation. The various indices and tables of the volume's appendix are also very good and offer a reassuring feeling of completeness.

A more recent chapter—the third—of biographical documentation, consisting of about 500 pages, takes up the major part of Volume Seven of "Studies in Musicology" which was published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1959. This second, concluding portion of "The Years of the Unfolding of Béla Bartók's Art" pursues Bartók's path through life from 1914 to 1926 inclusive. The subtitle chosen—"Béla Bartók's Appearance in European Musical Life"—indicates that it was in these years that Bartók found recognition among the widest circles of experts in progressive art. His name became the most honoured concept in the international community of new music; the first performance of each of his compositions was an international event. The first performances in Frankfurt of his two stage works composed to Béla Balázs's librettos laid the basis for his fame, just as did his appearances in Berlin, London, and Paris. With his chamber-music works—the first two quartets, two violin-piano sonatas (in the latter he played the piano part himself) — he finds himself in the centre of stormy interest just as in the case of his Dance Suite—with its orgiastic orchestration—which was included in the programs of several dozen excellent European orchestras. The Cologne scandal of the "Miraculous Mandarin" in November 1926 did not shake him, because he wisely knew that all this belonged to the Calvary of the innovating spirit. The year 1926 was important for another reason: it was in that year that the first precursors of the large-scale works of Bartók's late period, composed in the golden era of the 1930's, burst forth. Like the pieces appearing for the piano in his earlier period in 1908, they were again formulated on the piano. Most of them were introduced at the concert of his own works that took place in Budapest at the end of 1926.

For in those years Bartók still maintained contact with his Hungarian public by means of an occasional program of his works, which in the first half of the 1930's his adherents so painfully had to do without on account of the indifference of official circles. The material from Hungary—from Budapest and the provincial towns—documenting Bartók's recognition and reception is almost complete, thanks to the help of Denijs Dille, the Belgian Bartók scholar, who, with the aid of the dates on a concert schedule obtained through the family, directed Hungarian Bartók research to the dormant reviews of Bartók's concerts in Hungary's provincial cities. Of course in this volume—in contrast to the section preceding it—emphasis shifts in every respect from folk-music research at home to tours and first performances abroad. The material of the foreign reviews is not complete. Still it is surprisingly bulky. And this is mainly to the credit of those musicians abroad who, imbued with a feeling of international scientific solidarity, sent documents to Hungary.

The last book, the publication of which coincides with the writing of the present report, is the first volume of Bartók's letters to appear in a foreign language. This collection, containing two hundred letters, is being published in German. And although it was not prepared as a fourth volume to follow the three that have already appeared, it was compiled not only of the material already published but also contains 50 new letters. These latter have never yet appeared even in Hungarian and have thus been put—as though impatiently leaping over their mother tongue—into the centre of world musical interest. Among the items of interest in the volume the valuable letter material of the American pianist, Dorothy Parrish-Domonkos, should be mentioned. The artist was Bartók's pupil at the time when Wilhelmine Creel was also studying in Budapest. No less interesting are a few very important letters of A. Adnan Saygin, a Turkish composer, and Vinko Zganec, a Croatian folklorist. Bartók's exertions in connection with the production of his theatrical works on the Budapest stage appear in the form of separate material. And how much space was devoted to new material, apart from the volume's striving for completeness, is shown by the following weighty example: for the first time a few documents from the box in which Mrs. Béla Bartók, Ditta Pásztory, kept her letters, have been made public, and this in connection with Bartók's tour in the Soviet Union.

That all this material has so far not been accessible—and perhaps will not be so for some time—to the English-reading public, is not the fault of Hungarian Bartók research. . .

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The next chapters of the story of Bartók research in Hungary are still unwritten. But research has not stopped, and in the forthcoming chapters it is to be hoped that we shall be able to report on undisturbed work and more results.

The major part of Bartók's legacy is as yet unpublished. Hungarian research workers have no access to most of it. It is not always the ocean that separates us from it. It is much more the ocean-like distance of the spirit in the understanding of common aims.

It is our duty to publish documents. And in doing so we must strive for completeness. We have no right to conceal anything from posterity.

Musical history has condemned the irreplaceable destruction carried out by Beethoven's faithful man Schindler. Schindler took reverence for the dead to mean zeal in the virtue of annihilation. Hundreds of the "conversation notebooks" were destroyed at his hand. In his sense of reverence he wiped out the major part of Beethoven's spiritual legacy and forever deprived us of the most direct human disclosures, the intellectual verification of his revolutionary music.

We are endeavouring to see that this tragedy of being compressed between Philistine boundaries should not be repeated with Bartók's legacy.

Bartók's spiritual legacy—his musical works, writings, letters—are in the first place a Hungarian heritage. For this reason the natural centre of Bartók research is Hungary. And the signs indicate that it will remain so for a long time. At the same time we are observing with pleasure the ever growing interest in Bartók's life-work the world over. Hungarian Bartók research is endeavouring to serve this interest and to satisfy it despite every obstacle.

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A PORTRAIT OF ATTILA JÓZSEF THE POET

by

LÁSZLÓ PŐDÖR

If one were to ask English readers reasonably versed in foreign literature whether they have heard of any of the leading Hungarian writers and poets, most of them would be at a loss to quote more than one name (if at all)—Sándor Petőfi. I deliberately said Petőfi's name and not works, since the latter are mostly available in outdated translations that hardly do justice to the originals. The names of one or two prose writers would be recalled only by members of the older generation, who in their time had a chance to read English versions of some of Mór Jókai's and Kálmán Mikszáth's novels that were published in Britain about the turn of the century. Some might remember that the playwright Ferenc Molnár was a Hungarian and recall some of the Hungarian 'export plays' which were very popular all over the world between the two world wars; all of which goes to show that Hungarian literature, of increasing popularity in the socialist countries, still remains to be discovered by the peoples of the West.

Yet Hungarian literature is rich in remarkable personalities. Small nations cannot give the world individuals of international repute in every field of culture, even though some of them have impressive achievements in quite a few branches to their credit. Thus, for instance, Hungarian composers have taken their place among the world's foremost musicians. Liszt, Bartók and Kodály are known everywhere. Hungarian lyric poetry is, in our opinion, not inferior to Hungarian music.

And yet so little of it is known to the outside world—for a variety of reasons. One of the most important lies in the language itself. Hungarian is an isolated language, hard to approach; very few foreigners learn it well, and when they do so, it is mostly for practical purposes rather than out of intellectual interest. Another reason is the peculiar character of the language of Hungarian poetry. Unlike the more abstract languages of western Europe, Hungarian is a very picturesque language that has drawn freely on rural

idiom for the material of its modern growth. Imagine, if you can, the poets of, say, England turning, in critical periods of English poetry, to popular idiom as a source from which to refresh their poetical language and to develop it into an adequate medium for expressing the intricate sentiments and facts of modern life. This process, now an obvious absurdity as far as western literature is concerned, has taken place several times in Hungarian literature during the last hundred years or so; and this is one of the reasons why it is so difficult to produce satisfactory poetical versions of Hungarian poetry in foreign languages. If in addition we take account of the peculiar rhythm of Hungarian verse and the national character of versification, so sharply different from western metre (the rhythm of Magyar verse being based on falling stress, as in Hungarian the accent in any case invariably falls on the first syllable), it becomes obvious why Hungarian poetry has remained an unexplored domain for the western European readers.

Yet Hungary has quite a number of eminent poets besides Petőfi. Some of them, like Endre Ady, a notable poet of the early twentieth century and renewer of modern Hungarian literary idiom, have already begun to break through the wall of international anonymity. In his own particular field Ady was a genius no less significant than Bartók, his contemporary; only the medium of his art happened to be strictly national, in contrast to the international medium that was Bartók's element. To this class of poets belongs Attila József, whose poetry is outlined briefly in the following pages. Only now, in the third decade after his death, are his works beginning to be read by lovers of poetry outside his native country. (Actually this delay is to some extent being made up for by the speed with which various editions of his poems have been appearing in numerous languages.) In the absence of adequate English versions, József's poems are quoted below in French or German translation.

Had Attila József written in some western European language, maybe his name would now be mentioned next to those of an Apollinaire or a Supervielle. During the many ups and downs of a life that ended in mental derangement, he suffered all the agonies of hell and from these depths he brought forth the finest gems of poetry. As he says in a poem imbued with popular inspiration:

Qui veut être cornemuseux
Jusqu'aux enfers doit descendre
Car pour être cornemuseux
Il faut avoir souffert le feu.

(Translated by Jean Rousselot)

The hell of József's life began in his childhood. Born in 1905, in a working-class district of Budapest, where also many artisans live, he was the son of a soap-maker and a maid servant. Instead of the eccentric father, it was the mother who maintained the family and kept it together. The father soon deserted his family and disappeared from the country for good. Left to her own resources, Attila József's mother provided for her two daughters and son by taking in washing; she was compelled to send her son for some time into the country with the aid of the Childrens' Welfare Society. Attila herded swine and had to engage in hard labour before he was seven; when his mother went to see him, she was horrified to find her son in unspeakable mental and physical distress, and so took him back with her to Budapest, into less dire circumstances. From then on, Attila lived the life of an urban working-class child, doing odd jobs, selling soft drinks in cinemas, peddling self-made toys in the streets, and going out to steal wood from freight yards.

At the end of the First World War, Attila's mother died, and the little family was plunged into still worse poverty. Some improvement came into his life when one of his sisters married a well-to-do lawyer, who was appointed by the public guardianship authority as the boy's guardian. But financial support went with humiliations, for the lawyer concealed from his relatives the humble birth of his wife. Attila became ship's boy on a Danube river steamer; after having passed a private examination, he went to secondary school, and even made an attempt to gain admission to the Salesian order as a student of theology—a venture in which, fortunately for Hungarian poetry, he failed. His guardian then sent him to school at Makó, a provincial town on the Great Plain, where he mixed with intelligent, progressive-minded people, under whose influence he grew up to become a poet. He was still a secondary-school student when, at 17, he published his first volume of poems, *A szépség koldusa* (The Beggar of Beauty), and an undergraduate when his second volume—*Nem én kiáltok, a föld dübörög* (Not I Am Shouting —the Earth is Rumbling), 1924—appeared.

After leaving secondary school, young Attila enrolled in Szeged University, but was soon expelled because of a poem that was declared to be subversive.

CŒUR PUR

Sans père, sans mère, seul,
Sans berceau et sans linceul,
Je suis sans Dieu, sans patrie,
Sans baisers, sans bonne amie.

Trois jours que je n'ai mangé,
Peu ou prou, gras ou léger!
Mes vingt ans, ma force grande,
Mes vingt ans, je veux les vendre!

Si personne n'est client,
Le diable, lui, me les prend!
D'un cœur pur, je cambriole!
Je tuerais aussi, parole!

On m'attrape et l'on me pend.
En sol béni l'on m'étend.
Désormais mon cœur superbe
De la mort engraisse l'herbe.

(Translated by Jean Rousselot)

As the poet remarked in his autobiography written shortly before his death, it was the irony of fate that, of all his poems, this one should have attracted the attention of critics; no fewer than seven reviews of it appeared in distinguished literary magazines and dailies, and critics declared that they recognized in it the voice of the new, post-war generation of poets.

After his expulsion from the university, József went abroad—to Vienna and Paris—supported partly by his brother-in-law, partly by patrons of literature. Two years later, he returned to Hungary, with a vast store of new experiences, settled views, and new plans. For some time, he continued his university studies in Budapest, then dedicated all his energies to literature. While in Paris, he had become acquainted with Marxism, and when the impact of the world economic crisis led to a mass demonstration of Budapest workers in 1930, he finally took sides with the revolutionary workers. He published new volumes of verse—*Nincsen apám, sem anyám* (Fatherless and Motherless), 1929, and *Döntsd a tőkét* (Fell the Trunk),

1931, the volume of poems which registered the great change in his life. In the following few years, the art of the poet, who amid national misfortunes was wrestling also with his neurotic troubles, reached perfection. In this period he wrote his greatest poems, published in the volumes *Külvárosi éj* (Suburban Night), 1932, *Medvetánc* (The Bear's Dance), 1934, and *Nagyon fáj* (Racking Pain), 1936. Meanwhile, his disease, partly inherited from his father, partly brought on by his sufferings, completely overwhelmed him. His creative genius nevertheless continued to sparkle; some of his poems dating from this time even rose to formerly unattained heights. In 1937, he committed suicide by throwing himself in front of a train.

Attila József's poetry had absorbed very many influences before the poet found his own voice and his gifts fully unfolded. The sweeping poetic revolution that began in Hungarian literature early in the century had as good as run its course by the time József appeared on the literary scene. Of the two main trends of Hungarian poetry, he turned for encouragement to the circle of poets grouped around the magazine *Nyugat* (West), thus demonstrating his preference of European poetry to the provincialism of traditional, virtually official, poetry. Though a Hungarian poet to the core, he never ceased to protest that he was a European as well as a Magyar. On his lips, the word 'European' meant the highest grade of humanity, and it was with this word that he greeted Thomas Mann in 1937 when the latter visited Hungary:

En t'écoutant hommes et femmes vont choisir
De rester des humains qui peuvent se comprendre.
Car ils se raréfient. Redis-nous donc le conte.
Nous t'écoutons. Certains te verront seulement,
Heureux de regarder celui dont la voix monte:
Européen parmi les Blancs.

(Translated by Guillevic)

This European spirit was enhanced in him by his trips to Vienna and Paris. He read the great French poets, being especially susceptible to Apollinaire's influence. He mastered the phraseology of the French moderns, used their technique of free association of ideas and their methods of composition. At first he tried his hand at *vers libre*, partly under French influence, partly under the influence of Hungarian surrealist attempts.

However, after some time, by way of strengthening, as it were, the Hungarian features of his poetry, he turned his attention to folklore, to the more severe forms of folk-poetry and folk-music. He was the first poet to understand Béla Bartók's initiative — his poem "The Bears' Dance," as the title shows, is a poetical paraphrase of one of Bartók's pieces; it throbs with the rhythms of Bartók's piano pieces, rhythms that came to linger for a long time, affecting many later poems of his.

DANSE DE L'OURS

Bouclé, paré, dansant, pimpant,
Pattes de plomb, qu'il est fringant.
— Où donc traînes-tu tes pas?
— Auprès des filles là-bas.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

Ma fourrure est noble et cossue,
Car mes vingt griffes l'ont cousue.
— Peau de loup, de zibeline,
De chien, de martre, de fouine.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

J'ai trié la perle au printemps,
Pour y trouver mes belles dents.
Les familles de neuf gosses
Voudraient bien d'un tel colosse.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

Bien lentement, je danse, exprès,
Pour qu'on me peigne mon portrait.
Les tifs de cette mégère
Comme pinceau pourraient faire.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

Bourgeois, qu'ils valsent vos gros sous,
Il valsera, lui, tout son soûl.
Cordons de bourse, à la danse,
Et l'ours marque la cadence.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

Rien sur terre n'est aussi beau
Que fleurs de cuivre en ce plateau.
Monsieur hoche la caboche,
Les poings cousus à ses poches.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

Le bête, seule, amuse a l'œil,
Mais lui, l'ours, il a son orgueil.
Si vos pieds gèlent par trop,
C'est un cercueil qu'il vous faut.
Brouma, brouma, broumadza.

(1932)
(Translated by Guillevic)

And when under the influence of a new intellectual trend, elements of the *Tiefenpsychologie* became more distinct in his poetry; when his studies of Freudian teachings, tackled with voracious greed owing to his particular spiritual constitution, led him to explore and discover the most hidden secrets of the soul; even then, in a peculiar way, the tone of Hungarian folk-songs pervaded these achievements, so much so, that several (not invariably well-meaning) critics said that Attila József was writing "Freudian folk-songs."

József, however, used his superior poetical art, shaped by surrealism, expressionism, western *esprit* and Freudism, as an instrument for the poetical expression of more than just his own physical, intellectual, and spiritual life. This poet, despite his almost morbidly sensitive soul, was not immersed in his own life—the memories of his cruel youth, the fate of his family soon directed his attention to the lives and destinies of his fellow creatures. Predestined by his spiritual disposition to follow in the footsteps of the most pronouncedly decadent poets, he nevertheless became a poet of progress, of mankind's finest aspirations. Hungarian literary critics (and foreign critics who know him) today consider A. József one of the greatest working-class poets of Europe. For all the influence of the poetry of the twenties, expressing itself in rampant individualism, our poet, hardly twenty at the time, flung the following defiant challenge at his professor in Szeged University when the latter sent him down as unfit to become a teacher of youth:

Diplôme ou pas de licencié
J'enseignerai au peuple entier
Tous les degrés
Sans votre gré. . .

(Translated by Guillevic)

He would not stand aside and grieve over his own troubles—he looked at his own sufferings as part of the suffering of mankind, and always sided with the weak and afflicted. It was not long before he became a revolutionary and with his poems supported the struggle of the working class. However, his "proletarian poems" were totally different from the so-called *Proletkult* literature of the twenties, which regarded poetry as a mere vehicle of propaganda. Attila József's revolutionary, socialist poems have an individual voice. Political poetry that is deeply lyrical, springing from the heart and not actuated merely by partisanship, has a long tradition in Hungary. In the literature of other—perhaps more fortunate—nations, patriotic sentiment usually inspires poets to high-sounding, rhetorical poems, and there is an almost total absence of high-level patriotic poetry, whereas in Hungary, the patriotic poems of Petőfi, Arany, Vörösmarty, and Ady soar to the loftiest peaks of poetry. In political poetry, the literature of other nations has possessed, at best, only Bérangers—at least in the past. By contrast, in Hungary, the political poems of Petőfi, set aflame by his burning emotions, or of Ady, charged with fury and prophetic curses, have become the well-head of the political creed of several generations. To this category of poets belongs Attila József. Though he had mastered and used the elements of that poetry, he went beyond them as his art developed and raised Hungarian working-class poetry to an unprecedented level. Thorough knowledge of his subject and essential realism are the distinctive traits of his poetry. His worker portraits are not stylized, and in his lyrical representation of the working class his tone is that of a poet who fully and sincerely enters into the spirit of the message he has to communicate.

MA PATRIE
(Fragment)

Devant le pauvre, le riche est tout tremblant d'effroi,
Un pauvre est tout tremblant devant le riche.
Car notre vie, c'est la crainte qui la dirige,
L'astuce également, mais l'espoir n'y est pas.

Aux paysans jamais il n'accorde de droits
Celui qui se nourrit du bon pain de leurs miches,
Et quant au journalier, maigre comme les friches,
Plutôt que de de revendiquer, il se tient coi.

Un pauvre baluchon sur son dos se balance
Lorsque l'enfant du peuple émerge et qu'il s'élance
Hors du sentier foulé pendant mille ans, dit-on.

Il cherche en quel bureau il peut faire l'affaire
Comme planton lui qui devrait de son bâton
Frapper la tombe où sont les restes de son père.

*

Hongroise malgré tout, mais exilé chez elle,
Mon âme forme et clame un suprême dessin:
Que ma douce Patrie m'accueille dans son sein
Et que je puisse enfin être son fils fidèle.

Qu'un ours pataud traîne à la chaine qui le pèle,
Je n'accepterai pas que ce sort soit le mien.
Je suis poète. Enjoins au procureur au moins
De ne pas m'arracher ma plume dans mon zèle.

Tu as donné des paysans à l'océan.
Donne le sens humain aux hommes maintenant,
Donne au peuple magyar le génie de sa terre.

Qu'il ne soit pas la colonie des Allemands,
Ce pays. Que mes vers soient d'une beauté claire.
O ma patrie, fais qu'ils soient plus heureux, mes chants!

(Translated by Guillevic)

These powerful and yet deeply lyrical poems, pregnant with ideas, reveal József's poetical genius in its true greatness. No matter how weighty their contents, his gigantic poetical personality holds everything together. His orphanhood left deep and indelible traces in his soul, and it was through the sufferings of the orphaned boy that he came to understand the sufferings of the oppressed.

. . . Seul peut devenir un homme, celui
Qui est orphelin de cœur et de corps,
Qui sait que la vie déposée en lui
Est un simple supplément à la mort. . .

(Translated by J. Rousselot)

Only a very deep-rooted and deep-felt outlook on life can inspire such thoughts on the destinies of mankind as are contained in József's works. This proletarian and patriotic poetry, assuming the flow of speculative verse, is a unique phenomenon in European literature and is one of the reasons why translators and critics rank József with the greatest modern poets.

This militant and speculative working-class poet has also written love-lyrics of delicate tenderness expressing the sentiments felt by a man who sees in woman the lover and the mother, who looks to her for the reassuring warmth of family life, for solace and refuge in his illness. This richest of poetical forms in every literature acquired in József's hand a surprising, new note. His remarkable *Óda* (Ode) is a consummate masterpiece of love poetry, giving expression with a sincerity so bold, so natural, and novel to the intense and complete union with the being, both physical and spiritual, of the beloved woman, that his critics have been induced to term it a "biological love-poem," in which the most hidden secrets of body and soul are revealed by the pen of a daringly outspoken and at the same time wonderfully sensitive—almost shy—poet.

. . . Welch ein Stoff wars, der in mir Gestalt gewann,
Daß dein Blick mich so formt and füllt?
Welche Flamme hob mit mir zu brennen an,
Daß den Nebel des Nichts ich durchdringen kann
Und begehen talabwärts und hügelan
Deines Leibes fruchtbares Gefild?

Und daß ich eingehen kann in deine Geheimnisse, wie das
Wort eingeht in einen erschlossenen Sinn. . .

Rosensträucher, vom Winde bewegt,
So zittert dein kreisendes Blut,
Ewiger Strom, der das Leben trägt,
Daß mein Lieben entfach deiner Wange Glut
Und segne die Frucht, die im Schoß dir ruht.

Humusgrund ist dein Magen, von jungen
Säftepumpenden Wurzeln durchdrungen,
Fäden, gelöst bald und wieder verschlungen,
Deinem blühenden Gewebe verdungen,
Nähren die Zellen mit winzigen Zungen,
Daß das Gebüsch deiner laubigen Lungen
Rausche den Ruhm seiner Herrlichkeit!
In dir wandern selige Schwärme
Ewigen Stoffs im Kanal der Gedärme,
Und der kochende Sprudel der Nieren
Ists, der selbst Schlacken Verjüngung verleiht.
In dir erheben sich Hügel, die wogen,
Nordlichter flimmern und Regenbogen,
Werkhallen tosen dort, fließbanddurchzogen,
In dir jauchzt von lebendigen Tieren
Wimmelnd eine Millionenheit:
Algen,
Hydren,
Tang,
Güte und Grausamkeit,
Sonnen, Saturne, ein Sternbild, das schwindet,
Und in deine Materie mündet
Unbewußt alle Ewigkeit.

(Translated by Franz Fühmann)

What is it that makes Attila József's poetry such perfect art? It is the intrinsic element that also raises Bartók's music above other contemporary works—realism and thoughtfulness, and an admirable fusion of individual, national and universal problems, the suggestion of his nation's and his own final solitude, by means of an extraordinarily powerful creative instinct. Innumerable modern influences were assimilated and fused in the mental furnace of a poet who, in the last analysis, was striving after classical order. All his life he fought a desperate battle against the confusion and frustration, the solitude and suffering that poverty brought upon the world and his consuming disease upon his mind. Both in form and content his ceaseless quest of Order and Law (his favourite words!) is typical. As if aware of the restraining power of regular form, he explained, in reply to a question by a Rumanian newspaper, that he saw the poet's significance in the ability to find a form for the contradictions of reality. He searched

for the law that would bring order into the affairs of the world, for knowledge that would create the future—

Le verbe casse aux lèvres du poète
Mais lui, l'ingénieur des féeries
De notre monde, il voit dans l'avenir
Aussi clair que dans cette vie.
Comme vous ferez dans votre existence,
Il construit en lui l'harmonie.

(Translated by Charles Dobzinsky)

*

From the beginning, Attila József's poetry attracted the attention of literary critics, and his significance was soon admitted by progressive literary circles. That, however, was a far cry from success, either financially or morally. Under the conditions of barren cultural life in the inter-war period, his works were published in very small editions (for instance, of "Racking Pain" a mere 500 copies were issued, of which only 120 copies were sold by bookshops). It was a posthumous pre-war edition of his Collected Poems that achieved the first public success. True nation-wide appreciation for his work came only after the war. Since then complete editions and selections of various sizes have been published one after the other—editions of 30,000 to 50,000. Since 1945, a total of 724,000 copies have been sold, including many which have found their place in school text-books, along with the other great poets of Hungarian literature.

Following his death, his fame quickly spread beyond the borders of his native country. Benedetto Croce was among the first to recognize in him what was new and great—in József's poem *Mama* (Mother) he discovered the voice of the new European and discerned in it the outlines of future poetry. After the war his poems were translated into many languages. In the Socialist countries, József has by now become one of the best-known poets—Soviet and Polish readers in particular are acquainted with his poems from excellent translations. However, the greatest effort to make his work known has so far been undertaken by French poets. Several magazines have published French versions of his poems and, following the appearance of a small volume of verse, twenty-six French poets a few years ago undertook to produce translations of the best of József's work. (*Homage à Attila József par les poètes français*. Seghers, Paris, 1955.) Among

the contributors to this volume of translations we find names like those of Paul Éluard, Louis Aragon, and Jean Cocteau. Some of József's poems have been translated by several French poets, thus realizing his idea of how poetry should be translated. Himself an excellent translator, József held the opinion that poems cannot be rendered perfectly in other languages unless translated in several versions by various great poets, thus elucidating in concert all those shades which one man alone is incapable of reproducing.

A separate volume was published consisting of translations by Jean Rousselot (*Attila József, sa vie, son œuvre.* Les Nouveaux Cahiers de Jeunesse, 1958), giving the French public the second selection from Attila József within a few years. A much more comprehensive anthology incorporating the contents of the former volumes is to be issued shortly by *Les Éditeurs Français Réunis.* By the time the present study leaves the press, a German edition containing about fifty poems—likewise the result of cooperation by several poets—will have reached the bookshops. The Italian public, long familiar with József's name from magazine articles, may read his finest poems in the excellent interpretation of Albini (Lerici, Milan, 1958). The Italian translator is now engaged in work on a more comprehensive edition. As has been pointed out, English versions of any note are not yet available. Indeed, the present short survey and the German and French translations included therein are also intended to call the attention of English poets and publishers to Attila József and to rouse their interest in bringing out English versions of his poems.

Nothing illustrates the richness of József's poetry more convincingly than the circumstance that progressively-minded people in every nation, whatever their particular shade of political and philosophical opinion, can find in his poems that special beauty which appeals to their hearts, because the modern humanity of his poems rings true to everybody. The editors of the German selection have emphasized József's revolutionary militancy; the Italian translator has stressed the surrealist tone of the poet's early verse, its free-flowing powerful pictorial lyricism; the French poets have chosen from nearly every one of his periods, but have, apparently, been most impressed by his love-lyrics, his revolutionary and folkloristic poems. But whatever considerations may have guided the selection, from every volume there emerges the personality of a poet of immense force whose words express the sentiments and thoughts felt and thought by modern man, conveying the depths and intricacy, the glaring contradictions of the age in a new voice and a new attitude: the real voice and attitude of new European poetry.

ON MODERN HUNGARIAN NOVELS

by

PÉTER NAGY

Any endeavour to view the Hungarian novel, in the most general terms of a broader perspective, rather than scrutinize it in detail, will reveal one salient fact of crucial significance: that the modern Hungarian novel, in contrast to Hungarian poetry and short stories, has not yet joined the wide stream of world literature; what communication it has with it is that of an absorber rather than a contributor.

This proposition need, perhaps, not be proved in detail, but there is nevertheless food for thought in reflecting upon the reasons. There are, after all, other small nations whose literature may be judged in its entirety as less profound or lustrous than Hungary's, but which have none the less made substantial contributions towards world literature through their novels. Their works, the names of these novelists are to be found on every bookshelf of repute and in every tutored mind.

The question is all the more absorbing as this was not always the situation. The great eighteenth-century break-through in Western Europe in the exploration of the world through novels, may indeed have produced only somewhat anaemic and didactic imitations in Hungary, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Hungarian novel—along with poetry and drama—all at once leapt into the front rank of European literature. Here again, as far as poetry is concerned, there is no need for proof, since Sándor Petőfi has attained a place of lasting brilliance in world literature; and though the names of the dramatist József Katona or of the novelist József Eötvös are hardly known beyond our national frontiers, this does not alter the fact that their works were fully equal to the literary standards of their time. The modernity, in contemporary terms, of their style is not merely the result of an effort at outward elegance, but is a reality rooted in both theme and content—the simultaneous fulfilment, as it were, of the intrinsic requirements of both the author and of his work.

The storm of the 1848 Revolution, however, alienated Eötvös not only from the revolution itself, but in effect, from literature too—his life-work, after a splendid start, could never be completed. After the revolution only one novelist remained on the scene—Mór Jókai, whose period of creative activity, which was accompanied by unparalleled success and popularity, extended from the 'fifties up till the early years of the new century. We shall not here discuss the lonely and struggling author Zsigmond Kemény, who, as far as either the appreciation of the readers or the mainstream of literature is concerned, never was really "on the scene". Jókai's exceptional gifts as an author are as unquestionable as is the natural, instinctive exuberance of his Romanticism. These gifts corresponded at a particular instant of history—in the 'fifties and 'sixties, at the very moment when his talents were at the most brilliant pinnacle of their fulfilment—to the then prevailing manner of the European novel. Jókai's instant was the instant of Dickens, the elder Dumas and Eugène Sue, and, simultaneously with his success in his native country, he was able also to conquer readers abroad. But Jókai played the part of the biblical Joshua in the story of the Hungarian novel—he made the moment of Romanticism stand still, he arrested the movement of the sun for half a century to come. Obviously, like Joshua, he could not have performed this feat all alone—he needed a public that demanded this of him and a historical situation that made the public pose such demands. However, if the public and the situation had not coincided with his exceptional gifts, the realist-naturalist experiments that now and then appeared, only to die away again and again, might well have had a different outcome in this country.

In 1904, after a protracted period of flickering, the fireworks of Romanticism petered out and in Jókai the country's minstrel was put to rest amid national mourning. At this time Hungary's general development lagged behind the advanced nations by almost a hundred years, and her literature by a good fifty. The new literary upsurge which developed together with the impetus of the radical bourgeois movements of the time in the first decade of the twentieth century, made great efforts to put an end to this backwardness. It was associated with the magazine *Nyugat* (West), whose leading figure was Endre Ady, a poet of truly universal literary significance. *Nyugat*, while becoming the rallying point for a galaxy of brilliant poets, also fanned the embers of prose into a blazing fire. Among its contributors were Zsigmond Móricz, whose realist-naturalist genius was of explosive force and who as a novelist has produced the most impressive life-work in the history of Hungarian letters. The intensity and deep insight of his principal novels have given him a claim to a distinguished place

in universal literature. His astounding power of graphic delineation, the dramatic construction of rapidly developing plots, which, particularly in his short stories, stands unparalleled and lends his novels an irresistible verve, his knowledge of the human soul and the gift of depicting the emotional processes and inner world of men and especially women from every walk of life whatever their fate, and, last but not least, his passionate interest in social aspects, manifested by all his writings, permeating his whole life-work and fashioning it into a weapon to fight backwardness and serve progress, all these qualities raise him to the rank of the great in world literature. In the neighbouring countries and the Soviet Union, the works of Móricz have growing success; if appreciation is still withheld in the West, it may be ascribed chiefly to his language, steeped in popular flavour, and the peculiar, though not really exotic, traits of Hungarian conditions, which are often incomprehensible to the western reader. However, some signs of change have lately become discernible in this respect: the French edition of two of Móricz's excellent novels (*La Famille*, and *Un homme heureux* Éditions Horay, Paris) has aroused interest all over Europe. Besides Móricz, there was Frigyes Karinthy, with his grotesquely tragicomical outlook, whose version of his own fatal illness in *Utazás a koponyám körül* (A Journey around my Skull) is an extraordinarily forceful and valuable document; Milán Füst, with his strange narratives that probe the depths of the mind; Jenő Józsi Tersánszky, who in his seemingly jaunty novels explores the hidden aspects of life with a light-hearted whistle on his lips; Lajos Nagy, with his sardonic austerity—not to mention the repeated attempts at novel-writing by such authors who were chiefly poets, as Mihály Babits (*Halálfiai*—The Doomed), or Dezső Kosztolányi's short psychoanalitic masterpieces (*Édes Anna*—Anna Édes, *Pacsirta*—The Lark).

Twenty-five years of Horthy's regime were able to slow down the soaring development that had got off to so mighty a start in the first two decades of the century, they were never able to put a stop to it. It was during this period that the life-work of the creative writers who had risen early in the century came to fruition; and, though the eye of the historian of literature may observe the distortions and mutilations wrought by the counter-revolutionary period of 1920—44 in the works and careers of these authors, progressive literature has nevertheless been able on the whole to harvest a rich crop. The artistic revolution achieved by *Nyugat*, was a great step forward, and it all but steered prose writing, too, to the shores of international significance. Yet without solving the inner problems of society, no lasting advance could be made in literature. In the fabric of a backward

society that was semi-feudal in its mode of production, and whose influential strata were turning more and more towards Fascism, it is impossible, in our time, to say something that is perfectly modern and new, unless from a position of impassioned opposition to the dominant features of that society. This was the attitude that enabled the young poet Attila József to enter the front ranks of world literature. But bogged down in the fabric of this society, half repudiating, half accepting it—as most Hungarian writers and poets lived the realities of that era—their life-work could not help being of a hybrid complexion.

The Hungarian novel of the inter-war years was caught in the throes of this duality. The list of names could be extended, but more examples would again only go to prove that what has been said was valid for the whole spectrum, from the conformist writers representing the most reactionary political and literary trends, through the hard-working best-seller hacks, to those bourgeois penmen whose deliberate aim it was to transplant the latest achievements of the western novel to Hungarian soil. Evidence of this duality is afforded even in the specifically Hungarian initiative displayed in the emergence of the "populist" writers, occupying the borders between sociography and fiction, who in their turn produced a specifically Hungarian version of "*neue Sachlichkeit*" in literature. This trend which was in vogue throughout Europe in the 'thirties, preferred documents to fiction and has enriched Hungarian literature with some masterpieces hovering on the borderland between scientific sociography and the lyrical diary of an author. One of the best, was Gyula Illyés's *Puszták népe* (The People of the Puszta). Tibor Déry, having, in his *A befejezetlen mondat* (The Unfinished Sentence) achieved unity of content and style succeeded in creating a novel specifically modern and specifically Hungarian, which, owing to its impassioned revolutionary message, was not allowed to appear in the Horthy era; it was published only after the liberation. The inter-war years also gave birth to works of great psychological insight using the realities of the social scene only as a background and a motivating force. This tendency is evidenced in László Németh's great analytical novels, *Iszony* (Horror) and *Gyász* (Mourning).

Meanwhile, a separate Hungarian emigré literature arose, especially in the Soviet Union. It grew high, but although it represented Hungarian society as it existed before and during World War I with deep insight and persuading passion, attaining standards of ideology that were beyond the writers at home, it remained unavailable to readers in Hungary.

The best product of this literary trend is Béla Illés's *Kárpáti Rapszódia*

(Carpathian Rhapsody), which powerfully evoked the world of the first twenty years of the century.

Hungary's liberation in 1945 opened up wide prospects for Hungarian literature. True, war and Fascist persecution had taken a heavy toll of creative writers in the prime of their life and at the zenith of their powers, and a gaping wound of this size (almost a whole generation of writers and poets had been lost) is very hard to heal on the body of literature. But history opened up the possibility of rapid progress for the nation and thus imposed the same requirement on literature. The writers, shut off from every democratic trend and tendency for nearly a decade, now gained access simultaneously to the greatest works of socialist realism in Soviet literature and to the most recent achievements of the literature of the West. This moment, however, was not to be long-lived. For historical reasons that are now familiar, a narrow and rigid interpretation of socialist realism was dominant for a number of years.

Since then, however, during the last four or five years, the formerly constricted concepts of socialist realism have been discarded, and a more reasonable view has come to prevail. In Hungary, as well as in the other people's democracies, it has been shown in debates and by a series of works that the method of socialist realism in literature does not reject contact with the valuable works of western art. Concurrently with the modified interpretation of socialist realism, Hungarian cultural policies have, particularly in the field of book publishing, been making considerable efforts to make up for the opportunities missed. If only the wide range and the high standard of the foreign literature published during the last four years is considered, it will be found that Hungarian book publishing has never had a brighter period. Along with these books, Russian classics and recent Soviet novels as well as a whole *pléiade* of western writers are being published in pursuance of a book-publishing policy of broad conception. Faulkner and Kingsley Amis, Aragon and Dürrenmatt, Moravia and Sartre, Kafka and Pratolini, Steinbeck and Camus—among many other moderns (not to speak of the classics, from Chaucer and Villon through Blake and Pottier to Melville and Apollinaire)—have found translators, publishers and an enthusiastic readership.

As a result, the intellectual horizon of writers and readers alike has greatly expanded. With the overthrow of the superstitious limitations that had been cramping socialist realism and the appearance of the most recent products of Soviet literature, Hungarian literature has received an infusion from a literary crop that had been unknown in this country—a literature which frequently raises ideological problems but which is of a very high

artistic standard and in many instances represents a new departure in style. At the same time, writers have received numerous fresh inspirations, stimuli to experiments in style and method, from the stage and the screen as well as through experiences gained during travels abroad. Yet all this would not have sufficed alone: the decisive impetus has come from life itself, from the world around them, with its predominantly forward movement towards the spreading and realization of Socialism. The complexity and the wide range of contradictions that become evident in this process, their often simultaneous appearance (at the same time and, often, in the same mind) have demanded new methods of portrayal. At any rate, the old methods—the beaten track—no longer met the requirements of the times.

For some time now, the Hungarian novel has been searching for its future course in this direction. Mention has been made of the experiments in fiction of the late 'thirties—novels which were often inspired by snobbery. The most powerful influences to which these novels owed their approach were Aldous Huxley's sophisticated playfulness, Proust's and Joyce's psychoanalytical method and analysis of motive, and the optimism and depth of Giraudoux's fickle arabesques. These novels were in many ways new (in Hungary at least) as far as their method was concerned, but their world was hopelessly outdated: they were laid, almost without exception, in the no man's land between the top stratum of the intelligentsia and the lower level of the ruling class. (All this is not valid, of course, for the works of the populist writers who, true to their program, confined their attention to the world of the peasantry, or rather to the conflicts arising from the encounter of the world of the peasant and that of the landowner. The populists were, however, unable to offer anything new beyond the innovations in style and genre that have been mentioned, and before long their subject matter also became ossified and repetitive.)

It was this heritage that some writers tried to revive and continue undisturbed after the redeeming moment of liberation. They soon found, however, that it was impossible to continue this trend, not only because of a certain degree of pressure that was brought to bear on them, but also because the demands of life, of everyday reality, were for something different. It was no longer possible, with the old methods and the old approach, to give an adequate treatment of the sufferings that had been caused by the war, of the horrors of the extermination camps, of the changed ways of life, or of the rising toiling classes that were ever more vigorously stating their claim to a share of power. Something new was obviously needed.

This new way of looking at things, of perceiving and interpreting the

world, the Hungarian intellectuals—the writers among them—received from Marxism. It was Marxism, the construction of Socialism that directed the attention of the writers above all to the life of the working classes, their changing status and their future. The trouble, however, was that this novelty of themes and thought was not accompanied by a requirement for a novelty of form. On the contrary, in these years, the Hungarian writers—some of them acting by the sheer force of habit, others guided by a doctrinaire interpretation of the need for clarity or of realism—stepped backward rather than forward in matters of method. The prose-writing techniques of the second half of the nineteenth century, embellished by a new stylistic trick or two, were made the writers' "vernacular idiom" in which they intended to deliver their triumphant accounts of the transformation of the world and of men. During this period—the end of the 'forties and the first third of the 'fifties—any writer who tried to experiment in stylistic innovation ran the risk of being suspected, at the least, of surreptitiously flirting with decadence.

The staggering—stimulating as well as distressing—events of the mid-'fifties, which induced everyone to search their hearts and which became manifest on the general plane of history as well as in the private lives of individual people, families, or social strata, faced literature with a situation of an entirely new context. The necessity for the Hungarian writers, above all for the novelists, to create socialist realism continued to be the main task on the literary agenda, but this was no longer to be done in isolation from the whole of world literature and from the achievements in style attained in western writing, but by making critical use of these achievements. This requirement arises much more in response to the authors' own spiritual development and to the readers' tastes than in obedience to someone else's ideas or convincing arguments. It was precisely under the impact of their experiences and the shocks they have had to undergo that the writers, or at least many of them, have realized that the novel, this most living and changeable of all the branches of literature, is the least governed by specific laws of eternal validity. Or to put it, perhaps, more accurately—that which is of lasting validity among these laws needs from time to time to be clad in a new idiom, if it is to be truly appropriate to the period and its circumstances. More and more writers now seem in their literary practice to realize a fact which they have, almost without exception, known very well in theory and are in the habit of reproaching each other for disregarding. This is, that content and form are inseparable from each other, and that if they are separated, the yawning gap between them is apt to become fatal. The complex and contradictory

experience that is the lot of every man and characterizes all the events of our age, cannot be expressed in the literary idiom of the stable world and views of the late nineteenth century. The socialist consciousness, now acquired by more and more Hungarian writers, calls for new forms of expression, if it is adequately to render its essence.

This synthesis is at present still more an ideal that is desired than concrete reality. Nevertheless the writers, especially those of the younger generation who are at the outset of their careers, are nearly all striving towards this end. The range of characters and convictions, of experience and of intentions among the Hungarian writers is of the broadest, and this is reflected in their works. However, there was, perhaps, one decisive common feature in the novels of the past few years. The vital experience of a significant group of young writers who have in recent years begun to assert themselves was the great turmoil into which Hungarian society was thrown at the end of 1956 and the mass of socio-psychological problems that arose from it. Lajos Mesterházi in *"Pokoljárás"* (Journey through Hell) or Géza Molnár in *"Hullámverés"* (The Waves) and *"Márta"* have made strenuous efforts to achieve a modernity of form that should stem from the essential content. Their preoccupation with the events they describe obscured in their eyes the problems of expression.

On the other hand, and more or less independently of this trend, a number of writers have emerged in recent years who have, to a greater or lesser extent, turned away from external historical reality to paint its sublimated picture through the minute portrayal of the spiritual world of only a few people. These writers (some of whom have not been heard for nearly ten years now) devote meticulous care to matters of craftsmanship. In the novels of Magda Szabó (*"Freskó"*—Fresco, or *"Az őz"*—The Roe), her interleaved, reciprocating interior monologues have introduced an element of tension into this literary genre and led her to produce a striking and veracious, though none too sympathetic portrait of the character of a narrow but still extant stratum of people who in the midst of a changing world have adopted an attitude of introvert egocentrism. Beside her work, another unquestionable achievement has been a good novel of change, *"Iskola a határon"* (School on the Frontier) by Géza Ottlik. With a masterly method of gliding from the recent to the remote past and back again, he has not only presented the instant of youth with a spiritual imagery that is the hallmark of true art, but has shown how the birth of fascism is recorded and reflected in the souls of children and adolescents of a strange community. The novel has been a source of debate in Budapest literary life, the majority of the critics having stressed the anti-fascist character

of the work, while there has also been an emphatic expression of the view that its anti-fascist attitude is not an essential feature of the work, but only a vehicle for the author to develop his general views on humanity, which verge on existentialism.

More names and works could, of course, be adduced to illustrate both approaches. This would, however, lead willy-nilly to a *Jungian* typologization of our recent novels and to classifying them under one of the two headings of 'extravert' and 'introvert.' Though no doubt alluring, this method would, in its scholasticism, be a sterile one. A classification on these lines would I am convinced only imitate the dissimilar similarity of a snapshot: it would capture one moment, instead of attempting to picture the living process.

And this process undoubtedly indicates that Hungarian writers have now joined the mainstream of European literature. Hungarian novel writing is thus becoming suited to giving an adequate expression of the world and a true portrayal of life. Socialist realism in the full sense of the term cannot, in fact, be attained at a cheaper price. Just as the human mind, with all its contradictory complexity, forms an integral part of reality, in the same way the social context cannot be separated from men's minds, from their reciprocal effect and inner development. To exclude the one from the writer's range would be just as maiming and restrictive as it would be to shun the other. It is my belief that Hungarian writers have by now built up sufficiently large stores of human experience and reserves of artistic experiment for this synthesis to become truly and organically the order of the day in Hungarian literature. It is for the writers and critics alike to promote the maturing of this process.

RÁCEGRES NOTEBOOK

by

GYULA ILLYÉS

"Rácegres Notebook" which appeared in Hungarian in the Budapest literary journal *Kortárs* (Contemporary) is one of the most interesting Hungarian literary documents of recent years. Its significance is not simply that the writer reports on the changed life of the former farm labourers on the one-time big estates. The historical antecedents and the person of the author play at least as big a role in arousing interest. It is precisely from this standpoint that this introduction is necessary.

This study by Gyula Illyés, the greatest living Hungarian poet, links together and at the same time separates two historical eras: 1936 and 1960. In 1936 Gyula Illyés's "*Puszták népe*" (People of the Puszta) appeared. This sociographical study of shattering impact, interwoven with autobiographic elements, took the reader to Rácegres Puszta in Transdanubia, to the birthplace of the writer. The *puszta* in this case did not mean the "Hungarian speciality," well known in operetta, but what was first and foremost understood by this term in the language of the Hungarian people: the seigniorial farms, the farm labourers bound to the large estates, the settlements far from the railways and civilization. On this kind of puszta, Gyula Illyés lived at that time with his relatives, and with 600,000 other people in Hungary. *People of the Puszta* describes the exposed, almost medieval living conditions, unworthy of human beings, with such literary and sociological authenticity that, at the time when it was written, it shocked and incited to resistance, and ever since Illyés's book has been recognized as a classic document for those who would know the recent past. *People of the Puszta* at the same time can be looked upon as heralding a series of sociographical works. In this series, one group of Hungarian writers, the so-called populist writers, under the comprehensive title of "The Discovery of Hungary," wished to show the life of the peasantry in various parts of the country. After a few works which aroused a big response, the series was cut short: a court ruling put an end to the "Discovery of Hungary" in those pre-war years.

Together with a number of other writers from the series of those times, Gyula Illyés has now returned to the characters of his book, to the people of Rácegres, the

people of the puszta. This return, after a long interval, of a poet who has been the centre of literary political discussion in recent years, has resulted not only in this, his first more significant work in a fairly long time, but also in a series of related poems in which old and new experiences are fused, and which we regret being unable to publish in a translation worthy of them. Apart from the literary merits of this prose document, it contains much that is of interest from the sociological standpoint. The scene, Rácegres, precisely because of its past as part of the puszta, is a good bit below the general level of the country. Through the objective prose of Gyula Illyés, however, the reader can in this work recognize the signs of the fundamental changes which are taking place in the life of the Hungarian peasantry.

If all those partial pictures which the so-called "populist" literature produced about the world of men on our large estates could be combined into a single huge fresco in the human mind—for that would indeed be the generally valid picture—an out-of-the-ordinary tourist poster could be hung up on the waiting room walls, to engage the attention of those who are curious about the present situation. "Spend a Day in History" the caption above the comparison between the past and present might read.

There is so much contradiction, in the strong lines of the drawing, in the glaring colours, that the eye is captured. So much so that even those whose attention is not habitually aroused by posters are almost tempted to take a side-long glance and to ask themselves whether this one is not too much designed to attract the eye, whether outward appearances have not been excessively stressed to the detriment of intrinsic value. Or to put it more seriously: does the less visible, the inner, the spiritual, keep pace with the material and with the many sorts of visible developments? Does the "human" element keep pace with these developments, which may be called the object and which actually take place for the sake of the former? And if perhaps not, what is to be done?

The problem of the Hungarian agricultural population is approaching this point.

Progress has not been even. For indeed the situation and the time of departure are not the same everywhere.

Farming in common had to be grafted onto an entirely different "stock" in the villages and out on the puszta. The fruit will be the same: the quality, however, is now determined only by the salt of the earth and the degree of the sun's heat. And the tree will also be the same, although it reveals its origin much more explicitly.

In the past fifteen years one of the most valuable trends which has appeared in the shaping of the peasant's ways of life—also in respect to what we call the "human" element—is the levelling out of social differences. No amount of work is too much, when it comes to bringing about this equality of levels between the village people and the former cultivators of the puszta, and then between town and village, between working people of all occupations. But one would serve this necessary development badly if one did not take into account what I have already pointed out, the various points of departure and the initial circumstances.

There are villages too, the whole fifteen years of which I am familiar with. But of course I could best observe the developments on the puszta. And so first and foremost I shall speak of these. The surrounding villages have remained for me what they were in my childhood—Sunday experiences.

When after a few years intermission I again saw Rácegres, my memory, as I gazed round from the cemetery hill, gave me a more distinctive picture than that tourist poster. This colourful, Sunday-school picture, printed on stiff paper, which was divided in two down the middle, showing on the one half the scene around the home of "Sober" Péter, on the other that of "Drunken" Pál, once served to refresh my childish imagination, down there on the wall of the little puszta school, on a drowsy afternoon of study.

A long kneading trough for bread—in which the bread is prepared here to this day—that is the heart of Rácegres-puszta. The school is situated right in the middle, down in the valley, and the cemetery up on the hill, or rather, the mountain—for according to local speech everything on which you cannot plough upwards, is a mountain. Gazing from there, the puszta, where not only I but my mother before me had been born and bred, was situated on my right hand, at the eastern end of the trough. At some time, evidently, the arrangement of its buildings must have been planned. The many annexes, replacements and changes, the many further plans, had made it an absurd jumble of houses. Servants' quarters, stables, coach houses, workshops, new servants' quarters joined each other at angles that were as though a set of dominoes had been left upon the table by children who did not know how to play the game. It was in those houses, built to last for long years from good materials but with bad grace and in bad taste, that the peasants were overtaken by the freeing of the land and the waves of change which truly set everything in motion. These farm hands here, in contrast to those of the villages, had never dreamed of land distribution. They had never even accidentally heard or read of farming in common, in a cooperative: indeed even if they knew their letters, no one ever read anything.

So the surprises, the various strange things had just welled up like a spring.

I myself, who already lived far from them, had my share of surprises, too. At the time of the land distribution, some committee, amidst ornate words, presented the house of my birth to me, and when I refused it, put forward a solemn and for me (I will tell you why later) gruesome proposal that a memorial tablet should mark the house.

Looking to the left from the cemetery hill, at the western end of the trough, sixty red-roofed, brand-new houses are now ranged on the slopes in streets straight as an arrow. Neatly fenced around, they stand on spacious plots of land—from here they look quite uniform. There are wire fences within the plots of land too, this one protecting the orchard, that one the small flower garden in front of the house, and another the poultry yard. This group is also like dominoes, but they are in order, set out for a regular game. Indeed it is once again a poster design which edges into my mind. Of the kind which appears above texts recommending bank deposits or building loans and giving a bird's eye view of an ideal village, where everything is so clean and tidy that you can even sense the pleasant smell of freshly ironed, snow-white linen of the smiling farmer's shirt sleeves.

This is how the eye sees the new puszta from the place where once the old sledge-turn used to be, and one cannot help dwelling lovingly again and again on those still unplastered houses—for they are at this very moment drying out. By the way, they are not according to the old design, not oblong, but almost without exception cube-shaped. The porch, with its row of columns, is replaced by an open or closed glass veranda fitted into one corner of the house. Like suburban villas or the buildings at a summer resort. One, two, three, four... I did not count further how many rose bowers led from the garden gate to the veranda and at the same time to the entrance of the house!

The villa-like character and the similarity to a sort of platonic village is heightened by the fact that nowhere in the courtyards is there a cart, a plough, a worn harrow or rack, or any of those many agricultural implements that once turned even the yard of the most well-to-do peasants of the puszta into a picture of disorder through the very fact of their untidy presence. There is no stack, no rick, no manure heap. There are wide windows, though I think they are too wide for our winter; rouleau shutters, though I prefer the traditional Venetian blinds. But what does all this exhale, what does it bear witness to? Rising standards, trimness, airiness, spaciousness, health, everything which can best be summed up as: to live like a human being.

And in these houses which the town-dweller would call "my villa," people are living who once, here on the puszta, grew up in rooms where two or even four families lived.

And all this is taking place in such a god-forsaken place, where there is no electricity, no telephone, and where, both to the left and to the right, the next village, some seven miles away, can only be reached by a primitive dirt road from the medieval Árpád era. Which means, as even the least experienced traveller knows, that it only has to rain for a day and no other vehicle can use this road than those that were already in use in those ancient times.

All this then is the result of the diligence and cleverness of the people, precisely because these qualities—freed from oppression, like grass from beneath a cast-away brick—find ways of serving life.

The eye wanders over the things to be seen and gathers so much to delight the heart, that finally the heart too, goes into action, saying:

"The afflictions of the people during the past centuries were monstrous. The Hungarian people were in the thick of it again. The losses were terrible: hundreds of thousands of our young people frozen to death and killed, the overturned homes, the execution of the innocents, the imprisonments, the blood and the tears, which ran, not as biblical metaphors, but in stark reality, in streams and oceans. But see! There is a basket, bearing life, floating upon them."

*

Hundreds of newspaper articles and speeches have enumerated how many things were needed, before a village could take the "historic" step, before—as one organizer told me very expressively—the peasant could draw first one foot, then the other out of the thick mud of the accustomed path and step onto the road, the new road of which he sees only the beginning. How much struggle and ferment there is in these villages in whose outward appearance no essential change can be discovered. The nearby "pusztas" also share in the destiny of the villages.

This remote, this really puszta-like puszta overwhelms already through its outward appearance.

The good-humoured, jovial approach perhaps brings into focus what is to be described even better than the tragic. My next glance over there puts this thought about the new group of houses into my head: Lo and behold! The people have been led out of the puszta. How much can their Moses see of this new nest-building? From the valley, sheep press towards me and their shepherd raises his stick in greeting, like a biblical patriarch; he

is in fact just one of my former school-mates, whom time has given a lease on life in this ancient place.

Under this hill, in this trough and beyond, on the gentle slopes and among the willows of the rivers Sió and Sárvíz, on "the islands," there once lay the subject of one of my books.

Today, too, it was the subject of a book that again led me here. What if one were to add the picture of today's puszta to that of the one-time puszta? It promised to be such an easy job. The situations and pictures of life as they had then been drawn, would have to be drawn or rather, for the sake of greater authenticity, photographed in their present state. Then the bread was kept from the starving children in a locked cupboard; today anybody can cut as much as he wants. Once people were beaten; today a helping hand is offered them. And what is most important—and indeed most real—then two, three, even four families lived in a single room, while today... Just look! What I would most like to do is to spread a vast, panoramic film about the new Rácegres before the reader.

But photos, even when they fill an album, are still not a book, and many a report is all the more trustworthy for being the less "literary." Although we expect the sequel to a very effective book to have an even greater effect on us. It is the eternal desire of the reader that "Bitter Love" should be followed by "Happy Love" on our reading table. It rarely happens that these "Happy Loves," born of the instinct for symmetry, fail to take away a little of the good taste left by the "Bitter Loves."

What the "real" (that is, the future) problem of an age may be, is a question to which the answer unfortunately is not always to be found lying in the street. And still more rarely on the lips of men. It does not always represent a "ready theme." Sometimes it is as deeply hidden as the laws of atomic fission or as a desire hidden in the depths of our mind and making itself known only through its pain. It would take a long time to enumerate how many things are needed, apart from luck, for its expression. Till the time comes when it is really a "ready theme" and simply needs to be recorded, as though for an album or for a statistical sheet.

I visited those houses down below. From closer they are even more moving and inspiring, than from afar. To tell the truth, only that is new in them which they could not absorb into themselves from the old houses and which the new desires called for. New is the roof, the shutter. But any door or window which was the least bit usable has been repaired and nicely painted and now revolves here on its old, reliable hinge. None of the old beams has been thrown away: timber is a treasure here on the black, wheat-growing soil. And the bricks! Now I understood why and

where those ruins of old medieval castles and churches of which something has been left, have remained as historic monuments. It was only in places where they were built of building materials to be had free on the spot—of raw stone or rock—that this happened. And this was so, because to quarry these did not require a greater effort than to pull down what had been put together. But where sturdy building materials had to be brought from a distance? The soil here, almost down to the middle of the ground, is humus (and loess). I remember when I saw stones—or rather gravel—for the first time in my life. It had got into my father's pocket by accident; the Simontornya railway station and the track between the rails was made of it; in jest he thrust it before me: "What's this?" (For it was veined like marble.) Whenever he went to the "countryside," I pestered him for a present of at least a handful of railway gravel (it made good ammunition for my sling). I can still hear my sister's voice: "Pebbles, father."*

Even today bricks cannot be carried to Rácegres over a shorter or better route than in the Middle Ages. The material of the old puszta buildings, of the dreadful (because so small) servants' quarters, was also brick and tile, and oak beams. That is why they were taken to bits, down to the last morsel, and rightly so. The well-divided bricks were thus at least enough for the new foundations. Everywhere the walls are made of beaten earth, and chaff well-stamped and insulated, because there is a new method of doing this too.

In those villa-like houses—on the inside the walls are already plastered and not only whitewashed, but painted too in some places—the pieces of old servants' furniture of course prop each other up in the kitchen. As in the traditional peasant houses, there is also a "clean room," in sanctuary-like isolation, already reflecting the "complete bedroom" theory of having two huge beds in Assyrian-Babylonian style, a cupboard, a bedside cupboard, all of them in fearful, grim assembly, to which also belongs the three-mirrored dressing table with its dainty seat. Whoever takes alarm at this is recoiling from the first step. Whenever my hosts, with a meaningful expression, conducted me towards them, I would—as I opened the door on them after duly wiping my feet—let a cheerful glance wander over these furnishings.

The pantries—perhaps I should have started with them; so full of food were they at Rácegres in the spring of 1960 that it would have been

* He was intelligent, with a sense for distinctions, and explained that gravel or pebbles should not be taken away, even a pocketful, from a whole railway embankment; but he nevertheless brought some, and we understood a shade more about the inexplicable, about how the world ticks. (Author's note.)

superfluous (and for a journalist indiscreet) to open the door to them. What can be found in the pantry spreads throughout the entire house, like when there is a fire or no fire in the stove.

So anyone who wants to measure the situation on the puszta today against the yardstick of the "three million beggars," can pack up his bags and go back reassured; his questions based on those times, if he were so blind as to put them at all, would first and foremost be received with amazement. Everybody has shoes and a change of shirts. Soap? In the house of the famous rick-maker of my childhood I saw, on the little shelf above the wash-basin, as many tooth brushes as there were members of the family; I know it, because I counted them, smiling—my last act as a statistician.

The writers of "Three Million Beggars," "Out to the Village," "Lying Kills," "The Situation at Tard," "Stormy Corner," "Bankruptcy of the Peasant Way of Life," "Kiskunhalom," "The Dying Hungarians," "Hungarians and Europe" and other works with similar titles (as well as the writers attached to their group) did not want to lead the three million beggars and the many million homeless Hungarians to the Eden of the "complete bedroom," the petit-bourgeois way of life. The majority and the best of them would have sent even those who had already arrived on further. They described the deep misery of the people because it was from there that the first steps must be taken and because no one else had described it. If the social situation of a country is described in leaflets produced by writers as a private venture, that is the most faithful picture of the barbarism of that country, for it means that the appropriate organs—the courts, the clergy, parliament, the press, the whole paraphernalia of the superstructure—either do not yet exist or are not functioning and bear nothing but the empty name.

At Rácegres people eat and are clothed. They do not have bath-tubs yet, but in a good few of the cubelike houses they have left room for one. There are no water mains either. But it is an even greater shortcoming, and a ceaseless topic of conversation, that there is no electricity; though it needs only three or four miles of power line to bring it there. Naturally the shop, too, is primitive. Nor is there a pub to be found where one might gather for a glass of beer. There is communal drinking only when the zealous chairman of the cooperative farm gets a consignment and sells it himself in one of the gloomy little rooms of the former manor house, after working hours. There is no theatre, no cinema. The only radios are crystal sets. And there are many, many other things missing, on behalf of which I shall not exert my pen, for all of them will be there in the future

without any interference by the writer. And the things that are missing—and here we strike the deepest change compared to former times—do not threaten a nation's very life by their absence.

*

What must the writer do then? What is the subject with which he can fill a book under the guise of contemplating the valley?

A people's ceaseless urge towards the fullness of life.

How did my message about the mass of the three million beggars around me, about the world of the puszta, germinate at the time? Then too, I returned home for a longer stay and in my youthful self-confidence even crammed a notebook in the top of my suitcase. I'll fill it with my poems, I thought! I did write a tidy amount in it, but suddenly only prose lines meandered from under my pen. Not to disturb the sacred circle of poems with them, I turned the notebook upside down and started to write my prose in the back. Those were my first notes about the real problems of my native land. By the time the two literary forms met, the period of my stay had in the main come to an end too. "Ozora Notebook," that was the common title under which the entire work was published in the literary review "Nyugat".

Now I am not writing in a notebook, but on the sheets of paper which I always devote to prose, but ever since I came here again, there have been more and more verses and designs for verse.

What I want to put into a book about the past twenty years of the one-time Hungarian agricultural proletariat stands clearly before me. "People of the Puszta"—this term at first caught hold in the memories of men with difficulty; I have friends in the country who still say "Sons of the Puszta." I always regarded myself as a son of that stratum of the people. In that capacity, I would like to tell of their struggles, their happinesses and of all those things with which I can serve their future and their continued progress.

So let this report, too, consist of two parts.

I feel clearly, why I have been writing poems on the theme ever since my innermost emotions have again been concerned with this subject. A former aspiration of my instincts has broken loose and found sustenance.

No, it did not "break loose" and it is not "a former aspiration." This aspiration has never been pushed into the background. It now manifests itself with greater determination only because it has accidentally received sustenance. And let me say just one more word about this.

During intellectual debates the greatest difficulties arise in solving those misunderstandings which arise because both disputants want the same, only one wants it more thoroughly, more deeply—that is, he really wants it. On more than one occasion I may have seemed to be drawing away from the trends of progressive literature, just because I was very much occupied with the new subjects calling for expression: with the purport of work and the solace it provides, with the manifestations of collective spirit, the reality of belonging to the people, and with the conquering of that pessimistic outlook that we are still not the masters of matter.

Here, in my native hamlet, I was living in the world of the most conspicuous work and its fruits, in the atmosphere of manual labour.

I myself came to know more through my own poems: my greatest experience up till then was here in the wonderful evocation of this world of work. The conscious re-living of that once unconscious circumstance that there really is a human cohesion, full of hope and promise, and that to serve it is life's purpose. The only purpose of existence that can be expressed in words.

I have no interest in literary relics. I am completely indifferent to an armchair or a fountain pen which has belonged to the writer of some good work. My interest is completely engrossed by the work itself. I could not help smiling when I learned that János Arany's kidney stones were on show in the temporary museum of the Csonkatorony at Szalonta. Though these—having gone through the body—might have set one's imagination going in some way or other towards the essence, towards an understanding of what can happen in the inside of a poet. My memory does not need any sacred objects. On the contrary. I experienced that here, too, in a most salutary manner.

With the removal of the old buildings from the puszta, even the house where I was born had of course been destroyed down to the very last brick. That was the place to which my grandfather had brought my grandmother as a young wife, the house where my mother was born. Now it was gone, as was the wheelwright's workshop and also the one where my father curved horseshoes and repaired the, at that time, huge threshing machines. Among the ruins only a millstone table stands undamaged, in the middle of a courtyard which now exists only in the mind. And one or two bushes from among the lilac trees which surrounded our courtyard and garden. And further on, lonely and quite superfluous, stands the big puszta well, where a biblical scene once took place: a "stranger," that is, an old, unknown shepherd—my grandfather on my father's side—addressed my mother, who was still a maiden, and gave her as an engagement present two golden coins.

And precisely because my eyes wander over empty hollows, my imagination can perhaps even better and more realistically build anew those old houses. I see the wheelwright's workshop, I sit on the joiner's table, swinging my legs, and watch a stupid piece of wood being turned into a clever wheel spoke. Before me, too, in all its detail, is the blacksmith's forge. And not only that forge, but the one at Tüskepuszta as well, where my father made a nice copper band for the head of the broken Waterman fountain pen—bought in Paris—as a memento to remember him by whenever I should take it into my hand.

I am far from feeling sad at the disappearance of those wretched walls. I am sincerely pleased to see that stupid substance transformed. It is good to know that the bricks of my native home are used in the walls of the new, healthy houses, a third of a mile away, and I am particularly glad that I do not know which houses those bricks have been built into. And I think perhaps this is how I, too, have to build for myself, from a past broken down into its elements.

Sketch by János Kass

THE ICE-FLOWER BRIDEGROOM

A Short Story

by

ÁRON TAMÁSI

On the morning of the day the Infant was born into this world, it began to snow at Öcsérd. Öcsérd was no grain of wheat from Mankind's granary, as Bethlehem was. Rather, it was but a piece of fluff from the bran which is caught in the sifter. Which is to say that Öcsérd was a small and poor village.

So also was Mihály Hetfü, a resident of Öcsérd, who had in his stable, in place of the steaming oxen of Bethlehem, only two musing cows, small and lean; and who had in his shed, in place of the celebrated ass, only a solitary goat with a drooping melancholy beard.

But a mild foreboding that something was bound to happen was in the air here too.

Well, so it was snowing that morning.

At first the snow floated down softly and slowly. Like white butterflies the playful flakes settled upon the miserable yard and upon the barn, which, with its thatched roof, dun-coloured and bedraggled, was like a giant fox lying low. And the flakes fell also on the shingle roof of the house, upon those smoky shingles which time had parched and curled out of shape.

It wasn't cold yet.

But the more the festive day thrust itself upon the world, the more did the softness of the flakes recede into the past. They clustered roundly, then went wild, turning into gritty kernels and falling from the sky with a rustle almost as of poppy-seed. White poppy-seed.

The air, too, was beginning to grow more rigorous.

Next day, the thatch on the barn roof had frozen to breaking point. The barn-yard hissed with the descending white poppy-seed and the misshapen shingles crackled from time to time. Flowers of frost began to open on the windowpanes.

"It's beastly cold," said Mihály Hetfü.

They were sitting at table, after midday meal, having appeased their hunger with left-overs from the day before. The old man, like a yellow-ripe fruit in the autumn fog, sat blinking through his tobacco smoke. His wife, with knitted brow, was picking breadcrumbs off the table with two fingers, thinking to herself that they would make good feed for the hen, which had of late been laying eggs with such loyalty.

Young Timót was weeding among the frost-flowers on the windowpane.

The silence piled up against the dam.

"Will you be going?" she asked her son.

Timót, without turning, called back over his shoulder:

"Are you asking me?"

"Oh, no! Just little Jesus," she said.

A wave of silence splashed over the dam. The elder Hetfü thrust up his head; the young man turned around. They looked at each other, puzzling as to who should speak next.

"It is beastly cold, missus!" the old man said.

The old woman's lips were pressed into a thin line, then came apart like the wings of a startled bird. The words came almost swishing from them as she said that she would not go on churning her poverty any more, but would fling her patience into the fire. Therefore, let Timót get ready and go to Tákod, there to ask the hand of that thieving Buzogány's daughter in marriage and bring back with him half of the man's fortune.

"And get going!" she added. She sounded like a bugle calling to battle.

"And what do you say, father?" Timót asked.

The old man screwed up his right eye, and opened the other to do for both. His glance thus lighted on his wife, then softened on to his son.

"D'you think you could live with her?" he asked the lad.

"I might—if I'd stomach a good deal with her," Timót said.

"How much a day?"

"At least three times."

"Then it don't pay, son," the old man said, and pulled down his ears.

But he instantly pricked them up again, for the old woman now clutched the tip of the table, and her eyes flashed with anger. She was practically shrieking when she cried that the menfolk of the house were nothing but idlers; they were peering from out of their poverty through the eye of a needle and watching for this darned world to drop manna on them. The most they would do was to try to grab a rabbit's tail, and it was too small a thing to get hold of. Therefore they'd better stop running after rabbits' tails and get a good grip on the fox instead, and he would guide them somewhere sure.

"Where?" the old man said.

"Where you can find fowl!" she snapped.

The old man twisted round his head, saying that wouldn't do, as the fox would lead them to a false trail and might turn them into a couple of thieves. No, it was much better to keep on the straight track and try to get something in this way.

"What do you mean?" she asked suspiciously.

"Rebel, that's what I mean!" he said.

This provoked the old woman to flare up even more. She had good use for her neck still, thank you. And if they made so much as a move towards rebellion—they would be struck down like a couple of outlaws. So let her hear not another word, but let Timót get ready and go to Tákod. And, on the way there, he might as well dump that natural modesty of his and get ready to bargain over the dowry.

"How much property d'you think that man Buzogány may have?" the old man asked.

"Fifteen acres of woodland," she enumerated, "at least as much hayfield, a rich barn and a big house, and to top it all there's the sawmill. It's all worth at least fifty thousand. Fifty thousand pengoes, and he should bargain for half of it. At least half of it, since that girl's so sweet on our Timót."

"But she's an ugly thing, mother!" said Timót.

"She's covered with money. That's what she is. Off you go!"

The men's glances flickered here and there, as though they had indeed been looking for the fox's tail. They must have caught a glimpse of the russet brush, for the old man presently said:

"Are you going to catch her, Timót?"

"What else can I do, since you want me to that bad," said the young man.

So he made himself smart. He put on a clean cambric shirt, worn outside the trousers according to the prevailing custom. He stuck his legs into shining black boots and then slipped on a short doublet of grey wool with a nap that lay flat, soft and silky, like the hair of a horse, and was rimmed in black. He clapped on his lamb-skin cap jauntily, hung a long-helved axe on his arm, just in case he should happen to run into some wild beast, and started off.

A listless sun shone through the chilly, milky-tinted air, but was reluctant to get out. The powdery snow, which had broken even the large flakes into minute particles, crunched under his boot-soles, like gravel under the wheel.

There was not a soul on the road.

Beyond the village, where the hills loomed white through the milky air

and the breath of the fields lay frozen into hoary frost, Timót pulled down his cap over his ears. He screwed up his eyes in defense, for winter had pricked them with cold needles of light until they had become moist with tears. He buried his fists in his pockets, and with short, quick surges forward, walked along the path across the field.

Shrouded in white, the earth lay dead on every hand.

Well, Tákod was an hour distant from here, he thought. That much for the feet. And he was probably right, for it lay three and a half kilometres away, up in the hills. It was not an old or a regular settlement in actual fact, there were a number of forest farmsteads scattered about the place, and Tákod had been thrown together in a makeshift way by necessity. He, who lived at Tákod, lived by hard timber-work, standing on the hillside near the banks of the mountain brook Zungód, amidst lightning strokes in the frequent storms of summer; and in winter too, when crackling of the frost replaced the summer lightning.

Márton Buzogány was the only man who lived in clover.

"Well, it will be as the fox'll tell," Timót said to himself.

And no sooner had the thought taken shape in his mind, than out of the thickness of the forest a fox sprang out; it sprang on to the path, which led, winding, through the woods. It was a huge fox with thick, rusty-coloured fur and a shaggy tail so big that it might have done for a broom. It was big and bold and had eyes that burned; snarling, it bared its teeth. Mad with rage and slavering at the mouth, it blocked the path.

"You up against me, eh?" Timót said.

He thanked God that he had had brain enough to bring along that axe, even though one didn't as a rule go into the forest, especially in winter, without carrying some handy weapon. So he at once gripped the handle of the axe, and took a leap towards the fox, intending to introduce him to eternal life with a single blow. However, the rusty marauder was swifter than he and, giving an angry yelp, jumped aside. But even then it would not leave the path but kept dancing about in front of the young man, looking back continually and every now and then halting in order to bare its fangs at him and obstruct his passage.

Thus they ate up the yards, now slinking on slowly, now lurching forward quickly. But then of a sudden the fox picked up the scent of something, for all at once, it raised its hackles, and its entire body became taut, ready for battle.

And then, like a shadow gliding over the white snow a wolf burst upon the scene. In an instant it was upon the fox, and the two of them began to circle round in the powdery snow, snarling. The fox made whining

noises, like you hear when you stick a knife into sumach; and the wolf, with a rattling sound, was biting at its throat.

Timót felt his blood pulsating.

And like embers blown by the wind, his brain worked red-hot, as he tried to discover where he should aim a blow of his axe. He did not mean to hit the fox, for the wolf would be quite enough for him; but that brute of a wolf was rolling and turning round so quickly that it would be almost impossible to hit it over the head.

Nevertheless, he made up his mind.

"So you're come to bar my way, too, are you?" he said, attacking the beast with speech, as well.

He was on the point of striking, but at that very instant some large bird, attracted perhaps by the sound of his voice or by the smell of blood, flung aside the branches of the trees above him, dropping a powdery mass of snow over the young man's head. Timót reeled, shook his head, and leapt backwards at random. By the time he had wiped the snow from his eyes and regained his sight, the fox had succumbed and was now lying prostrate in death. And the wolf set down limply by his quarry, face to face with the young man, of whom it seemed to take no notice. It sat there flagging, its jaw hanging loosely and bleeding—apparently the jaw had been dislocated, for the wolf was moving it clumsily in an attempt to jerk it back into place.

Timót looked on and the sight made him feel sick.

And as the nausea spread all through him, the sweat ran down by his ears and froze instantly on his cheeks. So everything was against him, he thought. The beasts and the whole world, the sky and the earth alike, were against him today.

Maybe God didn't want him to go to Tákod.

"I will go for all that!" he said.

And so he lifted his axe, lunged forward, and, with a crack, cleft the wolf's skull. He wiped the edge of the blade in the snow, and started off in the direction of Tákod.

In a quarter of an hour, he was there.

When he entered the house he found only Buzogány's wife. Mrs. Buzogány was an old woman, for even the girlhood years of her daughter were now practically things of the past. Dressed after the fashion of burghers, she was running to fat at the hips, especially the right hip, for her right leg had a limp. By the fresh lamplight, she was just laying the table for eight.

"So you've come," was all she said to him.

"I have. Hope you've been expecting me," Timót replied.

She let that pass unanswered, but called out "Héli?" by which she meant her daughter Heléna. Héli turned up pretty soon—she had apparently been busy cooking, for she wore an apron. As she beheld Timót, Héli's face flushed a deep red. This was such an odd sight one might equally be moved to pity her or to laugh at her. Yes, for Héli was a fruit of the kind that even as late as November will be found clinging to the branch. Otherwise she was a tall and bony girl, with straw-like hair that almost rustled, and below her nose a timid moustache which at the corners of her mouth appeared rather impudent.

A few unimpassioned words were exchanged.

Not many, though, because Márton Buzogány came in from the sawmill to inquire whether the guests had arrived yet. When he saw that Timót alone had come, he grabbed him by the arm, and said:

"I'm taking away the bridegroom."

He led him into the large penthouse where, even in that piercing cold and by lamplight, the saw was emitting its strident sound. Two machines were manned by five workers—one of them a jolly gipsy fellow—and Buzogány added Timót to the gang, bringing their number up to six. Big, swarthy fellow that he was.

It was getting on to midnight when the guests arrived on a broken-down cart, and work stopped. One of the guests was Mrs. Buzogány's brother—a sort of gardener with a limp in one leg—and his wife; the other was Buzogány's brother—a butcher of peony-red complexion—who also came with his wife.

The party sat down to table.

And before Buzogány had time to pour them out their drams, the soup had already been placed on the table, in two deep tureens. But Buzogány could not be put off by the soup, for presently he rose, with a glass of brandy in his hand, and set his course towards Timót, who was sitting, his skin drawn tight, next to Héli. Buzogány had two wishes to make, an end to the war, and, to the betrothed, much happiness and many children.

They drank upon that.

Timót had his soup ladled out for him by Héli, who showed much partiality and open-handedness in his favour and ladled out at least six dumplings for him—for meat-soup with dumplings was what they had cooked for this day of rejoicing.

Now they started eating. Timót ate his soup bravely, but when he wanted to cut a dumpling in two in order to eat it well, the dumpling just bounced away from his spoon, splashing some of the soup. Ah, come on! he said to himself; but the dumpling gave him the slip again. He felt

his ears turning red. Good God, what was he to do? That dumpling was too damn big for him to tackle it whole, yet it was impossible to cut it in two.

"The devil with it!"

Secretly he began watching the others to see how they were grappling with *their* dumplings. He noted that Buzogány and the butcher were swallowing theirs whole, while the gardener cut them in two with his knife and the women were shoving them back and forth. But then he could not gobble them up whole, as it might stop his breath, and then, as his luck would have it, he'd become the talk of the village. He must not use his knife on it either, or they might say that he was a money-grabber all right, but also such a God-forsaken bumpkin as had never in his life eaten a dumpling.

He had another go at one of the dumplings.

But it was like stone!

Beads of perspiration began to appear on his forehead. Any trials but those damned dumplings appeared to him desirable. He'd sooner be facing that snarling fox or the snow-toppling bird of prey, or that marauder of a wolf that had drowned in its own blood.

Anything!

And yet he would not knuckle under, he thought. Where brawn failed to get the better of dumplings, brain should finish them off! Deftly he unbuttoned his shirt on his chest, without anyone having seen him do it. Then he wriggled nearer the table and, slightly stooping over his plate, fished out one dumpling with his spoon as though he were going to eat it up gallantly. He even got his mouth ready to devour it, but as he raised his arm, he broke the course of his spoon, and dropped the dumpling down his chest. It was an empty spoon that touched his lips.

It was still a bit hot, the dumpling, and a trifle wet, too, but at last it was put away in a safe place.

Soon it was followed by the other five.

"Now, thanks be to the stone crucifix!" Timót sighed.

"My heart's full of thanks, too," Héli whispered to him.

Timót saw that her gratitude was indeed of the heart—her pale blue eyes were eloquent enough on that score. Ah well, let her be happy, he reflected. To some people happiness allots but one minute; to others, a whole evening. For somehow he had an idea that it would last no more than one night. Yet how the wheel of happiness would be broken, he could not picture to himself.

Come what may!

Was it that the angels were watching over the place, or was it the Buzogánys' good luck?—the meal went off without a hitch, and the time

was passed in merriment. True, the glasses were plied quite often, for Buzogány kept urging the party, 'Your mugs, everybody!' And that peony-red butcher, too, had a decided hankering for the old brew.

Time flew.

And when day was just beginning to think it was about time to break, Buzogány prodded the jolly gipsy fellow and his clarinet into activity. At first the gipsy played only those sweetly plaintive songs, but soon he warmed up to a dance tune, and the butcher began to turn round and round with Mrs. Buzogány's carnival slippers. Following him, Buzogány—presumably to set a good example—took his daughter for a turn; then the gardener, too, began to shake a leg with the butcher's wife.

Gaiety was rising steadily.

Seeing that they had got off to such a good start, the gipsy had an inspiration and broke into a brisk floor-pounder. Well, that brought Timót to his feet, and away he went, stamping the boards smartly. As he was footing it by himself, the others stopped dancing in order to turn their eyes on the happy bridegroom. And Timót, who had by now downed a sufficiency of liquor, and whose heart longed to speed with him away from there, began to work himself into a fine frenzy. And as he swung and reeled and like a whirl-wind whirled and spun, twisting all his body, his shirt began to slip from under his belt and the dumplings to drop one by one on to the floor.

All six of them.

The whole party opened their eyes wide, wondering what it was that kept falling on the floor thump after thump.

"Stop!" Buzogány yelled.

Timót stopped.

"What sort of thing's this?" Buzogány went on. "Why, you ate 'em all up just now?"

Timót observed the dumplings scattered about on the floor and was unable to speak for shame. Suddenly, in the prickly silence, Héli burst into sobs; and Buzogány kicked the dumplings one after the other into a corner of the room.

"Excuse me," Timót said.

And he walked out of the room, took his axe, and set out for home at a brisk pace. At first, he glanced back over his shoulder once or twice, but no one came after him. He clapped his cap over his right ear, and whistled a tune. With the light of dawn, the frost began to give way, and by the time daylight came, the weather ha turned so mild, the birds were soaring and singing blithely; and the snow slipped from the trees softly, like cotton-

wool. The wild beasts had disappeared like yesterday's evening—he saw only two deer by a frozen streamlet. The animals waited for him to come quite near, and looked at him imploringly with shining eyes.

He knew what they wanted.

So, he cut the ice-sheet that covered the water open at two places, so the deer might slake their thirst. And the birds, maybe, too.

Then he clapped his cap on his left ear, and so reached home in high spirits. He found his father and mother sitting at table, drinking their morning milk.

"Well, son," his mother asked him, "is it done, then?"

"It is, mother," said Timót.

"And in what manner?"

"They're dead, poor folks, every one of them. The girl was frightened to death by a snarling fox; her mother, got herself eaten up by a wolf; and as for Buzogány, a young fellow pelted him to death with stone dumplings."

The woman understood her son's words, and went out.

"Since it's happened that way," said Hetfü senior, "what'll we do now?"

"We'd better rebel," said Timót.

And after the words, on which they now saw eye to eye, were out, the young man turned towards the window, and, smiling, watched the morning light suffuse the window-pane, and saw the flowers of frost melt away in the light like his intended betrothal.

HUNGARIAN WORKERS IN A NEW SOCIETY

by

LAJOS KOROLOVSZKY

There have been signs of late in the West of increased activity and interest in sociological research, which has found its reflection in periodicals and in the more serious daily press. Attention has been directed sometimes to the "organizational man," at other times to the "status seekers," then again to the "affluent society" itself, to the "social mobility" of society, or spurred by the analyses of the British Labour Party's defeat at the last elections, to the "new factory worker."

It may, therefore, be of interest to give some account of a large-scale political and sociological survey that was conducted in Hungary in 1958. It must, however, be pointed out at the outset, that in this case it was not a matter of an investigation by one or more Hungarian sociologists, or by a particular sociological team, into one or other of the problems of Hungarian society. This undertaking was considerably broader in scope, and apart from its political aims it also compiled rich sociological experiences.

Two Thousand "Social Researchers"

The investigation was initiated by a resolution which the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party adopted in February, 1958. The object was to conduct a study of the situation of the Hungarian working class, the leading class of Hungarian society, from the political, economic and cultural standpoints. Complementary to this object it was desired to find out to what extent the Hungarian working class truly takes part in the government of the country. The method adopted was that of the most comprehensive social research.

The resolution led to an investigation on a well-nigh unparalleled scale. About two thousand social research workers interviewed about 45,000

workers, or intellectuals who were formerly workers. Who were the people chosen to carry out this vast job? They were men and women who, because of their political past, their occupation or position, may well be said to have been "social research workers" for years. They included officials of the organizations of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, of various state organs and of the mass organizations such as the trade unions, and perhaps it is not without interest to mention that in those days one could often read reports in the Hungarian newspapers about the visits of Party and Government leaders to various factories. Their purpose on these occasions was not to give political orientation, to deliver some kind of address; the leaders were themselves seeking information: they were taking part in the great, nation-wide survey. The survey, compiled over a period of two months (May-June, 1958), covered all the important large factories in Hungary. Many medium-sized or small plants were also brought under the spotlight of the investigation. The inquiry was carried out by working parties, either central, national teams, which mainly visited the large factories, or district (in Budapest) and county groups. Not directly involved in the investigation were the workers employed in agriculture, trade and transport, and, to some extent, those in the building industry.

Not only the "subjects" of the investigation, but public opinion in Hungary generally, interested as it is in the problems of social development, received the news of this nation-wide study with pleasure. The very fact of the resolution was symbolic. For it meant the full assertion of a new attitude, a novel method of approach, going hand in hand with the great social change already realized, and this in itself represented a change. To put it less abstractly: earlier years had brought about a social change and with it an evolution of the situation of the working class; but during those years there had been no inclination to make a profound examination of the change and to recognize clearly the need for new methods which were the due of a new working class. These were the years when measures carrying forward the transformation were simply announced, rather than being discussed in "the wise assembly of an expert people"—as Attila József, the poet, writing in the sombre thirties, required the new society to do.

This investigation of the situation of the working class, on the contrary, aimed at discovering the living reality of the change. With this it also conveyed that the leadership considers it a duty to rely at all times on the opinion of the working class and to weigh what kind of measures need to be taken with regard to the situation of the working class, not only in general, but in order that this class might better fulfil its leading role.

In other words, it was a manifestation of the basic principle—which also prevailed afterwards in the inquiry and then in the subsequent conclusions and measures—that the essence of a scientifically founded policy is the analysis of reality and the taking of measures based on this analysis. It was also clearly felt from the above-mentioned resolution that it was not a question of a single, occasional method confined to one problem, but of a constant method of the leadership. This, moreover, involved a new approach to human relations, an approach which, in practice, was not confined to the working class.

The need to change the former bureaucratic practice was not, of course, the only reason for adopting the resolution. The decisive factor was that pride of place was given to the political and social fact that in Hungary the working class is not just the main force behind social change, but also the possessor of State power. Its position, the approach to it, the policies carried out towards it, must all necessarily differ from the situation of the working class in capitalist countries.

On the Method

A few words on the methods used in compiling the study. An essential element was the interview, a perhaps incomplete, but approximate, equivalent to the intimate fieldwork of the West—being the simplest and most basic of all sociological methods. The teams, consisting of eight to sixteen people, or, in the case of district or county groups, of two to three people, investigated each factory at length and had conversations with the workers. No previous selection took place, except when the members of the brigades wanted to meet the non-party workers separately.

The interviews covered a broad range of subjects, all the more so since the parts of the questioner and the questioned were constantly being inter-changed. Nevertheless, in line with the aims of the resolution that initiated the project, certain groups of questions were established. What was their opinion of the policies of the Party and of the Government, considering both the general trend and also individual measures? What did they think of their standard of living and, on the broader scale, of the development of their living conditions generally? What were the changes or the problems they had noted in the management of the factories? Had they, and if so, to what extent, experienced a change in the part they played, in taking their opinions into account and putting them into effect? Did they feel and let others feel what were the rights and duties of the working class, as the leading force in the country—how far did

they realize, for instance, the importance of education, training, the schooling of their children, in playing their part? What were the forms of their entertainment, of their cultural "consumption"? What else did they need, and so on?

The teams inquired separately into the problems of women workers—both of the married and the unmarried women—and those of young workers. The numerical information gathered in the course of the interviews (on wages, welfare amenities, etc.) was also checked with the factory management.

The purpose of the survey was not by any means to compile material and create a sentimental basis for self-satisfaction, but to establish a more realistic, clearer picture founded on the workers' sincere opinions and criticism and thereby fix a starting point for new, positive measures. We shall, of course, acquaint our readers with the critical observations too, knowing that nobody will mistake the part for the whole.

Direct contact was simple and easy to establish. "Towards the end of the first shift we went into the State Printing Office," said a member of a Budapest district team, "and talked to workers coming out of the compositors' shop. We told them what we were after, that we would like to have a talk with them, and asked them if they had time to come along and sit down with us in an empty room somewhere. There were plenty of interested and willing volunteers. We started the conversation, and, before we noticed it, one and a half or two hours had passed. We would all of us have had plenty more questions and observations, both the interviewed and ourselves. The printers then suggested that we come back in a couple of days and continue where we left off."

Thousands and thousands of such meetings, as well as numerous exchanges of views between leaders and workers, went to make up the reports which finally assumed the form of a centralized report which will hereafter be referred to as the "Survey." The political experience, statistical self-analysis, agreement or disagreement of forty-five thousand workers or intellectuals who had been workers, contributed to these conversations at which still extant or now disappearing erroneous views, little pet desires and the strikingly appropriate terms of the workers' language also came to the surface.

Let us have a look at a few examples that differ considerably in their quality and weight.

There was hardly a single conversation in which those interviewed failed to give evidence of natural self-assurance, of the feeling of responsibility, and, we may add, of the requirement that they be trusted, expressed in

terms such as these: "We understand the occasional necessity of unpleasant measures. We accept this. But explain them to us, tell us openly why they are necessary and how we propose to advance from here."

Fifteen to twenty years ago the consumption of black espresso coffee had something implicitly "bourgeois" about it in working class circles. Such a view is now of the past. This change in habits and tastes was fairly well known before the project was put under way. But only these conversations could bring to light the fact that even the accepted enjoyment of a "double" or "simple" coffee could not make people forget a Budapest speciality of the pre-war years—the little restaurants, the small pubs. This was where the workers had gathered with their friends and consumed their usual wine and soda-water, occasionally a small dish of paprika stew, and this was where the great "card battles" had taken place. Since the beginning of the fifties, the small inns had gradually disappeared and their places were taken by frequently tasteless drink-shops that lacked warmth and homeliness, with room only for standing guests, and by the coffee shops. It now turned out that the workers wished to see the small inns restored. As opposed to the drink-shop with its atmosphere and furnishings that encouraged mainly the consumption of spirits, these complaints voiced the genuine demand for more cultivated forms of enjoyment, giving the opportunity for conversation in a circle of friends.

It was this "fieldwork" that drew attention to a partly etymological phenomenon: the tremendous career achieved by "Berci," the diminutive form of the Christian name Bertalan (Bartholomew). In the past few years this name has become the designation of a type of person, of an entire category of people. Why Berci of all names? That would be hard to tell. There is something jaunty, youthful, cheery and lively in this name, as opposed to the solemn, nearly comic pedantery of the rarely used Bertalan.

"Berci" is the 20 to 25 year-old worker, who has no family worries and can therefore more easily dress, buy what he wants and spend his wages on entertainment. Then comes the period when, what with housing worries and bringing up children, the worker is, unfortunately, no longer a "Berci," only to re-enter the category again years later, when the sudden worries about obtaining and furnishing a home have ceased. The undulating fate of the designation "Berci" has at all events drawn attention to the cares of a certain category of people.

Returning to the reports which summed up the field work, these were finally handed in to the district Party organizations. Here they were collated and forwarded to the Budapest Party Committee, whence, after another process of summation, they reached the Central Committee. The counties

proceeded likewise. The Central Committee then had a comprehensive Survey prepared which was followed by the resolution on the tasks to be solved, passed in October, 1958. After the publication of the Central Committee resolution the members of the brigades again called upon the factories and told the workers of the way the whole investigation had been conducted, the results it had achieved, and the measures which had been enacted in the course of and since the investigation had been concluded.

Political Questions

Before proceeding to a summary account of the most important findings and figures of the Survey, we must again draw attention to the date when the investigation was carried out and to that of the subsequent further resolutions of the Central Committee. In the two years or more that have passed since then, numerous statistical figures, and with them certain conditions and problems, have undergone a change. We shall briefly return to this later. The present issue of The New Hungarian Quarterly carries a sociographic essay* dealing with the housing conditions of the Hungarian working class.

The first part of the Survey, which is concerned with *political problems*, contains in its introduction figures on the numerical growth and distribution of the Hungarian working class. It is here stated that the number of industrial workers was 700,000 in 1938, 950,000 in 1949 and 1,279,000 in 1957. The increase thus amounts to some 80 per cent. Expressed as a proportion of all earners, the figure was 18.7 per cent in 1938 and 29 per cent in 1957. This increase is a reflection of the changed significance of industry, the policy of industrialization and the birth of new industrial settlements. At the same time it is an indication of an inevitable degree of dilution through elements coming from other social classes. Most of the new workers took jobs in the various branches of heavy industry, particularly in the coal mines. The proportion of old skilled workers is relatively higher in the light industries.

Examining the various strata of the new working class, the Survey points out that "the old organized workers and those born and bred in the working class constitute the strongest and firmest stratum politically and professionally." It is they who provide the majority of the party membership and most of the economic, State and Party leaders. In the MÁVAG works, for instance, there are 1,400 workers who have been working there for twenty years; 770 of them are Party members and they form 50 per cent of

*Vilmos Faragó: "The Place I live in". p. 94.

the membership. This is the stratum, the report declares, which most possesses "class-consciousness, collective feeling, discipline, militancy, a love of work and a love of truth."

A further stratum of the working class is made up of those who became skilled workers after the liberation. A part of these do not come up to the level of the previous stratum either professionally or from the point of view of political experience. From among the best of them many have been appointed to various positions in state and public life. A large part of the unskilled workers do not, in the nature of things, reach the level of the skilled workers, and fluctuation is greatest in this stratum.

Among the workers in the factories there are a great many who come in to work from the country-side. In coal mining, for instance, their ratio is 40 per cent, while at the Kőbánya breweries in the vicinity of Budapest, it is 50 per cent. A considerable part of these commuters, particularly in the provincial factories, belong to the veteran staff. A smaller part of them leads an "amphibious" life (working in an industrial enterprise, and living in the village, where they also have some land), and through their peculiar position they represent the small private owner's mentality in the factory.

The Survey next proceeds to the political opinions and feelings of the working class. "In the years of people's democracy," says the introduction, "fundamental changes took place in the position of the working class. From an exploited class it became the possessor of power; its economic position improved substantially, its political maturity and cultural standards grew considerably... The majority of the working class agrees with the main aims of the Party. It agrees with working-class power, the building of socialism and the struggle to preserve peace. There has been a considerable growth in confidence in, and friendship for, the Soviet Union and the socialist camp; international proletarian solidarity has deepened in its ranks. It speaks with appreciation of the results achieved since the counter-revolution and of the rapid process of consolidation. The avoidance of an inflation gave birth to confidence. The workers approve of the fact that the Party speaks courageously and candidly of the difficulties and does not indulge in rash promises, but fulfils that which it does promise. The workers agree with the stand taken by the leadership of the Party against making a dinstinction between members of the Party and non-members with regard to their civic rights. They approve of the steadying of the rate of production, of the suppression of badgering, and of the gradual disappearance of administrative measures formerly employed in place of methods of persuasion.

The Survey, at the same time, states that "particularly because of the practice and experience of previous years," it was still possible—beside the recognition of the measures taken—to observe a degree of "reticence and expectation" at the time of the inquiry. Many people are beginning to look upon the activities of the Party and of the Government "with the eyes of an owner," acknowledging the achievements and criticizing the negative phenomena that impede progress. And what is essential in this criticism, what is one of the vital characteristics of the whole change is that the majority of the workers criticize the faults not from the outside but, to use the phrasing of the Survey, "justly and from within the premised system." Among other things it is this viewing things from within that makes it really understandable that during the chats the workers put forward proposals for the solution of so many questions of national and local importance.

The workers consider that "at the highest level the leading role of the working class is sufficiently ensured," but at lower levels the Party's policy and resolutions are not always carried out properly. Certain manifestations of bureaucracy and wire-pulling are strongly condemned.

The workers displayed impatience over the difficulties of the housing situation and certain shortcomings of the pension system. The pension system in force at the time of the Survey, prescribed a 60-year age limit and a total of only 10 years' employment since 1945. The amount of the old-age pension was fifty per cent of earnings during the last year of employment plus one additional per cent for each year worked after 1945. While this system greatly favoured those who had earned their living as private merchants or tradesmen prior to 1945, in fact even after 1945, it put those at a disadvantage who before 1945—many of them from 25 to 40 years—performed heavy physical labour or were employed as white-collar workers. (It should be noted that the system here criticized, which was put into force in 1955, was incomparably superior, both as regards the number of insured and the benefits paid, to the pre-war old-age pension system.) The new pension law introduced as a result of the Survey (we shall later return to this) has remedied these grievances.

They similarly objected that not everywhere were ethics of socialist trade being observed, they took exception to the behaviour of the sales staff in certain of the shops in the working class disctricts and objected to the frequent lack of cleanliness in factories. Characteristic of political interest was the fact that the workers expressed the wish that lectures and talks should regularly be organized for them on the most important internal and foreign political questions.

The change in the social system has been accompanied by a decisive change in the position of women, including working women. This manifests itself not only in the form of equal wages, social benefits, family allowances and the establishment of nurseries, but also in the broad possibilities for participation in production, for choosing a career and for asserting themselves. At the same time the position of working women, just as in the rest of the industrial countries, is made difficult in many instances by household cares; such shortcomings as the inadequate mechanization of household tasks and the occasional failure to organize the nurseries on the basis of the regional principle, cause unnecessary expenditure of energy for women.

At the time of the Survey 60 per cent of the membership of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party was made up of people who were originally workers (since then this proportion has increased).

It is interesting to note that the ratio of skilled workers within the Party is higher in the provincial factories than in Budapest. The reason for this is partly that since the capital houses the centres of the State, council, administrative and armed services and since the best workers were, after the assumption of power, sent to work in these bodies, they no longer appear as skilled workers in the statistics. At the same time, as the Survey shows, it was here in the capital also that the most declassé individuals collected. The ratio of Party members is highest in the heavy industrial plants (the Metallurgical Works at Ózd, the Steel Works at Salgótarján, the Lenin Metallurgical Works at Diósgyőr and the Works at Csepel).

In its examination of the leading role of the working class, the Survey states: "The political and economic results achieved over the past thirteen years prove that the Hungarian working class, as the leading class of the dictatorship of the proletariat, possesses all the characteristics that are necessary to the government and direction of the country." Of the members of the National Assembly 45 per cent, of the leading personnel in the State machinery 51 per cent, of the cadres of the armed forces and the judiciary over 55 per cent are workers. Among the heads of industrial enterprises the ratio is 60—65 per cent.

"The majority of the workers placed in leading positions have stood their ground, they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skill and have proved themselves leaders."

At the same time, the position and firm establishment of managers from among the workers was hindered by the former incorrect practice of frequent transfers. (In one provincial factory that had been established no more than seven years earlier, there had, up to the time when the report was drawn up, been six directors and six party secretaries in succession.)

On the Economic Position of the Working Class

Generally speaking the Survey cites the following facts as the most characteristic features of the change in the economic situation: the fear of uncertainty in the future has ceased, there is essentially no unemployment, most of the young people preparing for a trade are able to find suitable jobs, and the lives of old people now becoming pensionable are much more secure than before.

Between 1938 and 1949 real wages and real incomes rose by some 20 per cent. The Survey publishes the following statistical table to illustrate subsequent changes:

	Wages per earner	*Real income per head*
1949	100	100
1950	101.3	105.7
1951	89.7	98.4
1952	82.3	94.5
1953	87	99.2
1954	102.3	120.2
1955	106	126.5
1956	118.3	137.6
1957	138.4	158.5

Here are some further details of the analysis of the economic situation:

The increase in real wages has not been uniform. Those of people engaged in hard physical labour, of semi-skilled workers, of women and young people have increased more rapidly.

The most favourable development has been in working-class consumption, particularly the supply of foodstuffs and of clothing. Nearly all strata of the workers consume a great deal more meat, lard and sugar than before. The consumption of foodstuffs by the whole of the population, including the working class, is considerable as measured in calories and surpasses that of the highly developed countries. Clothing, particularly that of the children, is considerably better than it was before the liberation. The workers' requirements have undergone a change, especially since the wage increases of 1957. The demand for a whole series of industrial products has increased by leaps and bounds.

"Compared to the numerical increase in the working class, there has been a lag in health services, in the development of children's institutions and in the adequate improvement of working conditions in the factories." As compared to before the war health conditions have greatly improved

in every respect. But neither the public health organization nor the network of health institutions have been able to keep pace with the enormous growth in the number of insured and with the increased requirements.

The people who live best are those without children, families with two or more earners, families with few non-earning members, and those with high incomes, notably among the miners. Workers who are employed in town but live in a village, or have land in common with their families, also have high incomes.

The situation of young couples, particularly if they have children, is more difficult. Their greatest worry is the housing shortage and the need to purchase the durable goods necessary for their households. Family allowances, for the time being, do not reach the desired level.

Housing has improved since the liberation. The former slum areas have been eliminated, many houses have been built; and not only new houses, but whole housing developments, new sections of town and new towns as well. The distribution of housing, as compared to 1945, has changed, and the cultural standards of the housing being built for the workers is higher. Despite this, the housing situation, especially that of the workers, is not satisfactory. The reason for this is that the tasks are greater than the similar ones the Western countries are struggling with. From the start, there was the double legacy of the Horthy regime: the utter desolation and overcrowding that could only be etched by a Dickens, the uncivilized darkness of the wooden barracks and huts beyond the bright lights of the boulevards, and the incomparable destruction caused by the war. (Our readers may find a few relevant data in this issue of our periodical in the sociographic essay by Vilmos Faragó which we referred to earlier.) After that no small difficulties were presented by technical problems such as the relative obsoleteness of the Hungarian building industry and by raw material shortages, such as in timber and cement. (Partly as the result of this Survey, the Danube Cement Works being built under the Second Five Year Plan will supply an adequate amount of cement, which will ensure a realistic basis for the 15-year housing plan, itself the result of the resolutions adopted following the Survey.) Finally, the circumstance that in the early 1950's not enough attention was devoted to housing undoubtedly had a detrimental effect.

"This question," states the report, "is more serious today than is that of living standards generally and has already become a social and political issue."

The wage increases in 1957 "have eased the major part of the disproportions in earnings and have thus resulted in a more favourable distribution

of labour, a greater esteem for skill and a reduction in the fluctuation of labour. The reorganization of the wage structure has had a favourable effect on the living conditions of the working class and hence on their political attitude."

Benefits over and above wages and salaries amount to 40 per cent of the wages paid. They include health services, social insurance, family allowances, children's institutions, and so on.

The Cultural Situation

The Survey stresses that the cultural transformation has been on a very large scale and of revolutionary significance both as to quantity and as to quality. The pre-war illiteracy of 9.6 per cent of the population (nearly 750,000 individuals) has been practically abolished. "With the introduction of the multilateral school, the basic education of the people has been broadened. A differentiated system of secondary schools has been set up. Along with the establishment of specialized matriculation institutes, evening and correspondence courses, and the organization of adult education facilities, this system has helped satisfy the requirements of political, economic and cultural development."

During the 1957/58 school year 1,259,000 children attended the multilateral schools. Whereas in 1937/38 the total number of pupils in the 258 secondary schools was 52,000, and only 3.4 per cent of them were of working class origin, in the 1957/58 school year the number of pupils in 449 secondary schools was 126,500, and among them 33.2 per cent were of working class origin.

Analysing the position of pupils of working class origin, the report mentions that there are working class parents who do not understand "how necessary it is in the age of modern techniques for working people to acquire a higher education and are not yet always willing to make sacrifices in the interests of their children's schooling if this schooling does not immediately lead to a good job." Working class students—the Survey points out—receive less parental help in their studies than those of, say, intellectual parentage.

One of the most urgent problems of education today is the insufficient number of classrooms.

In the school year 1958/59, the number of university and college students was 31,200 (daytime section, 23,400; evening and correspondence courses 7,800). The proportion of students of working class origin was 32.4 per cent, while that of students whose parents were peasants amounted to 19.6 per

cent. (Readers might be interested to learn that in the school year 1937/38 there were 11,700 university and college students in Hungary, of which only 2.7 per cent came from working class or poor peasant families. It clearly results from a comparison of figures that the absolute number of university and college students coming from families of the intelligentsia and the petty bourgeosie is greater in present-day Hungary than it was before the war.)

From the 1949/50 school year to the end of the 1956/57 school year our higher educational institutions trained 3,748 engineers of working class origin (29.7 per cent of the graduates), 1,901 economists (39.9 per cent), 1,204 agronomists (22.8 per cent), and 1,167 doctors (17.5 per cent).

The Survey then adduces detailed figures to show the changes that have taken place in the cultural situation of the workers, without omitting those aspects where development has come to a temporary standstill. Regular school instruction for adult workers was broadened mainly after 1948. Since the liberation some half a million working people have attended institutes of higher education. Many of them did not complete the studies they had commenced and "fell by the wayside." In the academic year of 1957/58, a total of 12,790 people attended adult courses at multilateral schools and there were 32,740 students at adult secondary school courses. Thirty-four per cent of the latter were factory workers. Compared to the past, these figures are very significant, but in comparison to the total number of workers they are far from satisfactory.

At theatres and variety shows 45 per cent of the audiences are workers. The ratio for dramatic theatres is 35—40 per cent, for concert halls and the opera 20—24 per cent, for lighter variety and musical shows 65—70 per cent.

As a result of the cultural revolution large masses of the working class take an active part in cultural work. The basis for this was laid by the establishment of the network of factory cultural centres and libraries in the years following 1950. There are 289 cultural centres and 2,333 cultural halls being operated by the trade unions, with 1,788 stages (not counting the similar state institutions which are also at the disposal of the workers). It is especially the old workers' centres that are bubbling with cultural activity (at Pesterzsébet, at the Csepel workers' centre, at the MÁVAG works and so on). On the basis of decades of workers' amateur traditions and the increased possibilities for their exercise, the number of non-professional cultural groups has increased to several thousands. There are many choirs, dance ensembles and dramatic groups, organized by the trade unions, as well as numerous amateur art circles, puppet theatre groups and orchestras, with more than fifty thousand participants. There are, however,

strikingly few of the traditional workers' choirs. The problem could be solved by recruiting young people. Factory dramatic groups are very popular. There are 4,228 factory libraries (there were only 57 in 1927) with an inventory of 3,703,000 books. In 1957 these libraries had 682,000 readers who borrowed altogether nearly five million volumes. The number of persons attending the popular scientific lectures annually exceeded 2—2.5 million.

What Followed the Survey

In the preceding pages we have attempted in condensed form to recount the most important findings of the Survey.

Did the investigation and the summary of its results modify the picture of the Hungarian working class that has generally been accepted in Hungary? It would be difficult simply to answer "yes" or "no" without any qualifying remarks. The colour effects, the outlines were the same before the inquiry. All this, however, was frequently present in the public mind, including the thoughts of some of the Party and State officials, only in a pale, lifeless, indistinct blur. It was a dust-clad mural which, to stick to the metaphor, has now been wiped clean.

The proportions have been more clearly outlined, and the details are richer. The investigation itself and the method by which it was conducted have afforded experiences—both to the investigators and the "investigated" —that have contributed to developing their class consciousness. In this sense, the question that has been posed may be answered in the affirmative.

The sociological character of the investigation is apparent from the facts that have been elicited in the course of the investigation. As such, it may provide a useful incentive towards the solution of the manifold tasks of this branch of science. It follows, however, from the situation of the Hungarian working class that the investigation had to go beyond the limits where even the best of social research projects or Western public opinion polls must stop because of different social circumstances. The investigation did not come to an end when the various teams had sent their fundamental observations and critical findings to the State organs concerned—the ministries, councils, and so on. The aim of forwarding them was not to arouse an interest in sociology, however desirable, but to have remediable complaints remedied.

The completion of the whole project and the compilation of the Survey was followed by the further resolution of the Central Committee of the

Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. This resolution, on the basis of the results of the inquiry and within the bounds set by economic and other conditions, immediately determined which were the tasks to be undertaken. It was decided to elaborate a fifteen-year long-range plan for housing construction and at the same time to encourage cooperative building, to improve the position of teachers and of those employed in the health services, to increase family allowances and improve pensions; not to mention such smaller and, on the national scale, less significant problems as the setting up of cultured small inns in working class districts. These decisions are in the process of being carried out and the housing program is under way. Family allowances have been considerably increased for families with three or more children and for solitary mothers who are supporting one or more children.

According to the provisions of the new pension law which came into force in 1959 and took over many of the provisions of preceding legislation, men may retire on pension at the age of 60 and women at the age of 55, and certain sections of workers employed on jobs that are harmful to health (miners, foundry workers, chemical workers, and so on) even earlier. Workers who reach pensionable age are entitled to a pension if they have been employed for a total of 14 years, but the number of years of employment required increases gradually and will be 25 in 1970. Those who have not worked the full period but have at least ten years of service, receive a partial pension. The amount of the pension is fifty per cent of the monthly salary of the last two years of employment (this will gradually rise to five years) to which one per cent of the basic pension will be added for every year worked since 1927. Thus the new regulations, though justly taking into consideration the number of years employed, and realizing the principle of progression, did not result in any worsening of the position of the strata of employees who had once been merchants or tradesmen.

But the Survey had not only such tangible consequences as can be expressed in forints and cubic metres, and if we stopped here the picture would be somewhat one-sided. From the tremendous amount of material surveyed and duly analysed, scientific Marxist conclusions were drawn and new tasks designated in connection with every aspect of the area surveyed. This followed inevitably from the fact that the inquiry dealt with human relationships, political, economic and cultural definitions and revealed them in their own reality and multiplicity. We have already spoken of the profound change which has taken place in the composition of the Hungarian working class. The features of this change are revealed by the Survey in an almost documentary manner. A commonly known

political fact has now been bolstered by means of a scientific inquiry. We refer to the fact that this working class is no longer identical with the pre-war working class. It is not only its position in political and social life that we have in mind but primarily the fact that its composition and stratification have necessarily altered. For the proper definition of this stratification it is not even enough to know how many people flocked from agriculture into industry. For by the beginning of the 1950's more and more young people, for example, came from the village into industry who had no background of several years of agricultural work and for whom the factory represented the initiation into work. Similarly a part of the workers lived through, "experienced" the Horthy era, but the younger people have no firsthand experience of these years. The difference in environment, memories and experience naturally involves a different state of consciousness and outlook. This fact has also to be taken into account. Moreover, since the old, organized section of the working class has the greatest industrial and political experience, this stratum may and must be primarily relied on in the designation and solution of the tasks to be tackled.

It was in like manner that, proceeding from a knowledge of reality, those considerations of a political character were born which represented one of the most important results of the whole inquiry.

The resolution of the Central Committee stresses that the political contacts between the Party and the masses of the workers should be strengthened, that information should be available more widely and that its standards should be improved. The resolution lays down that lectures of a generally educative character should be organized in the factories and that more attention should be devoted to the cultural and general education of young unskilled workers and of those living at workers' hostels. Before deciding on questions of greater import, those concerned should spend some time on the spot and study the problems there. The leading idea behind the resolution is to "pay undeviating attention to the everyday cares of the working people."

The Changed Role of the Working Class

The character and trend of the investigation was thus determined by the changed role of the Hungarian working class, but it is also this changed role that increasingly determines the feelings the workers themselves entertain with respect to their status. The progress of this trend cannot be thwarted by the views and attitudes that have been inherited from the previous form of society, or even by the negative phenomena that have

arisen in the new society. Thus the trend cannot be held up by the fact that some of the unskilled workers are politically and culturally more backward and possibly indifferent, or that they cannot yet look upon the country "with the eyes of an owner"; that part of the workers who at the time of the survey led an amphibious life—as previously defined—did not take part fully in the social and political life of either the factory or the village, partly because of the great deal of travelling they did and partly because of their land; or that there are young workers who, though they live incomparably better and more securely than did their parents at their age, are nevertheless arrogant, demanding, and concerned mainly with having a good time.

All these are negative features and at the same time problems that require to be solved. Their reality cannot be denied, but they are more than counterbalanced by another, vastly more important, cumulative, and ever present reality, as experienced in every day life: The simple and self-evident knowledge that the road to promotion is open through training and study. the continuous awareness that ever more fellow workers are becoming army officers, engineers, factory managers or council secretaries, the indisputable sense of security, and the priceless knowledge that every career and every office is open to children who have the necessary abilities.

And it is here that the small minority of arrogant youngsters comes in, which makes itself so conspicious through its noisy conduct. For the great majority, precisely because of its grasp of the principle of "study equals success, no study equals falling behind," regards school and work much more consciously than its predecessors of like age in the past. (Perhaps an imaginary work-team of Hungarian parents could write a humorously-serious sociographic study about this.) Moreover, a great uniting force is represented by the YCL (Young Communist League), which at the time of the Survey had 313,096 members in its 9,379 local organizations. "The best of the young workers are in the YCL," we may read in the report, "among them a large number of workers rewarded for special merit. In various political and production campaigns they have achieved considerable results. In accomplishing the great tasks ahead of us, it is they that can be counted on."

We have cited examples designed to give a sense of this constantly effective reality. Any enumeration of this type would, however, be deficient, if it did not contain a factor that is effective through its very absence. We have in mind the disappearance of the upper classes. At first sight, there is nothing new or surprising about this. Why do we have to recall this fact? After all, the socialist societies are all passing through this

stage, and the bourgeois world has heard quite enough about it. This is true, but what is involved here is more than a decisive and well-known social and political conditon. This "more" is to be found in the "change of climate" that has spread diffusely through the general patterns of human behaviour and reactions and that is often not given sufficient attention even by Hungarian social research workers.

It is notorious that the classes referred to have a considerable influence over the working class and especially the petty bourgeoisie, even in the most democratic bourgeois societies. This relates not only to the financial aspects, the instruments of production, the relations between employer and employed, but in at least the same measure to the thousand and one features of segregation and "superiority" that are apparent in the social, cultural and recreational spheres, to the influence of a certain type of taste, behaviour and outlook. Hardly anyone would deny the subtle, constantly effective influence of these imponderables, appearing side by side with the actual differences of power and of wealth. It is now also part of the essence of things that there are no more places of entertainment or recreation, sports establishments and beauty spots, careers, secondary schools or universities completely, or almost completely, reserved for "gentle folk" and their children. In present-day Hungarian society these features have hardly any significance, especially as far as the working class is concerned, and this is a liberating factor of immeasurable value in the process of democratization and increasing awareness.

The present and the past both serve to shape the workers' sense of their position and their realization of the fact that they are members of the leading class of a changed society. We have no intention of presenting a false and pretentious picture, as though the Hungarian worker were a figure in a Baroque painting, with a paper ribbon streaming from his mouth and bearing such slogans as "I am the leading force" or "My labour builds Socialism." It may well be that the "leading force" is at that moment bending over his machine and criticizing the local council, or even the Party and the Government, because a coffee house on one of the boulevards is closed for alterations for the third time, or he may be grumbling "that bloke was a worker too, and now look how he's yelling at us," by way of comment on the behaviour of the director, who has forgotten his origin and his task. Such things happen, but they do not impair the trend, the ever firmer contours of the general picture, which show that the majority of the workers are aware of their place and their role.

We have thought it necessary to develop this theme at some length, because it is precisely these concomitants of the changed social position

that are furthest from the everyday experience of the Western reader. True, the economic and technical developments of the last 10-15 years, certain achievements in welfare services and the present level of employment in, say, Britain have led to the appearance of not a few similar features in the portraits of the workers of various countries. Although, to stick to the example of Britain, the standard of living of the workers there is still higher than that of their Hungarian colleagues, the "revolution of rising expectations" is a term that is characteristic also of the Hungarian worker's planning of his own future. True, as yet it is exceptional for him to say: "next on my list is a car," but there are very frequent instances of "next on my list is a washing machine, or a fridge." Indeed, we shall come closer to the sociological truth if we say that in Hungary too these are not so much exciting as natural items on his list of wishes. Even though the car may not be next on the list, we may well conclude that, for the Hungarian worker, it is doubly true and even more universally valid to say that "there is no more of: 'What was good for my father is good for me', it is rather; 'I have many things which my father never thought of,' or 'I have achieved something which I thought would be impossible for me.'" * Similarly, to take just one more example, it is a valid observation for the new Hungarian worker, too, that "part of his home and family centredness is his intense interest in his offspring." **

We referred, at the beginning of the preceding paragraph, to the secondary consequences of the disappearance of the upper classes and to the lack of experience of Western readers regarding them. What Professor Edward Shils of the University of Chicago writes in the issue of the Twentieth Century already quoted in another context, on the role of class society, class prejudice and snobbery in impeding the progress of science, can only serve to strengthen us in our conviction of the soundness of our view. Writing of sociology students at the London School of Economics in the latter forties, "who came from the working and black-coated classes," he states that "these often gentle and sweet, sometimes felinely distrustful young people, for the most part felt themselves ill at ease, uncertain and unconfident of their ability to do something of which their elders and their examiners disapproved. They too felt themselves to be 'outsiders,' and natural shyness was accentuated by a sense of remoteness from the pillars of British society." ***

* Ferdinand Zweig: The New Factory Worker, Twentieth Century, May 1960.
** Ibid.
*** Edward Shils: On the Eve. Twentieth Century, May 1960.

These circumstances, feelings, and moods are truly unknown in the Hungary of today. The children of workers sit in the benches of the universities by their own right, and since they have for many years now not had more "distinguished" classes above them, they are not "a bit uneasy." Since there is none of the old "establishment" and its own, peculiar influence, the professors themselves cannot see in their students proof of the fact that they have been exiled "from the golden triangle of Oxford, Cambridge and London." They cannot, therefore encourage "the students' vague sense of being cave-dwelling outcasts."

It is, of course, no merit of the university students who stem from the Hungarian working class that they do not "feel alien to their own society" and do not "feel themselves cast out by it." They cannot help it—this is their society. If we were to look for a negative feature, we might rather point to the fact that some of them take it too much as a matter of course that their position is many times more advantageous and comfortable than was that of their parents.

We have picked out a few quotations from the enjoyable paper by Professor Shils of Chicago not because we wish to enter into an argument with him over the future of British sociological research. This is not our task. It is simply that we have found his impressive remarks on the reflection of the "secondary" influence of the upper classes to be in full agreement with our earlier experiences.

As far as the nation-wide investigation is concerned, it has still not been concluded. A year after the appearance of the resolution referred to at the beginning of this article, several district and county committees of the Party started new, partial projects. Thus in the second half of 1960 the Budapest Committee of the Party is examining the situation of the railwaymen, on the basis of the central resolution.

It is a truism to say that a knowledge of the facts is the first condition for all political action and all scientific endeavour. Yet this simple truth is sometimes forgotten. The Survey that we have discussed shows no signs of this forgetfulness, and the investigations now taking place indicate that a knowledge of the facts is the point of departure for the Hungarian political leadership. Not only political life will be the richer as a result. Those engaged in sociology have obtained valuable material and encouragement. Hungarian society has need of a more complete knowledge of its changing self. Now, more than ever, the first task of the sociologist is intimate fieldwork.

THE PLACE I LIVE IN

Notes on a new housing development in Budapest

by

VILMOS FARAGÓ

"My house is my castle," the heads of two hundred and ten Hungarian families might well say, as they smugly lean on their elbows out of the windows of the house I live in. They might say this, if in the blissful pride of possession they were not rendered uncertain by the consideration that in their position it is quite likely that the democratic *plural*, "Our house is our castle," is even more fitting.

Our house.

Eight hundred of us live in it! Amidst peaceful good neighbourliness, in fact, amidst a sense of brotherhood that might be compared even more to that of the pioneer city founders: we settled down together amidst its walls still smelling of fresh paint, at Christmas time, 1955.

Our house and *our* housing development.

The housing development of four thousand people for whom 1,052 flats in twenty-one newly erected buildings provided the framework in which to begin their life anew and live it in security. Coming as we did, from crowded sublet rooms, strife-torn shared apartments, or the flats of mothers-in-law pleasant by constraint, practically all of us young couples—moving here was a historic event for us, a conquest of the land.

Of course, historic events are most often ostentatiously unfestive, the commonplaceness of the details enjoins even the sentimentally inclined to prosaic acts. "Oh, if only that brand new cabinet doesn't get scratched while it is being moved! Tell me, have you seen my brown half-shoes anywhere? Heavens, one of the fruit jars has got broken!" These are pleasantly agreeable cares, but consume all our energy. Meanwhile the December rain keeps coming down cheerlessly, the furniture gets soaked on the lorries, and we stumble to the gate with our traps among frightening puddles and crushed bricks; I look in vain for a glimmer of common joy on the faces of future neighbours. Yet how nice it would be—and how nice it would

sound in a report—if intoxicated by the certainty of possession we would at least clasp hands. No. We measure each other with indifferent and suspicious looks, put on a care-worn face and cautiously close the door behind us, to keep the others from looking in. Are we perhaps ashamed, even before ourselves, to admit how blissfully happy we are? Of course, we are.

And the walls! They are still alien, bare and so coldly hostile, that when the fire flares up for the first time in the tile stoves we stand around them for protection—it is the first thing we feel to be ours. The fire.

To recollect the moments which gradually consecrated everything as our own would be a task worthy of a writer. For my part, I can only contribute mosaics that barely fit together: a glimpse into the life of a housing project.

But first let us make a detour.

Revolution in Desires

In a very short while, the number of inhabitants of our capital will reach two million. Growth in the number of residents has been so swift for years that, although it is explicable, still it cannot be regarded as entirely normal. The explanation lies in the stormy transformation and mechanization of agriculture, which thrust hundreds of thousands of workers on the capital. The natural increase in population swells the number of inhabitants by nine thousand annually, and "immigration" increases the population considerably, too. The thousands of factories and construction sites offer work to this mass, but we are incapable of satisfying the *housing requirement* of all, at least for the time being. As a consequence of the armed struggle towards the end of the war, in 1944 and 1945, 80,000 homes were seriously damaged or destroyed, twenty-three per cent of the houses of pre-war Budapest. This was a terrible loss and its replacement a tremendous task. We started to cope with it, of course, but the unequal balance between desires and possibilities will only be restored by the fifteen-year housing program. One million homes will be built during this time throughout the country, and thirty-nine new housing projects in Budapest, with 150 thousand homes. In the past ten years for every one hundred marriages only 26.8 homes were built, whereas—just to maintain the existing level—43 should have been built.

Behind the growth in demand for new flats, another factor is playing a role which we usually include under the heading of "growing pains." As a necessary consequence of the social-economic changes, the desire for improvement in the way of life manifests itself with tremendous force. Families living in a small flat want a bigger one, newly-weds want a separate one of their own—as a natural right! Anyone who knows that the social

and political situation even twenty years ago in Hungary forced the masses to be extremely modest in their desires, can understand the great joy which this revolution in desires represents. At the low point of the great world economic depression in 1933, there were nine thousand empty flats in Budapest, and a further eighteen thousand notices of termination of lease were pending in the courts, while at the same time fifteen per cent of the population huddled in sublet rooms and night lodgings; indeed, the ten per cent who "slept under the bridges" were not even as well off as that.

And now? Ever since apartment houses have been nationalized, notices of termination of lease for failure to pay rent have virtually become a thing of the past in court practice. A person can pay his rent almost from his "pocket money": rents do not run higher than five per cent of the family incomes! The rent in forints of the old flats is only fifteen or twenty per cent higher than the rent in pengős in 1939, whereas the pengő-forint conversion rate is 12. The monthly rent of the new flats is 2.70 forints per square metre and the highest rent to be found is no more than 216 forints. This explains why in Budapest 90,000 single men and women are clinging to their leases, so that we are faced with the strange situation that, though the average number of persons per family is 3.18, the average number of individuals per flat is only 2.7.

The Landscape

There is something pardonably cheap in the view that spreads before me from my window, like a colourful health poster acquainting bored passengers in the waiting-room of a railway station with the most perfect panorama imaginable of a hygienic environment: turfy parks in the wide embrace of ochre coloured blocks of buildings, the grass a shrill green, the young trees nodding their crowns of leaves, neat gravelled drives, two wonderful sand-pits,—the chief "work place" of the innumerable children. Further away, to the East, on the opposite bank of the Danube: the tremendous forest of smoke stacks of the Csepel Iron and Steal Works. And these two together, symbols of honest rest and feverish work, are exactly like the vision of the socialist future as envisaged by the zealous poster painters.

Our housing development was built on the right bank of the Danube in the southern tip of the Buda side of the capital. To the north the mass of Gellért Hill blocks the view, to the west and south is a range of gentle hills which is dotted with modern villas and buildings imitating *art nouveau* castles from the beginning of the century, and to the east is

Csepel Island with its puffing giant plants and the vast warehouses of the Danube free port.

Four or five thousand years ago an impenetrable marsh stretched here, its pools filled with fresh water by the spring floods of the Danube. Later on the bed of the river wandered eastwards and the marsh gradually dried out.

And then the history of the region could begin in earnest.

A Bit of History

First, men of the Copper, then of the Bronze Age, risked coming down from the hills surrounding present-day Buda. They fished in the Danube and began primitive agriculture on the splendid humus—the spades of the archeologists not long ago unearthed their food caches and dwellings dug into the ground.

Celts and Illyrians later overran the region, warrior clans with a higher culture, who lived here unmolested until the first century B. C. Then the Roman legions made their appearance and occupied the quadrangle between the Danube and the Drava, adding to their vast empire the new province of *Pannonia*. From that time on the history of our immediate vicinity becomes as exciting as a romantic adventure novel.

The adventure novel begins in 6 B. C. That was when Emperor Tiberius decided to conquer the Markoman realm which had developed in the territory of present-day Czechoslovakia. He turned his legions northward, but they had hardly reached the Danube in the vicinity of what is today the Austrian capital of Vienna, when the native population of Pannonia, the Celts and Illyrians, unexpectedly revolted. The legions turned back, and in a murderous struggle lasting three years they finally quelled the rebellion. Tiberius breathed a sigh of relief, but his anger did not subside. He decreed stringent measures. Among others, he removed the native population from the easily fortified heights and resettled them on the flats. That was when the region of our estate was populated: the conquered and humiliated residents of the present Gellért Hill, the Celt-Eravisks, withdrew to this area and founded a new village. In order to keep an eye on these restless elements, and further to maintain control of the north-south and east-west military highway, a cavalry detachment of 500 men was settled here as well. Within a few years the stone buildings of the local garrison, the "castra", were erected and towered threateningly over the hovels of the Eravisks.

Now the settlement began to develop. In the third century it already had eight or nine thousand inhabitants. A separate quarter for craftsmen

came into existence: the workshop of armourers, wheelwrights and wagon-makers. This region like the whole province of Pannonia, became "Romanized." And then, in 360, armies of barbaric horsemen, the Sarmatians, made their appearance on the eastern bank of the Danube which represented the "limes." In one irresistable assault the horde swept across the limes. Killing, robbing, pillaging, they razed the flourishing Pannonian settlements—ours too. Their inhabitants fled pell-mell towards the West, never to return again. The ruins of the "castra" and the settlement were buried by the earth and covered by vegetation, and the region slipped into sixteen hundred years of undisturbed slumber. What the name of the settlement was we shall never know. Our archeologists have searched the soil in vain, nothing came to light but tools, weapons, household vessels—and these objects remained mute. Only one among them has said anything, a bronze letter of discharge, belonging to one *Octavius Cucci Filius*. He was a Roman soldier, he had fought and bled in the legions of the emperors for twenty-five years, and here, where he had settled down in hopes of spending his remaining years in peace, he was struck down by a Sarmatian arrow. And here beside him was where his wife also died, whose beautiful barbaric name has such a familiar ring in these parts even today: *Maricca*.

The 1600 years of rest were indeed undisturbed, because, although the waves of the great migration stormed by here (according to a chronicle in verse from the Middle Ages this was also the place where the Magyar settlers crossed the Danube), they did not stop even for a brief period.

After the story of Octavius Cucci Filius, it was the spadeful of earth with which—around 1950—the building of our housing project began that opened a new chapter here.

Grown ups and Children

The building operation lasted for a long time, nearly six years. It was interrupted or slowed down a number of times: faithfully following the irregular breathing of our national economy at that time. It was as if the responsible persons themselves had not known at the outset how many houses should be built and how far the estate should extend. In its realization—fortunately—there are hardly any visible traces of the initial uncertainty, and our housing estate gives the impression of order and planning. Twenty-one apartment houses are lined up side by side and behind one another in a loose pavilion-like pattern, interspersed with broad expanses of lawns and parks; no traces are left of the dark, dreary tenement yards. Roomi-

ness, air and sunshine everywhere. The housing development will gain its final aspect—that of a novel park community—when the vast number of saplings planted on the little streets and squares branch out into large trees.

The residential buildings are not high (most of them consisting of two or three floors only) but they seem rather to spread out lengthwise. Their style, unfortunately, embodies a dull compromise between conservative and modern elements: unadorned and unsophisticated, without the unlaboured poise of modern buildings. They are representatives of a terminated and fortunately short-lived architectural era, it was thought that the noble simplicity of Hungarian classicist architecture could be expressed and revived in the "idiom" of ferro-concrete. It is pleasant to live in them, of course, because the interior arrangement of the flats is practical; they have only one fault: the rooms are too small. Although this is a concomitant of modernity, in this instance it was not considerations of style that fashioned them in this manner but a much more prosaic factor, that of economy. There are not enough flats in Budapest, let us therefore build small rooms, in order that as many flats as possible may be packed into one house. Sensible reasoning this, although it is quite likely that twenty years from now we shall recall this with some embarrassment. Our only excuse is that it was born of necessity.

By this time, we are fairly well provided with consumer services. The amount of food we consume is enormous, our self-service grocery and delicatessen store itself has a monthly turnover of 600,000 forints, and to this may be added a vegetable and fruit shop, a dairy shop, a butcher's, a tobacconist's and a restaurant, which some nature-loving officials of the catering industry named the "Deer." There is a shop that looks after our requirements in textiles; a bootmakers' cooperative keeps our shoes in repair; a barber shop and ladies' hairdressing salon see that we are well groomed and attractive, and if after all these we have any money left, we may still pay our respects to the goddess Fortuna, for we even have a shop where lottery and football-pool tickets are sold. Do we indeed have any money left for such frivolities? And what about savings? After all, we must purchase a new radio, rugs, a TV set (the number of antennas on the rooftops is increasing), a motorcycle, a car (the garages are being built beside the houses), the old furniture ought to be exchanged for something more modern, we have to go to the cinema and the theatre, and heavens, there is yet the washing machine, the vacuum cleaner and the floor buffer to be acquired. In addition one goes to Lake Balaton in the summer, and one's wife really can't wear her "last year's rags," can she?

Oh, I almost forgot about rent! For a one-room flat with kitchen and amenities the rent is 90 forints, for two rooms it is 134, and for three rooms it is 190 forints per month. What about the gas and electricity bill, and the telephone (where there is one)? This too makes up from 100 to 150 forints. Is there anything left? As a test I inquired from five families, and found that three of them have savings-account books, with not very significant sums deposited but enough to provide a secure basis for the realization of attainable dreams. Attainable dreams? They include the complete mechanization of the household, a refrigerator, or the redecoration of the flat. ("You know, they have those modern, monotone sprayed walls, that's the kind we would like.") So it appears there *is* something left.

And the children? Did the planners think about them? Because it was evident that there would be a spate of them. Flats were allotted only to married couples, and first of all those with children. This was the principle followed. Practice has borne it out, only twenty per cent of the families are childless, and the four thousand residents may be divided roughly as follows: 2500 grown-ups (husbands, wives and grandparents), 500 youths (15—25 years) and 1000 children. (The average number of inhabitants per flat is 3.81, that is, more than one whole person above the average for the capital!) So of course the planners thought of the children. The whole housing project, with its playgrounds, sand-pits, swings and its wonderful riverbank full of adventure are one vast "kindergarten." However, since man's life does not consist of play only, a school with sixteen classrooms has also been built. Its interior is attractive and modern, but its exterior—with its flat, heavy "monumentality"—is the same type of miscarried creation as the exterior of the blocks of flats. Within one year it became evident that the school was too small. Two pavilion-type buildings were therefore added to it, each with four classrooms and now there is room enough for all the children. And the very little ones? To relieve the burden on the factory and state crèches nearby, a state crèche was built on our housing development, a veritable "wonder palace" inside and out. What pleasure to be an infant in it! Who would have thought that man can be separated into "classes" from the age of three months to that of three years? There is a separate room here for the "cradle dwellers", another for the "grown-up" toddlers, and yet another for the "veterans" from two to three years who sometimes dash around madly and at others sit in a corner behind a heap of coloured blocks and, with an inspired expression on their faces, build the finest skyscrapers in the world. Parents off for work deposit their offspring here in the morning, and the nurses prove to be perfect substitutes for "mommy" until night: they diaper them,

feed them, bathe them, put them to sleep, play with them, and for all this the parents—depending on income—pay two, three, four, or at the most five forints daily. A kindergarten was also built, naturally, for the "very big ones," aged three to six. The conditions here are the same as at the crèche.

The children. Perhaps I have spoken too much about them, but I am convinced that they are all significant personalities of our housing project. If a fine local patriotism is in the process of developing here, it is they that will embody it. In them and in our young people. Now do I fully appreciate that it was they who have rendered everything here home-like. When they first raced around the buildings like frisky colts; when they first scrawled on the wall in big awkward letters, "the porter is a half-wit"; when the smack of the first clumsy adolescent kiss resounded on one of the benches in the darkness that enveloped the park—that was when the place became *ours*.

The grown-ups? From morning till night they hurry off to work, only their flats have become their sweet home, not the housing project. Something must be said about them too, of course, one or two profiles sketched—but first let us make another detour.

Means, Methods and Policies

Since the system of housing construction and housing policy are close functions of the social-economic situation in every country, most likely it is unavoidable that certain details should remain obscure to many readers who may know about our situation only from hearsay, if at all. I regard this digression as necessary in order to reduce this probability somewhat by attempting to clarify a few fundamental questions.

Apartment houses for rent may only be built in Hungary by the state, or by state enterprises, organs or institutions. The building of such houses is therefore a state affair. This is true even of the building of family houses or blocks of flats for private ownership by their residents, since the state supports such building by means of considerable loans. Thus the latest scheme for the cooperative building of family-houses and privately-owned flats is subject to the following conditions:

The problems of construction are taken over by the Home-building Cooperative. Anyone participating in the scheme enjoys a 30 per cent state discount. He then advances 15 per cent of the reduced sum in cash and pays the remainder in the form of installments over thirty years without interest. If a family has many children, or pays off the loan sooner than the allotted time, then it receives a further discount.

As regards the state building of flats for rent the system is as follows:

The point of departure is the national economic plan. This is prepared by the National Planning Office. Here it is determined how many flats should be built during the period of the plan, and to what extent the capacity of the building-material industry and of the building industry itself is to be expanded so as to meet the requirements.

Second phase: the territorial building plans, drafted by the building departments of the local councils. These are furnished with a break-down of the number of homes to be built in their respective territory during the period of the plan, after which it is their job to determine, with the help of the State Planning Enterprise for Town Building, the number of houses to be devoted to dwellings, public institutions and service shops and stores, as well as their distribution, etc. On the basis of this territorial building plan, the investment program is prepared.

Third phase: the architectural plan. In Budapest the Municipal Investment Enterprise is made responsible for having this plan prepared and from then on has full powers as manager of the entire construction. On the basis of the territorial building plan and the investment program,—it turns over the drafting of the architectural plan to the State Housing Architectural Enterprise.

Fourth phase: the building process. The Municipal Investment Enterprise makes a contract with the builder, one of the state building-industry enterprises, hands over to the latter all the plans and the architectural documentation—and the construction gets under way.

Fifth phase: the completed building. The investment enterprise takes over the new house from the building enterprise and turns it over to the house-management office of the given local council, which latter is *the proprietor*. This office looks after the maintenance, hires the janitors and, of course, also collects the rents.

The Ministry of Building determines what principles of comfort, aesthetics and urbanism should prevail in the course of planning and construction. Its prescriptions are strict and are compulsory for every planning and building enterprise. As far as the standards of comfort are concerned, the guiding principles are essentially as follows: electricity, gas, and water must be installed in every flat, each flat must be equipped with a bathroom or a shower bath, not a single flat may consist of less than 48 square metres of base area (corresponding to the size of 1.8 rooms), 60 per cent of the flats must have central heating, and 45 per cent must be equipped with built-in furniture. Of the urban dwelling houses 75 per cent must be built in a housing development system.

When the housing preject is complete, there remains only one task: the distribution of the flats. This worry is the job of the departments of housing of the local councils. Their position is by no means an enviable one. The number of those in need of a flat is always much greater than the number of flats. Justice can be done only if the principles of flat distribution are strictly adhered to. They can be summarized as follows:

The Department of Housing Economy of the Municipal Council—irrespective of which district the house is built in—distributes the flats among the departments of housing economy of the twenty-two Budapest districts. The departments of the various districts hand on half of their quotas to the factories and institutions, and they themselves distribute the other half. The factories, institutions and departments of housing economy carefully weigh each application; the applicant who is most in need receives the flat. An important standpoint is that the neediest are selected from the following sections of the population: 70 per cent workers, 20 per cent technical and other intellectuals, and 10 per cent—irrespective of occupation—young couples.

Has this principle been observed at our estate? According to my experiences and approximate statistical data, yes. The distribution of the residents by occupation is as follows: 75 per cent workers, 20 per cent intellectuals and 5 per cent employees. The majority of them—as I have mentioned before—are young couples.

On Budafoki Road, which leads into the housing estate, and on Fehérvári Road, there are a few important factories. Along Fehérvári Road there is a motor factory, the GAMMA Optical Works, the BHG Telecommunications Factory (one of the largest of its kind in Central Europe), a driving-gear factory; and along Budafoki Road there is the Lágymányos Tobacco Factory, the Budapest Thermal Power Station, the Goldberger Textile Mill, the April Fourth Machine Works, the EMAG Factory which manufactures agricultural combines, a factory for processing coffee beans and manufacturing confectionery goods, and also the country's largest works for pre-fabricated building elements. The majority of the workers and of technical and other employees living on our estate work in these factories.

Human Failings — and How to Cure Them

Were they all *in need* of their new apartment? The answer can only be in the affirmative, although for the sake of objectivity it should be noted that the *extent* of the need naturally differs and in deciding *this* aspect,

some unfairness may accidentally have taken place. Human nature being what it is, it would be foolhardy to assert that not a single case of favoritism has occurred. Temptation is always present when demand outruns supply. But the supervising authorities—and the press—do their best to prevent abuses and to right them if and when they occur.

Whether everyone *deserved* his flat, is another question. Naturally not. Neither those who passed it on to someone else for a tidy sum through an apparent exchange deal, nor those who destroy all its fittings with methodical unconcern. The flat-wreckers. They represent a small, but peculiar type of man. The various "advanced" specimens are so many psychopathological cases. What kind of attitude could motivate a certain resident who breaks off all the door knobs in his *own* flat? What kind of zeal drives another one industriously to pry all the white tile squares off the walls of his kitchen and bathroom and smash them to bits with a hammer? What are the "aesthetic considerations" that induce a third one methodically to remove the plaster from his walls or to take up the parquet flooring and use it for fire-wood? What conception has anyone of cultured living who raises chickens in his vestibule? It is a puzzle. That is, only the momentary attitude, zeal and "consideration" are puzzling, the more general social explanation is simple: it is a case of lumpenproletarians. And a good part of the lumpenproletarians are not so much guilty as they are victims. Not the victims of our present social system; we have only inherited them from a society that has passed away. Stern measures have been taken, but there have never been any evictions, for this very reason. The authorities have confidence in the educating influence of the environment. Their patience is like that of the diligent workers of the park-maintenance enterprise, who re-sow the trampled grass and re-plant the saplings whose trunks have been broken. Order begets order, good example leads to improvement and patience breeds consideration.

There lives here a bus-driver who used to regard it as his masculine duty to chase his wife around the building with his belt. We observed this with shocked pity. The recognition that he is all *alone*, because chasing around the building is not a way of life here, brought about a change in him like in a sleep-walker awakened from his trance. The two of them now dress fashionably on a Sunday afternoon, and go for a walk together arm in arm. Of course there are no miracles and I would like to save myself from even the appearance of "optimistic" exaggeration. Our bus-driver—much more rarely, it's true—still beats his wife occasionally. Not on the street now, but in his flat. While this perhaps does not alter the essence, still the difference is not merely formal. Whereas up to

recently he extended his instinctive, primitive concept of life *to the whole world*, he nowadays dares to give it free rein *only at home*, and even there with growing embarrassment. The ground has slipped from under his feet; society no longer accepts the way of life which his childhood environment had forced upon him as the only natural one.

Our bus-driver will get completely well. For there is something really moving in the way the instincts of the old coal-delivery workman living in the house next to ours are reacting to the new circumstances! His occupation—it would take us out of our way to enumerate why—has enjoyed enormous prosperity for many years, so he earns a great deal of money, like a youthful film star. Unfortunately he also drinks heavily, wine and brandy, in line with the traditions of a coal deliveryman. When he tottered home at night all black from coal dust he was the family bogy-man. His children fled in terror behind their mother's skirts. His insane drunkenness extinguished even the last spark of gentleness in him. The new flat, however, and the fact that the older children have become bread-winners, has created a new status of authority at home. The members of his family are no longer dependent on him for their living. The feeling of dread has disappeared. The flat has been attractively furnished, the windows are now covered with lace curtains, the floors with rugs. And the soot-covered father one day began to feel miserably alien, out of date and stupid, his feeling was exactly like our bus-driver's: he found himself alone. Now he stumbles among the new furniture awkwardly, cowardly, and with a sense of guilt; he is seeking—not his old self—but the new man he must become.

To say that the flat-wreckers and drunks are glaring exceptions, that in the main we are not like them, would be to make superfluous, silly excuses. Of course we are not like them. What are we like then? A full answer would exceed the scope of this article. We must confine ourselves to portraying one or two faces here. Nevertheless, something significant may perhaps be read in them too.

The Grassalkovich Dynasty

Not far from here is a factory with a small force of workers, but of national significance: the Sand Preparing Enterprise. Barges on the Danube bring the main raw material to the factory, and railway freight cars bear the ready-made product, foundry sand, in the four directions of the compass.

Sándor K. works in this factory. It so happens that he has very little to do with sand; he is a lathe hand, the factotum of the maintenance section.

He is a young man, he knows mostly from hearsay only but he mentions with elderly nostalgia, what a "king" the lathe hand of the ironworker's trade was in the past.

"By the time I really learnt it," he says, "the trade had lost all its beauty. The 'clever' machines had become widespread, and the role of individual resourcefulness, creative imagination was reduced to a minimum. That was why I came to the Sand Preparing Works, because this was a small factory, there was no work done in series here, every working day presented new tasks from which one could learn something new."

I looked at his hands. His fingers were strong, but long and delicate. (Like a surgery professor's—I could say by way of a hackneyed comparison, but there is no sense to this now.) His fingers are exactly those of a lathe hand's, of one who will undoubtedly become an artist in his craft.

"An artist?" he looked at me a bit scornfully; journalists like to exaggerate. "At least master. Such as my brother, my uncle and my cousin. They are lathe hands in the real sense of the term!"

"What do you mean?" I asked somewhat surprised. "Is this some kind of family trade?"

"No, not exactly," he replied. "For example my father was a machine fitter. My mother's father was an iron caster..."

Here he reflected a bit, then he exclaimed:

"That's right, iron casting! You see, among my mother's relatives this was really a family trade. The Grassalkoviches were so many iron casters."

"Iron-casting Grassalkovich?" I looked at him in real surprise this time; the Grassalkoviches were a well-known dynasty of princes in our country.

"I see you are amazed," Sándor K. said, "well listen to this..."

And he related the story of the Grassalkoviches. It is just like a folk tale:

Once upon a time in Poland there were two poor but noble youths, the Grassalkovich brothers. When they grew weary of their poverty they packed baked ash cakes into their knapsacks and went off to Hungary to seek their fortune. The elder lad was very ambitious, so he soon enlisted in Empress Maria Theresa's army, and performing many feats of gallantry, went to the great court in Vienna. He received vast estates and a princely title. The younger lad was more modest. He liked to work, therefore he founded a small bloomery in the northern hills. He never acquired an estate, never received any titles or rank, and his male heirs only inherited the love of the trade from him. All of them became casters and lived by their work until they died...

So much for the tale. I looked at Sándor K. and then I felt I understood his stubborn desire to become a master of his trade. His mother was a Grassalkovich girl, from the iron-casting branch of the Grassalkovich dynasty.

The Career of a Worker

Sándor B. and his wife are the world's most delightful couple. They are young, they have children, two charming kids romp around them; I was surprised when I first heard that they have been married ten years already. My second surprise was when I learned that Sándor B., this young head of family, with his boyish amiability, was the assistant director of one of the technological institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

How did he get this far?

From his answer the picture of a typical worker's career unfolded before me, a story so familiar that it has grown dull. We in this country have become a little insensitive to it simply because our hero shares a similar career with many thousands of fellow workers.

He had been a machine fitter. In 1950 he was appointed an instructor of his trade at a vocational training institute. Half a year later he became a teacher. Another year went by, and he was sent to different provincial towns—Dorog, Győr, Miskolc—there to organize the new type of vocational instruction. Then he himself went to school, completing a three-year course of study at the College for Technical Teachers. He was next appointed to the Budapest University of Technology as a specialist on materials and manufacturing processes—to teach political economy. There is no contradiction in this! He had eagerly begun to study political economy already in 1945. At first he was pleased that he was able to understand it at all; and later that he liked it more than any other science and that he was even able to teach it. In the working-class movement he for years led group discussions of trade unionists on political economy. Now that he has been an assistant director of the institute at the Academy for several years, he still has not given up his "passion." He teaches economy at the evening college of the Trade Union Council. And consider how many other things he does besides! He is chairman of the institute's trade union committee, a collaborator in the Department of Science and Culture of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, a member of the workers' militia—to list only the most important.

And of course he is a father. And a husband. A good father and good husband. Yet his life has been no bed of roses and during the past ten

years there would have been a thousand reasons for his marriage to break up. They had no flat. They lived as subtenants on the premises of a former shop together with the tenant couple! Of course they only went "home" to sleep, as late as possible, after the last cinema showings were over. His work in the provincial towns would have figured as a deliverance, if his wife's work had not kept her in Budapest. For a year they hardly saw each other. Then came the three years of college. The husband received a meagre scholarship—they ate beansoup in standing buffets of doubtful cleanliness, but they loved each other, so their beansoup was ambrosia. Their housing problem, of course, remained unsolved. During his college years they stayed with their in-laws. Then in January, 1955, they finally were assigned their present flat! It was in the nick of time—a month later their first child was born.

Since then? Their circumstances have become firm, their bohemian good humour fortunately did not suffocate in philistine boredom. They love life and know how to live. They hold splendid dinners in memory of the beansoups. In summer they roast themselves the colour of bronze at Lake Balaton. They go to all the first nights at the opera and the theatre, without snobbishness, with childish curiosity. They buy loads of books and the postman brings them packets of daily and weekly papers and periodicals in his bag.

*

So much for the place I live in. I did not promise a complete picture, only mosaics. A collection of notes, which in some sly manner should, none the less, present the illusion of completeness. Now I know that this was immodesty, one cannot even *live* completely. Then how could one present even the *semblance* of it in an article?

THE LIFE AND ART OF GYULA DERKOVITS

by

GÁBOR Ö. POGÁNY

I

Gyula Derkovits was born on April 13, 1894, in Szombathely (the Savaria of the Romans), in Western Hungary. He spent half of his short life in Szombathely. He left his native town at the age of twenty, never again to return. The years of childhood and youth prove, in the case of most people, decisive for the shaping of the character of the individual, of the artist; and this was no less so in Derkovits's case. In Derkovits's mind, however, Szombathely with its memories of the one-time Roman province of Pannonia never became a concept of cultural geography—the name of the town was for him only a symbol of privation, of poverty and frustration.

As one of the numerous children of a talented cabinet-maker, who stumbled, however, from one financial failure to the other, he had no opportunity of acquiring a proper education. The young Derkovitses were compelled to take turns in going to school, because their father could not afford to buy shoes for each of his children. It was precious little that the poor artisan's son could grasp of the spirit of the baroque cathedral town, one of the privileged administrative centres of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy of the Hapsburgs. This is how, years later, he recalls the *genius loci:*

> "Houses and windows, and ever changing streets, as my parents would remove to ever changing houses year after year."

Much as he might exert himself to turn out veritable masterpieces of cabinets and tables, Derkovits senior could not always earn enough money to pay the rent, and his family was consequently obliged to shift its lodgings far too often. At last, after many vicissitudes, the father put his four sons to work and taught them his trade, hoping that the five of them might be able to make ends meet.

Young Derkovits's artistic *penchant* revealed itself at quite an early age: he proved to be a skilful draughtsman and decorator; nevertheless, his father insisted on his son's continuing in apprenticeship under his guidance; though Mr. Chmárits, a signpainter, would have been willing to take the gifted boy on as his assistant, the old man could not possibly do without the labour of his third-born son if they were to keep their heads above water. In these circumstances Savaria became, and remained, in the eyes of young Derkovits, a symbol of frustrated ambition. Yet he was fond of nature, of the open air, taking long walks on Sundays; and quite often—for lack of leisure-time—he would spend all the night rambling.

> "I now was happy," he wrote in his reminescences later on, "because I could go out of doors, at least at night; for during the day I would be drudging like a slave in the workshop, tugging at the float or working by the bench, sawing and planing boards, chiselling or varnishing, pushing the varnish-pad round and round."

In order to get away from the strangulating atmosphere of Szombathely, to break out from his prison of social destitution, Gyula Derkovits now decided to make a desperate move. At the outbreak of the First World War, he volunteered for the army. In taking the risks of war as the only possible escape from the vicious circle of poverty and helplessness, he was actuated by disgruntled impetuosity. It was as if a drowning man, having successfully waded ashore, had to dash through a burning forest to reach final safety.

He was twice wounded in the first two years of the war; the second time, in the Carpathians, so severely that the surgeons were for amputating his left arm. Derkovits protested against the radical cure, and as a result had to live thereafter with his left arm lamed, but strong enough at least to hold his palette. During his convalescence in Vienna and subsequently in Budapest, he devoted much time to drawing and painting. From 1917 on, he regularly attended a free school. As a disabled serviceman he received a pension—meagre enough to compel him to look for some joiner's work to keep body and soul together. The war years had left deep scars on his inner world; they increased his perspicacity. His experience of that horrible world conflagration, added to the memories of his childhood, made it easy for him to perceive the immorality of the cruel methods of domination that prevailed in the type of class society he lived in.

2

In the last phase of the war, the Hungarian capital lived in an atmosphere of extreme tension; workers staged one strike after the other and demonstrations demanding peace became ever more frequent. The bloody terror of the monarchy's police force failed to halt the quickening march of events. The collapse of the Central Powers at the war-fronts came at a moment when the spirit of revolution ran high in the hinterland.

Derkovits, who surveyed developments from the point of view of the working man, drew clear-cut conclusions from the momentous transformation that was taking place. At the end of 1918, one month after the dethronement of the Hapsburg Dynasty and proclamation of the Republic, he joined the Communist Party of Hungary shortly after it had been formed. When, on March 21, 1919, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the first workers' state to be formed in Hungary, was proclaimed, a group of enthusiastic demonstrators marched through the streets of Budapest, carrying a poster drawn by Derkovits, showing the symbolic figure of a worker slaying a dragon.

Despite the grave financial situation of the country, the Commissariat of Education made every effort to provide adequate artistic training for talented young people. Training studios were opened in the capital and a free school at Nyergesújfalu on the Danube for particularly gifted artists. It was to this school that Derkovits came to be assigned, and for two months he worked there, if not in the best of comfort, at least under conditions of comparative tranquility. These brief two months were the only period in his years of "apprenticeship" when he was in a position systematically to pursue his studies, in the course of regular studio work. For the next fifteen years until his death he would affectionately remember his days at the free school and would often tell his friends about the talks that took place there. The head of the school, Károly Kernstok, one of the most fascinating artictic personalities of the period, had a fertile influence on the young man's mentality and pictorial approach. Another reason why Derkovits so fondly remembered the weeks spent at Nyergesújfalu was that during his stay there he formed a deep friendship with Viktória Dombai, who later married him and became his devoted helpmate.

The few months of artistic work and hopeful planning came to a tragic end when the triumph of the counter-revolution broke up the small community of Nyergesújfalu. The brief spell of bright sunshine in Derkovits's life was ended by the gathering storm-clouds of gloom. After the collapse of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Derkovits went through terrible ordeals.

He became, to the greater "glory" of Admiral Horthy's Hungary, an outlaw, figuratively speaking. He worked as lumberman and joiner; his earnings were small and far between, and his status as an artist seemed lost for ever. He is said to have worn at this time pieces of sackcloth tied with a string around his broken shoes.

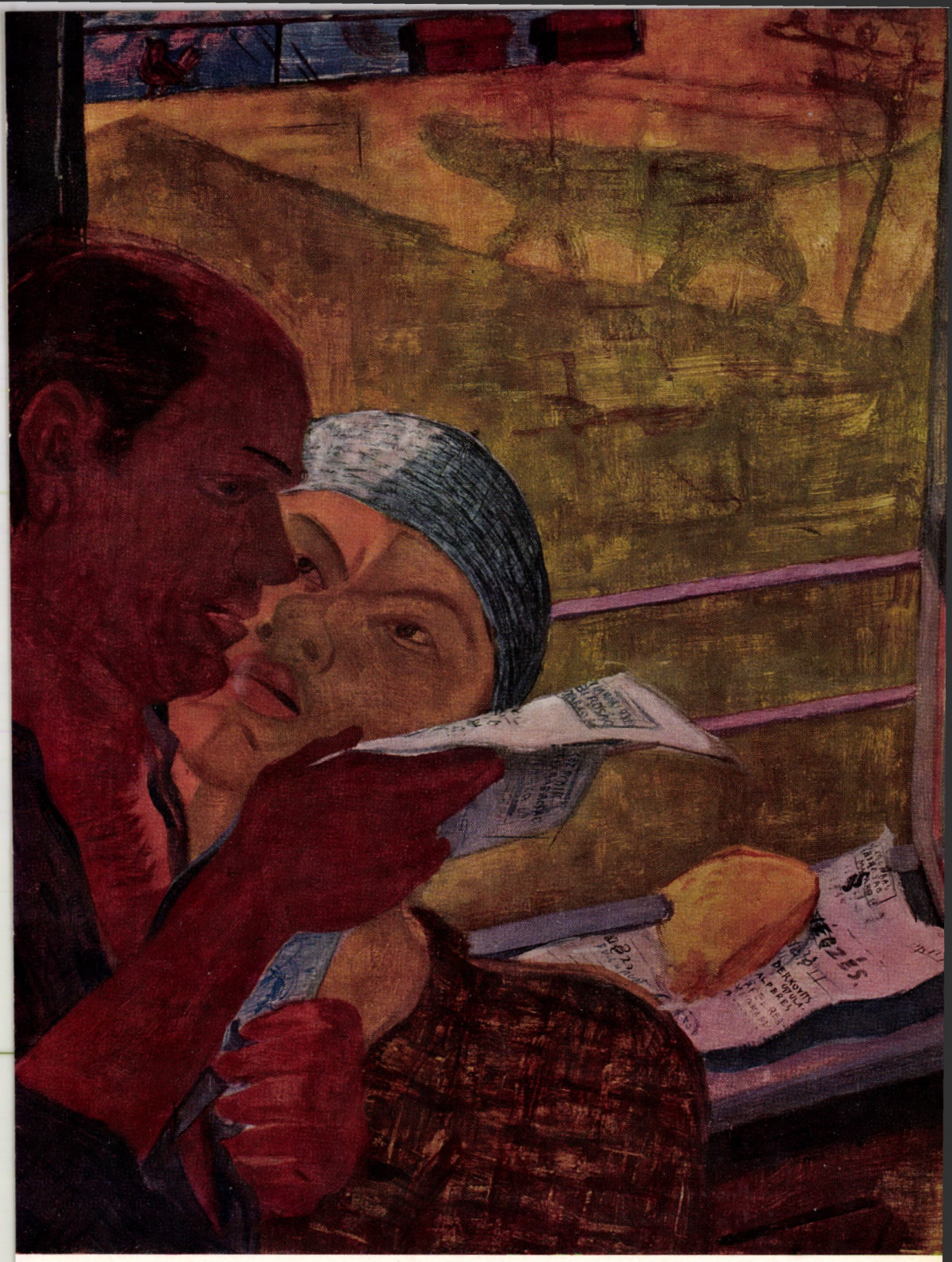
Several of his works dating from these years of hardship are known to us; they prove (besides many others that are now lost) that even the most dreadful privation failed to stop Derkovits from carrying on his creative activity. Wherever he went, he always had his sketch-book on him, and would record every interesting event or figure he chanced to see. Plans of paintings and compositions occupied him all the time, and he would make sketches of his ideas. A few self-portraits, oil, pen or dry-point, supply the best indication, perhaps, of his aristic problems in the years 1919—1921, which concerned, mostly, character studies, expression of mood, and individual style.

The first one-man show of Derkovits was staged at the Belvedere (a private gallery in Budapest) in autumn 1922. Progressive-minded critics expressed their sincere appreciation of his art; his first master, Károly Kernstok, encouraged him enthusiastically and said that Derkovits had excellent prospects. However, during the post-war inflationary period and in the revengeful atmosphere of the Horthy régime, mere professional success was by no means sufficient for further development.

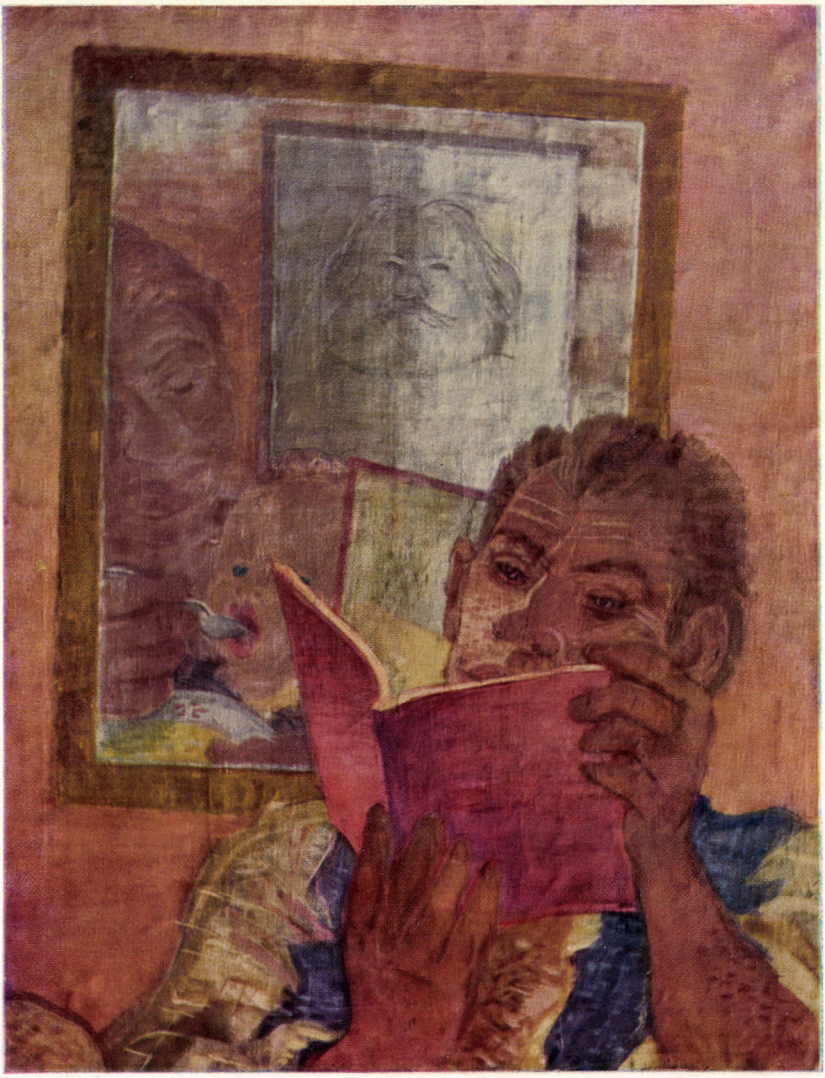
His elder brother, Jenő, who had been a member of the Communist Party of Hungary ever since its foundation, was forced into exile—so impossible had his situation become in Hungary because of constant police persecution. *The Last Supper* (1923) Derkovits intended as a monument immortalizing his brother's departure from his homeland. The painting acquired a broader, symbolical meaning hinting at the painful parting of hundreds of thousands of progressive-minded Hungarians that were likewise compelled to emigrate.

3

Soon afterwards, Derkovits himself was forced into exile. He resided in the Austrian capital up to January, 1926. His brother Jenő brought him into contact with the Hungarian refugees in Vienna—Communist writers and artists—who drew the attention of Austrian critics and collectors to Derkovits. During these years of exile he painted a good deal, and his output was successful. He also mastered the technique of etching. In 1924, his pictures were seen in company with the works of the boldest of Viennese



Gyula Derkovits: The enforcement order (1930)

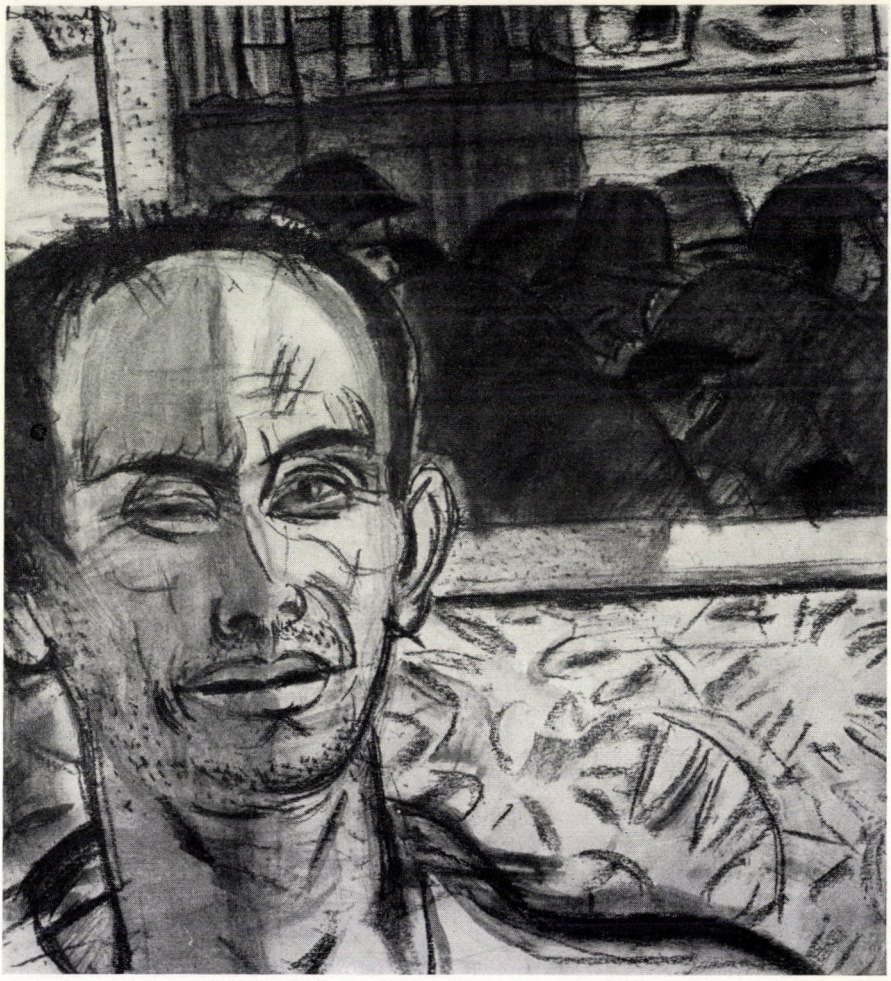


GYULA DERKOVITS: GENERATIONS (1932)

GYULA DERKOVITS: STILL-LIFE WITH FISH (1928)

Gyula Derkovits: Shipbuilder (1934)

Gyula Derkovits: Along the railway (1932)



GYULA DERKOVITS: SELF PORTRAIT (STUDY, 1929)

GYULA DERKOVITS: MOTHER (STUDY, 1934)

GYULA DERKOVITS: WORKER CARRYING BRICKS (1932)

GYULA DERKOVITS: BOY CARRYING A BASKET OF SHELLS (1932)

GYULA DERKOVITS: PEASANT SHARPENING HIS SCYTHE (1929)
(from the Dózsa woodcut series)

GYULA DERKOVITS: PEASANT REBEL (1929)
(from the Dózsa woodcut series)

GYULA DERKOVITS: WORKERS TEARING DOWN PRISON BARS (1929)
(woodcut)

artists in the "Hagen Bund," and, in February, 1925, he arranged a one-man show at the Weihburg Gallery.

After his return to Hungary, Derkovits's prestige among fellow artists grew steadily. He scored signal successes: at first, at the 1926 annual show of the New Society of Artists (KUT), which he had joined four years earlier; then in September, 1927, as a contributor to the group show in the Ernst Museum; and, in December of the same year, at a show of his graphic works arranged by Schillings' etching shop. The clear understanding of his tasks as an artist can be seen from a statement which appeared in the catalogue of his show in the Ernst Museum.

> "Painting pictures," he wrote, "is to respect the plane surface as the only monumental form of painting, by using pure pictorial elements—lines and colour-planes—in one plane, that is to say, in two dimensions. I want to rid my art of all illusionistic elements, for it is my belief that you cannot have a powerful art unless you use pure pictorial forms and paint all the phenomena of life everywhere, in order to be able to find as intensive an expression as possible. Fine arts should be linked with the message to be conveyed, because you no doubt have something you wish to communicate to your fellow humans. I am aware that it is my duty as a painter and a modern man fully to express the phenomena of our life and our society. I believe I do perform this duty by taking note of topical events."

Little more could be added to this, even when interpreting the masterpieces of his last few years. At most it may be said that as his works became more and more flawless, so did modern pictorialism and revolutionary ideology, modern forms and current themes of the day become increasingly blended in his work.

His self-portait *I and My Wife* may be taken as marking the beginning of the last stage—the period of maturity—in his lifework. This painting, done in 1927, embodies all the qualities of his earlier career, but it has an equilibrium, the inner harmony of the artist who has found his feet, who has come into his own at last.

Nineteen twenty-nine was the happiest, the only peaceful year in Derkovits's life. The party of the Hungarian Communists, which worked

underground, entrusted him with the organization of a hide-out in Budapest. He took a flat in Hunyadi Square. In spite of the danger it involved for him, this assignment gave him great satisfaction and stimulated him to vigorous artistic work. The knowledge of having a flat where he could regularly play host to his friends multiplied his energies and gave an even, steady pace to his artistic development.

4

Encouraged by his comrades, he went to work on his "Dózsa" woodcut series which appeared as a posthumous work under the title *1514* two years after his death, in 1936, when the police seized some of the prints together with the blocks. To put into terms of a woodcut his stupefying visions of one of the most magnificent popular risings in Hungarian history, Derkovits cut out unusually large blocks (appr. 50×44 cm—20″ by 17″). This series of woodcuts tells the history of that great storm of four centuries ago in eleven scenes, from the explosion of the peasant rising through victories and ultimate defeat to the ruthless reprisals taken by the lords. This series of woodcuts forms a message in which all the social rebellions of half a millenium of Hungarian history call to the downtrodden of the twentieth century. In the scene entitled *The Clash*, barefooted and cloth-capped poor folk are seen struggling against jackbooted and helmeted, bayonet-pointing gendarmes and police; yet the anachronistic uniform which Szapolyai's mercenaries are wearing does not in the least lessen the authentic effect of the picture, for the grin on the brutish faces of the killers hired by the rulers had scarcely changed through the ages, from the slayers of the infants of Bethlehem to the SS guards at Auschwitz.

It was above all the cuts entitled *Dózsa on the Red-hot Iron Throne* and *Werbőczy* that upset the dandyish sham-composure of the culture-bureaucrats. The former picture shows the leader of the rising chained to a flaming iron chair, with a red-hot iron crown on his head; on his bare chest the inquisitors had branded with a hot iron the words "Büdös Paraszt" ("Filthy Churl"). In the latter picture, István Werbőczy—who after the crushing of the rising completed the total subjugation of the serfs by drafting a new Code of Law for Hungary—,wearing the gala dress of the politicians of Horthy Hungary and leaning heavily against a pillory on which a convicted peasant is languishing, casts his eyes on some hanged rebels showing through prison bars.

The individual trait of Derkovits's power of expression appears at its best in *Peasant Rebel* and *On the March*. All decorative arrangement is absent

from the heavy, angular mosaic of the shapes—there is almost no trace reminiscent of the well-mannered geometricalness of Cézanneism or of cubism; the analysis of form is dwarfed into a respectable pastime by the interpretation of the sufferings of the humiliated, oppressed millions. The artist's knife cut into the smooth surface of the wood-block just as destitute peasants might toil with their imperfect ploughs on arid land, themselves or members of their family harnessed to the decrepit implement, for lack of draught-animals. Every light patch, every line Derkovits cut with his sweat and blood into the hard pear-wood, bending with faltering breath and pounding heart over his carving desk, which he had patched up from a kitchen table and pasteboard; he left no stone unturned to warn his compatriots of the social injustice of his day by teaching them, in an artistic representation, lessons of the national past.

5

The disastrous economic crisis of the early thirties led to an intolerable situation in impoverished, underdeveloped Hungary. Unemployment assumed grave proportions, monetary stringency became general, the peasantry and the working class, and the intelligentsia, as well, sank into misery that was beyond belief. Social tension threatened an explosion. Derkovits was reduced to utter poverty, worse even than in the leanest years of his previous life.

The painter and his wife vainly attempted to make both ends meet by making paper bags, yet didn't earn enough money to pay their rent. His own destitution gave him a keen, first-hand experience of all the vicissitudes that fell to the worker's lot, and he, too, felt the desire for revolutionary action which was building up in the minds of the toiling masses.

September 1, 1930, was one of the most exciting days in the history of Hungary between the two wars. The workers of Budapest organized a powerful demonstration in protest against the brutal policy of the government, which was increasing the misery of the masses. The streets of the capital rang with the Communist slogan of "Give us bread and jobs!" —the organized action of tens of thousands of people shook the walls of the great mansions and banks.

The panic-stricken government ordered the police and gendarmerie ruthlessly to disperse the demonstration. For several hours baton-charges were made, volleys fired, and mounted police attacked the crowds, beating the demonstrators with the flat of their swords (police in Horthy Hungary regularly carried a sword) before that upsurge of discontent was

brought under control and the demonstration dispersed. Derkovits and his wife were on the move all day and would turn up at every critical point of the clash. He had prepared a placard for the demonstration—a sheet four metres square, made up from nine leaves of the "Dózsa" series plus one tint-drawing *(Workers Tearing down Prison Bars)*.

Derkovits made a wealth of drawings and sketches perpetuating scenes of the great mass demonstrations. Mounted police charging the crowd, bayonet-pointing gendarmes, and wounded workers lying prostrate on the pavement are to be seen in his sketches dating from that time. In one engraving and a gripping tempera he recorded the memory of that eventful day; the latter—*He Wanted Bread* (or *Terror)*—represents the soft, toned-down colouring of his later years. It is just this muffled tone, this whisper, as it were, pregnant with sky-storming emotion, that gives his protest poignancy. The painting only hints at the tragic episode—two jackbooted legs and the butt of a rifle symbolize the power of the oppressors, and the head of a blood-stained corpse lying on the kerb is the symbol of the demonstrator killed, of human dignity defiled. Dim colours and reticently applied shapes convey the moment of distress; but the astonishing terseness of the artist in calling tyranny to account elicits an elemental indignation in the viewer.

Lovers of art are aware of a paralysing feeling of anguish which overcomes them, even after two and a half decades, when remembering the last phase in Derkovits's life. Perpetually harassed and defying malevolent criticism, he painted, drew, or etched his pictures and engravings, one better than the other, utilizing with astonishing industry the pool of creative experience he had built up, carrying into effect his noble artistic program with the ability of the mature artist. As though suspecting that he had not much time left, he worked almost unceasingly. He filled one sketch-book after the other, got to work on a new "Dózsa" series—in dry-point. Nearly every week he would complete a painting. His picture *A Bridge in Winter* (1934)—a pearl-grey elegy on shivering dismalness—was improvised in a single afternoon, the artist being in a hurry not to miss an exhibition of the KUT. At that exhibition this piece of inspired bravura won Derkovits a Szinyei Society Prize for Landscape—the only distinction he ever received in a career strewn with masterpieces.

But all this was accomplished under the most distracting conditions. He was locked in a ceaseless struggle to retain a shelter above his head. On August 19, 1931, the eve of St. Stephen's Day, Hungary's old National Day, he was evicted from his home in Hunyadi Square, handcuffed and taken to police headquarters. Six months later, in the depth of winter,

he was once more removed from his lodgings, this time again with police assistance. There was a period when his daily fare would consist of twenty greengages or, in midsummer, of two to four pounds of watermelon.

6

It was during the years of Hungary's ever speedier drift towards fascism that Derkovits made his most flawless pictures. The disaster that menaced his own life and the future of his country made him capable of superhuman efforts. *The Enforcement Order* (1930) shows the artist and his wife at the window of their garret in Hunyadi Square, reading their eviction order. Under a piece of bread on the windowsill lies the writ that had been sent them previously. The roof of their house casts the shadow of its ridge on the bulkhead of the neighbouring building, and it shows the silhouette of a cat stealing towards a little bird that is perched on the parapet. Derkovits turns into the picture from the left, his lustreless profile is reflected in his wife's worried face. To the right, the window-pane thrown wide open reduces the space of the picture. On the surface, greyish-blue colours alternate with dingy yellow ones, the transition being prepared, as it were, by rusty and violet nuances. The brown colour of the partition beneath the window and of Viki's dress represents a counterpoint of sober reality, contrasting with the ethereal hues. The individuals standing against the background of that miserable panorama might well lose their relish for life, were it not for the beauty of the colours, the joy caused by the perception of surprising sights, which bring tidings of the possibility of happiness.

The output of the artist's last years leaves no doubt as to the fact that he continued to follow closely the developments in his country. And yet his chief works of this period were mostly tributes to incorruptible Harmony and did not groan under the crushing burden of accumulated bitterness. The completion of each picture seemed to give him new satisfaction, seemed to be a triumph of his views, a defeat for the intriguers. Successful creative activity brought him comfort for the indignity he had to suffer; he drew in tint the figure of the haughty bourgeois, engraved on copper the flogged peasant, did in oil and tempera the figure of the condemned man against the cement pillar of the barbed wire fence. As a masterly chronicler he recorded every suffering of the poor, but at the same time did not omit to picture their hopes as well.

His confidence was not mere self-consolation, because he never embarked on a wild-goose chase. He directed his gaze at the really existing, indestructible forces, the "new people"—the working class. His painting "*Generations*"

(1932) is a promise of the future. It shows a typical working man reading a red-backed book; behind him, hanging on the wall, there is a mirror which offers a view of the scene in front of the picture plane, of the worker's family—his wife, nursing her child; also seen is the framed portrait of a bearded old man who might be the worker's grand-father, but is really Karl Marx. In this picture, Derkovits carries further the principle of pictorial construction that dominates in his *I and My Wife:* the motive selected for conveying the artist's message appears in a montage designed to concentrate the attention of the spectator; the space is formed without infringing the rules of two-dimensional painting. In the colouring, all naturalistic chance elements are neglected, and the affinity of tones is given predominance. The worker, who after the work hours is studying Marxism conceives the desire to transform the world of appearances, and his child's destiny will be to take possession of the material and spiritual goods of society.

In the face of the adversity of the historical crisis, Derkovits prepared himself for resistance on the basis of the clear recognition of social development. As the working-class movement suffered increasing losses and sustained ever harder blows at the hands of the ruling class, Derkovits would prophesy with growing resolution the inevitable victory of the working men. Through the medium of his brush, bridge-builders, sand-carriers and weavers became the all-conquering heroes of modern times. The shipbuilder's figure, delineated with much compassion, assumed monumental proportions alongside the barge he had built.

In his painting *Mother* (1934) he left us a hymn to proletarian posterity. Completed shortly before his death, this picture is conceived in love for ever resurgent life, for the new generation born for happiness. A mother is seen clasping to her bosom a tiny baby. Visualization is facilitated by stressing the differences in proportion and tone of the head and the hands of mother and child. Only a few touches of silvery grey and terra-cotta blend with the ensemble of pink and violet, and only a few patches, more shadowy than others, indicate the corporeal plasticity of the protagonists. The colour-patches flowing into one another, without articulating the painting in any particular way, extend the forms to the very frame of the picture. The larger-than-life size lends dignity and majesty to this comparatively small canvas. And since the pathos is warmed by intimate feelings, its solemnity commands homage to the most universal human qualities.

7

Derkovits, like other gifted and energetic humanists of the twentieth century, provided an example of an artist, who, fully aware of his mission, searches for the most appropriate pictorial expression of progressive ideas, while ignoring the bullying of cynics. He was not to accomplish that lofty mission. He was just forty when he died on June 18, 1934—of heart-failure resulting from acute pneumonia. His weak physique, brought low by the disease, could no longer endure the struggle against privation, malice and solitude.

THE NAZIS

A Short Story

by

FERENC SÁNTA

The shepherd was already getting on in years, perhaps he was sixty or sixty-five. He was chopping wood on a broad, high block. Beside him a boy, about eight or nine years old, gathered together the pieces.

Both of them heard the hoof-beats. They heard the horses stop behind their backs and then the scrape of a match as cigarettes were lit. Still they did not turn, but continued to chop wood as though they had heard nothing.

The two armed men had come from the pinewood, where they had stood for a long time in the concealment of the trees, gazing at the shepherd, the flock of sheep, the small hut, the barking dog running to and fro. Then they had come across the pasture and reined up their horses behind the shepherd and the boy.

There they sat behind them, blowing out the tobacco smoke and saying nothing. There were pistols at their waists, rifles slung across their backs; their legs hung down out of the stirrups.

Time passed in silence—as though there were no people standing there, close to each other. Yet they had all been born human beings, the armed men, the shepherd and the child too.

When they had smoked their cigarettes to the end, one of the armed man unhooked a large rubber truncheon from the saddle and called to the old man:

"You, old man!" he said.

The shepherd was just raising his axe for a blow, but he did not bring it down; instead he quickly put it in front of him on the ground, whipped his hat off his head, turned round and, with uncovered head, bowed as low as he could. He didn't speak, didn't raise his glance, just stood there in front of the horse, bowing, hat in hand, his light, white hair fluttering in the breeze.

The child, as though he hadn't heard a word, continued to gather the wood and stack it up in a small pile beside the rest.

More time went by; the armed men said nothing, the old man, bowed there before them, did not move either.

Then later, a lot later—the horses were pawing the ground and tossing their heads—the armed man spoke.

"Did you see anyone?" he asked.

The old man replied quickly, as quickly as when he had put the axe down on the ground in front of him.

"I haven't seen anyone!"

The second armed man moved nearer.

"We asked you: have you seen a man around here?"

"I haven't seen a man around here," said the old man.

He rested his gaze on the ground, saw his laced boot, the grass and the horses' hooves.

"Come closer!" said he with the rubber truncheon.

The old man went over quite close to the horse.

"Still closer!"

He stood right by the horse's leg.

"Closer!"

He went right up to the armed man's boot. He saw the toe of the top boot, the stirrup and part of the horse's belly, and the grass.

The armed man leant down and, putting the rubber truncheon under the old man's chin, lifted up his face. The old man was bent forward at the waist, his head back to the nape of the neck, but he did not raise his eyes; he gazed at the horseman's trouser-encased knee, and the stirrup leather. He wanted to swallow, but couldn't because of the truncheon.

The armed man gazed at his face. His wrist rested on his knee, and thus he held the rubber truncheon under the old man's chin, lifting his head ever higher and gazing into his face.

Then he took away the truncheon and hit the shepherd with it across the shoulders.

There was silence.

"You can go!"

The old man turned and quickly went back to the wood block, put his hat on his head and then took up the axe, raised it high and continued to chop wood.

When he had knocked the fourth or fifth bit into pieces, the armed man called out:

"Old man!"

He turned, whipped off his hat, bowed, his eyes on the ground—everything exactly as before.

"How old is the boy?"

"The boy is eight..."

"You bring him up?"

"I bring him up!"

The other called out too:

"How long have you been bringing him up?"

"I've been bringing him up a year."

"How old's the boy?"

"The boy's eight."

"You bring him up?"

"I bring him up."

They moved closer.

"Have you seen a man around?"

"I haven't seen a man around."

"You can go!" said the second one.

They were silent.

"You, boy!" the one with the rubber truncheon said.

The child's arms were full of wood and he had started towards the pile to stack it up beside the rest. He stopped, put down the wood at his feet, quickly pulled his cap off his head, bowed and turned round, still bowing from the waist. The wind tousled his hair too. He too saw his feet and the grass on the ground.

"How old are you?"

He replied at once—in the same manner as he had put down in front of him the wood in his arms.

"I'm eight years old."

"And this old man is bringing you up?"

"This old man is bringing me up."

"How long has he been bringing you up?"

"He's been bringing me up for a year."

"That's the old man?" asked the other.

"That's the old man."

"Your grandfather?"

"My grandfather."

"Come here!" said he with the rubber truncheon.

The child went over—just like the old man—in front of the horse.

"Nearer!"

He went exactly up to the top boot, but he was so much shorter that, bowing

from the waist, his head did not reach the boot;, he was there almost under the belly of the horse. He saw nothing beside the grass and his own shoes.

The armed man moved his foot, thrust the toe of his boot below the child's head, sought for his chin and raised his head.

"Higher!" he said.

The child raised his head higher, pressing it right back to the nape of his neck. He had never seen the faces of armed men and he felt a great desire to raise his eyelids.

Then he closed his eyes.

"Open your eyes!"

He continued to gaze at the creased leather of the boot.

"Seen a man around here?"

"I haven't seen a man around here."

His mouth also filled with saliva.

"You said that old man was bringing you up!"

"I said that old man was bringing me up."

There was silence. The horses' hooves pawed the ground, the old man's axe clinked.

"Turn round!" said the armed man and lowered his boot.

The child turned round.

"Look in front of you!"

The child raised his head.

"What do you see?"

"I see: far away hills, the sky, trees; then I see the hut and in front of it stakes with the cooking pots on them, I see the goat, the stove..."

"Well, forward march!"

They followed him, let him go right up to the hut. Then they stopped him. It was a low, shepherd's hut; in front were a few cooking pots set on stakes, to the right a tethered goat, white as snow, and, nearer among the stones, the morning fire, burned to ashes.

He with the rubber truncheon went and stood beside the child and with his foot turned him towards the goat.

"What's that?"

"It's a goat."

"Take a good look!"

"I'm taking a good look."

The other also said:

"What is that?"

"A goat," said the boy.

The armed man leant his boot against the child's side.

"Turn round!"

There further away was the flock, grazing. Not a single sheep bell hung from the neck of any of them.

"Call the dog here!"

The boy called the dog over. It came slinking over slowly, then sidled up and sat down at the boy's feet.

"Pay attention to me!" said the armed man. "The thing that's lying at your feet, what is it?"

"A dog," said the boy.

"No... the thing that's lying at your feet is a goat, a large white goat! Do you understand me?"

The boy was silent.

The armed man put the rubber truncheon on the boy's uncovered head. He laid it across him. He put it right across the middle of the crown of his head, so that the end stretched out far in front of the boy's eyes. The second armed man came closer and stopped with his horse alongside, quite close, so that the leg of his boot strained against the boy's shoulder.

"Well?"

The boy gazed at the dog.

The armed man who had just come over to the side of the boy took out his rubber truncheon and laid it lightly across his shoulder.

"Speak nicely!"

"Well! What's at your feet?"

The boy gazed at the dog.

"A goat," he said.

"A large, white goat."

"A large, white goat."

The armed man swirled away from beside him, the other took the truncheon off his head and with his foot turned the boy towards the goat.

"And now... there's the dog. Do you understand me?"

He put the truncheon on the boy's head.

"Yes!"

"A medium-sized, dark brown dog, neither little, nor big."

"Yes!" said the child.

"What's it called?"

"Ceasar..."

"Go," said the other, "and stroke him nicely, like you usually do and say his name too..."

The other again raised his foot and planted his sole in the boy's back, carefully shoving him forward.

"Ceasar!" said the child when he reached the goat, and he put his hand on its head, between the horns. "Ceasar!"

"And what else do you generally say to him?"

The boy bent down beside the goat's neck, his cap in his hand, his eyes on the ground.

"My little dog!" he said.

There was silence.

"Come here!"

He left the goat and went over to the armed man; this time, however, he no longer stopped in front of the horse but went right up to the boot. The armed man lifted up his chin. Again he wanted to swallow, but couldn't because of the pressure of the boot against his throat; he would have liked to look up, but gazed motionless at the boot under his face.

"You can go!"

When the boy was half way towards the old man, the armed man called after him. He turned and bowed from the waist.

"Have you seen men around here?"

"I haven't seen men around here," he said.

He still stood there for a while. The armed men lit up, took a puff, and lined up their horses side by side.

"You can go!" they then said.

The old man chopped wood the whole time; he didn't turn round, but worked as though no one was at hand.

The two continued to stand there behind their backs—the child gathering and stacking the wood—until they had smoked their cigarettes. They kept silent, blew out the smoke and gazed at the shepherds. Then they threw away their cigarettes, one raised the reins, followed by the other, and, throwing their rifles behind them as they straightened in the saddle, they continued on their way at a walking pace.

A TRUE LEGEND

Radio play

by

GYÖRGY SÓS

This play has won the third Prize in the International Radio Play Competition of 1960 and has been broadcast several times over Radio Kossuth, Budapest

CAST

MOLNÁR,
Chairman of the village council

Reverend TORDAI

"Uncle" SKORKA,
coach-driver of the village council

SEBES

A CARPENTER

A SHOPKEEPER

MRS. BAKOS

MRS. DAVID

ZSUZSIKA

(A small bell tolls in the distance)

A VOICE: Earthquakes never end suddenly. Their unchained forces continue to twist and rumble underground and send repeated tremors through the walls of distant cities. Wars too, do not end when the last shot is fired. Even after the passage of many years the aftermath of the tragedies of the past again and again, overwhelms us with its resurgent waves.

(The sound of the small bell dies away, and there is a few seconds' pause, before the noise of a barnyard can be heard. A few geese are cackling, and there is the frequent crowing of a cock)

MRS. BAKOS: *(A woman of about thirty)* Chick, chick, chick, chick . . . chick, chick, chick, chick. Come and get your breakfast!

(From very near by comes the sound of poultry running up to the farmer's wife)

Off with you! Shooh, you gander! Why, he'll be knocking the basket from my hands. *(The cock's crow is heard from nearer by)* All right then! What are you so het up about? Do you think you were the first to get up? You dumbhead! Why, the men out there have cut a couple of rows at least by now. Shooh, you cheeky creature!

MRS. DÁVID: *(From next door)* Good morning, neighbour!

MRS. BAKOS: Good morning! Look at that cheeky cock. He won't let the hens be long enough for them to peck up the bit of corn I gave them. Shooh, you beast. Has your husband gone over to Old Hill too?

MRS. DÁVID: Yes, he has. They say the combine harvester can't manage the steep parts. I'll be going up there too, I'm only waiting for the herd to get going.

MRS. BAKOS: We can go up together then. I'll just tend to the chicks first and get some food packed up because my husband didn't take any with him. Come and call me when you go.

MRS. DÁVID: All right. What's up with the old woman? I haven't seen her yet today, though she's usually up early enough.

MRS. BAKOS: She must be asleep. Yesterday she complained that she wasn't feeling well. I brought her a bit of chicken broth last night. I killed that speckled hen, it wasn't able to lay for three days, you know. Shooh, there's nothing more, go and scratch for yourselves now. Will you call for me then?

MRS. DÁVID: Yes, I will.

MRS. BAKOS: I'll just pop into the shack and have a look at what the old woman's doing.

(The cock crows)

Get away with you, you old rascal! You know you mustn't come into the back garden, or you'll scratch out all Auntie Róza's flowers. That's not what the poor old woman planted them for. Shooh!

(The creaking of a small gate is heard, while the cock's crow gradually fades into the distance)

Auntie Róza! Auntie Róza!... Seems as if the house were empty... The window's open. *(She calls in through the window)* Auntie Róza, how did you like the chicken broth? Did you eat it? *(Aside, to herself)* The devil can make out what's inside in that darkness.

(The sound of a few steps, then the opening of a door which stays open. In surprise)

Wonder why the door's unlocked? She always locks it, she's so timid, poor thing. My János has told her time and again not to be afraid. A thief would take us first, with all we've got, before he got round to her. Who would guess that there was a shack in the back garden? *(Gaily)* Aunt Róza! Did you have someone to sleep with you last night, is that why you've left the door open?

(Suddenly she stops talking. There is a grave silence, with the crow of the cock from very far off. There is the sound of Mrs. Bakos taking a few steps on the boards. Then, quietly)

Good Lord!

MRS. DÁVID: *(From far off, outside)* Mrs. Bakos! Are you coming, neighbour? Let's get going or we'll never get out there for lunch!... Mrs. Bakos! Where are you?

(She comes in. Then, more quietly)

Auntie Róza isn't ill, is she?... *(Her voice trails off completdly towards the end)* ...poor creature... God rest her soul...

MRS. BAKOS: Her door was open. She must have felt it coming...

MRS. DÁVID: Look, there's a lamp set out here and this white dress beside it.

MRS. BAKOS: She showed it me once. It's her burial dress... She's put everything ready... She had six children and nine grandchildren and yet she's died all alone here. Nobody noticed when she passed away.

MRS. DÁVID: She looks just as though she were asleep. Her face is quite smooth now.

MRS. BAKOS: For all that she had such deep furrows on her brow... Her six children and nine grandchildren all

died before she did... Her husband passed away a couple of years ago, too...

MRS. DAVID: What shall we do now?

MRS. BAKOS: I don't rightly know... My János is sure to be able to tell us...

MRS. DÁVID: We ought to tell the Council.

MRS. BAKOS: So we ought—that they can see to her funeral. I'll just close the window.

(She closes it)

MRS. DÁVID: We ought to light the lamp at her head.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes, but won't something catch fire from it?

MRS. DÁVID: We'll pour some water in a saucer and put it in the middle.

MRS. BAKOS: Here's yesterday's broth. She hasn't so much as touched it. Though it really was a fine broth... You just go to your husband while I run along to the Council. Tell my husband I'll come as soon as I can, but I can't leave her alone, poor thing, can I?

(A short interval, then, very quietly, while she crosses herself)

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen.

MRS. DÁVID: Did you cross yourself?

MRS. BAKOS: *(A little frightened)* Why, oughtn't I have?

MRS. DÁVID: Maybe she wouldn't have liked it.

MRS. BAKOS: *(To encourage herself)* I hope I've done no harm.

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MOLNÁR: *(On the phone)* Hello! Hello! That Nagykaránd? Put me through to the District Office of the Agricultural Coop please. No, I don't know the number. I'm the chairman of the Village Council at Vidács. Please, do put me through to the District Office, even though I don't know the number... Yes, I'll wait...

SKORKA: *(Shouts in through the window from outside)* Comrade Chairman!

MOLNÁR: What is it, Uncle Skorka?

SKORKA: I've been standing under the window here with the trap, waiting for you for half an hour.

MOLNÁR: I'll be coming right away, I've only got one more phone call to make. I've set out three times already, but something always happened. I don't care who comes now, whoever it is, I'll get rid of him and we'll set off.

SKORKA: Shall we be away for long?

MOLNÁR: We'll nip round to the three cooperative farms and have a look at the tractor-station. We'll be away till lunch-time, I'm sure.

SKORKA: In that case I'll take a couple of bags of oats, for if the Comrade Chairman says lunch, we'll be lucky to get back for supper.

MOLNÁR: *(Speaking through the phone)* Hello! Yes. That the Coop office? Hello! This is Council Chairman Molnár of Vidács speaking. Look comrade, the manager of the coop store here has just been to see me. He complained that they had not been sent all the pork they had asked for. I don't know how this could have happened, but here we are in the very midst of the harvest, and you've chosen this moment to make things hard for us with the meat... No, don't have a look, just see to it that they send it today! This is the first time the people in our three coops are harvesting together, we've got worries and troubles galore. We don't want any ill feelings about that darned meat... You say the order was late... I don't know, I'll ask the manager and believe me, he'll get what's coming to him. But comrade, you really can't punish the whole village by depriving it of its meat!... All right... Have a try! So long, and don't be so bureaucratic. *(He slams down the receiver.)* I'm coming, Uncle Skorka!

MRS. BAKOS: *(After knocking)* Good morning.

MOLNÁR: Good morning. My dear woman, I cannot possibly receive people at eight in the morning. Anyway, I'm in an awful hurry.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes...

(A short pause)

MOLNÁR: *(Somewhat perplexed)* Are you sure it is me you're looking for?

MRS. BAKOS: The Comrade Chairman...

MOLNÁR: That's me. But perhaps someone else at the Council could see to your business. You don't have to come running to the Chairman with every little trifle, you know... Well, all the best, and don't be angry, for I've a host of things to do.

MRS. BAKOS: People say the Comrade Chairman is the only person...

MOLNÁR: Are you dead certain that it's very urgent?

MRS. BAKOS: Well it is urgent like.

MOLNÁR: Come along in the afternoon. I must get off now, we ought to have set out an hour ago.

MRS. BAKOS: Yes... They said you'd be in a great hurry, but I did hope you'd listen to me.

MOLNÁR: *(Heaves a deep sigh and calls out through the window)* Uncle Skorka, wait a bit, will you?

SKORKA: *(From outside)* I knew it.

MOLNÁR: Tell me quickly what it's about.

MRS. BAKOS: Poor Mrs. Steinberger.

MOLNÁR: Who is Mrs. Steinberger?

MRS. BAKOS: She lived in our yard. You know we have a room and a kitchen in a shack in the back garden. That's where she lived.

MOLNÁR: *(Impatiently)* I am not the one to see about housing. If there's something wrong you'd better see the Housing Office.

MRS. BAKOS: It's not about housing.

MOLNÁR: What is it then?

MRS. BAKOS: You see Mrs. Steinberger died last night.

MOLNÁR: Deaths must be reported to the Medical Officer and the Registrar's Office. Don't be angry but this is really none of my business.

MRS. BAKOS: I've been there. It's they who sent me to you. You see there's something else about this case.

MOLNÁR: What?

MRS. BAKOS: Mrs. Steinberger, you see, was as lonely as my little finger. She's got no one to bury her.

MOLNÁR: We've had cases like that before. I really don't know why they sent you to me. The village will have her buried in the usual way.

MRS. BAKOS: Only...

MOLNÁR: Only what?

MRS. BAKOS: Only, are you sure it will be the right sort of burial?

MOLNÁR: Why shouldn't it be right? Do leave off, my good woman, I've got plenty to attend to as it is. You just run along home and the Council will see to it. Good-bye...

MRS. BAKOS: Good-bye... But Comrade Chairman, please don't be angry with me, I know my husband always says that nowadays there's nothing after you're dead and all that, but you see...

MOLNÁR: Well, what is it?

MRS. BAKOS: You see this Mrs. Steinberger, she was always such a devout soul and she wanted to have a priest to bury her, with the prayers of her religion. That's why I've come to the Comrade Chairman to see to it please, because no one else can do anything about it. My neighbour and I, we washed her, put on her burial clothes and lit a lamp by her, but we didn't dare do any more, lest we spoil things... You see my neighbour's a Lutheran, I'm Catholic and poor Mrs. Steinberger was a Jewess... There's no one in the whole village whom we could ask what we should do, for Mrs. Stein-

berger was the last Jewish person left here after the war. Now that she's dead, there's no one who could bury her according to her religion. May she rest in peace.

MOLNÁR: *(With sincerity)* ...in peace.

MRS. BAKOS: The other day she showed me her burial dress. That was when she said "Dear Mrs. Bakos, you're such a good woman. Promise me that when I die you'll have me buried by a priest, according to our Jewish faith. I had six children who died and nine grandchildren, and there was not so much as a prayer by the coffin of a single one of them, nor even a coffin to put them in... Promise me you'll call a priest to my side." I promised her, poor thing, after all, that was her will. I don't know how the Jews say things are after death, but she, poor woman, suffered quite enough in her life and I thought her last wish ought to be fulfilled. If you'd please call a Jewish priest from somewhere... For if there's no life after death, we wouldn't be doing any harm, and if perhaps there should be after all, she'd think well of us up there, with that kind heart of hers... Well that's what I've come about.

MOLNÁR: Yes... Well you really are a good woman... but as for me, I wasn't appointed here to organize ceremonies... That's certainly not my business.

MRS. BAKOS: Where am I to go then, now? My husband always says the Council's the sort of place where they see to everything.

MOLNÁR: *(In confusion)* Ah... yes, yes. We'll try and do something about it... Yes, we'll have a look and see what we can do. You just go home now. What is your name?

MRS. BAKOS: Mrs. Bakos. My husband is János Bakos. It was your brother-in-law, comrade Chairman, who persuaded us to join the coop last winter... He certainly knew how to persuade a body. You'll get a priest for her, won't you?

MOLNÁR: We'll straighten this business out somehow.

MRS. BAKOS: Thank you very much. Just send him along to 23 Kapás street. I've got an awful lot to do and I should have taken his dinner out to my husband, only Mrs. Dávid said she'd take it. But I'll have to sit up by her bed all night. Even if I can't pray for her, at least she won't be alone. Perhaps my neighbour'll come in too. 23 Kapás street, don't forget. János Bakos's house. Good-bye, Chairman.

MOLNÁR: Good-bye, Mrs. Bakos. *(Heaves a great sigh)* Well, Bálint Molnár, what are you going to do now? You ought to telephone to Nagykaránd and ask the Chairman of the District Council to send a Jewish priest if they have one. Is that really what I ought to do?

(He turns the handle of the telephone)

Please put me through to Nagykaránd...

SKORKA: *(From outside)* Shall we get going Comrade Chairman?

MOLNÁR: Straight away, I've only got one more call to put through.

(Over the phone)

Hello! Give me the Chairman of the District Council...

(A short interval then, to himself)

They'll think I've gone mad. I still haven't sent in last month's report, the repair jobs are going slowly at the tractor-station, there are too few machines in the coops, the seed is scattering, we should discuss investments for the third quarter, I ought to convene a meeting of the Council, and yet I, the No. 1. man in the village, have nothing better to do than find a Jewish priest... They'll think that Molnár at Vidács either isn't up to his job or else the heat wave's addled his brain... Hello! *(Embarrassed)* This is Chairman Molnár of Vidács. Hello, Comrade Chairman... You know, I called you because... well,

you see, I'll be sending you last month's report at the end of the week. We've got so much work to do here, I haven't had much time... And then there are always a host of trifles... That's why I called you... I want some help. You see... The fact is...

(From here he speaks without inhibition)

that the District office of the coop there at your place is making a fuss about the pork, because of some paper or other. It's run out in the shop here, and they absolutely must send us some. Please give them a ring and tell them to shelve their bureaucracy for once... All right, thank you. *(He puts down the receiver, and gives a loud puff)* It'll be terribly hot again today... I really ought to have asked him about that minister... Never mind, I'll do it when we get back.

SKORKA: *(From outside)* Comrade Chairman!

MOLNÁR: I'm coming! We can get started straight away.

(A two-wheeled trap rattles on the cobbles)

SKORKA: Look how nicely the roan's leg has recovered!

MOLNÁR: Yes...

(A short pause)

SKORKA: She'll be able to trot around another couple of years with this here trap.

MOLNÁR: So she will.

(A short pause)

SKORKA: But the piebald pulled better, all the same.

MOLNÁR: Yes...

SKORKA: You're not very cheerful today, Comrade Chairman. Or is it all your worries?

MOLNÁR: Well, there's plenty to be had, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: Yes... responsibility, I suppose, is a big thing. Just take it from me, Comrade Chairman, there are enough cares on my shoulders too. Suppose I had not cured this poor nag's leg... There's a lot of value in a horse like this—and you're in the soup before you can say Jack Robinson. For the trap must always be ready to go. This is not the sort of place where I could say "the horse is lame, I can't go." Once the word's "go," why there's nothing but to get up and go. In the State's interest. There's many that don't even know all the responsibility that rests on a driver, such as me... True, I've had plenty of practice here...

(A short pause, with only the trap rattling on)

MOLNÁR: *(just to himself, quietly, with no echo or any other technical trick)* Still, I ought to have done something about this burial business. But what? The devil take it! The hard thing about this chairmanship is that here you always have to be clever in advance. How much easier to be clever after the event. For that poor woman it makes precious little difference by now, how she's put into the grave. Funerals are, after all, always conducted for the living and not for the dead. But what will the living say? Shall I have the loudspeaker announce that the last Jewish woman in our village has died? What would happen? How many people would feel a shiver running down their backs, as it did down mine this morning? Would they understand that this is really still part of the Second World War, which obliterated so many in our village, simply because they had their Sundays on Saturdays? And what if there're some who'll snear and grin? And anyway, should I, the Council Chairman, be the one to organize a Church burial? It's true that they suffered a lot, yet isn't it odd for me one day to lecture on the origin of the belief in God, of religion and of the Churches, and to explain why we don't agree with such things, and then for me, of all people, to run around for a priest to officiate at a religious ceremony? Who's to puzzle this out? Maybe I'm about to stir

up something that it would better not to touch again...? Yet what if I leave something in the dark, that had best be brought out into the open? I ought at any rate to do something... One way or the other...

(He suddenly gives a start)

What's that you're saying Uncle Skorka?

SKORKA: *(Somewhat offended)* I'm asking for the third time now, whether we're to go to the tractor-station first, or to the Golden Ear Farm.

MOLNÁR: To the tractor-station, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: Then I'll turn down here.

(The trap runs off the cobbled road and continues on a dirt track)

We'll go by the back way, behind the Jewish Temple, so we'll get there faster.

MOLNÁR: All right, Uncle Skorka.

(For a short while, only the rattle of the trap can be heard)

SKORKA: *(Without any malice)* Now there's a place that God's moved out of.

MOLNÁR: *(Though he knows full well, nevertheless he asks)* Is this the Jewish Temple?

SKORKA: That's what it was, but then... Look, there's so much grass and weed between the steps, that the geese go there to graze. It'll be coming on fifteen years now that no one's set foot inside. Though you know at one time, when I had a handsome cab of my own, before my two horses were called up for the Army, I used to spend a lot of time at the stand here. In the autumn, when they had their lent, I would always take old Mr. Klein home from the Temple after the fast. He was a good customer because he lived close by and I could turn back for another passenger... But in vain did the poor man fast, he died of starvation somewhere all the same... You know Comrade Chairman, it's not as though I had ever been the church-going kind, a cabby's always got so much to do, he hasn't time to go to church. But I do think it's a sad thing, when a church is all overgrown with grass, like this one. Not because they don't use it, but because the people have gone who used to go to it... They've been exterminated... Why? For nothing... Jews? Gentiles? As though they were not all the same... Even with horses, look how many kinds there are. Brown, black, grey and white. And yet they're all horses, and their worth is set by how well they pull... Isn't that right?

MOLNÁR: Yes, you're right, Uncle Skorka. By the way, did you happen to know the Steinbergers?

SKORKA: József Steinberger? Of course I knew them. They lived in a back yard in Kapás street. Of the whole family, only the old couple survived by some accident. I heard the old man died a couple of years ago. I used to go to their place because on the main holidays each autumn all their sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren would come home, and I would bring them in from the station. Sometimes my cab would be so full up, there would be eight or ten people sitting in it, all on top of each other. I never could make out how they could all get inside that little house... Since the war I haven't had to take anybody there. Why did you ask?

MOLNÁR: This Mrs. Steinberger died last night.

SKORKA: She's dead? She was a short little woman... She brought up a lot of children with a lot of trouble, but she never said a nasty word about anyone. Everybody around there liked her. If someone's goose had a grain of corn stuck in its windpipe, they always took it to Auntie Róza. She'd take it out, something wonderful. And she never took a penny for it... When I went to fetch her children from the station I always asked her: "Won't you come for a ride Auntie Róza?" "I will sometime, only you'll have a lot of passengers now on your way back. But one day I'll come along and then you'll take me

for a ride all the way through the town, alone, by myself." But she never came for that ride. Though I know she would have loved to come... And who's to bury her now?

MOLNÁR: The Council, of course.

SKORKA: It ought to be in the Jewish cemetery.

MOLNÁR: That's right, of course.

SKORKA: And who's going to pray over her?

MOLNÁR: She was the last Jewish person in Vidács.

SKORKA: So she's going to be buried without a prayer?

MOLNÁR: She won't know anything anyway, poor woman.

SKORKA: They said she was a very religious person.

MOLNÁR: Do you think, Uncle Skorka, that we ought to call a priest to bury her?

SKORKA: All her children and all her grandchildren were buried without a priest.

MOLNÁR: And what do you think people would say?

SKORKA: Well, maybe they wouldn't all say the same... Some would say one thing, others another... I don't know much about politics and things of that sort, but if you were to ask me, I'd say she ought to be buried with Jewish prayers... Not because of God and religion and her seeing it from above, but as a matter of humanity.

MOLNÁR: Somehow I feel like that myself. Yes, that's what we ought to do, and that's what we shall do. Thank you for your advice, Uncle Skorka.

SKORKA: *(Seriously)* Glad to be of some help, Comrade Chairman. And if you ever again get into a jam over something, don't you be afraid to ask me.

MOLNÁR: *(Smiling a little)* Right! Just give that horse a nudge, will you... They've got a phone at the tractor-station, and I'll try and phone for a priest from there.

(The rattle of the trap gets louder, then slowly fades away)

(After a short interval, the puffing of a stationary tractor is heard, as it runs idle in the repair shop of the tractor-station)

MOLNÁR: Good morning.

SEBES: *(A young man of about twenty-five)* Good morning, Comrade Chariman. Though it's nearer tea-time for me, than breakfast.

MOLNÁR: Were you that early today, Comrade Sebes?

SEBES: Today? Why, we got going at dawn yesterday.

MOLNÁR: So that's why you look as haggard as though you had been to a ball that lasted three days on end. Not that a young man like you shouldn't take it in his stride.

SEBES: A bit of overtime pay comes in handy.

MOLNÁR: Where are the others?

SEBES: They've gone out with the two combine harvesters. The director is also with them. We fixed both machines during the night. In the morning one went off to the Golden Ear Farm, the other to the Kossuth Farm. By now they're busy on the wheat.

MOLNÁR: That was a tidy bit of work you did. Are you keeping watch here now?

SEBES: Yesterday afternoon we fitted a new engine to this tractor. We've been running her all night. I'll go and stop her now, to give her a rest. I think she'll be ready to start tomorrow afternoon and then I'll be able to get some sleep.

MOLNÁR: But when you go to sleep, you take off that red cap, of yours, don't you?

SEBES: Comrade Chairman, you're always at me about my cap.

MOLNÁR: Well, I'd have thought that a knitted red cap, especially with a dangling tassel like that, was more fit for girls to wear. Don't you think so?

SEBES: It's for him to wear that wears it. At any rate, it keeps my hair from becoming oily.

MOLNÁR: Take care, or one fine day a bull will knock you off the tractor.

SEBES: It's not the bulls but the girls that usually go for it.

MOLNÁR: Is the office locked? I'd like to put through a phone call.

SEBES: I've got the key here. But I'll go and open it for you, because the lock's a bit stiff.

MOLNÁR: Sure, where else would a lock be stiff, if not at a repair shop, eh?

SEBES: Here you are.

(Lock being opened, door opens)

MOLNÁR: Comrade Sebes, you came to us from Nagykaránd, didn't you?

SEBES: Yes.

MOLNÁR: Then you know the place well, don't you?

SEBES: Fairly well. But it's a big town, you know.

MOLNÁR: You don't happen to know whether there's a Jewish priest there, do you?

SEBES: *(With a little chuckle)* What do you want him for?

MOLNÁR: I need one.

SEBES: *(Tries to be witty)* For you, Comrade Chairman? *(Laughs)* I wouldn't have thought a man with a handle-bar moustache like yours would be wanting a Jewish priest.

MOLNÁR: *(Reprovingly)* It's not for my moustache that I need him. An old Jewish woman has died in our village and I need him to bury her.

SEBES: A relative of yours?

MOLNÁR: Why should she be a relative?

SEBES: Because of the fuss you're making over her.

MOLNÁR: She has no more relatives left. It's the Council's duty to have her buried.

SEBES: *(Shrugs his shoulders)* I don't know whether there is a Jewish priest at Nagykaránd or not. Go ahead and ask them, the phone's over there.

MOLNÁR: If you were in my place, wouldn't you look for a minister?

SEBES: I'm in my place here and that's all there is to it. I'm not the slightest bit interested in a Jewish woman I've never even set eyes on.

MOLNÁR: Perhaps it wouldn't do any harm if you were a little bit interested.

SEBES: Is it going to be such a big, pompous funeral?

MOLNÁR: No, it won't be particularly pompous.

SEBES: *(Jocularly)* If I were paid overtime for it, I might go and have a look at it.

MOLNÁR: *(Angrily)* This is no joke!

SEBES: O. K., it just slipped out of me.

MOLNÁR: Is it so hard to understand that here we have an unfortunate creature whose relatives were all exterminated during the war and that we must pay her the last honours?

SEBES: I didn't say we shouldn't.

MOLNÁR: But...? Tell me frankly.

SEBES: There's no "but"... It's really all the same to me... Only... I don't want to say anything against that Jewish woman, because I don't bother about anybody's race. But this was the sort of war in which the Jews got it in the neck. I don't say that it was a decent thing to do, but surely it's time we should forget about the whole business. They had bad luck, so what are we to do about it? It was bad alright, but we can't change it now—it's over and why should we keep warming up the old stew? She's dead. Let her rest in peace, at least we can be certain there won't be any more anti-semitism at Vidács... What are you looking at me for? Do you mean I'm not right?

MOLNÁR: *(Quietly, with consternation)* This is horrible... "There won't be any more anti-semitism at Vidács?" Is that all it means to you? Look, how red my palms are, from the way I clenched my fists while you spoke. This morning I still hesitated whether to arrange for this funeral for fear there might be someone who would talk the way you've been talking. And now that such a person has turned up, I know we

must arrange for it. Even though you only come along if you are paid overtime.

SEBES: Comrade Chairman, you said yourself that I was to speak frankly, and now here you are, trying to stab me with your glances. I'm the sort of person who says what's on his mind. Now you tell me why I am wrong.

MOLNÁR: Because there are things of which we cannot say that they are all the same to us, even though it may not be pleasant to remember them because our own conscience pricks us a bit. Everyone here suffered from the war, that's true, but why? Because the Second World War began somewhere, slowly, with the persistent spread of this evil thing that infected people like rust infects the wheat—this idea that the Jews... We blush for shame now, when we remember that this was all that was given to us in place of work and bread and land and everything else, and that we often accepted it. We even thought there was nothing we could do against it. We were blind, for we believed that it was only the Jews they were hitting, and meanwhile we too were nearly beaten to death by it.

SEBES: You, Comrade Chairman, can hardly say that you did nothing against it, after all...

MOLNÁR: Sometimes one's conscience troubles one just because there are fewer of us for some task than there should be. We'll arrange for this funeral. It's not that woman that needs it, but rather we who are here. Perhaps you too.

SEBES: *(With little conviction)* Yes. Well, I'll go and get that engine running, because I want to have it ready by noon tomorrow.

MOLNÁR: *(To himself)* How much harder it is to remove the weeds than to sow a new crop. *(Turns the handle of the telephone)* Hello! Put me through to Nagykaránd please. Hello! The Chairman of the Council! Hello! Hello!

(His voice slowly fades away)

*

(The noise of the barnyard is again heard, but it is now much more drowsy than it was in the morning. The cock no longer crows, only a duck quacks and a hen clucks industriously. For a moment all this is heard from nearby, then it gradually grows more distant and all we hear are the sounds that penetrate into Mrs. Steinberger's room)

MRS. DÁVID: Here I am.

MRS. BAKOS: Wasn't my husband angry because I had you bring out his lunch?

MRS. DÁVID: No. All he said was: "All right." Hasn't the priest come yet?

MRS. BAKOS: No one's come, but I suppose the Chairman will see to it.

MRS. DÁVID: It would be best to bury her tomorrow.

MRS. BAKOS: I don't even know what we should do with her bits of property. She used to get a little money from her Church every month, from somewhere in Budapest. Perhaps we ought to write to them.

MRS. DÁVID: The Council will see to that. What's this?

MRS. BAKOS: I found it in the cupboard. It's her prayer book. I often saw her reading it, so I've put it under her hand.

MRS. DÁVID: What if the Chairman's forgotten all about it?

MRS. BAKOS: If no one comes by evening, I'll go and see him again. You'll stay here by her the while, won't you?

MRS. DÁVID: All right. I'll run home now, but after the milking I'll be back.

(The trap rattles)

SKORKA: How about a piece of bacon, Comrade Chairman?

MOLNÁR: Well, I must admit I'm pretty hungry.

SKORKA: I knew we wouldn't be home for lunch. There goes the five o'clock train, off to Nagykaránd. Just unpack that parcel, will you?

MOLNÁR: So you didn't bring fodder only for the horse?

SKORKA: Many people have no idea that in a job like mine you have to think of a lot of things. They imagine that my job consists only of sitting in the driver's seat and saying gee-up! But if a man's to rise to his responsibilities he must think of other things too. After all, the Chairman can't be expected to think of other things too. After all, the Chairman can't be expected to think of everything. Just carve a slice for yourself, there's plenty there.

MOLNÁR: Thank you. This is fine. Then I'll hold the reins a bit, while you eat your share.

SKORKA: Gee-up! We'd better hurry, for that priest might arrive by the five-thirty from Nagykaránd.

MOLNÁR: I don't. know. *(Eats as he speaks)* At first the Chairman just couldn't make out what I wanted. I suppose he was somewhat puzzled himself, about what he ought to do. He hummed and hawd a bit, but finally promised he'd see what he could do and then phone me about it. His message is sure to be there by the time we get back. And if he can't come by train, they can always send him along by car. We'll see...

(The rumbling of the trap fades away)

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ZSUZSIKA: He said he'd be back about lunch time. I'm waiting for him too, because I've got a lot of messages and some papers for him to sign.

MRS. BAKOS: If I may sit down here I'll wait for him. I've been here once already, only you weren't here then.

ZSUZSIKA: What's it about? Won't it do tomorrow?

MOLNÁR: Here I am. What's up, Zsuzsika?

MRS. BAKOS: Don't be angry please, but I've come again. Do you remember? I was here this morning about Mrs. Steinberger.

MOLNÁR: Don't worry, everything'll be all right. I've spoken to the Chairman of the Council at Nagykaránd. Zsuzsika, didn't he phone?

ZSUZSIKA: Yes, he did. He left a rather odd message. I was to tell you he had seen to the pork and it would be here tomorrow. But he can't send a Jewish priest, because he hasn't got one either. He also said he had tried to ask for one from Budapest, but couldn't get through on the phone.

MRS. BAKOS: What are we to do then? She ought to be buried tomorrow.

MOLNÁR: *(Puzzled)* Yes, she ought to be buried tomorrow...

MRS. BAKOS: I found a prayer book in her cupboard, but who on earth can read it?

(The tolling of a small bell comes from afar)

MOLNÁR: Wait here a moment! I've thought of something.

(The distant sound of the bell gradually comes nearer. For a few moments it is heard from quite nearby, then it stops. A garden gate is opened)

MOLNÁR: Good evening.

TORDAI: Good evening.

MOLNÁR: Please forgive me, Reverend, for butting in on you like this. My name is Molnár, I'm Chairman of the Council.

TORDAI: I'm Gáspár Tordai, at your service. Perhaps we'd better go inside.

MOLNÁR: I wouldn't like to disturb you for long.

TORDAI: Oh, not at all. This is just an old man's pastime you know. I water my little garden every evening, but I've just finished for today. Please come in.

MOLNÁR: We could sit down on this bench here, the earth's got such a good, fresh smell.

TORDAI: Make yourself comfortable then.

MOLNÁR: I've come with a strange request, sir. At one time I used to go to your services, but that was a long time ago. Of course you don't remember, I myself hardly do. But I have preserved the conviction that you were a good man, always.

TORDAI: *(Humbly)* God created me to be such as I am.

MOLNÁR: I need your help.

TORDAI: I don't know of what help a Lutheran pastor could be to the Chairman of the Council, but I shall gladly do what I can and what my conscience permits me to do.

MOLNÁR: I would like to ask you, if possible, to conduct a funeral service.

TORDAI: There's nothing to prevent my doing that.

MOLNÁR: But maybe there is. You see... I've heard that Christian clergymen are also required to study Hebrew.

TORDAI: So they are.

MOLNÁR: Do you know some too, Reverend?

TORDAI: Just a little. I can read it and I know a prayer or two. Why?

MOLNÁR: It's a Jewish woman that requires burial.

TORDAI: A Jewess?

MOLNÁR: Does your religion forbid you to do it?

TORDAI: No, it doesn't forbid it, but it's the sort of thing that rarely happens...

MOLNÁR: Last night a Jewish woman called Mrs. Steinberger died. She has no one to bury her, except us. You know, Reverend, that I'm not a church-going man, because I take a different view of the world and I have my own opinion of religious ceremonies, too. But now I somehow feel that we ought to bury this woman according to some sort of rite. Even though we may not be able to do it in exactly the way that they do, it ought to be something like it. Are you perhaps versed in these things, Reverend, and would you undertake to do it?

TORDAI: You and I, we look at the world in two different ways, but now we are sitting together side by side here on this bench. In this matter our thoughts, too, are one. You've asked me to discharge a sad duty, but I'm glad you asked me, for this is a just cause. Who would have thought that the Chairman of the Council who "takes a different view of the world" would think of things like this? If a man chooses humaneness as his weapon, I shall, in my own way, always be his ally. We'll bury the woman tomorrow. Thank you for letting me help.

MOLNÁR: It won't be a big funeral, for we're in the middle of the harvest. Everyone's out on the fields.

TORDA: It would be good if there were at least ten men present. According to their Law you must have at least ten men for prayer.

MOLNÁR: I'll call that many together. One or two people are sure to be able to come from each of the cooperative farms and from the tractor-station. I'll organize it by phone tomorrow morning. It would be best to bury her as soon as possible.

TORDAI: Could we gather by, say, one o'clock?

MOLNÁR: Yes.

TORDAI: Is the coffin at her house?

MOLNÁR: Heavens, we haven't even got one yet! We ought to have a fine coffin made.

*

(Sounds characteristic of carpenter's workshop)

TORDAI: We don't want a beautiful coffin, Mr. Répási, that's not in line with their tradition. Just simple, rough boards.

CARPENTER: I know sir, I remember making them.

MOLNÁR: Send the bill to the Council.

CARPENTER: All right. There'll only be the price of the wood on the bill...

That's the way I'd like it. I'll get it fixed up during the night.

(There is the sound of sawing for a few moments, followed by a brief silence; later, first from afar, then ever nearer, the sound of the coffin being nailed to)

*

SKORKA: Good morning.

MRS. BAKOS: Good morning.

SKORKA: I see the coffin's ready.

CARPENTER: Yes. I've just nailed it to. She didn't need much wood, poor thing.

SKORKA: The pastor's sent this black cloth to spread over the coffin, so it shouldn't stand here bare, before we take it out to the cemetery. The funeral will be at one o'clock. I'll be here by noon with the Lutheran hearse; the Chairman and the others will be going straight to the cemetery. We'll harness the Council's horses to the hearse, that's why I'll be driving them. Because I know those horses. I've only just cured the roan that had a sore leg... and it's a very responsible job, driving a hearse. You have to take care not to go too fast or too slow. A clumsy tug at the reins, and the trouble's already there. Oh, and here's another lamp; if you need it, light it. Well, all the best. I'll be here at noon.

*

(The sound of the noon bell tolling—a larger bell than before. Afterwards there is a short interval)

MRS. BAKOS: Have you come here too, Reverend? I thought you'd be going straight out to the cemetery.

TORDAI: I've come here. I'd like to accompany the hearse.

MRS. BAKOS: You know sir, I'm a Catholic and I don't know, but I hope we didn't do anything with her that we oughtn't to have. We just washed her and dressed her.

TORDAI: You did well. You did everything as you should have.

MRS. DÁVID: We kept vigil by her together last night. We wanted to say a prayer for her, but we didn't dare. So we just put her Book in her hand, we thought it'd be better than nothing.

TORDAI: So it was.

SKORKA: Will you really be coming to the cemetery on foot along with the hearse, Reverend?

TORDAI: Yes.

SKORKA: As you wish. I'll drive slower then.

*

(A short pause. The creak of the hearse's wheels is heard from afar, then ever nearer)

Whoa, brown'un, slow there. You're not used to that black spread over you. Whoa there... Whoa... You see, Aunt Róza, how oddly things have turned out. Now who'd have thought the time would come when I'd really be taking you for a ride. You're alone in the cab, all alone, and we're going right along the length of the town... The Council's horses are drawing you and the Chairman himself has arranged for the funeral. That's a great honour you know... It's true that there's not much of a crowd following us, only the old Lutheran pastor trudging behind the hearse and a couple of women after him. For the men who helped you up have hurried back to the harvest... But you mark my words, Auntie Róza, if it were winter and people had more time, all the people of Vidács, every one of'em would be here... We wanted to call in a Jewish priest but we couldn't get one... Never mind, everything'll be fine all the same. The Reverend Tordai also knows his job well, you can take it from me. When we put you up on the hearse, he read some Jewish from the Book, fluent as a brook. I listened well, Auntie Róza, because our Chairman's only coming out to the cemetery and when he's not around, I have to watch and see that everything happens as it should... Slow there, brown'un, the

pastor can't come after us as quick as that... There'll be a bell too, Auntie Róza. It's not a Jewish custom, to be sure, but the pastor has allowed the bell ringer to toll the bell when your coffin is lowered to the grave, so that those who're not with us in the cemetery should be there in their thoughts.

(The creak of the hearse is heard for another few moments, then fades away)

*

MOLNÁR: I see we're all here. Let's get started then. Comrade Sebes, are you representing the tractor-station?

SEBES: They sent me, because I'm going off to sleep right after.

MOLNÁR: You might have brought some sort of hat, you know that's how they do it.

SEBES: It's here in my pocket, only I didn't dare put it on before.

MOLNÁR: Would you have had the nerve to come out to the cemetery in that tassled cap?

SEBES: That's all I've got, so what am I to do about it? Can I help it, if I don't have a hat?

MOLNÁR: You could have asked someone to lend you one!

SEBES: But who's to fix the engine while I run around for a hat?

MOLNÁR: Go home!

SEBES: But...

MOLNÁR: Go home! Get out! Quick! *(More quietly)* Let's get going, comrades.

*

(A short interval, then the sound of a man's footsteps is heard on the cobbles)

SEBES: *(To himself)* Who'd have thought he'd puff himself up like that? He looked at me as though it had been my fault that Hitler didn't like the Steinbergers... Fifteen years ago I was just a kid of ten, so what business of mine is it all?... I don't say it wasn't a pity to provoke him with that cap. I wouldn't for the life of me have thought they'd take this whole funeral so seriously... Am I really such a bad fellow then? How could I know they'd all come in their Sunday hats? Now they'll think I wanted to play a joke...

SHOPKEEPER: Can I serve you?

SEBES: What's that you say?

SHOPKEEPER: I've been watching you for some time staring at the shop window... Please come in. We've got everything here, shirts, ties, handkerchiefs. During harvest time like this, our service is even better than usual. That's why I'm standing in the doorway, you see, trying to read the customers' thoughts even before they enter the shop. Would you like an elegant pair of swimming trunks?

SEBES: No thanks, I don't need anything, I was just looking round... Do you have any hats?

SHOPKEEPER: Of course we have. The cheaper kind or a better one?

SEBES: But I haven't any money with me.

SHOPKEEPER: Sorry, I can't let you have anything on credit.

SEBES: You see I should be going to a funeral. I never wear a hat, but this Mrs. Steinberger is being buried, perhaps you've heard.

SHOPKEEPER: Please come in. I'll lend you a lovely dark hat. Be very very careful with it and bring it back to me after the funeral. Will that do?

SEBES: Yes. Thank you. But let me have it quickly. If I run I can catch up with them.

(A short pause, then fading footsteps)

*

MOLNÁR: We have assembled in this cemetery today for a strange funeral. It would not be fitting to argue over an open grave about how we should view the world. Most of the people here today consider that man can only prosper during his life

here on earth—that it is here that we must bring about well-being and peace. This is our conviction, yet we have gathered to honour according to her beliefs a fellow human who has passed away but who, during the greater part of her life, was not allowed to feel that she was indeed a human being. It was deep compassion, not so much over her death as over her life, that has brought us here today, to do as she wished us to do by her. We have not brought a wreath, because that is not the custom, and we have all donned dark hats, as required by tradition. We are filled with shame, for it is an old story that those who despise crime are the ones that show shame, and not the criminals. Even though fifteen years have passed since the war, we are again seized with horror, for it is always those who bury the dead who are horrified, and not the murderers. Today we bury not only you, but also those who should be standing here around your grave. It can no longer prove a consolation to you, but it can console us who live, to know that we are now to some extent making amends for something that was not of our doing. We only looked on, helpless, while it was being done. Not everyone is here, for not all of us could come. Life cannot stop, but we who are here have come in their stead, on behalf of those who are working out in the fields and by the machines. We did not know you, Mrs. József Steinberger, but we felt we could not pass by your grave with a shrug of the shoulders, saying, "it means nothing to me." We felt it was our duty to come, because we wanted to tell you and to tell everyone who still doesn't understand, that our world is incompatible with hatred, with even a flicker of the hatred that led to your sad fate. May you rest in peace!

TORDAI: My brethren in mourning! In the place of her tearful children, grandchildren and relatives, of a congregation in prayer, of a priest of her own faith, I stand here in the name of contrite humanity, by the open grave of Mrs. József Steinberger. I am a servant of God, but how good it is to feel that those who have assembled round this grave did not ask each other who was whose servant, for here we are all of us now serving the cause of humanity. I feel that we are engaged in something that is truly good, something that would not have occurred to people in other eras, under a different social order. And now let the earth from which you were taken and from which we were all taken, cover you. *(Clods of earth thump on the coffin)* Rest in peace, and may your God bless you, with this my prayer that is that of your own faith. And if I should not read it well, forgive me, for I am an aged servant of the Lord and my eyes are weak and the tears of my sad office...

(A few sentences earlier a small bell has started tolling far away and now grows stronger as the voice fades away. For a few moments the bell is heard from nearby, then it becomes more distant, while)

A VOICE: *(From very nearby)* Do not say this is mere legend. For thus did it happen, thus was Mrs. József Steinberger buried. May she rest in peace, and may those who buried her live in peace.

OLD HUNGARIAN COLLEGES

by

IMRE SURÁNYI

I

English educational problems have always been viewed with interest in Hungary. One reason for this certainly lies in the peculiar and unfamiliar character of the English school system as it appears to the continental observer. But a probably deeper reason is obviously to be sought in the fact that the traditional college system as known in the old Hungarian education on the one hand, and the British public schools of a not less marked national character on the other, definitely show some noteworthy parallels. There are certain similarities in approach and structure alike. Which of these two similarities is the more striking?

In both countries, these institutions began to flourish at the beginning of the Reformation, although the origin of the public schools goes back further (Winchester, founded in 1328). Both types of schools were proud of their history and saw a source of strength in their respect for traditions. Concomitant with this, both protected their own autonomy with militant determination. The schools in the island country were, however, in a more favourable position in this respect.

Moreover, the colleges in Hungary and the public schools in England started as educational establishments for the poor. The students at Harrow proudly sang their school hymn honouring their founder, "Our house was built in lowly ways." But in this respect the Hungarian colleges remained more faithful to their original aims. If we wish to draw the parallel further, we can say that, since there was no central control over the development of either type of establishment, each school evolved in the course of the centuries according to individual patterns different from every other school, and the result was often an imbalance of structure and organization. The same unhampered growth was evident in methodology and curriculum. The natural informality of the English garden provides a good simile not only for British educational institutions but

also for the Hungarian Protestant schools. This fertile and playful freedom was clipped by Maria Theresa in her famous School Act providing for central control of education. Declaring that *Die Schule ist und bleibt ein Politikum* (education is and will always remain a matter of politics), the Queen bluntly proclaimed the principle of state absolutism in the educational field.

The parallel can be extended still further: in its golden age each of the two types of educational establishments attached great importance to character training. Bishop Wykeham's famous motto, "Manners makyth man," might have been inscribed over the entrance of any one of the Hungarian colleges. This principle was successfully translated into practice within the framework of student self-government, which trained young people at an early age to act with responsibility both as individuals and as members of a community.

These striking similarities must not divert one's attention from certain basic differences rooted in the very divergent histories of the two nations. Thus, with the passage of time, the public schools became privileged establishments admitting only children of the governing strata, and later, when through the introduction of state aid it was made possible for the day-schools to take on one non-paying student for every three paying students, upper-middle-class snobbery turned them into a prototype for ruling-class schools in a wider sense. In Hungary, on the other hand, during the centuries of Turkish conquest and Hapsburg oppression, the colleges, as a rule, remained militant centres fostering the gifted sons of the people. They trained those preachers—very often taken away to man the galleys—ministers and school-masters, who at their small posts always worked for national independence and the awakening of a national culture, as well as the writers of the Enlightenment—in other words, the type which culminated in Lajos Kossuth, leader of the War of Independence of 1848—49.

II

Towards the end of the Middle Ages, the Ottoman Empire, attacking Hungary from the Balkans, crushed the country's independent statehood like a house of cards. After the tragic defeat at Mohács, in 1526, the country, divided into three parts, was ravaged by the Turks for 150 years, while the Hapsburg dynasty held sway over the western part, considering it a mere pawn in the chess-game for European hegemony. Only the small Principality of Transylvania was destined to uphold national existence in this period.

The intellectual aspect of Hungary underwent a radical change already at the beginning of this restless age of bloodshed. The Roman Church lost its controlling influence for a time, for its parishes and schools were depopulated; and of the high clergy some were killed on the battle-fields, while others, jealous of their power, isolated themselves from the national strivings. Looking for spiritual comfort, human rights, and often merely for loot in the chaos amidst the ruins, the populace, liberated from the discipline of Church and king, gladly accepted the lighter yoke of the "heresy" imported from Germany.

In Hungary, the Reformation made its apperance in the company of its ally, humanism. The first significant school-founders and preachers came to this country from among the pupils of Luther, Erasmus and Melanchton, from Wittenberg, Strassburg and other German universities. Unsparing of work or of themselves, they raised education from its lowly position and turned the schools into the "vegetable gardens" of the new church. Theology, of course, dominated the curriculum, the other subjects playing only the role of *ancilla theologiae*. Instruction in Latin, Greek and Hebrew served the primary aim of paving the way for the study of the pristine Scriptures and scholarly writings connected with the Book. The effort to give a classical education was exhausted in the reading, memorization and copious imitation of the outstanding authors of antiquity, and vigorous drill in "Latin thinking" as well as in the Latin language. It may be of interest to mention at this juncture that in the early days of the College of Debrecen—one of the nourishing-grounds of the idea of national independence, where 300 years later the student paper proudly announced the thwarting of susbscriptions to a German-language comic paper—anybody who dared to utter a word in Hungarian was ruthlessly penalized.

The tireless Bálint Trotzendorf, a zealous pupil of Melanchton, exercised the most marked influence on the development of the Protestant colleges in Hungary. His influence was strongest in the field of school organization. According to his master he was born to administer schools as Scipio Africanus had been born to command camps. He could not base his planning on the resources of a rich city and independent republic as could Sturm in Strassburg, but had to make do with more modest resources and a much smaller staff. It is to his credit as an organizer that he was able to teach such a large number of students of different ages and backgrounds in a single establishment. The similarity of the position of Protestant schools in Hungary readily accounts for Trotzendorf's great influence in this country. His Hungarian pupils recounted that his school in Goldberg

resembled a wisely governed republic with excellent laws. Some said that "even the servants and servant girls spoke Latin there, so that one had the impression Goldberg was situated in Latium".

III

The most advanced forms of student self-government developed at Debrecen and Sárospatak, the two major colleges of the Reformed Church in Hungary. The older of the two, enjoying the preference of aristocratic patrons, was the college at Sárospatak, where the Czech Komensky (Comenius), this outstanding European pedagogue, taught for some time. Due to the unfortunate predicament of the country, however, some regions of Hungary were in constant danger, and the schools in these areas were often forced to move. Such was the fate of the town of Sárospatak, too, and so the college at Debrecen gradually took precedence, emerging as the *schola universalis* of the Hungarian Calvinists by the second half of the 17th century. At Debrecen, primary, secondary, and advanced schooling were provided already soon after the founding of the college. Since at that time the school had only a single teacher, the *rector professor*, he lectured in the advanced section called the academy, and eminent students, the *praeceptores publici*, provided the instruction in the lower branch. In addition to the public lectures, private tutors *(praeceptores privati)* coached the students. This private tutoring had the advantage of hammering in the material presented in class. In this way no student remained without direct intellectual guidance, and every one of them had an older student to assist him, who, according to the principle of *docendo discere*, also profited from his responsibility. Some of the private tutors were paid money for their activity, others received their board for it, and still others only laundry service. But private tutors called "gratists" were assigned even to the non-paying students. The regulations of the school did not permit tutors to draw their students from academic work by requesting private services of them, on the other hand they were allowed to use even a whip to force lazy pupils to study.

The students who were boarders formed the *coetus*, which was a veritable little republic in itself. Elected officers governed the life of the student body, and lower officers served the community in various functions.

The elected *senior* presided over the *coetus*. He ranked immediately after the rector and the professor. It was his general responsibility to guard the honour and welfare of the school community. At the initial stage he was also the treasurer. Even though the senior was elected from the ranks of the most eminent students, success sometimes turnep his head and so

later on elections were held every term. As a matter of fact, the office was adequately rewarde d. Its holder was given a dish of the food sent in from town, at noon and in the evening, and since the early part of the 17th century 20 dinars to boot. Commenting upon this sum the school's regulations state that it is not a large income, but neither is it small, and if the senior is not satisfied, he may as well look for some other post.

The controller or *contrascriba* was the senior's deputy. He was the chief guardian of school discipline and therefore it was his duty to make nightly visits to the dormitories. As a matter of fact, he, too—just like the senior himself—was accountable for negligence or for any moral slip on his part and subject to punishment ranging from a fine to whipping or even expulsion. The senior and contrascriba and their auxiliary officers constituted the student council or *senatus scholasticus*. The curator in charge of the servant students *(curator mendicantum)*, the provisioner and the official host, the *dispensator* and the *praebitor*, who was in charge of the bread supplies, were also on the council. The provisioner controlled the accounts. At the zenith of its power, the student senate was responsible for all the financial and scholastic affairs of the college. These principal officers were elected from the ranks of the advanced branch or academy. On the other hand, secondary-school students were also eligible for the lower offices, often involving financial responsibilities.

The activity of some of the finance officers was connected with catering for the college. Two successive methods were known: the *coquia* and *alumneum*. The first was based on the cooperation of the townspeople, who undertook to supply food to the student body, sharing the cost among each other. To collect their contributions, the *coquus*, or provisioner, called on the prospective donors every day with a few poor students. In the *alumneum* a separate canteen was established from endowments donated by patrons of the college. The canteen was the scene of activity of the dishwashing students *(lotores)* vested with less comfortable offices. Their term of service was three months, but if they failed to discharge their duties in a satisfactory way, the term was extended. An interesting financial post was that of the explorator. It was his task to ferret out where parties were to be held in town and to direct the college singers there, in order to collect contributions for the college.

The protection of the college depended on the office of the *vigiles* and *janitores*. It was their responsibility to guard the physical security and moral integrity of the college. They were equipped with cudgels and torches and divided the nights into watches among themselves. Vigilance was their main duty, and it was strictly prohibited to lounge about, to

seek shelter in the halls or even to yawn, for if they were caught at any one of these misdeeds, they were severely called to account. Always students from the advanced branch were detailed on night watch, a service which had a punitive function. The student acting as janitor used, or threatened to use, his cudgel on those who sought to steel out of the college. No outsider was admitted to the college during classes, and women were never admitted at all, being told in accordance with the school constitution to send their husbands or, if they were widowed, to visit the professors at their residence.

The most characteristic institution of student self-government was the college court *(sedes scholastica)*. The institution dates back to the middle of the 16th century, and at the peak of its power it had the right to try even the rector. Later it lost this right as well as the authority to judge such grave crimes as murder and fornication, and those guilty of these crimes were expelled from college and handed over to secular authorities.

The president of the college court was the rector, who had no vote however; its convener and clerk was the senior, and its members were the *contra-scriba* and a jury of eleven older students. In more serious cases the sentence of the court could be appealed to the faculty. The older school constitutions contained a wide variety of penalties, ranging from simple scolding to lashing and expulsion. The new school regulations at the end of the 18th century provided for more humane sentences: whipping and caning were abolished, but the college jail or *carcer* was introduced. Swearing, which had become something of a fad, was heavily punished, recidivists were even expelled. It must be stressed that the severity of the school courts was not unjustified, because discipline often became lax under the chaotic conditions of the 16th century, when the older students went about armed and often joined the army straight from college, or returned to the college from fighting. With the eclipse of self-government, the sphere of authority of the college court continued to diminish and most of its major responsibilities were transferred to the rector and the faculty.

IV

The *coetus* or student body, which often had a membership of over a thousand, was a lively community of multifarious activities. Its vitality often demanded an outlet beyond the college walls, and its organizations became interlinked with the life of the town and sometimes with an entire region of the country. Let Debrecen again serve as our example.

The Calvinist schools in Hungary banned music up to the end of the

18th century. The masters of the famous College at Pápa were very incensed at the violin, which they called "Music without any wise Purpose" and held to be a pastime of rakes and debauchees. Nevertheless singing came into its own relatively early. The famous choir of the Debrecen College began its activity under very tragic circumstances. During the plague of 1739 the church services were held in the streets at which a master directed those students who had good voices in singing the psalms in four parts. The choir also played an important role after the defeat of the War of Independence (1849), when it fostered the national spirit. It was obliged, after each public performance, to sing the hated Austrian "Gott-erhalte" hymn glorifying the emperor. The members of the choir counter-acted this by demonstratively singing the prayer of the Jewish slaves from Verdi's "Nebuchadnezzar."

"Groaning like cattle under an iron yoke
Mercy, God almighty, mercy upon our souls."

A body of the Debrecen students even more popular and useful than the choir was the Fire Protection Society. The town suffered heavily from fires, partly because the roofs of its houses were thatched with reed and partly because of its location in the plains, where nothing checked the ravaging force of the winds which fanned the fires. The Fire Protection Society of the college students was founded in 1680 in order to curb these frequent conflagrations. It was the first society of its kind in the country and the second in the world, being preceded only by a few years by the students of Amsterdam. The Society was active for two hundred years and during this period it often saved the town of Debrecen from total destruction. During the disastrous conflagration of 1764 a large number of student-firemen perished while fighting the fire. With the progress of technology the professional fire-fighters of the town gradually took the place of the society. The student-body was not very pleased with this and had many a quarrel with the firemen. Finally, they had to see reason and the illustrious society held its last meeting in 1880.

It has been mentioned that the colleges were schools of the poor. The indigence of the students differed only in degree. The so-called mendicant students or servant students paid neither for their tuition nor for their board, but according to the puritan principles of the college gave their services in return, according to their abilities. These services were usually of a personal character and, in addition to the performance of lowly jobs in school, included waiting upon older students. Often the college during the thick of farm work in the spring or autumn, hired out its pauper stu-

dents to the peasants who paid them the current wages. In addition they helped older students in the collection of donations for the school, and transmitted the good wishes of the college at christenings and weddings. Their hard lot was aggravated by the rudeness of their superiors who often employed even physical violence against them. Their life was characterized by the old saying: *plus ictus quam victus* (more beating than food). The plight of this unfortunate stratum of students changed but little during the centuries and therefore many of them soon left their Alma Mater. As stated in a report by the director of the Debrecen College, dated from the 1860's, only 74 out of 278 servant-students reached the fifth form, the rest of them left school, some going home, others going to the dogs.

Direct solicitation and supplication were the two tried and tested methods of collecting donations. The former method was practiced in town and its immediate neighbourhood. The servant-students, led by older undergraduates visited all the well-to-do townsmen and collected cash contributions and gifts in kind from them. A more successful and extensive method was that called "supplication". During the summer holidays the parts of the country accessible by travel were divided into districts and the college sent into each of them groups of gift-collecting students. The movement which originally began at Debrecen gained ground in the whole country and existed for a long time until it was finally abolished by the Synod of 1891—92. As a matter of fact, the collecting and supplicating students never accepted the donations without giving something in return. The younger students recited greetings or sang, and the older ones preached.

The custom of *legationes*, which was first introduced at Debrecen in the 1630's, then taken up at Sárospatak a few decades later and soon acquired nationwide proportions, was of a similar character. At the request of the congregations, the college sent out older students, accompanied by servant students, for the holidays to preach the Gospel and, having won good will for the school, to collect charitable contributions as well. Assignment to the different congregations always gave rise to no little excitement and rivalry among the students, for the more generous congregations would often supply the annual requirement of the preaching student, leaving enough even for the pauper students to buy a suit of clothes or similar necessities. The custom was not without educational benefits. Young theologians and candidates for the teaching profession had a chance before starting their career to come into contact with practical life, with the country and with people, to learn polite manners and social usage. The schools also profited from this cooperation because through the *legationes* a kind of solidarity developed between the college and the congregations.

Another source of making money was the *rectoria*, again a specifically Hungarian institution. After graduation the industrious students were recommended by their Alma Mater to organize a provincial school or to run an already existing one. These country schools—called *particulae*—were branches or extensions of the mother school. The college delegate was able to make enough money in these places to undertake a period of study abroad afterwards—for the longing to do this coloured the lives of Hungarian students at all times.

Despite the systematic collections and the support of permanent patrons, the colleges were always hard up. Their difficulties increased when, in the second half of the 18th century, the solicitation of gifts from members of the congregation was restricted. They then tried to get help on several occasions from their correligionists abroad. It is a noteworthy fact that during the reign of Maria Theresa they addressed a request for aid to Thomas Harring, the Archbishop of Canterbury, too, who, with the support of English bishops and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, arranged an endowment for the College of Debrecen. Although the Government obstructed the forwarding of the aid, the masters and professors were nevertheless paid from this gift over a considerable period.

V

The students of the ancient colleges lived like beasts in the wilderness. During the dark centuries they suffered not only hunger and privations, but had to keep a weather eye for the marauding troops of the enemy, which often destroyed their schools and slaughtered both students and professors with ruthless barbarism. Their own pride and obstinacy often got them into trouble with their patrons, and they turned against themselves the anger of townsmen, priests and princes. They lived under their own laws, prayed to a militant and severe God, and caring but little for their own lives, their zeal was often devoted solely to their nation and religion.

History can recount many an example of this. Let us here recall a veritable miracle on record, probably unique in the history of education. When in 1681, after long years of peregrination, the Sárospatak College reopened at its old seat, there were no professors available. For long years the college was run by the seniors, without a single professional teacher. The older students studied with their younger schoolmates, they lived as they could and even managed to act as visiting teachers in the neighbouring villages. Self-government really flourished in these years, and the bitter seeds bore sweet and nourishing fruits.

In other cases, when they felt that their sense of justice was violated, when they had suffered a real or supposed injury, and sometimes out of sheer bravado, the students would kick up such a row as to cause nation-wide student uprisings. Examples are furnished by the history of each college. It happened, at Sárospatak that an attempt was made to deprive the students of the right to manage the college's finances, which had until then been under the students' authority. The students responded by marching out of school in anger and camping out on a mountain-side, returning only after long negotiations which resulted in the reestablishment of their former rights. The student uprisings more than once resulted in bloody riots, in which many lost their lives. Afterwards the ringleaders were forced to abandon their gowns and were expelled while the bells tolled them farewell.

But fortunately at all times and in every college there were professors whose human example, profound scholarship and deep devotion to youth inspired great emotions and deeds during national crises. The colleges had their great moment of national fervour at the outbreak of the War of Independence of 1848. There was then no difference between student and teacher, only a close community ready to sacrifice everything. Professor István Bocsor, an eminent teacher of history at the College of Pápa, said godspeed to his students who had joined the minutemen, in the following words: "You are off to fight for your country, and if you acted otherwise, I would tear up my papers like so much wasted effort, and, smashing my chair as a worthless souvenir of my profession, I would burn it to ashes together with my papers." These eminent men—truly independent intellects in very dependent positions—did not think about the dangers awaiting them, the possibility of prison and the gallows, but often marched into battle at the head of their pupils through a shower of bullets.

The revenge of conquering Austria was not delayed in this field either. The new School Acts which favoured centralization and Germanization, abolished the ancient autonomy of the colleges and with it the "organs of self-government which concealed criminal aims" of the rebellious students, with a single stroke of the pen. Those colleges which survived this period in the last century emerged as mere shadows of their former selves, they were doomed to decay and remained only as symbols of something that had been.

VI

At present a considered effort is under way to revive the most valuable of the ancient traditions. The centuries-old establishments are animated today as of old with the invincible vitality of youth. The situation is,

of course, entirely different in the Hungary of today: state and society have taken charge of the educational responsibilities left to college faculty and student self-government in past centuries.

The college at Sárospatak is now flourishing as one of the largest and most distinguished co-educational preparatory schools (gymnasia) of the country. Of course, the one-time differences between the young members of the gentry and the poor servant-students have gone with the wind in this community of equals who are all provided for in like manner. And where are the one-time wine-filling and bread-distributing pauper students of Sárospatak? They could hardly find a place in the gleaming modern kitchen, which is like some big laboratory. The *vigiles* still exist, but they no longer strike their spears against the stone floor of the halls, trembling in the cold winter night, but are on "bell service" tending the phone in the pleasantly heated janitor's box. Nor are there any longer *expectantes*, students who wait for a free bed in the college and sleep for years on the floor in the hope of some day becoming full-fledged residents. Today not even the successors of the one-time servant students need hopelessly long for admission to the college. More and more of them complete a secondary-school education, and soon this stage of schooling will be a general pattern in Hungary.

In the literary and debating societies, now as of yore, cool minds and heated passions meet in lively debate over the most recent problems of art and science, and young men and girls pronounce their final judgement over the affairs of the world with the self-assurance of youth. But in addition there are specialized clubs in which those with a special interest in some branch of knowledge receive expert guidance.

The ghosts of the past no longer haunt the college halls. Together with them have disappeared those bent and humble peasants who carted their sons to the college gate and left them there with ill-hidden sorrow, to become separated from them perhaps for ever because of the social barriers that would subsequently rise between sons and parents. Their successors, the parents of today, still bear a touching but more understanding respect for science, and now they visit the college and join the teachers in a common effort to help the school do the best work possible. This is how the place of the aristocratic patrons of the past has been taken by the modern parent-teacher associations, which help the teachers in instructing and educating the boys and girls to get along in the world on the basis of that small replica of the world which is their school community.

BOOKS & AUTHORS

ENGLISH PROSE

From the Diary of a Reader

by

PÉTER VERES

A sketch by Péter Veres on the volume "Mai angol elbeszélők" (Modern English Short Story Writers, Edited by Dr. Éva Róna, Europa Publishers, Budapest, 1958) is printed below. The volume contains 39 stories by 29 authors. The selection adequately represents the English literature of the last fifty years, including D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Aldous Huxley, as well as Gwyn Thomas, Dylan Thomas, Philip Oakes and Neil Bell.

Péter Veres (born in 1897), is a key figure among the so-called peasant or populist writers who have played no small role in the Hungarian literature of the last twenty years. Mr. Veres, who lives in Budapest today, spent a large part of his life at the heavy labour of a peasant. Under the title "From My Reader's Diary," he regularly contributes critical studies to literary periodicals.

I am reading the *Modern English Short Story Writers* and find myself sighing, "How they can write! Oh, these people certainly know how to write! And even their women authors!"

Yes, they decidedly know how to write! And it is a great lesson for us that the slogans—for there are not only political slogans, but slogans of love, landscape-description, and all other kinds of slogans, too!—the stock phrases, and the lyricistic attempts believed to be poetic, that prose-rhetoric which makes the "great" works of more primitive literatures become unreadable in a few decades or sometimes in a few years, are almost completely missing from the works of these modern English writers, and in general from the works of the best western writers, such as Dürrenmatt. None of them suggests to me the taste of a "literary effort," and this is something of an achievement in itself.

Unfortunately, likewise missing is that genuine poetry to which a Gogol, Tolstoy, Dickens and Thackeray owe their immortality. The kind of poetry which is hidden not only in the words and in the "poetic" expressions, but is part of the mental and intellectual constitution of the author.

These English authors are, with but a few exceptions, real prose writers. They are rationalist artists of the brain—almost of the same sort as the writers of detective stories. (Parenthetically, I have not the slightest objection to such stories, I just note the fact.)

Yes, they certainly know how to write. This selection, however—I feel—is definitely addressed to "the reader": each piece is most readable. Lawrence *(Things)* and Huxley *(Nuns at Luncheon, Sermons on Cats)* are enjoyable, Bates *(Queen of Spain Fritillary, Colonel Julian)* is fascinating, Wodehouse *(Bill, the Bloodhound)* devilishly amusing, Katherine Mansfield *(Bliss, A Cup of Tea)* subtle and enchanting, and so on.

But among what can be called professional story-tellers, Dylan Thomas, the poet, outshines the others. He is represented in this volume *(The Enemies)* by just a brief short story, but if the word has any meaning, it is a genuinely "modern" and charming piece of writing. This is real greatness, "new" greatness, an advance in literature; the rest are rather works of splendid craftsmanship.

It is true that Somerset Maugham, who has been criticized many times and by many critics, is among the best in the volume. What he says is not merely interesting but also true (the "beautiful-meaning" poetry—does not seem to be his cup of tea), and that, in this book, is something outstanding. Great culture—the culture of the ruling classes—is behind him. I think this is one of the best "stories" I have ever read. Because, in the final analysis, this is not a "true story" and not even just experience. It is a real "short story." Its title is *The Outstation*. It is the masterly illustration of a sound idea—an idea of not very great significance and not even complete originality. (I do not say this critically either—I only note it as a fact. An illustration can also be a masterpiece.)

*

I find Th. O. Beachcroft another outstanding author in the volume. He is a robust writer. Not only can he tell a story, he also has a sense of drama and tragedy. Of course, he too is typically a prose writer *(He Was Living with his People, The Vulture)*.

It is to the debit side of the book, however, that the so-called "social" writings (I dare not say "writings reflecting the class struggle") are its weakest point. The famous Priestley *(The Andersons in a Depressed Area)* is represented by a very poor and unrealistic story and the Welsh writer Rhys Davies by two stories displaying poverty in terms of naturalism *(The Nature of Man, The Destiny of Love)*.

The main trouble with these stories is that they are not true in the way told here. One may, of course, paint in black, but only in relation to another colour.

Gwyn Thomas *(And a Spoonful of Grief to Taste)* suffers from the same disease. He is a man of great originality and a true writer, but this sample of writing is immature and unconvincing. And his wit and very original manner of writing, which, at home, are probably considered to be among his greatest assets, have a confusing effect in translation. In a translation—even in a good one—the weaknesses of a writer become enhanced, and his virtues toned down. The only exception is when the translator is a greater writer than the author of the original.

*

And what occurs to me on reading Graham Greene *(The Basement Room)* is that the cloven hoof of tendency—whether represented by a kind of existentialism that is distant from every-day politics and every-day didactics, or any other kind of "-ism"—drags down the writing in the eyes of a reader professing a different world outlook. It drags it down if it is written as an illustration to, or justification of, the writer's ideology. If the inner motive power of a story is not a thesis, but truth or the wish to delight, or the two together, then it no longer makes any difference whether the justification of the originally postulated thesis is also there. Then it does not drag down the writing. Just in passing: the capacity to delight never drags it down, but neither is it enough in itself to elevate it. Only truth can do that.

*

I discovered another significant—perhaps great—writer in this volume. His name is Philip Oakes *(The Fault, Another Kind of Passion)*. A profound knowledge of natural landscape-description (by the way, this very rich facet of nineteenth-century prose hardly appears in the collection), familiarity with peasant life and a remarkable ability to write are all here. And, perhaps, as in the case of most English writers, a lack of ideology.

This is again not said in censure, but only noted as a fact. G. B. Shaw's generation still believed in socialism, in democracy and in humanism (that was before Hitler!); these writers believe in nothing. He who really is a writer is, of course, a writer even so. The writer is a writer whatever he believes, or even if he does not believe anything at all.

Here, in the socialist countries, most critics and students of literature try to credit English writers with somehow "exposing" capitalism, the

bourgeoisie, or the bourgeois way of life, although in most cases all they really say is that man in their eyes (that is, in the eyes of most of them, for there are among them some writers who *do* intend to expose) is "an impossible creature." This is, I submit, an entirely different matter. Even if the unmarked people do indeed come from the bourgeoisie. A bourgeois writer can write only about them, because it is among them that he is at home.

*

What do I sense from these short stories and, beyond them, from all the examples of modern western literature which have reached me? In the first place, the demand for the highest degree of readability. The demand for enjoyable and delightful reading.

The modern English prose writers accept as axiomatic that "the reader" does not like reading matter burdened with political, religious, philosophical and moral ideas, or those which simply illustrate such ideas; that, generally speaking, he does not like didactic and propagandistic literature. And even if an occasional H. G. Wells "spoofs" him by some sensational new ideas or pretense at ideas into reading something of the kind, he gets tired of it soon. This reader, the most exacting, educated bourgeois and intellectual reader, is beyond any ideology, and when he reads, he wants to be delighted and entertained. This is the sort of stuff that has to be given him.

This type of reader's demand is satisfied by Somerset Maugham at the highest level. He really knows what the reader wants who does not wish to save the world and does not even believe that it could be saved or even that it should be saved.

In the second place, I sense that English literature—and not only English, but also all of western literature, including the best of the North-American—is dominated in general, although not in everybody's case as the central problem, by existentialism. And the outstanding representatives of this literature are the authors in whose writings existentialism does not figure, indeed, as the central problem, but only as if it were ever present in the general state of mind of the author. In this way, however, it was present already in the literature of the Greeks and of Shakespeare, too.

The existentialist writers, and the writers more so than the philosophers, contributed at any rate that much to the world that they revived—of course, only for the few who understand—the "sense of destiny." This with the difference that from the ancient sense of destiny religions were born and doctrines created, that is, "order" was formed; for the Greek trag-

edies of destiny, far from suggesting the "Nihil," transmitted this message among other things; "There are many things that are wonderful, but nothing is more wonderful than man" (Sophocles: Antigone). But of this new sense of destiny nothing is born, except bitter or cynical scepticism, the Nihil.

It is the heart of the matter, and at the same time the tragedy of modern western thinking and of the human species that these modern nihilists are right, in a great many things. They are right in any case in their insight into facts and in their ruthless criticism of phenomena. Faith in honest politics has been shaken—no, not, shaken but entirely crushed!—all the world over, they say; faith in religions and in gods is mere formality and hypocrisy, although huge masses are unable to live without it, for only the rich and parasites can afford to become cynical; the masses need the "law," they need form, order and ritual, but then this always becomes petrified; science, like one running amuck and never looking behind, races ahead, only increasing the nervousness, the "progress-hysteria" and atomic hysteria; art is swallowed up by the entertainment industry—and so on. There is no hope.

All this is true, but, damn it all, it is nevertheless these sometimes "narrow-minded" and "petty" politicians who hold in hand—as far as it is possible, of course—the peoples and the countries; and the completely hypocritical priests did, after all, instil some kind of order, moral responsibility, good taste and decent behaviour into the masses who came under their influence in the course of history. In other words, existentialist criticism is right, but a realist way of thinking, rational action (of relative validity but nevertheless rational) and active wisdom are still more right. And this rightness—that of active wisdom—is of a higher order, for this is the truth of life and the truth of survival.

ENGLISH VERSE

Adventures of an Anthologist among the English Poets

I.

Whoever has compiled a major-size anthology certainly has bitter experience of how difficult and intricate such a task can be, especially if the field to be covered is as immense and so altogether different from your own, as English poetry is from Hungarian.

The task with which I was entrusted was the compilation of an anthology covering the entire field of English poetry from the

beginning up to the present day, covering some twelve thousand lines, making use of our numerous classical and other extant translations, but presenting chiefly new material and new translations.

As a young enthusiast, I promised the publisher to hand in my first draft title-list in two months' time. I really did so; but now, after nearly two years, when comparing the final list of contents just off the press to that first and desperately reckless design, I have to admit that they do not at all resemble each other. But I also have to admit that during those two months, spent in a ceaseless and almost maddening buzz of English names, titles and first lines of poems, in a whirlpool of various editions, library catalogue-numbers, figures denoting the lengths of poems, bits of advice given by selfless but irksome friends and less selfless but irksome translators, I was immensely happy, somewhat like a child who has strayed into the toy shop of his dreams and even gets paid for it at the end.

My happiness, as happiness often does, ended in utter confusion. *Embarras de richesse*, another feeling well known to anthologists, hindered my decisions. I lived in constant fear of forgetting something. The anthology threatened to become oversized and top-heavy at that, considering the great number of young English poets almost unknown, I presume, even in Britain, whom I included, having picked them out of The London Magazine and The Times Literary Supplement.

After the necessary reshaping, a serious danger presented itself: predominance of the Anglo-Saxon period, almost completely unknown in Hungary, and that of the Elizabethans; these had to be thinned out, too, and as soon as I passed over to some other period, the danger always and inevitably arose. I decimated the Anglo-Saxons and the Elizabethans and augmented the metaphysicals and popular ballads. Later some metaphysicals and popular ballads had to be omitted in order to bring in more of T. S. Eliot and his circle. And so on, until, finally, the periods somehow arranged themselves properly, and with that, I naively thought, the bulk of the work was done.

But ever new difficulties awaited me. Poets had to be represented, naturally, according to their significance. But significance is a difficult matter to decide upon, especially when it has to be expressed not only in the number of poems by a certain poet, but likewise in the number of his lines. There are numerous English poets, not insignificant ones by any means, who notoriously expressed themselves in loquacious, long verse, not to speak of the epics. So the problem of excerpts confronted me.

For myself, I do not like reading excerpts, but then I do not like anthologies either. I proudly prefer the original, the going to the sources. Why am I supposed to be interested in the opinions and choice of Mr. So-and-so, the anthologist, when I can have my own? But all this was miserable self-excuse only, a desperate flurry at a moment of impotent log jam. To say nothing more, I could not possibly expect thirteen thousand readers (assuming one reader for each of the thirteen thousand copies of this book) to take some evening course in the universities and set about reading Paradise Lost, or, say, A Toccata of Galuppi's in the original, though there certainly are quite a lot of people in this ambitious little country who do that too. So, in the end, I kindly submitted myself to becoming just another Mr. So-and-so, and as such even lined up excerpts of longer poems and epic pieces, headed by Beowulf, with a movement of Four Quartets bringing up the rear. This tended to upset the delicate balance of my anthology, and, naturally, displaced shorter poems by the dozen.

Some sleepless nights were still to come. An offhand count of the lines showed about two thousand lines or almost one hun-

dred poems to be in excess, and, at the same time, numerous poets still remained whose complete works were not available here and who thus could not be represented adequately. The poems referring to Hungary by W. S. Landor, for instance, though perhaps insignificant, yet certainly interesting to us, had to be left out altogether, there being no collected edition available in our libraries. The volumes of several modern poets were treasured in private hands only, and often in those of translators or would-be-translators, which meant, of course, that in obtaining these books artful diplomacy was needed on my part so as not to swell the ranks of those an anthologist inevitably makes enemies of anyway.

A period of tiresome fussing about followed. At times I positively felt ashamed of being compelled to measure poetic grandeur and achievement almost with a tape-line and frequently to look up the indexes of standard English anthologies and histories of literature in fear of overlooking somebody who should not be overlooked. Another awkward problem was that of the many masterly translations made by good Hungarian poets of English poets of less importance. God only knows, for instance, what induced Árpád Tóth, that fine poet of the beginning of this century, to translate Arthur O'Shaugnessy's delicate but shallow *The Fountain of Tears* so brilliantly, causing the translation, though very close, to sound far more genuine and powerful than this modest and melancholy Victorian poet ever was. Evidently the same sense of relationship was at work here that made Tóth and his contemporaries, M. Babits and D. Kosztolányi, translate the pre-Raphaelites and the great Victorians from Browning to Wilde. *The Fountain of Tears* is a long poem of 72 lines, far more than I can afford for a poet of O'Shaugnessy's stature. On the other hand, leaving out Tóth's virtuoso translation and having some other shorter piece translated would be irreverant to Tóth. A radical but simple solution had to be adopted: complete omission of the poet. I still think the Hungarian reader will gain more by reading poems of some hitherto unknown modern English poet whom I inserted at the expense of poor O'Shaugnessy.

Many similar questions of detail remained to be considered. But, finally, some items of satisfaction began to soothe my troubled mind. Shapes, or rather, hints, of a final solution came into sight. To preserve what might easily change and vanish the next moment, I hastily typed the list and handed it in as the preliminary draft of the largest anthology of English verse ever published in this country.

I do not want to tire the reader with further details of my struggle. To make a long story short, I shall merely relate that in the stream of books thinly but constantly pouring in from Britain to our main public libraries I still discovered new anthologies, new editions, new poets and new poems, which simply could not be overlooked. The discovery of the admirable Chatto Book of Modern Poetry by C. Day Lewis and John Lehmann, Modern Verse in English by David Cecil and Allen Tate, Seven Centuries of Poetry by A. N. Jeffares, The Modern Poet's World by James Reeves, etc., was most helpful to me, especially in making the modern part of the book excitingly up-to-date. But anthologies, as I had to learn from my own experience, are often misleading in making one believe a certain poet to be a significant or even a great man on the basis of the one or two really good pieces even a mediocre craftsman sometimes succeeds in producing. I was thus misled, I think, more than once, but never mind. My intention in introducing the modern English poets was not to produce an oppressive collection of faultless masterpieces, but to give a small but live cross-section of what I believe to be one of the most exciting fields in present-day literature.

2.

For some reasons not quite clear to me, Hungarian is a fortunate language capable of rendering almost all the known systems of prosody, besides its own ancient metrical principles based mainly on accent and a certain regular distribution and alternation of accented and unaccented syllables. While the French read Shakespeare in prose and the English translate Homer in couplets or in whatever else they try to substitute for the hexameter, we translate both in their original metrical form, just as we do the French alexandrine or the Old-Germanic alliterative line or every possible complicated metrical formula of Greek or Chinese or ancient Hindoo verse. Being a small nation, we developed a great tradition of translation almost from the beginning of our national poetry. Translation, that is to say, orientation in a world alien and yet so common, has been almost a duty with our poets ever since there emerged in the 14th century a Hungarian language suitable for a poet to work in. Most of our great poets were great translators, and their best adaptations, like János Arany's Hamlet, A Midsummernight's Dream, Sir Patrick Spens — Árpád Tóth's Ode to the West Wind or Ballad of Reading Gaol; Lőrinc Szabó's Ancient Mariner and many, many others we count among our own national treasures.

Utmost exactitude in, and loyalty to, metrical form had to be observed as basic principles by all my 37 living and 11 classical translators. In judging a translation, accurate rendering of the original metrical structure has long been one of the sine qua nons in our publishing practice. This has forced me to become something of an expert in English prosody, just as my recent translation of the 14th century Sir Gawain and the Green Knight made me a sort of expert, I think, in Hungary of Middle-English alliterative rhythm and 14th century South-Lancashire dialect.

Coordination of 48 translators, providing them with the texts and distributing the immense material according to some pattern of resemblance of character and poetic tone was not an easy task. Almost one half of these translators does not speak English at all, so I had to provide them with so called "rough translations," which are a very curious and horrible literary genre indeed. I only wish you might read the "rough translation" of some well-known poem to be able to imagine the sheer rubbish a beautiful and musical piece of poetry may seem when deprived of everything poetical it contained. It is a real wonder that such masterly translations may nevertheless emerge from this rubbish, as those of László Kálnoky, Sándor Weöres or István Kormos (poets of high reputation all three of them) who caught every tiny detail and hidden bit of poetical beauty and transposed it into equivalent Hungarian verse.

3.

And now, something about the final material of the book that survived all the new discoveries and desperate rearrangements. It includes some 500 separate items, the works of more than 200 known and anonymous poets from more than a thousand years of English literary history. The book begins with two fragments from Beowulf in masterly translation, and continues with six other important and characteristic pieces of Old English poetry. A small collection of folk-songs and popular ballads forms a separate cycle; two fragments from Sir Gawain mark the beginning of the Middle Ages; Barbour, Chaucer, Langland, Gower, Skelton, Lydgate and others also have their due share.The Renaissance and the Elizabethans have a somewhat bulky representation, being well known and popular in Hungary. The metaphysicals, also very popular here, bulge at the expense of the Augustans, who are rather thinly represented. But I managed to smuggle in Milton's L'Allegro (in Árpád Tóth's unsurpassable translation) and even

three fragments from *Paradise Lost*, let alone his most important shorter pieces. Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson and the Brownings, most of them well known, often published and beloved in Hungary, are on the list with their finest; Shelley exceeds the others with 14 poems. The turn of the century is dominated by Swinburne and Hardy; the latter I consider one of the greatest of English poets. Four poems by G.M. Hopkins were a real torture to their translators. The next poet deliberately essed is W.B. Yeats; and, I think, none of the important poets of World War I and the beginning of the century has been omitted. Among the moderns T.S. Eliot, of course, and Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Cecil Day Lewis, Vernon Watkins, W.H. Auden, Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, Dylan Thomas, David Gascoyne, Philip Larkin, Sidney Keyes and Keith Douglas are given particular emphasis, with due attention to their relative importance. As an appendix, a few nursery-rhymes —among them *Old Mother Goose* and *Old Mother Hubbard*, friends of all English-learning Hungarian children—form a closing cycle.

Considering that all this has to be squeezed into a pocket-size volume on India paper, in a popular series called "Gems of World Literature," and intended mainly for students, nothing better could be done. But, as I am told, a separate major-size volume of modern English poetry is already in preparation, as well as a standard English anthology in two or three volumes in the series "Classics of World Literature."

All I can wish now is that some day an English Mr. So-and-so would sit down and try to make a similar anthology of Hungarian verse. I can assure him in advance that he will be well pleased and astonished with what he will find and be as eager to share it with his reading public, as I am impatiently waiting now for opinions about my new book. In one of last year's issues of The Times Literary Supplement I read an excellent and wise translation made by Mr. Vernon Watkins of a poem by our great and tragic modern poet Attila József. Perhaps it may prove to those who have noticed it that there is certainly something we too could contribute in return to English literature.

MIKLÓS VAJDA

MEN BEFORE THE MIRROR

If writers are to understand human nature, Huxley says, they should study the behaviour of cats. One who during the thirties witnessed the reeling descent into catastrophe in Central Europe and who lived through and survived the world war, scarcely needs to pass through a school requiring so much patience. For he then found himself in the midst of a drama of lamenting and rejoicing, howling and penitent confession; he was a dazed spectator of a comedy in which all that is fundamental, or even conceivable, in human life exhibited itself in complete nakedness. He must needs have formed some view—something definite and unequivocal—about the nature of those happenings and their logical order. And, if forced into print by the impact of the experience, he must announce or, at least, hint in his story that the events related are those of his own life; that "this is what I think about their meaning and significance, this represents my own life-experience." Examining the lives of his heroes, the writer also probes his own past. The distant answer he hopes to arrive at

in wielding his pen is of importance not only in terms of his work but also of his own existence.

For this reason, the books I am about to review here will be examined not only with regard to their themes but also from the point of view of the confessions that are expressed in them. We shall take cognizance both of the figure before the mirror and of its reflection therein.

Man has no means of communicating with the outside world save through himself. He has to establish contact with his past self, to identify himself with by-gone times. But can the picture-postcards of remembrance recapture the long-past moment, its full and true reality? For this alone creates excitement, the complexity that embodies both present and past, the being that I now *am* and the one that I once *was*. Words can express but one possibility out of ten thousand—how can we tell, then, who we are or why we have become what we are?

Thoughts like these occupy the mind of Bébé, one of the heroes in Géza Ottlik's novel *Iskola a határon** (School at the Frontier), as he listens, in the summer of 1957, to the confessions of Dani Szeredy, a former pal of his at the military school. (Bébé is a school nickname formed from the initials of his name, Benedek Both.) Isn't this a proof of the stupid improbability of this world—Bébé is thinking—that Szeredy should have gone and hitched up with Magda, of all women? Magda, who in the last year of the war burned the secret orders of his army corps headquarters, for which a court-martial sentenced Captain Szeredy to death *in contumaciam?* And isn't it ridiculous that this should have happened, of all people, to Szeredy? A fellow who always said that one should never betray one's country, not even if it made him sick to have to throw in his lot with it. Bébé and Szeredy, though both past forty and long out of uniform, have been incapable of re-adapting themselves to civilian life in their thinking. For Szeredy includes in the category 'Fatherland' something which comes under the heading 'Society'. He has lost the faculty of distinguishing one concept from the other. How? why? and when?—that is one of the novel's principal themes.

It all began back in 1923, at the military school near the frontier; here is the starting-point of Bébé's story. Or rather, not only his, for Ottlik has assembled the complete and true reality from two pictures. The other is the diary of a third ex-military school student, Gábor Medve, who, at the time of his death, willed his 'memoirs' to his former friend Bébé.

The school was a huge, grim pile. The man who built it must have had a morbid soul, for it was one vast complex of corridors and lobbies, and even its rooms and halls were gloomy and tortuous.

The line of lockers marked out by rule was a symbol of this world. "My whole life might have been easier if they had not used any rules," Bébé reminisces. "Then, perhaps, I should have become a bolder and better man."

This quiet reflection comes to us from somewhere afar, through the smoke-screen of the years, and from the Present. The authentic picture—the word 'authentic' denoting the moral motive—is pieced together from recollections, from the reflections of two persons recalling the past, one complementing the other, correcting and filling gaps in the texture of the other's remembrances. The events of the past come to life in two dimensions: the tormented lyricism of the first person and the objective preciseness of the third.

First, the rule-marked line of lockers was impressed on the minds of the pupils, next, the Law, according to which they had to stomach slaps and humiliation because the day would come when they would themselves be slapping others. It was brought

* Géza Ottlik: *Iskola a határon*, *Magvető* Publishing House, Budapest, 1957, 475 pp.)

home to them that Merényi, a boy with a rascal's face and disciplined bearing, and his clique were bullying the other boys by the only right, the right of force. Existence for them became simplified into endurance. Studying, exercises, blows from Merényi, and Sergeant Major Schulze's mumbled obscenities filled each day in a long succession of days. This life too has its topdogs and underdogs.

In his recollections, Gábor Medve analyses the underdog's attitude to life. His thoughts may be summarized as follows:

In the first week, apathy settled on them, and a solitude from which there was no escape. They were aware that each had to fight his own battle with Fate, and that they could look to no one for succour. They understood that Evil was more real, more genuine than Good, and that much as they wanted this state of affairs reversed, they were unable to do anything towards this end. They knew that what was being done to them was outrageously unjust, but—"the heavy guns of Justice cannot be hauled into such fragile mechanisms as human societies." They lived in a world where no one understood his neighbour, for words were indifferent towards their anguish.

The heroes of Ottlik's novel had to endure suffering, in order to prove that the rule-marked line of lockers and Sergeant Major Schulze could not, after all, destroy the human being in every one. This school at the frontier is a symbol: symbol of the doomed Fatherland, which Szeredy, for all the loathing he felt, was unable to repudiate, and symbol—according to Medve's anguished confession—of human life in general.

In his novel, Ottlik makes no attempt to trace the emergence of Fascism as a social formation to its beginnings. He portrays the Fascist as a type, an attitude in the making. It is not Fascists he delineates, but that debased frame of mind which can make a man prone to submit to oppression—and to be proud of it into the bargain.

Nineteenth century tradition and the twentieth century revolution in the novel mingle in Ottlik's book in the same proportion as past and present mingle in the events and reflections. Even the minutest gesture seeks to convey full authenticity, to reconstruct the bygone moment as well as that which is constant and timeless in it. Space and Time are at once concrete and symbolic, for though "School at the Frontier" is about schoolboys, it also furnishes an explanation of why Hungary stood paralysed with fear when the shapes of creatures like Warrant Officer Schulze hid the sun.

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In his novel *Hitvita és nászinduló** ("Religious Dispute and Wedding March") Miklós Szentkuthy adopts the ironical view of history embodied in Thomas Mann's Joseph tetralogy, and combines it with the unaffected realism of medieval chronicles. It is as though we were watching a scientific debate and a full-blooded peasant comedy taking place simultaneously in the historical setting.

The novel relates the history of the day on the morning of which devoted monks nailed Luther's theses on the heavy iron-strapped door of the church of Wittenberg Castle. The heroes are Doctor Martinus, professor of theology, and Lucas Cranach, court painter to the Prince. The moral of the novel, in the author's words, is this: As a young man, Doctor Martinus of Wittenberg was rather a 'wild-eyed' fellow, an innovator and revolutionary in the sphere of theology. The same attributes could be applied in connection with the juvenile work of Painter Lucas. Both Theologian Martin and Painter Lucas later repudiated their youthful temerity and turned lukewarm opportunists, even traitors.

When night fell upon Wittenberg, Luther's parchment hung torn upon the church-

* Miklós Szentkuthy: *Hitvita és nászinduló*, *Magvető* Publishing House, Budapest 1960, 539 pp.)

door. Opposite the door, just a few steps away, the body of an old peasant was dangling from the gallows. In the morning he had been one of a mob that believed the Theses proclaimed a "new order of human *societas*." But when the cuirassiers of the Prince were slaughtering the rebellious peasants in the streets, Doctor Martinus had taken to his heels. The author of the Theses abandoned the people who sought to deepen the religious controversy into social revolt. The Luther of the novel aimed at theological polemics; the people wanted bread and a better life.

While Luther, his stout body wrapped in woman's garb, was fleeing from the town, Cranach crouched behind barred doors in his house and, in spirit, was absconding like the friend whose escape he had been a party to.

Such is the plot in a nutshell. It is but a pale reflection of the novel's richness.

In order to condense within the compass of a single day the life-stories of two men and the problems of theology and art, Szentkuthy resorts to a trick of composition. The episode-ridden story is related as the eye-witness account of a contemporary chronicler. Or more precisely, it is the "outer" story—the events, theology, history—that is treated in this manner. But the essence, the "inner" story—that is to say, the problems of art, ethics and life—is told by Lucas Cranach in the first person singular, with the aid of a soliloquy and a letter. The composition, incidentally, makes it clear that Cranach is the real hero of the novel; he represents the drama, whereas Luther and his theology merely provide the setting.

The inner story deserves to be dealt with here more fully. Cranach, standing in his room before his fresco-sized Venetian mirror, is listening to the monologue of his own reflection. Here is the gist of what it says (not in the author's words but in line with his style):

In your young days you were a licentious, hot-headed youth. Now you are for Peace and Order. Then you picked armfuls of field flowers for the lasses; now, Nature is a downy chestnut branch on your table. You used to yearn either for round-bellied Venus or for sacred devotion; now both elicit a calm smile. And the first altar ordered by the Prince? Young Lucas, the loafer, would have painted on it the German Forest, the Italian tavern, the drunken monk declaiming the *Amorum libri*, merciful God and the braggart Devil. *You* have added to all that the dilettantism of the Prince, the rigid ceremonial splendour. You soon banished to the deepest recess of your soul your juvenile reflections and your faith, and reduced the logic of existence to mere commerce: "This world of the powers that be is indeed a crazy world. But theirs are the arms, the might, the whole country; so let those at least who work grow rich on them."

There is in this reflection the realization that it is neither in paintings nor in books that the vital issues of history are decided. But this merely serves to increase righteous indignation. Szentkuthy is well-acquainted with Hungarian cultural life before 1945. For in Cranach's life-story one may discern the typical fate of an artist in the nineteen thirties. The observations on Lucas Cranach's art, on its philosophical and moral lessons, point to the distressing problems that beset Hungarian intellectual life and literature between the two world wars. They indicate, above all, that the experiences of life and thinking remained hopelessly confined within the framework of the arts. Literature used reality merely as a shield, making no attempt at changing it. It was too cowardly to try to fulfil its mission.

Judgment is followed by lyricism, historical analysis by confession. In his letter, written at the request of Master Albert of Nuremberg, about his youth and his artistic aims, Cranach says:

> Youth was the moment of Revolt. Among the boisterous young scholars

of Vienna, I would mouth about chastity being no virtue, about its being no more than a sensuous and artistic mood evoked by a richly-coloured world.

He had preached—the letter continues, in substance—that human life too was a form of vegetation; that there was neither thought nor sentiment. If some secret did after all exist, a secret about which so much had been written and said before, it would most likely be the answer to the question of whether it was possible to differentiate between parasites and non-parasites. For all living things exist only through Death.

The answer given by the fathers to that question had degenerated into an innocent and silly fairy-tale, whereas this cruel recognition of the fundamental law of existence generated gloom and hopelessness in life as well as in the arts. That was the reason, perhaps, why he looked for the grotesque and the unreal in art (Cranach here used the plural pronoun "we," alluding not only to himself but also to the companions of his youth), because this knowledge was a terrible burden to have to bear. For not only the truth, but also the art of the fathers had proved to be devoid of interest. Field flowers, the trees of the forests at Gand, the search for truth, or the antics of the clown—anything would do. The important thing was revolt.

Miklós Szentkuthy was born in 1908. After a wartime childhood, he grew into conscious youth in the midst of the retrograde, medieval views of a dull-witted and ruthless society. His generation tried to escape from the general inanity by the levers of negation and scepticism. ("I am a believer in neo-frivolity," declares the hero in a novel written by Antal Szerb, one of the most gifted authors of that generation.) For spiritual guidance he turned to Spengler, to the history of ideas, then found consolation in execrating them. The form is still more baffling, since Szentkuthy experiments with juxtaposition in space, which he substitutes for chronological succession. His book is a complex of novels—the novel of outer events, of inner life, of landscapes. History has led him out of this hopelessness.

In the end, the revolt failed to bear fruit. Classical studies (mythology and the roguish Odysseus), the ancient thinkers and men of action taught him the lesson that life is a thousand times richer than death, that faith is a more human attitude than faithlessness. They also led him to the conclusion that there is only one worthy theme for the artist—the world of humanity. His greatest experience was his encounter with the downtrodden, the underdog. To master the art of expression then ceased to be a difficult task, for he knew already that it is Man that matters, that the real Theme behind the theme, behind the blinkers of religious devotion, is Man. Here was the point of departure on the road that led Cranach towards compromise and Szentkuthy towards the novel.

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After psychology and spirituality, come the facts of sociology. In László Bóka's novel, *Alázatosan jelentem** ("I Humbly Report" —the obligatory form of address in the Hungarian army before the liberation) the subjects dealt with above are approached from a sociological point of view, in terms of twentieth century Hungarian history. The author describes the conception of his novel as follows: "This novel, which takes its characters through the whirlwind of Hungarian history, all the way from barrack-room life in the thirties to the POW camp, depicts how the army officers were gradually pushed from the centre to the periphery of events in the process that led to the liberation of Hungary, and how

* László Bóka,: *Alázatosan jelentem, Szépirodalmi* Publishing House, Budapest 1958, 608 pp.)

their places were taken by rank-and-file men who, to use the words of Endre Ady, the poet, were 'seeds of the future'."

The hero of this novel is Major Zoltán Benedek, an army officer and gentleman. As an ambitious and gifted soldier, his position in life and his personality are fully correlated. One day, however, events compel him to pick up the receiver and report to the counter-intelligence department of the General Staff that he has got on the track of Communist activity in his battalion. From that moment onward, the correlation goes awry. For among those subsequently arrested are Anna, his younger brother's widow, whose company at rare family reunions he had always enjoyed so much, and János Dobi, the best soldier in his battalion.

At the time when he replaced the receiver his equanimity was as yet unruffled, his conscience clear—he knew he had acted in accordance with the oath he had taken, "as behoves a soldier."

His services have their reward: Major Benedek is promoted colonel and made regimental commander, and, in the winter of 1943, he is assigned the honourable task of holding up the advance of the Soviet Army at the Korotoyak bridge-head. But reality plays a trick on Colonel Benedek: a move he has so perfectly mastered in theory and so ably executed during military exercises—the redeployment of his regiment from defensive to offensive action—now baffles him. Von Loebe's tommygunners try in vain to stop the retreat by decimating Benedek's regiment. The retreat cannot be halted. Benedek is left to himself and, to escape bombardment, takes refuge in a brush-covered hollow. This moment hovers on the borderland between reality and unreality. For on a sudden he finds himself surrounded by a forced labour group—ragged, emaciated—led by János Dobi. They are the ones whom that memorable phone-call sent to prison and for whom this is the hour for action.

Action, perhaps, is the key-word which characterizes Bóka's novel. In Mihály Babits's opinion, it is not action, but failure to act, which heroes of Hungarian novels are generally guilty of. The reasons why this has been so ought to form the subject of a sociological essay, an aesthetic analysis of the Hungarian novel in which the sensuous has preponderated over the intellectual elements, for thoughts have appeared in the novel, at best, in the form of interposed disquisitions. Let us therefore content ourselves with the observation that Benedek is an active hero whose entire life contradicts the logic of history. (Remember that Ottlik's characters are deprived by society of the possibility of action; they are people to whom things merely happen. In Szentkuthy's novel, Luther and Cranach are unable to advance from thought to action.)

In Bóka's novel there is action in yet another direction, the action of those who take the road leading to the liberation of Hungary. The conflict of the novel is built upon this social antagonism, and its construction follows the pattern of this conflict, its clash and denouement. The conception holds together the various layers of the novel: the psychological novel, the portrayal of Zoltán Benedek's fate and of his inner life, and a satire on army life which, without being forced in any way, applies to the dull, militarized life of the nation as a whole.

The novels that have been reviewed here are about the past, an Atlantis of tragic memory. But at the same time they also treat of the present, for they confront two eras. They remind the present of the past. The real lesson, the real excitement, lies no doubt in this confrontation.

CSABA SÍK

A BOOKSHELF-GALLERY OF MODERN HUNGARIAN PAINTING

POGÁNY Ö. GÁBOR: *Magyar festészet a XX. században.*

(Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadóvállalata, Budapest, 1959. 106 pp.)

GÁBOR Ö. POGÁNY: *Hungarian Painting in the Twentieth Century.*

(Corvina Press, Budapest, 1960. 106 pp.)

"Never has the man in the street taken so much interest in Art as today, and this aspiration towards beauty brings peoples closer to each other and leads them to a better mutual comprehension of different civilizations. The multiplicity and rapidity of the means of communication make it possible henceforth to satisfy man's intellectual curiosity and render artistic awareness universal."

These words, quoted from the preface to the catalogue of the Fine Arts Exhibition organized during the Universal Exposition at Brussels, were written by the president of the executive committee of the arts show, the Marquis de la Boessière-Thiennes. In addition to exhibitions organized on various occasions and to museums permanently open to the public, it is art books that play the most significant role in acquainting the public at large with the outstanding works of art of other nations. It is due in the first place to art books that the notion of "*Musée Imaginaire*", as André Malraux called it, was born. This is the imaginary museum that anybody may set up on the bookshelves of his own home, a gallery in which he can collect and enjoy day after day the reproductions of the works of art that are dearest to his heart.

Just as "World Literature", in Goethe's sense, would be unthinkable without printing and translations, an international public opinion on fine arts would be inconceivable without the publication of art books and the reproduction of works of art. Without it the notion of English painting, for instance, would have less meaning for the Hungarian public. We owe it mainly to art books that in Hungary no less than in the rest of the world, the number of people is increasing for whom the names of Gainsborough, Reynolds or Turner will conjure up paintings known from books at least.

Only in recent years have the publishers of Hungarian art books started to meet their task of presenting reproductions of the best paintings and sculptures of Hungarian artists to those interested in the fine arts and thus spreading knowledge of the oeuvre of Hungarian artists to an ever growing number of people in foreign countries.

Following the volume on *Hungarian Painting in the Nineteenth Century*, which was published a few years ago, a large-scale album, dealing with Hungarian painting in the twentieth century has now made its appearance in the booksellers' shopwindows. Among other languages, the book has also been published in English by Corvina Press. It was compiled by Gábor Ö. Pogány, head of the Hungarian National Gallery, who selected the forty-eight coloured reproductions and also wrote the introductory essay, explaining the historical background and analysing the development of various artistic trends in Hungary.

The first painting reproduced in the volume is dated 1900 and the last 1955. The reader who turns the pages and looks at the well printed pictures connecting these two dates will find the publication of the book fully justified. He will, we believe, find it worth his while to look through its pages and to become acquainted

with the art of the Hungarian people even though the compilation does not follow the turbulence and the search for new—and often false—ways to be found in French or German painting of the same period.

The development of Hungarian painting differs from that in Western Europe in many respects but it also has many similar features. The difference lies, in the first place, in the circumstance that the bulk of these pictures could only be born in these parts, in the Hungarian countryside. When these painters were producing their masterpieces, they made their brushes talk Hungarian. It is difficult to write about this, for in doing so we ought to make the reader see—through our words—the brilliant atmospheres and skies of the pictures József Egry painted of Lake Balaton, or the warm and mellow colours of the afternoon sun in autumn on István Szőnyi's Danube landscapes. It would need a lot of further words to explain what Francis Bacon expressed in the three terse words: *homo additus naturae*, and what these artists realized in their landscapes—human and picturesque, filled with the breath of life and in close touch with the human soul. Even József Rippl-Rónai, who spent a considerable part of his life in Paris, a painter whose name is mentioned side by side with those of Vuillard and Bonnard in art books, could not remain other than Hungarian, despite the fact that his French artistic tendencies made him a member of the French *Nabis* group.

It will obviously seem strange in Britain and America that an album on fine arts bearing the name of the twentieth century in its title should hardly reflect any of the swift changes, of the conflicts and mergers of various styles, characteristic of this period in Western Europe and particularly in France. Yet there is no doubt these changes had an effect on Hungarian painting too.

The source of the quest for new forms was the same in Hungary as in the West. Here too, as early as at the beginning of the century, in the 1910's and 1920's, artists had the feeling that the norms of values, regarded as infallible up to then, were beginning to lose their power, that the revolutionary changes in the natural sciences and in technology were modifying the image they had formed of the world and that the artistic expression of this needed a new artistic idiom. Artists at that time thought that the more markedly they turned their backs upon so-called bourgeois public taste the more revolutionary they would become.

However, it shortly turned out that discarding of traditions and the denunciation of all old values would separate them not from bourgeois public taste but from the revolutionary masses, who had testified to their longing for art already in the second half of the nineteenth century and then again after the First World War, particularly in the days of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. It was of signal importance both for strengthening Hungarian aspirations for independence and for the development of art that social problems particularly engrossed artists in the period of oppression following the defeat of the struggle for freedom of 1848—49. Though in their historical paintings the best artists, particularly Mihály Munkácsy, Bertalan Székely and Victor Madarász, evoked bygone times, it was absolutely clear to everybody that they were referring to Hapsburg-Austrian oppression. Thus they effectively roused the craving for liberty of the Hungarian people and kept alive the spirit of the struggle for freedom of 1848.

In the same way, at the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, the best Hungarian painters, among them Róbert Berény and Bertalan Pór—whose works are represented in the album under review—supported the Hungarian revolution with their remarkable posters, thereby raising the art of the poster in Hungary

to an outstanding level. (Cf. *Posters of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*, Corvina Press, Budapest, 1959. Published in Hungarian, German and Russian.) It was due to the close connexion between social aspirations and artistic endeavours—which had its reward in the appreciation expressed by the public at large—that exaggerated artistic trends could hardly strike root among progressive-minded artists in Hungary even at a later date.

In the same way as in Goya's oeuvre, where the representation of the war of independence of the Spanish people, of the horrors of war, of the oppressive yoke of the Church and of the life of simple people are ever recurring subjects, the artists of the freedom-loving Hungarian people would present scenes of Hungarian history chosen to encourage people to continue in their national and social struggles. The war pictures of László Mednyánszky are deeply moving representations of the sufferings of ordinary soldiers driven to the slaughter house of the First World War. The paintings of István Nagy and János Nagy Balogh act as incitements to rebellion through their representation of the misery of the peasantry. The life work of Gyula Derkovits, this great painter of the proletariat, (see p. 109 in this issue) was a far-reaching symbol to a working class that, though kept in destitution, tortured by terrorism and often exposed to starvation, was nevertheless ready to fight for freedom. The works of these artists, some of which are reproduced in the album, prove convincingly that progress, that which is new, the future are served by the artistic experiencing and rendering of reality and not by its disavowal.

A part of the reviews of Pogány's book published in Hungary, as well as the introductory essay to the book itself, again raise the issue that has been discussed in Hungary for several decades, namely, from what point of view, by what standards, Hungarian painting is to be judged. There have been pessimists — artists, critics and art historians with an inferiority complex — who merely bewailed the backwardness of Hungarian art in the face of Western endeavours and achievements, whereby they often confounded fashions with genuine values. There were others who could not rid themselves of the obsession that because of the 150 years' Turkish occupation in Hungary and the Austrian oppression lasting from the driving out of the Turks to the First World War, Hungarian culture had come to lag so far behind that of the more "fortunate" countries that this backwardness could scarcely be overcome any more. The retarding factors, of course, made their influence felt. Nor did the Horthy-regime, which lasted twenty-five years between the two world wars and was profoundly opposed to cultural advance, fail to leave its mark. The present study on Hungarian painting in the twentieth century bears witness to the fact that it was not the pessimists who were right, nevertheless.

For the pictures at the beginning of the book, consisting of reproductions of paintings by the representatives of the Nagybánya school, testify to a high artistic level. Sprung from the soil of Munich naturalism and French impressionism, the art of Károly Ferenczy, István Réti and János Thorma produced a singular type of *plein-air* painting which stressed the connexion between man and nature. This tradition was later on developed by István Csók, István Szőnyi and Aurél Bernáth. Tivadar Csontváry and Lajos Gulácsy followed different, more expressive lines. The works of Gyula Derkovits reproduced in this album were displayed at the Venice Biennale in 1960. They show that amidst poverty and persecution "his most perfect pictures were created, imbued with subtle colouring and such beauty of tones, that not even the most ardent practiser of *l'art pour l'art* could have surpassed them." Today's older generation is represented by the paintings of Endre Domanovszky and

Lajos Szentiványi. It was after the liberation of Hungary that their art unfolded fully. In their paintings the figure of the worker, building a new country from the ruins of the old, makes his appearance. Domanovszky among other works has painted a mural for one of the buildings of the Danube Iron Works, showing foundry workers on the job, while Szentiványi's picture—reproduced in the album—shows the building of the Kossuth Bridge. This bridge, which was erected as a temporary structure, has now been demolished after having done over ten years' service and thus has become a symbol in Hungary. Nevertheless, Kossuth Bridge meant more and something different for the people of Budapest than the other bridges. It was linked with more personal experiences, a feeling reminiscent of a love that finds its own, after a long period of hopelessness. For in 1945 the Danube had for months hopelessly divided the inhabitants of Buda and of Pest, which together form the twin capital. And amidst privations and strenuous self-sacrificing work, the Kossuth Bridge was completed and the two parts of the city were rejoined. The painting shows the reality of 1945 — the work proceeding with a heroic effort: a grey, overcast sky, cold colours, a frosty and hungry mood, through which, however, the rhythm of work and creation and faith in the future make themselves felt.

In Hungary the book has met with the readers' affection and interest. Published in six thousand copies, it was sold out within a few months. In addition to the contents, the success was, of course, also due to the book's fine appearance.

GÁBOR VÁLYI

"TALES OF THE PEOPLES"

for Grown-up and Young Readers

It is strange what persistent and enduring companions of mankind folk tales are, how infinitely old yet ever fresh and young, how vital and irreplaceable. Ubiquitous from times immemorial, wherever people gather they provide entertainment and delight, they meet an innate need of every age and every society.

The first historian of Hungary, known as Anonymus, in the twelfth century, made mention of silly peasant tales that lull their listeners into dreams; soon the Churches of Europe launched a concerted campaign against folk tales, threatening story-tellers and listeners alike with excommunication. And while the feudal state condemned the "dangerous, seditious" stories of the common people voicing their sense of social justice, the greatest of writers have looked upon folk tales as models. To the names of the Russian Gorky, the Hungarian János Arany one could add a long list of others who were decisively influenced by the tales heard in their childhood and deliberately collected them. Many more authors could be cited who have created literary masterpieces by using simple folk stories for their material. Contemporary writers and readers need to resume the reading of folk tales, thereby returning to the very source of literature, to tales so intricate in their simplicity, embracing almost every possible theme of literature, every human thought and feeling, the whole history of makind.

Two new undertakings in Hungarian publishing were, therefore, hailed with joy when they got under way a few years ago.

Folk tales from all over the world are now being issued by two publishing houses in two series, one for grown-ups, the other for children. The series for adults is issued by Europa Publishers. Several volumes appear every year in a neat, "French" style, each containing the selected stories of a particular people. To the other series, issued by the Ferenc Móra Publishers, we shall revert later.

In a relatively brief space of time—between 1956 and 1960—Europa Publishers have issued twenty-one volumes, of the series entitled "Tales of the Peoples" in a very attractive edition.*

The series is intended to give complete coverage, so that it can let Hungarian readers sample all the available sources of folk tales. The volumes published so far have not, therefore, been published according to any particular system. Some have been collections of the tales of exotic peoples, while several others have presented the most characteristic peasant tales of more advanced lands. If this principle is borne in mind, there can be nothing surprising in the fact that Chinese stories from the Tang period or Vietnamese folk tales were followed, for example, by Rumanian folk stories or Hungarian Gipsy tales, in motley array.

The series edited by Europa Publishers to make folk tales accessible to adults, fulfils an important mission. In modern society the enjoyment of folk tales has diminished and they have been gradually banished to the nursery in the same measure as literature has advanced; this has been particularly the case in countries with high technical civilization. Apparently people are unaware of the fact that most of the folk tales called into existence by human civilization were by no means intended to amuse children and are actually not suited for children. They addressed themselves to adults—particularly the oppressed peasantry—giving them entertainment, reassurance or encouragement, and generally affording them the satisfaction of vital spiritual needs. In the modern age the belief that folk tales are for children has become so general that even today it is difficult to dispel this prejudice in the minds of readers.

The successful series "Tales of the Peoples" has proved to be very suitable for melting the reserve of adult readers. However, the principal mission of the series is rather to acquaint Hungarian readers with the peoples of the world, to reveal the common traits connecting them all as well as those features that reflect specific aspects of the people in question. The language of folk tales is a common language whose elements belong also to our tongue, and yet Anatole France believed that "when these ancient, ever-living stories spread from region to region, they acquire colour from the sky, the mountains, and the water and are scented by the soil. Everywhere they gain some peculiar delicate shade and fragrance; like honey they absorb the flavour of the ground. They incorporate something of the souls through which they have passed and where they have lingered; that is why they have become so precious to us."

The "Tales of the Peoples" series first of all provides samples from the treasure house of regions relatively least known to readers—thanks to the excellent conception of Sára Karig, the editor. Especially valuable are the volumes containing stories from peoples that have, as yet, no written literature. These volumes thus present the unwritten literature of the people concerned. The value of the individual volumes is greatly enhanced by their tasteful execution. The cover, text-figures, tailpieces are in every instance composed of the ornamental elements and patterns of the people concerned; with a few exceptions, they have been designed by Mrs. P. Lóránt, following a study of the

* Complete list at the end of this article. (No. I.)

available material in the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest.

When turning the leaves of the attractive, well-appointed volumes, the storybook series "Gesicht der Völker" of the Kassel Röth-Verlag immediately comes to mind. This series appeared as a more modern and more accessible successor to the "Märchen der Weltliteratur" and raised folk tales to the rank of world literature for the first time in the 'twenties and 'thirties. It was an excellent and laudable idea of Europa Publishers to follow in the footsteps of the "Gesicht der Völker"; it is a pity, though, that the principle observed in the arrangement of the volumes is different, leading to certain deficiencies. Though in the compilation of each volume the publishers have rightly acted on the principle of endeavouring mainly to select texts that satisfy aesthetic and literary demands, they have unfortunately not everywhere supplied these texts with the notes indispensable for their correct understanding and designed to provide information on a scientific level. The story material of the "Gesicht der Völker," while providing enjoyable reading, is also material suitable for scientific use of great value. At the outset the Europa Publishers were apparently afraid that notes referring to international parallels would disturb the reading public's enjoyment, whereas—according to the evidence furnished by the latest volumes—it is precisely such notes that offer the information required by the average reader and draw attention to the individual colour of the stories of various peoples.

In consequence of the lack of precision in formulating the principles of publication, the material and notes of the series are very disparate. Beside the volumes containing authentic folk tales based on purely oral sources, there are, for example, also precious old literary collections (such as the material of the volumes containing Chinese stories from the Tang period; the golden age of classical literature—or tales of Tibet, translated from the original) and transrciptions of a literary character (like the Kazakh tales, rewritten by Béla Balázs; the gipsy stories written within a story on the basis of observations by Tibor Bartos; the collection of African translations by Miklós Radnóti, the eminent, inspired poet; the Vietnamese tales rewritten by Nguen Hun Thut). The authentic collections, too, vary greatly in value, some volumes being unjustifiably sketchy or the material not characteristic. Thus it was a pity to make up the Eskimo volume on the basis of tales taken from the "Gesicht der Völker" series, considering that the original volume itself was not very rich; in the case of the rather thin Portuguese, Georgian and South American volumes it would have been better to collect more abundant and typical material reflecting the wealth of the area. It does not seem very appropriate to have included a small part of the classical collection of Grimm's tales. In general, more importance should be attached in the series to the selection of the most characteristic pieces from the material of a people and to publish the specific local variety of the well-known common form, lest the lay reader should in time come to the conclusion that the same stories are to be found in every volume. Even the first-rate expert epilogues and notes have not always been able to make up for perfunctory selection of the material to be found here or there (e. g. in the Rumanian volume).

However, the deficiencies noted in a few of the volumes practically shrink into insignificance beside the gorgeous wealth of the series as a whole and the substantial contents offered by the great majority of the volumes. The latter include the particularly successful collection of Albanian tales containing hitherto almost unknown material, the Australian and Burmese stories supplemented by exemplary notes, the careful selection of the tales

furnishing the contents of the Cashmere and Turkish volumes. The expert selection of material derived from Manchurian-Tunguz peoples living on the banks of the river Amur (most regrettably without quoting any sources), the beatiful tales of the Mongolian-Turk nomads of Tuva, and the volume of extremely interesting Vogul tales in fine translation deserve special mention.

The furthcr volumes contain collections of Ostyak, Gilliac, Malagasy and Arab tales. It may safely be stated that the experiment undertaken by Europa Publishers has more than justified itself; the public receives the tales for grown-ups with pleasure; and most of the earlier issues have been sold out.

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Even more popular than the above series is that of the Ferenc Móra Publishers, comprising international folk stories that open up the fascinating world of tales told by the peoples of the world to youthful readers aged eight to fourteen.

There are few countries in which the folk-tale cult is as valid as in Hungary—where story-telling is still a flourishing art among the peasantry. Modern pedagogy has recognized the instructive influence of fictitious adventures, of the valiant struggles and perseverance of story heroes, and therefore draws deeply on the material of Hungarian folk tales, after due consideration of what is suitable for young people. The demand of the young for such tales is, however, infinite, and publishers are compelled to search incessantly for new sources. This was how the new series was born as the fruit of a joint undertaking by teachers, folklore researchers, writers, and translators. Notwithstanding the necessarily smaller quantity of material as compared to that embraced by the series of the Europa Publishers, it is to some extent more consistent and handled with greater skill.

Each of the five bulky volumes so far published* (several of which have been reprinted in more than one edition, numbering as many as a hundred-thousand copies) comprises tales of peoples within an extensive geographical unit.

This principle of arrangement may be less scientific than the grouping of tales according to the ethnic background of the various peoples or by tracing the origin of the various types of stories, but to youthful readers this kind of grouping appears more perspicuous and natural. The tales in this series have, therefore, been arranged in accordance with geographical regions, allowing, of course, wider scope to countries rich in folklore than to those with a less profuse fountain-head of tales.

Special appreciation is due to the publishers because, as opposed to earlier custom, they do not treat the matter destined for children perfunctorily. Though educational considerations may be predominant in selection, philological fidelity is not abandoned.

The editor of the series is Gyula Ortutay, professor of folklore at the University of Budapest. The material is selected and the volumes are supplied with explanatory epilogues by outstanding folklore experts, while the translations are done by the best translators. This cooperation has proved to be very fruitful, so that the volumes enjoy wide popularity. Youthful readers are provided not only with a new and varied wealth of stories, but also with opportunities for learning about the thinking, ideals, and heroes of various peoples. In addition to folk tales, the volumes also contain characteristic sagas and noteworthy selections from epic poetry and popular books. Among the coloured illustrations, maps of national costumes, ornamental designs, pictures of ornamental objects conduce to bringing the reader closer to

* Complete list at the end of thist article (No II.)

the story-telling nation. Not infrequently it is necessary to rewrite texts for the young; such work is done with utmost care and tact, that it should not detract from the value of the original text. The first of the four volumes lying before us appeared in 1954. These books are able to meet the demands not only of children; and it may be hoped that their youthful owners will preserve them and peruse them again when they have reached the adult stage of enjoying tales.

LINDA DÉGH

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NAGYVILÁG—WIDE WORLD

A Hungarian Journal of World Literature

In conversations with writers and publishers during my visit to Paris last year, they were always astonished to hear about the wide scale of Hungarian book printing, and—to quote their polite epithet—the "liberal" attitude to western literature. On one occasion I was discussing this topic with an eminent author-critic in the tiny room of a large publishing-house on the left bank of the river Seine.

"Molière is the most frequently played Hungarian playwright, Stendhal is the Hungarian novelist sold in the greatest number of copies," I argued, but he only gazed vacantly out of the window, at the graceful spire of a small Parisian church.

"But you wouldn't dare publish Sartre," he interrupted maliciously, though with a smile. I informed him that a volume of his short stories had been issued. Thereupon, presumably to pull my leg or in jest, he blurted out in a tone of disdain:

"Well, Sagan, she hasn't been published, has she?"

I told him that *Bonjour Tristesse* had appeared. He was visibly mollified. The duel went on for a considerable length of time. I showed him the collection entitled "Contemporary French Poets" and the anthology entitled "Contemporary French Prose writers." When he saw the names of André Breton, Henri Michaux, René Char, then Marcel Aymé, Jean Giono, André Pierre de Mandiargues, he hummed and hawed, blinked and snuffled. I knew I had won. But I gave him a last friendly coup de grace by taking out the latest copy of *Nagyvilág* (Wide World). It was unnecessary to translate or explain the text; on the "flap" of the Budapest journal on world literature the names of a number of foreign authors figured in due order.

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The first copy of this journal was issued on October 1st, 1956. The second copy only appeared in April, 1957. The essayist László Kardos, professor of world literature at the Budapest University and the present editor of the magazine, wrote the following in his editorial entitled "After the Storm":

> "The idea of starting *Nagyvilág* was conceived in the months when a lively and extensive struggle was initiated against dogmatic and blinkered cultural policies and when the masses that had started educating themselves were with increasing urgency giving vent to their dissatisfaction over the persistent provincialism weighing down our literary life and art. What we are wont to call the cultural revolution of our people's democracy is no mendacious illusion. The noble, avid thirst increasingly shown by the Hungarian people for the classics of world literature has been a fascinating phenomenon in socialist education. *Nagyvilág* has been called into existence by this demand of our cultural revolution, striving to integrate into Hungarian socialist culture the genuine values of contemporary world literature in addition to the classics. For several years this demand went unsatisfied. The timid distrust manifested by some of our cultural policy-makers towards the products of contemporary western literature, and the naively exaggerated confidence with which they expected the literary works written in the countries building socialism to exert an immediate and invariably positive social-pedagogic influence, have at times led to ludicrous blunders and harmful mistakes, and in

general to grotesque disproportions and constricting one-sidedness.

"The recognition of these blunders, errors and disproportions gave birth to the idea of founding *Nagyvilág* which is destined to appear monthly as a living refutation of the hostile calumny that socialist culture necessarily involves narrowing, oppressive limitations, as compared to contemporary bourgeois culture. It will not only be a refutation, renewed month by month, of this calumny, but at the same time an incontrovertible proof that the horizons of socialist culture are susceptible of infinite expansion, offering room to all the genuine cultural treasures of the world".

On the first anniversary of *Nagyvilág*, the editorial staff weighed the first incomplete volume in the balance in these words:

"Our cultural revolution is no insignificant factor in the realization of socialism, and this cultural revolution can hardly be imagined without educating the people in world literature and without providing our intelligentsia with adequate information. We must make use of every achievement of 20th century civilization which may become a useful component of our great work of construction".

The journal is discharging this difficult task with gratifying success. It represents a colourful contribution to Hungarian intellectual life. It may safely be stated that every copy is an event to which many tens of thousand of readers look forward eagerly. Each number is sold out quickly, in Budapest often within a few hours of its appearance. Its circle of readers includes schoolmasters and students, engineers and physicians, but it is also read by a considerable number of industrial workers and even of peasants. The magazine maintains permanent contact with its extensive public by arranging literary evenings, readers' meetings, and through the "Readers' Forum" column for instance. In May, 1960, the letter of a schoolmaster was published in this column expressing thanks for the broadening of his knowledge on world literature. "I believe there are many who share my pleasure in getting to know such new—at least for us new—Soviet writers as Nagibin and Tendryakov, or such western authors as Faulkner and various notable representatives of modern Italian and French literature. I think *Nagyvilág* shows a very live response to what is taking place in world literature. I take the liberty of suggesting the publication of more one-act plays and significant stories of the novelette type."

The opinion of the whole reading public is naturally more important and more interesting than that of an individual reader. The editors recently sent a questionnaire to readers of *Nagyvilág*. It was answered and returned by a great many people (there was an answer even from a reader in Australia), offering criticism and suggestions which are being considered and turned to account by the editors. The most striking is the change in the list of favourites. Who are the favourite authors of these readers? In 1958, testing resulted in the following list and order of preference: Hemingway, Graham Greene, Huxley, Thomas Mann, Camus, Cocteau, Aragon, Steinbeck, Brecht, Mauriac, Wilder, Leonhard Frank, Sholokhov, Sartre, Pratolini, Caldwell, Joyce, Faulkner, Maugham (all of these naturally on the basis of the works published in the magazine). In 1960 the order of preference was Dürrenmatt, Sartre, Hemingway, Camus, Sholokhov, Leonhard Frank, Faulkner, Arthur Miller, Graham Greene, Brecht, Steinbeck, Tennessee Williams, Wilder, Aragon, Ehrenburg, Cocteau, Nagibin, Franz Kafka.

A few words should be said about the methods used in preparing *Nagyvilág* and about its composition.

The bulk of the material published in the journal is naturally made up of belles-

lettres, i. e., stories and novelettes, poems and plays. Among the permanent columns, one of the most attractive is the "Round Table," giving scope for debate. In this column discussion of such themes as our knowledge of world literature, the works of Bertholt Brecht, or the opera, has attained high standards. Notwithstanding the journal's chief aim of presenting contemporary literature, the gems of the past are not neglected either. The "Living Past" column revives the memory of Chekhov and Chopin, of Mark Twain and Pottier. The column entitled "Workshop" affords an insight into the "secrets" of creative art, and analyses, for instance, the problems of translation. (Here it should be mentioned that *Nagyvilág*, while publishing new works drawn from foreign literature in Hungarian versions by the best translators, also endeavours to promote the training of young translators by announcing competitions.)

The column on "Our Visitors" contains statements by foreign authors visiting Hungary, reports or interviews with guests, as in the case recently of the Australian writer Frank Hardy. The column entitled "Information" contains brief studies on significant or remarkable trends in world literature and on the more comprehensive literary events; for example the June issue in 1960 carried an article by Péter Nagy on the series of novels by C. P. Snow. Under the heading "On Authors and their Works" Hungarian writers of note discuss literary movements in other countries or the works of foreign writers. In "The Home of All Peoples" Hungarian writers report on their experiences abroad. Thus the itinerary of István Vas on his tour of Britain, written partly in verse, was a great success. (The prose part of the itinerary was published in the first issue of The New Hungarian Quarterly. The Editor.) Recently the critic László Kéry has written an account of his visit to London. The column "Documents" embraces such important literary material as the letters of Thomas Mann or Malaparte's autobiography. The column "Books" contains reviews on new works published abroad and on foreign books published in Hungarian. The "Chronicle" provides literary news from every part of the world. Many fine drawings are also published in the journal, including the works of such artists as Dufy, Picasso, Matisse, Fernand Léger, Reynolds Stone, Gerhard Marcks, O. Pochtienny, Edvard Munch, William Gropper and Lorenzo Viani, to mention but a few names.

Let us, however, return to the poetry and fiction that take up most of the space in *Nagyvilág*, and look more closely at the works published in the magazine and their authors. The enquiry into readers' opinions, previously referred to, revealed that English literature is extremely popular in Hungary. The word "English" is, of course, inaccurate, for we ought to use "English-language." Within the last few decades, the scale of preference has certainly turned in favour of the Americans. Among the latter—as we have seen—the first and foremost is Hemingway, several editions of whose story "The Old Man and the Sea" have been sold out, while his other novels have been or are to be issued in new editions. In respect to this eminent American author, and the trend and value of his work, a lively debate has been conducted in the "Round Table" column. Of works by other American writers, *Nagyvilág* has published Steinbeck's short story, The Red Pony; The Lost Phoebe by Theodor Dreiser; William Faulkner's Pantaloon in Black, written in the early forties; and Thornton Wilder's play, The Skin of Our Teeth, which has since had a resounding success on the stage of the Madách Theatre.

Of the British works we may mention a part taken from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, written by James Joyce in 1916, Evelyn Waugh's Excursion into Real Life, Aldous Huxley's Green Tunnels, Narcissus Sky by Herbert Ernest Bates, who

has lately become very popular in Hungary, and the story Man in the House by the Irish novelist Frank O'Connor, formerly practically unknown to Hungarian readers. English-language literature is represented chiefly by prose writers, but some poetry has also been published, for instance poems by William Blake, on the occasion of the 130th anniversary of his death, when Géza Képes contributed a commemorative commentary in the column "Living Past." Recently, *Nagyvilág* has introduced Cecil Day Lewis and Louis MacNeice as representatives of the younger generation of British poets.

French literature, which has for a long time been exceedingly popular in Hungary and has exerted a marked influence on writers and poets alike, takes up considerable space in the columns of *Nagyvilág*. Of the poets whose works have appeared in the magazine in Hungarian versions by the best translators and been reviewed by first-rate critics, we may mention Aragon, Éluard, Carco, Supervielle, Claudel, Follain, René Guy Cadou and Saint-John Perse. The list of prose writers comprises the names of such authors as the Nobel-Prize-winners Camus and Mauriac, the Goncourt Prize-winner Merle, furthermore Colette and Schlumberger, Aymé and Queneau, Gamarra and Vercors, or, among the young experimentalists, Marguerite Duras. The Unicorn by Ionesco was a tremendous success, as well as another French play, Les Séquestrés d'Altona, the latest drama of Jean-Paul Sartre.

For a long time, the influence of German literature prevailed unilaterally in Hungary. After the natural reaction following the war, the works of anti-fascist and humanist German writers now again occupy their deserved place—also in the columns of *Nagyvilág*, where in the past few years the names of Brecht, Hermlin, Böll, Strittmatter, Bochert, Werfel, Arnold Zweig, Döblin, Thomas Mann and Heinrich Mann could be encountered, while a resounding success has been scored by the Swiss Dürrenmatt.

Occasionally *Nagyvilág* prepares a special issue to present the literature of a particular nation. The first such issue, published in 1958, was devoted to Italian literature and contained poetry by Saba, Ungaretti, Montale, Quasimodo and others, as well as prose pieces by Alvaro, Jovine, Buzzati, and Venturi, furthermore a large number of studies and articles on contemporary Italian literature and on Italo-Hungarian intellectual relations. Recently works by Calvino, Montanelli, and Lampedusa have also appeared in *Nagyvilág*.

Spanish and Portuguese literature has so far not been allotted an adequate place in the columns of the journal, although works have been published by the gifted author Juan Goytisolo, and a short story by Ferreira de Castro who is fairly well-known and liked in Hungary. Spanish and Latin-American lyrical poetry has been represented in *Nagyvilág* by the verses of R. Alberti, N. Guillén, Jimenez, Asturias, and Neruda.

The magazine has assumed a difficult task in undertaking to publish the literature of the neighbouring countries, for it has to wrestle with a still extant snobism which evinces interest only in the literature of the great nations. *Nagyvilág* endeavours to combat this unjustifiable attitude by providing its readers with the choicest fruits of the literature of the neighbouring peoples. Thus it has issued poems by the Polish poets Isakowski and Broniewski, by the Rumanians Beniuc, Stancu, Porombacu, Jebeleanu, the Bulgarian Milev, the Yugoslav Tosović; scope has been given to Borowski, an eminent representative of modern Polish prose, and a separate issue was devoted in 1959 to Czech and Slovak literature, in which poets were represented by Nezval, Steifert, and Kundera, prose writers by Lustig, Mucha and Jan Weiss. In connection with the literature of the neighbouring peoples, an important initiative was taken in the July issue of 1960 by the opening—with expert participation—

of a discussion under the heading "Open Windows" for the evaluation of the literary situation in the neighbouring countries.

The journal renders useful services to Hungarian-Soviet relations by publishing the finest products of new Soviet literature. Prose works have appeared by Olesha, Katayev, Sholokhov, Fedin, Tendryakov, Nagibin, Dudintsev, as poetry by Vera Inber, Yesenin, Yevtushenko, and others, as well as the Optimistic Tragedy by Vishnevsky, which has also been presented on the stage with great success.

In Hungary, world literature first used to imply only western literature, later European literature in general. One of the achievements of the cultural revolution that has taken place in a spirit of internationalism is that the concept of world literature has come to be significantly broadened and horizons have expanded in the last few years. We do not say that there are no more white spaces, but the process of integrating the literature of colonial peoples, of remote nations with world literature has got under way. *Nagyvilág* naturally is doing its share in this task. It has introduced Chinese literature with the works of Pao Chin, Mao Tun, and Lu Hsunt, which have acquired growing popularity among Hungarian readers in recent years; moreover, of the Japanese authors, hitherto unknown in Hungary, it has presented Fukazawa, while attention has also been extended to contemporary Iranian prose (Sadeq Hedayat) and the revival of ancient masterpieces, such as the poetry of Omar Khayyam. In this sphere the achievement of numerous beautiful and thrilling projects still lies ahead.

ENDRE BAJOMI LÁZÁR

ECONOMIC LIFE

TREATISES ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND ADVERTISING

IMRE VAJDA: *Nemzetközi kereskedelem.*

(International Trade.—Published by Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó Budapest, 1959, 409 pp.)

Is it possible to give a congruous and at the same time truthful picture of a field of knowledge virtually every constituent element of which is in perpetual motion?

This question arises whenever we have to consider a book that endeavours to offer a comprehensive account of modern economic life. The question assumes particular weight when the book discusses present-day international trade on a world-wide basis. In this case, the framework within which such phenomena may be discussed on an adequate scientific level is strained by the dynamics of world politics no less than by the dynamics of economic phenomena.

As a matter of fact, the characteristic feature of present-day international commerce is precisely that the rapid increase in volume is associated with changes of structure, methods, forms of organization, and territorial distribution. The growth in turnover is followed by the establishment of various forms of international organization, providing for the integration of large territorial units in respect to finances, production, etc. The progress of the economically underdeveloped countries, is, at the same time, beginning to recast the international division of labour. In some products—e. g. those of the chemical and especially of the petrochemical, industries—turnover grows at a faster rate than in others; the development of new productive regions (for instance the Sahara oilfields) is accompanied by a shift in economic-geographic formations, resulting, moreover, in a reappraisal of the importance of certain transport routes.

Thus it is no wonder that contemporary economic literature evinces an increasing interest in the theoretical and practical aspects of international trade.

Publications on this subject issued in Hungary during the last few years have, however, dealt mainly with only one or two aspects of the problem. The recently published extensive work "International Trade" by Imre Vajda, professor of foreign trade at the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest, has been the first work for some time to give an account of foreign trade, both in its historic development and various concrete aspects. The significance of the book is further enhanced by the fact that it is the first work of its kind, in the economic literature of the Eastern European countries.

The first part of the book describes international trade in the light of history, from antiquity to the end of the Second World War. The more voluminous second part deals in detail with the problems of foreign

trade in the period following the Second World War. The structural alternations of the world market are analysed from novel viewpoints, discussing the development of foreign trade in the leading capitalist countries, the influence of the establishment of the socialist camp on world commerce, the necessary preconditions for colonial and semi-colonial countries to acquire independence, the new forms of international economic relations, typical new features in the development of prices, international payments, and overseas shipping. In conclusion, the book surveys the changes that have taken place in the situation of the principal commodity markets.

By this triple approach, discussing the problems of international trade first by single countries and groups of countries, then according to the various fields of subject matter, and finally according to the commodities themselves, I. Vajda has succeeded in producing a synthetic presentation of this intricate subject, which often elucidates its complicated correlations from a completely novel viewpoint.

The author has devoted particular care to a detailed account of the role played by the United States in the capitalist world market, the rapid advance of the Federal German Republic in international commerce, and finally the development of the situation of Britain and of the Sterling area.

For readers in western countries, the chapter describing the world trade of the socialist countries could be of peculiar interest. It analyses the process which, after the failure of the policy of embargoes, has now finally led to the broadening of East-West trade.

It is common knowledge that the various capitalist countries of Western Europe have, one after the other, concluded trade agreements with the socialist countries, and that the interest of capitalist circles in East-West trade is on the increase. Between 1952 and 1957, the volume of trade between the capitalist and socialist countries has been doubled, while the total turnover between the two respective parts of Europe was trebled from 1953 to 1957.

As regards trade among the socialist countries, the author explains that the chief task of foreign trade here is again the realization of the international division of labour. Higher productivity, resulting from an international division of labour, lowers the costs of production and leads to improved quality of the goods produced. This principle has been gaining ground since 1955 in the work of the international economic organization of the socialist countries, the Council for Mutual Economic Aid. With the recognition of the earlier inadequacy of cooperation, the coordination of industrial production has been initiated and planning raised to an international plane. At the seventh session of the Council, in 1957, a decision was reached providing for the preparation of long-term plans.

A new feature of the foreign trade of the socialist countries has been their increased attention to underdeveloped countries in need of economic help. This is evidenced by the fact that the turnover of trade between the countries participating in the Council for Mutual Economic Aid and the underdeveloped countries has grown nearly fourfold from 1950 to 1957.

A special chapter in the book deals with the changes in international trade due to the liberation or greater independence of the colonial and dependent countries, of Africa and Asia, and with the manifestation in their foreign trade of their specific economic problems.

Hungary's foreign trade relations have never been so extensive before. This, too, is a result of the fact that the principle of peaceful coexistence is gradually making headway in the sphere of foreign trade. The book of Imre Vajda offers a theoretical, scientific perspective and practical help in these widely ramified commercial activities.

ISTVÁN VARGA: *A reklám.*

(Advertising — Published by Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó, Budapest, 1960. 436 pp.)

How far does socialist advertising resemble that in the western countries? Wherein lies the difference between them? What are the economic considerations underlying its aims? What are the psychotechnic principles that determine the choice of instruments? A long-awaited answer to these questions, of interest to every economic expert, is now supplied by István Varga, professor of the Karl Marx University of Economics in Budapest.

The book opens with a colourfully detailed and striking history of advertising. Next, it offers an analysis of advertising as carried on under modern capitalism, with numerous comparative figures about the cost of advertising in different countries and for different commodities, the distribution between the various means of advertising, etc.

From the point of view of advertising theory, the third chapter of the book is of special importance, because here István Varga expounds the theory of socialist advertising. In discussing the aims of socialist advertising he points out the following differences: While capitalist advertising always serves only the interests of a particular firm, socialist advertising is of economic significance to the community, for its role in serving the interests of a firm is subordinated to the aims of the people's economy. Socialist advertising is, therefore, not competitive in character, but serves the fulfilment of the economic plan, by exerting an active influence on demand. This influence prevails not only by bringing about changes in the composition of consumption at a predeterminated level. Just as in western countries, advertising is often employed to create a demand among buyers for the advertised article; it is used also in socialist countries to support the launching of new articles, by creating a completely new demand. Under socialism commodity advertising is thus more important than shop advertising, though the latter course may also be justified under certain conditions. How these principles of socialist advertising are carried out in practice is another question. The author does not hesitate to censure present advertising practices, and quotes a series of highly instructive examples in support of his criticism.

Relations between market research and advertising are discussed in a separate chapter, giving a summary of the methods that may be used for the investigation of markets in the course of the preparation and execution of advertisements. A great quality of materials based on practical experience is here described and evaluated. At the end of this chapter the author deals with the complicated task of checking the effects of advertising, including a detailed analysis of the methods employed, such as inquiries based on objective figures, demoscopic studies and tests, among them the latest method of Daniel Starch.

The author draws important conclusions for economics from a discussion of the relation between the elasticity of demand and advertising. This question has been made topical by the necessity of assessing, or at least weighing, the possibilities of satisfying demand both quantitatively and within adequate time-limits before starting to publish advertisements intended to increase the turnover in the consumer goods involved. In socialism advertising may never be handled as an end in itself, but must always answer the purpose of widening and directing a demand that can be met and that is, at the same time, desirable from the point of view of the people's economy. Therefore the preparation of socialist advertising requires the taking into account of elasticity in demand on the basis of careful preliminary study.

The bulky chapter on the psychology of advertising contains interesting parts on the role of Pavlov in the development of materialist psychology, and discusses its connections with the psychology of advertising.

An advertisement must actually endeavour to elicit from the buyer a response—corresponding to the aim of the advertisement—that will amount to a conditioned reflex. Thus the buyer, when shopping to satisfy a need, should instinctively choose the advertised article.

On the basis of results obtained by the most up-to-date experiments and investigations performed in various countries, the author gives a detailed description of the effects expected of an advertisement in realizing this requirement. They include attracting the attention of the potential buyer, making a lasting impression on her or his memory, and stimulating a determination to implement the purchase.

The two fundamental questions to be answered by advertising psychology are the following: "What shall we say?" and "How shall we express the idea?" These points are dealt with in the last chapter of the book, which deals with the psychotechnique of rousing response and analyses, on the basis of ample examples, the criteria of good advertising and the characteristics of poor advertising, as applied to the numerous and manifold means utilized in this field.

This is the first book in the literature of the socialist countries to treat the questions of advertising on a broad theoretical basis. The value of the volume also as a study in cultural history is enhanced by the inclusion of 573 coloured or black-and-white illustrations as well as by abundant examples and references.

EGON KEMENES

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BUDAPEST ON LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY

The Hungarian capital has recently been the scene of an important scientific conference. Its participants were economists of the socialist countries, and its theme was productivity of labour. The circumstance that this was the first time that the economists of the socialist countries ever convened for a conference of this type lent particular significance to the deliberations. The 15 Hungarian and 13 foreign lectures delivered were a signal example of scientific cooperation.

It would be superfluous now to stress, by way of introduction, the importance of the problem, which was indicated indirectly by the very fact of the conference and more directly by the contents of the successive addresses heard there.

The fundamental character of the issue —that of productivity—was emphasized by István Friss, corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Director of its Institute of Economic Science, in his opening speech. An examination of the question of productivity is made particularly timely by three considerations:

the peaceful economic competition between the capitalist and socialist countries;

the extension of an international division of labour among the socialist countries;

the increasing importance of the internal problems of the socialist countries as regards production and productivity.

With respect to the first, the speaker designated production per head of population as the most important index of peaceful competition. He recalled that although the socialist countries and, in the first place, the Soviet Union had embarked on this competition under unfavourable conditions, still the rise in productivity in the smaller People's Democracies was greater than in

any of the big capitalist countries. These well-known facts, however, cannot divert attention from the numerous tasks which economists have yet to solve. Here István Friss mentioned the problem of finding methods that would most rapidly increase labour productivity, and the problem of comparative data. Speaking of the second sphere of tasks, he explained that the differences in development in the past and the various kinds of price structure still place many obstacles in the way of extending the division of labour among the socialist countries. The task to be clarified may therefore be formulated thus: how do the national income, production per head of population, productivity and the standard of living take shape in the different socialist countries? The third sphere of tasks, the increasing of production and productivity, involves particularly important research work in Hungary. In this sphere we dispose of a great many valuable experiences, but at the same time we cannot close our eyes to a number of bad ones, and the mistakes made offer a rich store for analysis and study. Among the mistakes of the past the disregarding of profitableness and the neglecting of technical development should be particularly cited. To mention one example, productivity, although increasing on a greater scale than in the pre-war era, did not rise as much as it should have, precisely because of these mistakes.

The same line of thinking was continued by Jenő Fock, a member of the Scientific Council of the Institute of Economic Sciences, member of the Political Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and Secretary of its Central Committee. Stressing the importance of increasing productivity, he pointed out that in Hungary, according to the new plans, nearly two thirds of the growth in production between 1959 and 1965 must be achieved by increasing productivity. This is to be attained, in part, by the planned modification in the ratio of investments. Between 1961 and 1965, as compared to the standard for the years 1956-60, overall investments will increase by 50 per cent, within this the investments on machines will rise by 75 per cent.

The conference, as the two introductory speeches here referred to indicate, thus endeavoured to clarify those fundamental problems which are indispensable in actual practice, i. e., those of the measurement and of the indices of productivity, the related problems of planning and, in addition, the questions of the means of comparison and of practical application.

Eighteen industrial and ten agricultural reports were read and then debated in special subcommittees. The broad exchange of ideas showed, however, that the fundamental theoretical problems were essentially identical both in industry and agriculture. Ferenc Erdei, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, in calling attention to this, noted that the importance of the problem of agriculture had been recognized only in our days. Thus the questions of profitableness and productivity in agriculture had at first been neglected, while the level of specific yields and the yields per unit of area were regarded as the main indices. Only now has one begun to pay attention to cost, that is, to the problems of profitableness and productivity.

Indices of Productivity and its Measurement

The scientific consensus that emerged from the reports and from the discussion may be summarized in the following: several kinds of indices must be used to provide a many-sided characterization of productivity, and among these particular significance attaches to indices of net production.

As regards the details of the problem, it is worth citing a few methods of approach. The two methods used in Czechoslovakia are, in essence, as follows: 1. productivity per worker is calculated for all branches of industry taken together, on the basis of overall productivity at stable state wholesale

prices; 2. in certain branches of industry productivity is calculated with the help of indices of industrial production expressed in natural units. (Alois Balek and Alois Cerveny.) In the Soviet Union, too, two kinds of indices of productivity are calculated. Just as in Czechoslovakia, the overall production per worker is calculated in stable wholesale prices; in addition the rise in productivity of the individual industrial worker is calculated. (M. N. Demchenko, Institute of Economic Science, Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union.)

The most important characteristic of the so-called direct method of measuring productivity is that the level of productivity is measured in the first instance in terms of the number of work hours per unit of product. In contrast to the previously mentioned methods, where the diversity of price systems renders valuation difficult, this method has the advantage of making it possible to by-pass the data relating to value. (Ottó Lukács, department head in the Hungarian Central Bureau of Statistics.)

The main problem was: which category of labour power is most suitable for characterizing the concrete work consumed in production. According to one opinion productivity must be determined on the basis of all those employed. The more technique advances the less sense is there in separating the productive from the non-productive labour force. (László Bontó, department head in the Hungarian National Planning Office.) It happens more and more frequently that in the process of production the object of work involves no direct expenditure of physical labour. A concomitant of technical development is that within the total labour force the number of maintenance workers and the technicians concerned with the organization and development of production increases. (István Cságoly, head of the General Department of the Crude Oil Trust.)

The agricultural reports also emphasized the primary importance of measuring productivity on the basis of concrete work.

In practice—because of the characteristics of agricultural production, the various difficulties connected with measuring and evaluating concrete work and capital assets, as well as the absence of calculation of cost and economicalness—we have to confine ourselves to examining the productivity of concrete work. In its measurement complete and partial, as well as indirect indices are used in practice. (L. Csete, department head at the Institute of Agricultural Business Administration, Hungarian Academy of Sciences.)

A number of speakers stressed that in agriculture working time may not be used, because the accounting is taken in so called "working units" which is not equal to working time, as in the agricultural cooperatives the members are paid according to their production and not on the basis of working hours. In working out the details the method of evaluating according to age groups was raised. (Kazimierz Sokolowski, member of the Polish Institute of Economic Science.) Other speakers called attention to the fact that it was not enough to measure productivity on the basis of labour expenditure and the amount of goods produced. The calculations must always be carried out in conjunction with costs. (Herbert Winkelmann, member of the Statistical Bureau of the German Democratic Republic.)

Several reports dealt with the question of organizing productivity. The debate clearly showed, and Miklós Ajtai, deputy chairman of the National Planning Office, stressed in his closing address, that in the planning of productivity, too, several kinds of indices must be used.

International Comparison of Productivity

Comparison of productivity of labour as between the socialist countries has up to now been rather neglected. It was this at first glance striking conclusion that introduced the exchange of ideas on the second principal theme. The debate raised a good many problems and usefully designated those

methodological tasks without the solution of which international comparison cannot have a firm foundation.

In comparing production standards on an international level the following main problems arise: the comparability of products, the demarcation of costs, and divergencies in production structures. The advantage of a method of comparison based on indices according to products is that indices of constant contents weighed in several ways may be calculated on this basis. Comparison based on cumulated data has this advantage, however, that the cost need not be divided up according to products, while its disadvantage lies in indices of varying contents. The simplest solution would appear that of comparing concrete labour expenditure per unit of production in the given production phase. (Zoltán Román, worker of the Budapest Institute of Economic Science.)

Among the chief problems of international comparison mentioned in the discussion were: the problem of how to reduce the divergencies arising from differences in quality of products and labour to a common denominator; problems originating in the differing price levels of the various countries and the divergent development of values; those arising from the divergent structure of the several branches of production; the question of labour power; difficulties resulting from uneven historical development; problems arising from differences in geography, climate, soil conditions; and finally the questions involved in the delimitation of indices and in statistical methods. (Balek and Cerveny).

The development of productivity and the question of specialization to be realized within the socialist camp provided an opportunity for bringing to light a number of very interesting interrelations. It was made clear, for instance, that specialization will not be determined by where productivity is now the greatest. On the basis of comparable data it will be possible to determine what level of productivity can and must be achieved by a particular country in which one of the branches of production is concentrated. (Professor Imre Vajda of the Karl Marx University of Economic Science, Budapest.)

The problems of productivity in agriculture were also subjected to comparison. In this sphere great difficulty is caused, for example, by the fact that the results of agricultural production are generally known to us only as applied to one-year periods, that the quality of agricultural produce varies a great deal from country to country, that changes in quality of produce are hard to measure and that, as in the case of industrial measurement, the conversion into comparative prices and the demarcation of the range of costs, etc., gives rise to problems. Consequently, the most important task in this sphere, too, is the reduction to a common denominator and the standardization of data to be used for purposes of comparisons. (L. Horváth, department head in the Inst. of Economic Science, Budapest.)

Experiences, Results

Wide attention was attracted by the addresses dealing with the practical results and experiences up to now. Among these were the lecture of Professor Alois Chlebowczik on "Divergencies in the Level of Productivity in Polish Industry between 1953 and 1956", and the report of István Haraszti, chief engineer of the "Dinamo" Electrical Machine Factory, Budapest. The latter drew the conclusion that it is a mistaken concept to consider that assembly-line production is invariably for large series and great investments. Lajos Csete—whom we have previously cited—analysed the data of 112 cooperative farms to show that an increase in the proportion of costs of capital assets results in an increase in productivity. Sándor Peregi, member of the Institute of Business Administration of the State Farms arrived at some very interesting conclusions regard-

ing the question of productivity by production branches on the basis of data for the year 1957, covering 34 state farms. According to his investigations the productivity of concrete work was the greatest in highly mechanized grain and hay production, and lowest in viticulture and in intensive cultivation of row-crops and by irrigation. The level of productivity in the growing of fruit and of pulse falls in between.

It was the unanimous opinion of the participants that scientific conferences of this nature serve to raise the standard of the branch of science concerned and that the Hungarian initiative in calling the meeting was fully justified, since no other method could have replaced this scientific forum and the discussions that developed there. By deepening the exchange of experiences between scientific workers of the various countries, the conference has hastened the solution of those practical questions which economic cooperation between the socialist countries raises.

ETA KIS

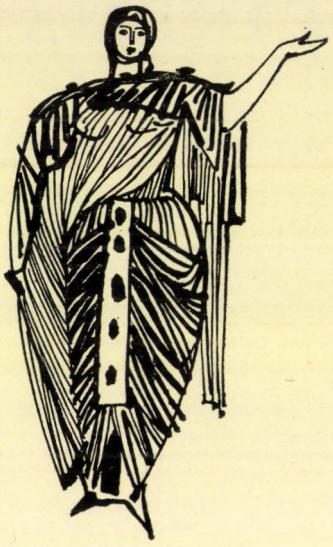
THEATRE—CINEMA

AN EXPERIMENT IN GREEK DRAMA

In a small covered Sports Arena in Budapest, an experiment has been made, which—so far as we know—has in recent times only been parallelled in Greece. Two years ago, some enterprising theatre people had the idea of evoking the Greek classics under circumstances different from those of conventional modern drama. Modern, concert-like performances of two works of Sophocles, based on the magic of the beautifully recited text, were a great success. The idea has since matured, and this year the director made an attempt to conjure up the genuine Greek theatre.

A cleverly designed platform was built upon the concrete arena and some suitable pieces of stage scenery—an altar, a fountain, a stone bench and so on—were placed upon it to establish the Greek environment. The costumed actors took the stage, open on all sides, not only to recite but also to act the ancient poem. Reviving the spirit of antiquity? It would be more correct to say: variations upon some antique themes. For it is not a religious ceremony or a common holiday at which the public gathers, but a modern theatre, that does not conjure up the genuine spirit of the Greek theatre. It is a show, which presents—perhaps a little too convivially—the interesting, attractive or moving characters of a great tradition to a public eager to learn or glad to remember.

Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* was on the program the first night. Evidently one of the reasons why it was chosen was that among the great Greek tragedians Euripides is the least inclined to metaphysics and that, in this touching tragedy of a tender virgin who becomes the self-sacrificing heroine of her people, even the greatest characters are brought close to the public; nor is the work overloaded with details bound to time and place that make the enjoyment of these ancient classics so difficult for the theatre-going public of today. An eternal human parable here speaks directly to the people of our age. But one of the reasons for selecting this drama may also have lain in the circumstance that in the work of completing the tragedy, which has come down to us in a fragmentary form only, precisely those motifs that are closer to modern man could be more forcibly stressed. Gábor Devecseri, who has translated and adapted the tragedy with a virtuoso's ease, with brilliant sonority and throughout in the fluent idiom of the stage, made use of this possibility most skilfully. Drawing also from other works of the great Greek tragedian, he has written two highly effective and beautiful passages about the great moral values of peace. These two passages—at the beginning and at the end of the drama—are delivered by the virgin goddess Artemis, as she appears amidst the mortals. Nor does she lift her voice *ex machina*, she is, as it were, a human participant in the plot. This feature is characteristic of the whole perform-



ance—from the pathetic solitude of remoteness it draws the ancient world into the sphere of the modern audience.

By making the drama clear without any marked explanatory interference, the director, Károly Kazimir, has endeavoured to preserve the antique atmosphere of the work. The performance is characterized by mildly stylized realism. The people that speak and act in their Greek costumes on the platform stage are felt to be modern, their movements and intonation, their contact with the audience are natural and realistic.

Following the pattern of their feelings, their diction becomes softer or louder quite spontaneously. The chorus, interrupting and commenting on the events, does not play the part of a sublime liturgy; the texts it recites are much shorter than the original; it divides the plot into parts rather than expounds it; and follows it in an emotional, rather than an explanatory manner. To make the chorus more natural and comprehensible, its structure is also simplified; the commentaries are recited by one person at a time only; the members of the chorus unite for choral declamation only in the passionate passages, while in the most outstanding ones their recital becomes a soaring song. To achieve the necessary stylized effect, the director does not hesitate to make the throb of rhythm felt in declamation; he has the restrained excitement of the dialogues accompanied by slightly pathetic gestures and, if necessary, lets incidental music provide a background to them. Particularly important portions of the text are recited by one person, then repeated by the chorus, and, finally, in song. Thus the emotional range of the passage is further enriched. The music (by Tamás Blum), played by a few wind and some percussion instruments and sung by a small female choir, is in any case given a fairly important role; it provides a kind of framework, which divides and connects the scenes and acts and emphasizes actions and ideas. It is sometimes highly effective, but at others it is interwoven with the text and this is, unfortunately, detrimental to clarity of speech.

The visual part of the production also strives for a similar interplay of naturalness and stylization. Virtually no cothurnus or mask haunts the production. The actors move without any artificiality, sometimes they even give too free play to the rhythm of their modern and individual movements. The stage, open on all sides, demands movements that are different from those the actors are used to on a stage that has only one opening. Obviously, it needs longer practice to acquire the art of such more expressive gestures, and in this respect the actors were to a great extent left to their own devices—for better or for worse. By using dancers, the director evidently strove to utilize the open space and also to give the spectacle a more animated quality. As long as the dances were organically built into the course of the drama, thus enlivening the text of the choruses by suggesting the presence of the people intervening in the plot, they had a good

effect. Occasionally, however, the illustrative dances, deteriorating into inserted pantomimes, struck one as seriously confusing exaggerations.

Agamemnon's speech, for instance, in which he tells about the antecedents of the Trojan War, the rape of Helen, was represented by a pantomime. This, apart from introducing completely foreign elements into the drama, unnecessarily divides the attention of the spectator, instead of focusing it upon the drama itself.

The actors obviously enjoyed their parts, and delighted in the attractions of their novel surroundings. The men particularly adapted themselves with a surprising flexibility to the common style (Gábor Mádi-Szabó as Agamemnon, Attila Lőte as Achilles). The individual aptitudes of the actresses asserted themselves more strongly. Vera Sennyei's acting differed from the style of the ensemble and tended to the modern and high-strung style of an intimate stage. Nevertheless, she gave a remarkable and colourful performance in the part of Clytemnestra. On the other hand, the inherent discrepancy between the mundane personality of Hédi Váradi and the natural simplicity of the Greek virgin who grows into a heroine of self-sacrifice, was bound to cause some confusion. The heroine's diction was lost; and we missed the full and deep sonority of Iphigenia's plaint. Nor did Miss Váradi give adequate expression to Iphigenia's exaltation.

The second night's program, instead of consisting of a single ancient masterpiece, was devoted to a subject that had set out on its victorious career from Greek antiquity: *Eternal Amphitryon*. Nearly fifty works, dealing with the story of the married couple exalted in their very adultery, are known to the history of literature. The four most outstanding works among them, the plays of Plautus, Molière, Kleist and Giraudoux were chosen by Gyula Kárpáti, to make up a two-act comedy by putting together episodes taken from the works of all four authors. Though the resulting story forms a complete whole, the scenes also shed light on the four different periods, tastes and personalities and, at the same time, on the contrasts between the styles and morals of the times. In addition to the continuity of the story, the comedy, made up as it is of mosaic pieces, should have been cemented together by two more features, the explanatory framework and a style attuned to the same key. Though the former was in itself a risky undertaking, it was on the whole, a success, but the latter was to be the stumbling block that caused the interesting experiment finally to fail.

Géza Hegedüs had chosen a well-known character of the modern "form-breaking" play as the narrator and made him recite the connecting text. Or rather he chose two narrators—why, is a question still unanswered—since, at the beginning of the play, the narrator's chief and *alter ego*, István Kazán, the director of the show, also made a personal appearance and informed the audience of the aims of the *whole* performance. Hegedüs's text is partly educational and partly playfully ironic

jesting in that he deliberately pokes fun at the role and the message of the narrator. He acquaints the public with every platitude and strikes the key-note of the whole production, which is somewhat sentimental, somewhat derisive, somewhat overfamiliar, somewhat respectful, somewhat reverential and rather circus-like.

It is this circus-like key-note that is intended to ensure the unity of style. Reinhardt himself once produced Sophocles in the circus. This, however, is not Reinhardt's circus: it is thriftier, less loquacious and more frivolous. The director must have had some kind of modern farce in mind, as if among the authors conjured up he felt himself closest to Plautus. Accordingly, the scenes taken from Plautus—that of the servant hurrying home from war and meeting his own *alter ego* and the episode of Mercury in the form of the servant keeping a watch over the nuptials of Jupiter-Amphitryon—have come off best. However, is it correct, becoming and worthy of artistic ambitions to stylize the works of three classics of the modern era to the level of antique mass entertainment? What is bound to result from such intentions?

Among other things, Jupiter, who even in Plautus' comedy is no simpleton, becomes throughout a stupid and pompous nincompoop. Nor has Amphitryon come off any better, although in Molière's play he is more than the embodiment of the cuckold philistine; in Kleist's work he is

nearly the incarnation of rebellious man aspiring to become God-like, whereas in Giraudoux's drama the self-irony and superiority he displays make him a worthy partner of Alcmena, this wonderfully clear and clever, pure character. Molière's genius in making a masterpiece of a cheap farce can somehow stand the test of a degradation of style; Kleist, however, becomes sheer caricature. Obviously, both the author and the director equally dislike the stuck-up stupidity of a Prussian army officer. They are right. But to see in Kleist only the Prussian army officer, and to take note of this aspect at all, not only points to complete ignorance but also indicates that the authors

have been willing to falsify one of the most passionate and problematic—and for this very reason most interesting—treatments of the subject for the sake of a seemingly effective but essentially untruthful and accordingly ill-conceived caricature. The serious and increasingly exalted or rather sublime jesting of Giraudoux also ceases to be credible and loses its message in this circus-like production. This is the more regrettable since the eclectic comedy is virtually built upon this most up-to-date and therefore most timely and most readily accessible variation.

It is a pity for the idea, which is essentially a fortunate one, and for the zealous care bestowed upon the production. For the actors have again played with evident enthusiasm and, at times, with remarkable inspiration and adaptability. The careful thought which Éva Schubert, this young actress, has bestowed on ennobling Alcmena's increasingly colourful and deep character deserves great respect. Most likely Giraudoux's Leda is less of a demi-mondaine and belongs less to the underworld, but, given the surroundings and the manner determined by the production itself, Hédi Váradi's performance was excellent. István Prókai's fresh and youthful talent was a pleasure to watch in the part of Sosias. Mádi-Szabó, however, who was so movingly human and authentically convincing in the part of Agamemnon, was unable to cope with the caricature of Jupiter, most probably because he did not himself believe in the figure. Sándor Deák, at the same time, rather unsuccessfully endeavoured to give credence to Amphitryon's part, which had been completely turned into that of a philistine. And those ribald effects of the circus! As though clowns were rushing from among the audience onto the stage and unequivocally thrusting upward their equivocal swords and fieldmarshals' batons. *Hanswurst*—in terme of Amphitryon: this was indeed the kind of stumbling block on which the enterprise inevitably had to fail.

The audience was encouraging and inspiring. It mostly consisted of young people, but there were quite a number of greying temples and wrinkled faces to be seen in the packed house. The observant eyes, the intelligent and sympathetic faces were a sight worth seeing. The chilly silence in places where applause was expected was as telling as the stormy acclaim that exploded at times. What was it that had induced these people to head for this place along with the sport fans in these sultry dog-days? Was it a sort of snobism: the pride of enjoying a dainty morsel prepared for the chosen ones? Evidently, a few went to the theatre for this reason. However, the majority was made up of people who were longing for the breath of great poetry, which creates and preserves human parables for all time. Their response to what they saw proved that they clearly felt the essence of genuine poetry. For the sake of such an audience it would be worth while raising the required standards even higher.

Designs by Erzsébet Kepes

DEZSŐ KERESZTURY

NEW TRENDS IN HUNGARIAN FILM COMEDIES

Of the screen plays produced in 1960 comedies scored the greatest success, both among audiences and critics. Although it would be somewhat exaggerated to speak of a particular Hungarian school in this respect, it must be admitted that—barring British film production—there is hardly any other country where screenwriters have displayed an equally strong tendency to concentrate on humour.

This is clearly illustrated by the fact that among the 47 countries which took part in the 1960 film festival at Karlovy-Vary only Hungary was represented by a comedy. A similar atmosphere of gloom pervaded other great international film festivals. Moreover, a survey of recent trends in cinematographic art (for the moment) reveals an impressively marked tendency to gloomy and tragic stories. While neo-realism still made occasional attempts to produce comedies and create novel features in this genre, the predominance of sombre colours has become well-nigh exclusive in the French "*nouvelle vague*," in the American TV style, in prominent new Soviet films, as also in outstanding Japanese productions.

This development is all the more striking as it can scarcely be regarded as accidental that cinematographic art actually started with little comic studies.

It was at the grotesque sight of the practical joker himself getting drenched that spectators, suddenly elevated to the rank of art critics, first broke into uncontrollable laughter—and it reached its greatest still unsurpassed heights in the sphere of broad comedy, with performances of a Chaplin or the productions of a Clair. These achievements were the first to prove that cinematography had risen to the level of other arts; they helped to sustain the belief that comedy was the most adequate genre for screen plays. This was not due exclusively to the technical possibilities of the age: it was much rather a question of concurrence of the new language, of the new mode of expression inherent in the screen with a vital sense of comedy, which renders the renaissance of film comedies if not imperative, at least highly probable. There can be no doubt that today the masses desire gaiety and merriment no less than they did in the past. Man has an ancient craving for laughter. If art fails or refuses to satisfy this craving, it will be met by worthless products of industry.

Reverting to Hungarian comedies, we may safely claim that Hungarian films have always been able to make people laugh. A special industry of film comedies had developed already during Horthy's regime; it arose from the trashiest operetta and vaudeville traditions, relied on the most drastic means, but in its own commercial sphere, its products were not very inferior to similar burlesques manufactured in Vienna or Hollywood.

Naturally after Hungary's liberation, the film industry broke away from the ideology of these serially-manufactured, cheap comedies. On the other hand, it must be admitted that this inheritance also had its positive aspects. It provided a background for the development of splendid teams of Hungarian comedy actors, and for our producers a chance to acquire such skill and ability as a sense of timing, thorough knowledge of the public, and ingeniousness, which are of especial importance in the production of film comedies. Thus a frame was available, a possibility that had to be invested with new contents, in a double sense, since artistic requirements were associated with the demand to represent a transformed society and a fundamentally changed life.

It was precisely this duality which occasioned a peculiar detour in the further development of Hungarian film comedies. The first efforts toward the creation of socialist comedies were characterized by a fundamental misunderstanding: a false interpretation of idealism led to the abandonment of the basic requirements of comedy and to a disregard of the aesthetic nucleus of comedy. What these new interpreters failed to grasp was that the fundamental object of genuine comedy is always severe criticism and exposure, a fact recognized by Sándor Hevesi, the prominent Hungarian stage manager and theoretician, as far back as 1917, in his essay, "The Paradox of Comedy." Hevesi, in his rather subjective and psychologizing style, wrote: "In their depth and true sense, all genuine comedies are sad or bitter... But comedies are amusing, someone may object; they have to be funny and gay to be liked. This is quite true, but genuine comedies are self-contradictory in that what is merry on the surface is bitter underneath, and what is amusing from outside is very sad inside."

Inspired by the results of social change, Hungarian scenario writers and film producers first tried to give a direct picture of the positive aspects of our transformed society, by trying to popularize in a direct way such features of socialist man as selflessness, magnanimity, moral courage, and the like. A number of comedies were launched in which derision of egotism became praise of selflessness; fiasco of fickleness was turned into eulogy of constancy; persiflage of credulity, infirmity of purpose and weakness of character became praise of courage and staunchness. Briefly, comedy themes were rendered unfit for comedy. It is unnecessary to quote titles in this connection: an abrupt break in the message the comedy was to communicate often skilfully camouflaged by the witty and rich scenario, the rapid rhythm of events, and excellent photography, became a characteristic trait of Hungarian film comedies to such an extent that the only exceptions to this rule were screen plays based on the works of classic or semiclassic authors, such as Károly Makk's "Liliomfi," a version of the play written in the past century by Szigligeti, the prominent Hungarian dramatist; Viktor Gertler's "Dollar Daddy," a version of Andor Gábor's play, or films straying into the realm of animated cartoons such as Makk's "Tale of the Twelve Hits."

It was in this respect that last year's film comedies seemed to inaugurate a radical change. The screen-writers had at last found a way to express the basic idea of comedy, to bring into relief its true character of criticism and ridicule, to depict our present life, to be amusing and true at the same time, to be both brave in exposure and "socialist." So far, four film comedies of last year's harvest have been presented to the public: "*A kölyök*" (The Kid), "*A megfelelő ember*" (Right Man in the Right Place), "*Két emelet boldogság*" (Two Floors of Happiness), and "*Rangon alul*" (Mésalliance). Although of different value and expressive of varying attitudes, all these products seem to be the harbingers of a sort of renaissance in Hungarian film comedies.

"The Kid" presents the story of an impulsive, stumbling, harum-scarum young girl who, after many adventures, adapts herself to the communal life of a new Hungarian town and factory. The story reveals the influence of traditional Hungarian burlesques inspired by musical comedies. Although it transfers the trite romantic story of the manager and the typist to a socially more realistic setting, its aesthetical structure nevertheless marks the play as a late offspring of the *gemütlich* Vienna school. That, in spite of all, "The Kid" is not devoid of significance for the development of Hungarian film production, must be ascribed mainly to the work of Mihály Szemes, the director,

characterized by tasteful moderation and an up-to-date attitude. He utilizes the naturalness of neo-realism, presents the story laconically and yet expressively, and creates a suitable atmosphere, reminiscent of W. Wyler, without suggesting imitation. As regards its style, the film under review breaks with traditional Hungarian film comedies, although its scenario still shows traces of heterogeneous features and contradictions owing to the new setting for an old-type story.

This duality is still more pronounced in "The Right Man," the next comedy with scenario by György Révész and István Kállai. Compared to the ideology of our traditional comedies, the subject of this play seemed to offer decided progress. It exposes to ridicule the serious problem of careerism, of back-biting and favouritism. The protagonist of the play is a guileless duffer, a nonentity, who tries to make his way without wire-pulling. He is faced with an intrepid gang of pushers, a secret and powerful clique, the school of careerists conducted by Érczkövi, a "Prof." who employs the most cunning wiles of intrigue against the hero, to trick him out of the desired job so as to obtain it for the professor's wife. Yet, the comedy misses the real point. The producers of the film confine themselves to playing with both the subject and the spectators, and fail to cut into this grave evil of social life. Satirical illustration has two fundamental conditions: reality of the problem, and moral condemnation; the film answers only the latter. The phenomenon itself has been removed from its actual social environment, carefully deprived of all semblance of probability, and transferred to an almost surrealistic medium, as good as suggesting that the problem is unreal, or at least not likely to occur in our midst. Indeed, the "Right Man" is anything but efficient and capable of coping with requirements. While the gang of careerists, as represented in the film, move on a plane of utter social and artistic unreality, in real life such pushers and careerists, flaunting their character and nefarious activities so openly, could not survive a moment. What is left is an abstract arraignment of careerism accompanied by a pell-mell and confusion of various comedy styles, which—while breaking up the play into amusing episodes—deprive it of all integrated structure.

More successful and uniform in composition is "Two Floors of Happiness", a film based on Imre Bencsik's script and directed by János Herskó. The film actually presents six basic situations—which can hardly be regarded as a story—with variations that are all too familiar. Six young couples move into a newly built house: two floors filled with happiness. Yet, the word happiness is—rightly—placed between inverted commas by the authors. The very humour and cheerfulness of the comedy arise from the fact that nowhere is happiness an unmixed blessing: the life of the newly-wed couples is overclouded—by an ubiquitous mother in one case, by aversion to domestic chores on the part of a scientist-wife in another, and by the obstinacy of the young people in a third case. The film makes fun of the characteristic problems that may arise in the lives of young couples. Though the conflicts may perhaps have been somewhat more profound, the authenticity of the types, the actuality of the problems, the ingeniousness and witticism of the script, its cultured presentation and good taste justify the critic in regarding this film as the choicest fruit of last year's crop.

"Mésalliance" (script by György Hámos, directed by Frigyes Bán) is another double-faced creation. In a certain sense, it is the inverse of "The Kid," for an exciting, witty and completely up-to-date script has been handled in the obsolete manner of thirty-year-old staging methods. While the tendency and humour of the play satisfy all realistic, social and critical requirements, the style of staging—loud and primitive—

shows all the traces of operetta influences and relies on burlesque. The film is nevertheless amusing and has had a great success, because the essence of the play, its splendidly caricatured figures and highly amusing farcical situations cannot be quite obscured by the cheap claptrap of the stage management which seems to have been blind to all real possibilities. The amusing story of the philistine mother who resorts to the most cunning tricks in order to prevent the marriage of her daughter to a young workman, and becomes involved in all sorts of match-making intrigues to frustrate her daughter's "mésalliance" at a time when the two young people have already secretly been married, offers a copious source of humourous possibilities which the film has failed to exhaust completely.

Though representing different values, and imperfect in many respects, the four films here discussed—taken as a whole—herald a new era in Hungarian film production. They form part of the endeavour to imbue comedy with life as it is today, with the atmosphere of the socialist society of our country; they are representatives of the effort to draw the subjects of new Hungarian comedies from everyday life, revealing and criticizing more or less serious anomalies in a humorous yet constructive spirit, instead of reviving and mechanically imitating old comical formulae and hackneyed stereotypes.

ERVIN GYERTYÁN

MUSICAL LIFE

AN EVENING ON THE ISLAND OF THE YOUNG LADIES OF BRUNSWICK

Dazzling though the light was which the tympanum of the temples of Apollo and Zeus spread far and wide, the sanctuary enshrining the statue of the deity could be entered by the devotees through a small door only. This ancient ritual seems to prevail in the huge park of Martonvásár, at the centre ot which a small island has been dedicated to the memory of Beethoven. His statue stands in a glade, and it is there that the annual Beethoven festivals are held every summer. A graceful wooden bridge connects the shore with the island, and not more than one person can cross it at a time. It is thus in single file that the one or two thousand pilgrims who foregather to hear the concert arrive at the scene of the festival. On beholding the marble statue, reminiscent of Apollo and of Zeus in one, the visitor cannot but feel as if he had entered a sanctuary. The silent march across the bridge takes more time than the whole drive along the twenty mile highway from Budapest to the small town of Martonvásár.

The park surrounding the mansion of the Brunswick family has always been regarded as one of the hallowed spots of the Beethoven cult. But it remained closed to the public until the castle and the park were taken over by the state; indeed, the wealthy beer brewer who had purchased the property from the Brunswicks, friends of Beethoven, refused to admit the public even to the unveiling of the composer's statue. Today, the ground floor of the mansion houses a new Beethoven Museum, and the island is the scene of the festal concerts.

And it is as if history—or perhaps Beethoven himself—wished to justify the high esteem.

For no sooner had the Hungarian authorities taken up the cause of the Martonvásár Beethoven festivals than surprising new documents concerning the relationship between Beethoven and the Brunswick family came to light.

This hospitable Hungarian building, which, with its pleasant old trees, lake and island, always seemed to symbolize an idyllic episode in Beethoven's life, now stands before us as the scene of a silent tragedy. Evidence of it is to be found not merely in the courteous and deferential dedications but in the very compositions of the great musician.

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A few years ago, in Switzerland, the seal of a box containing letters of Beethoven's happened to break off. This box had for a century and a half faithfully kept the secret of a great love. The thirteen love-letters thus revealed (the copyright of which was acquired by the Beethoven Archive at Bonn from a Swiss collector) open a new chapter in the great composer's

life history: Josephine Brunswick, hitherto known merely as belonging to the circle of Beethoven's friends, has advanced to a central place as the queen of Beethoven's heart over a period of ten years. A queen who maintained the strictest incognito. Indeed, perhaps even more interesting than their love is the secrecy with which the two lovers succeeded in hiding their relations from the world, so that hardly anybody had been aware of it up to the present. And even those who had an inkling of the affair, either referred to it in the language of flowers only, as did the two other daughters of the Brunswick family, or maintained a friendly and gallant silence, as did Prince Lichnowsky. For the letters themselves indicate that the underlined parts of a certain Beethoven song, the score of which had inadvertently been left lying on the pianoforte, may have revealed the love-affair to the prince. Many of the love-letters are worded as if written by two conspirators. Expressions of passion are interspersed with abbreviations, such as could be understood only by the two of them and evidently formed part of a carefully elaborated lovers' code that enabled their inventors to exchange enciphered kisses. And how severely they warn each other to observe the rules of conspiracy! It was between the pages of lent and borrowed scores that these *"billets doux"* and diary scraps went back and forth.

And lo! this posthumously detected love-story re-establishes the equilibrium of things and explains in a flash a number of suspicious phenomena as does a newly discovered planet whose existence and whereabouts have long been speculated upon by astronomers.

Of the secrets which Beethoven intended to carry with him into the realm of eternity the most romantic is precisely that of the *"unsterbliche Geliebte"*. Will this secret be resolved, or has it been resolved, by the newly-found letters? When Beethoven died, three pencilled, unaddressed and unmailed declarations of love, together with two female portraits (those of Giulietta Guicciardi and Theresa Brunswick) were found in a secret compartment of his desk. So many conjectures concerning the person of the anonymous addressee have been made since that time that, though the secret still remained unravelled, the "eternally beloved" became a legendary figure in musical history. Many investigators had already previously come to the conclusion that she was to be sought among the members of the Brunswick family. Most historians suspected Giulietta, the beautiful Italian cousin of the Brunswick daughters, while Theresa was the guess of other investigators. In a letter to Marianne Czeke, historian of the Brunswick family, Romain Rolland even raised the possibility of *both* daughters' being taken into consideration. Theresa, as the great promoter and patroness of women's education in Hungary, was very dear to Romain Rolland, the humanist, who would have been delighted to find in her the inspirer of the Ninth Symphony. His letter under reference contains the following passage concerning Theresa and, incidentally, Josephine:

> "There was something of a heroic flame in her which brings her close to Beethoven. If she was not the *"unsterbliche Geliebte", it may have been her sister.* They were worthy of one another. Both outshone their surroundings and the age in which they lived."

The recently discovered and published letters make it clear that Romain Rolland's intuition was correct and that it is really to the Brunswick daughters that we must turn if we want to solve the riddle.

Yet, those who search the secrets of the soul know that all solutions and explanations lead to still further secrets. There is no such thing as a final and unqualified solution, least of all when dealing with a

Beethoven who hid his loves from the world with such determination that Bluebeard could hardly outdo him.

Since the newly-discovered love-letters give rise to the question whether Josephine Brunswick may not perhaps have borne a child to Beethoven, one is inclined to interpret as a conspiratorial effort of the type to be found in the letters, as a sign of almost flaunting secretiveness, the fact that one of Josephine's young daughters was named *Minona*. Reversed, it reads *Anonim*. "I am anonymous, don't ask who I am," whispers this little toy sphinx, secretively and in confidence. And is not the love between Beethoven and Josephine elevated to a higher level by the psychologically interesting fact that no member of the Brunswick family was without influence on Beethoven? A life-long friendship existed between him and both Francis and Theresa, while he was in love with their Italian niece, Giulietta, who was their companion. And what kind of *transfer* may one suspect in Beethoven's affection for Rachel Vernhagen, who bore a speaking likeness to Josephine Brunswick? What was the nature of the genes suspended in the cells and chromosomes of the Brunswick family and influencing their instincts, their very fate, so that all its members were drawn towards the composer ever since they became acquainted with the young musician in Vienna? "I felt like a young schoolgirl when I entered his room" writes Theresa of their first encounter, she who, towards the end of her life, at the age of 86, had come to speak of the composer as "Beethoven... *Christus sans comparaison,*" thus expressing a recognition that had been ripening through a lifetime. And it seems as if even the next generations of the family felt the obligation of this friendship of yore. This family of aristocrats had come to the early recognition that the friendship of a Beethoven was for them a case of "*noblesse oblige*".

*

It was Theresa Brunswick who taught the lime trees here in the park of Martonvásár—by no means symbolical but very real trees—how to speak. Into their bark she carved the names of the family's friends. And, when the guests had departed after the house concerts, she came of a morning to greet these trees and to ask them about the further fate of the friends who had left for Vienna, Buda or the more distant Transylvania.

> "These lime trees never failed to give me an answer."

Recalling again and again the irretrievable past after the death of the two lovers, Theresa asked herself and these trees the ever recurring question, which she also confided to her diary, as to where and when she had failed:

> "Beethoven! It seems like a dream that he was a friend of our house! Why did Josephine, as Deim's widow, not marry him?..."

This question did not cease to worry her. Had she had a share in frustrating the happiness of the two lovers? It is as if a sense of guilt were tormenting her at a time when these events already belonged to the irremediable past:

> "Is Josephine now suffering punishment for the pain she inflicted on Luigi by not marrying him? What would she have made of this hero?"

The statue of the hero stands now before us among the talkative lime trees at the border of the glade in the park of Martonvásár. But the statue remains silent.

He was free to visit Martonvásár, he was accepted as a friend, even as a lover, and he is referred to in the letters of the Brunswick daughters as the "*charmant*

Beethoven" or the *"göttlicher Beethoven."* Yet, no matter how charming and divine he might be, he could never become husband and host in this lordly castle.

> "Please do not be cross with me for my not being able to satisfy your sensual love," writes Josephine in one of her letters and continues: "I should have to violate sacred bonds if I ceded to your solicitations."

These "bonds," so "sacred" to the young widow, could be but social prejudices.

And Theresa lived to see the time when, 50 years later, princesses escaped with illiterate, loutish gypsy musicians! Yet, a Beethoven was denied happiness at the side of Josephine Brunswick.

It is no exaggeration to say that Beethoven expected bliss from this love. His fervently passionate letters contain a line which is most illuminating. A constantly recurring motif in Beethoven's epistles is his complaint concerning the deterioration of his sense of hearing. He writes of it in a roundabout manner, but his despair is unmistakable. He regards his fate as hopeless. We need only recall his tragic Heiligenstadt testament.

Yet, there comes a moment when his hope is rekindled, his hope of bliss and salvation. He writes in one of his letters that his deafness began improving from the moment Josephine loved him. Let us leave it to the neurologists to tell what kind of ear trouble could—or might have been—healed by the bliss of love.

Here is the golden bridge which Beethoven, crying *de profundis*, sees before him:

> "True, I am not as industrious as I ought to be, but a *deep sorrow* deprived me of my old working power, a sorrow that lasted till my love for you, my adored J., began to germinate. The next time we are together undisturbed I shall tell you of the cause of my profound suffering and of the life-and-death struggle I have been fighting for some time. There was something which seemed to make my fate hopeless and exclude all prospect of happiness, but the trouble has been getting less ever since I conquered your heart. Oh, I am well aware of the inestimable value of this love. My creative abilities will increase again, and I solemnly pledge myself to become worthier of myself and you very shortly... Ah, if you but deemed it important to establish and increase my happiness by your love... Oh, my adored J., it is not mere sexual attraction that draws me towards you: I am chained to you by your whole being, by all your qualities, by my respect, by all my feelings, by the full force of my sentiments. When we got acquainted I was firmly resolved not to allow the spark of love to arise in my soul, but you have conquered me. Did you or did you not wish it to happen? You, J., might some day solve this enigma for me. Ah, Heavens, how much I should like to tell you: how I am thinking of you, what I am feeling for you... but words are weak and pitiable, mine at least".
>
> "May our love last long, long; it is so noble and is based on so much mutual respect and friendship... and all these similarities in our thoughts and feelings... oh, let me hope your heart will long not cease to beat for me... my heart will cease to beat for you only when it has altogether ceased to beat; farewell, my beloved J. I hope I, too, am able to contribute a bit to your happiness as, else, I should be selfish."

This letter ranks with the rare documents of mankind. There are many who have

written love-letters, but only a few have written letters in which a man's sufferings are exposed with such profundity. We know of but a single document of like vigour: Attila József's poem, "Racking Pain."

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What indeed can the lime trees speak of? Only of the idyll. Their vocabulary reaches no further.

And, amidst the trees, what does the silence of the statue's anguished face reveal? It tells of tragedy.

At the foot of the trees, in the centre of the park, where a narrow wooden bridge crosses the lake to the island, in the very middle of the island, facing the statue of Beethoven, the musicians are tuning their instruments so that, by their rendering of the symphonies, they may tell once more the story of that idyll and tragedy which have their broken but still living roots here in the soil of Martonvásár...

The conductor raps with his baton. The ghosts vanish. And two thousand listeners, their faces expressive of deep emotion, look up at the statue.

MIKLÓS HUBAY

MUSICAL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN IN BUDAPEST

I.

"To the best music-school in the world, worthy of the great men of music of Hungary, my admiration and gratitude."

These words were inscribed in the visitors' book of a Budapest primary school by Yehudi Menuhin. This music-school—one of a number of similar Budapest schools—is situated in Lorántffy Street, in a garden suburb on the right bank of the Danube. Corresponding to the present form of organization of education in Hungary, it is a regular eight-year primary school with the same curriculum as elsewhere. The only thing that distinguishes it from other schools is that it gives its pupils singing lesson each day.

Was it then these six singing lessons a week that elicited Menuhin's interest and persuaded him to call this institution the best music-school in the world? If one were to simplify matters, one might say yes, it was. This, however, is not the essence of the answer and to obtain a more adequate reply we shall have to proceed somewhat further—to Zoltán Kodály and to Kodály's principles of musical education.

In a speech delivered some time ago, Kodály remarked, half in fun and half in earnest, that he had long been convinced the musical education of the young should be begun nine months before their birth, indeed he had now come to the conclusion that it would be better still, if it were begun nine months before the mother's birth. This, then, was the first principle—that the receptiveness of the child towards music must be aroused at a very tender age. The second principle was that teaching the use of instruments could only be tackled at a later stage of musical education. One must begin with the human voice, which everyone possesses, though not everyone may be able to use it. Young people should thus be taught to use their voice. But what is a first-form pupil to sing? In Kodály's opinion, the teaching of music should be begun with instruction in folk songs, those great treasures of human

culture. This principle also determines the objective, which is mainly to train, not musicians, but people who understand music. The school must give young people a general musical education.

For several decades, Zoltán Kodály's principles could not be put into practice. It was only in 1951 that a primary school at Kecskemét (Kodály's native town) broke ground and set out to implement his reforms. This was the first so-called singing school in Hungary. It was followed, six years ago, by the one in Lorántffy Street, in Budapest. Now there are 82 such schools in Hungary, of which 24 in Budapest.

Not long ago I paid a brief visit to the school in Lorántffy Street to have a look at life there. The school has been developed gradually. First it had only two parallel first forms but it now has six, and in another two years it will be a full-scale primary school. They are now preparing for the usual end-of-term concert in which all the four hundred pupils take part.

At the invitation of the headmaster I attended a rehearsal of the second-formers. Between twenty and thirty children were lined up, with flutes in their hands. Behind them stood the choir, also composed of their own class mates. Instrumental instruction only begins in the third form, and even there it is not compulsory for everyone, but in the second they learn to play the flute, as a transition to preparing them for instrumental music instruction.

The children were rehearsing the "Little Suite" by László Gulyás. The conductor, who observed the intervals with complete assurance and stressed or toned down voices as the score required, had to climb on a chair to make him taller than his fellows. For the conductor was a boy of nine, one of the musical boys in the third form. He was no infant prodigy, but his gift for music had marked him out among his companions. The school was not making him a conceited prima donna, for, later on in the concert, he would take his place among the choir like everyone else and sing together with the whole school.

A middle-aged man with glasses was leaning against the piano, watching the rehearsal. He was the composer of the "Little Suite," and this was the third time he had come here. He had written his piece at the request of the school and had now come to polish up some of the details and rearrange the scores for the voices on the spot. This is not the only instance of a close link between school and composer, for others have also written simple works at the request of Lorántffy Street School. The well-known woman composer Erzsébet Szőnyi is at present working on an entire fairy-tale opera for them.

Daily singing lessons, the high-standard reproduction of folk songs and of the works of classical composers, solmization twice a week, choral singing and, from the third form on, general musical instruction —are these then, the secret of the music-school? These, and one other thing besides. That *other* thing—the coordination of singing, music and the other subjects—is what in professional jargon is termed "subject concentration." Singing—strange though it may sound—has a bearing on the other subjects. This is not difficult to understand in the case of literature, which children find easier to absorb than other subjects because they have already learned folk poetry in the first form. But reading, too, is much easier because familiarity with musical scores requires occasional musical phrases to be read in unison, and this also helps to make the reading of literary texts more fluent and intelligible.

In the ordinary run of primary schools the comprehension of the concepts of verse is fairly difficult in the upper forms. Here it is child's play, for the pupils have had to do with rhythm and beat and accent from the age of six, so that iambics, hexameters, couplets and assonances are no problem for them. The mathematics teachers find their job is made easier be-

cause of the greater readiness of the children for abstraction and the formation of concepts. Part of the subject matter of history and the names of places in geography are already familiar to them, through the lives and works of foreign classical composers. In the study of languages they have a tremendous advantage, through having a refined ear that enables them to pay more attention to accent and pronunciation.

2.

When, 85 years ago, Ferenc Liszt founded the Budapest Academy of Music, Hungary at last had the institution of higher musical learning that she so badly needed. But musical training at the lower levels was not to come until several decades after.

More than fifty years ago, Jenő Sztojanovits, an outstanding music teacher of those times, summed up his opinion on the position of musical education in Hungary in the following terms. "The entire country has one single higher school of music, the Academy of Music. In setting it up, a resplendent roof was erected over a non-existent building. The foundations, the first and the second storey had simply been forgotten."

Sztojanovits was the pioneer of music instruction in the schools of Budapest, and his work was later continued by Pongrác Kacsóh, the composer of the operetta "John the Hero." On September 25, 1910, courses in music were started at twenty-five schools, and in the first year six hundred pupils took exams. Over the next twenty-five years the number of courses was doubled, and by the academic year of 1936—37 there were 52 preparatory courses in music attended by some 1,600 pupils. This number remained pretty constant till 1945.

It was really only after the liberation in 1945 that the foundations were fully laid. One of them was the singing school, based on Kodály's principles, the other the Budapest Organization of Music-Schools. At present this organization caters for 12,500 students studying music in Budapest, which is just eight times the number prior to 1945. This, however, is only one institution, which cannot by itself satisfy the requirements of all those who wish to study music. In addition, numerous trade unions and cultural centres have their own music-schools, and instrumental music is taught by various collectives, not to mention private tutors.

The Budapest Organization of Music-Schools has nine districts in Budapest, which are under central control from the financial and professional points of view. A total of some five hundred teachers is engaged in the work of musical instruction. The great advantage of central control is that universal principles can be evolved for the teaching of music, inspection is made easier, and a relatively small administrative staff is needed.

The district schools and courses of the organization operate in some 180 schools, where a few of the premises are made available for the purposes of instrumental instruction. Only four district music-schools have separate buildings. This, of course, is the aim for the future, but at the moment the shortage of school buildings does not permit each of the district music-schools to have a separate building of its own. In a few years' time this problem may be solved, too.

This organization is the centre of pre-preparatory musical instruction, and it also provides the instrumental training in the singing schools which have been described. The structure is roughly as follows: In the first year of the music-school course, which coincides with the second form of the eight-grade primary school, there is only preliminary training, consisting of solmization and games. It is here that the appropriate instrument is chosen for the child. This, by the way, is no easy thing to do, for the majority of the parents—and this is so all the world over—would like their

children to play the piano. The best interest of the children, however, requires that they be persuaded to devote themselves to instruments which will enable them to play not only by themselves, but also "communally," that is, in orchestras and chamber ensembles. In the case of most children their interests would best be served if they tried playing string or wind instruments instead of the piano. However, the right to decide rests with the parents and as a result nearly half the children are studying the piano.

Instrumental instruction begins in the second year of the music-school course and continues for seven years, so that it ends with the completion of the primary school. This parallel progress is important, because the musical curriculum is intended to harmonize, as far as possible, with the singing-lessons given at school.

Those who have completed the elementary music-school are faced with two alternatives. If they feel that they have a calling for a career in music, they may, in Budapest, apply for admission to the Béla Bartók Vocational School of Music, while, if they wish only to become amateur musicians, they may continue their studies for another five years with the Budapest Organization of Music-Schools. At present, these continuation classes are attended by 1,100 students.

Musical instruction as a rule takes place after school hours. The curriculum consists of solmization, orchestral and chamber music and later, harmony. Instrumental instruction is limited to twice a week, for 24 minutes at a time in the lower forms and 30 minutes from the fifth year on. This is not very much, but for the present no more time is available per pupil, since the five hundred teachers are not sufficient. There is an average of 27 pupils for every teacher, omitting those engaged in administrative work. Even so, several thousand children applying for admission have to be turned away every year, as there is no vacancy for them in the State music-schools.

The fees charged by the Budapest Organization of Music-Schools are very low. Pupils evincing excellent progress pay 10 forints a month and only those with the worst marks and failing their exams are required to pay 55 forints. Even these slight fees may be waived for 20 per cent of the pupils. It need hardly be pointed out that the fees make up only a diminutive fraction of the actual expenses, and the State contributes more than 12 million forints to the costs of musical education for 12,500 young people. This vast sum not only covers the teachers' salaries and other expenditure, but it also permits the commissioning of composers to write works that correspond to the requirements of progress in the music-school. For each of the nine district music-schools has an orchestra of its own, and some of them have two. These are generally string orchestras in which pupils may play from the fourth year on. They mainly need easy works that avoid the more difficult technical requirements. Since these orchestras—for teaching considerations—have no viola parts, they have to have works or transcriptions in which the second and third fiddles replace the viola part. An example for such transcription was first set by Leó Weiner, the chamber music expert of European fame, who transcribed Bartók's "For Children" for three violin parts and one 'cello. Many other Hungarian composers have produced works that comply with these special requirements.

The Budapest Organization of Music-Schools also provides for the purchase of instruments. They now have 340 pianos, some 800 string and nearly 150 wind instruments. These not only enable regular instruction, but are also sufficient to allow the children to practise.

The figure of 12,500 students in the capital who are studying music with State aid and guidance is a large one and a matter of justified pride for all those who believe in the power of music to improve people. Further development can now be achieved

only if more school buildings are made available and the Academy of Music will, beside training professional musicians, devote more attention to providing teachers. Then we can enable everyone with a bent for studying music to achieve his or her aim. This is not a plan for the distant future, but something to be realized in the next few years.

3.

So far we have discussed two stages in the musical education of the young people of Budapest. However, the question may be asked, with good reason, "What about those who do not attend the singing-schools and o not learn instrumental music?"

The State Concert Bureau, the National Philharmonia, has for the past few years been trying out the attractive idea of arranging various series of concerts for the young. These concerts are planned ahead for a whole year, with due attention to teaching considerations, school education and the requirements of various age groups. Instead of going into theoretical considerations, perhaps it would be better to describe the program of one of the young people's series, entitled "Song of Nature" which was arranged for primary school pupils. It consisted of seven concerts, held at the Academy of Music on Saturday afternoons. On the first occasion there were songs and works on the parts of the day, next time the music of the waters, then music about the sky, the forests, the homeland, animals and the seasons of the year.

Here, for example, is what happened at the concert devoted to the day and its component parts. A music master delivered a brief introduction to the concert, after which a children's choir sang works by Lassus and Kodály. Next, a pianist played two works by Bartók, entitled "Dawn" and "Evening among the Székelys." This was followed by Rubinstein's song "The Night" and Schubert's "Serenade", sung by an excellent soloist. A violinist played Debussy's "Moonlight" and a mixed choir of young people sang a choral work by Monteverdi.

Then, before the intermission, came the highlight of each of these concerts for the young, namely, community singing. The promoters of the concerts distribute booklets with the tickets, containing not only the concert programs, but also the text and score of a song for each occasion. In the case of the program on the parts of the day, this was a charming French folk-song, entitled "The Cockerel."

The music master divided the audience of 1,200 in the Academy auditorium into sections—the stalls, the first-tier gallery and the second gallery each sang a separate part. The song was first sung by a children's chorus on the stage, then in unison by the whole andience. A little later the auditorium broke up into parts and began singing in canon, so that in five or six minutes' time they reached a stage of perfection where they could well appear on the stage themselves.

The second part of the concert began with a brief musical quiz. A few volunteers tried to cope with the questions set by the music master, which are usually concerned with the concert of the day and its subject matter. Successful answers are rewarded with a couple of tickets each to an evening concert. And, incidentally, while backing and encouraging the contestants, all the students in the auditorium review all that they have heard at the concert. Finally there were two more pieces of music—the "Morning" movement from Haydn's Symphony in D major and Mozart's "Eine kleine Nachtmusik," both performed by the chamber ensemble of the State Concert Orchestra, without a conductor.

For secondary school pupils, there has been a series of seven concerts entitled "Musical Portraits." On each occasion works of two great composers were presented, with brief lectures and explanations by an expert. There is a separate series of concerts for trade apprentices, entitled "The

History of Dancing," with samples from every period of dance music, from the old court and community dances, through the ballet, the traditional Viennese and Hungarian dances, to symphonic dance music. A special series has been arranged for the pupils of the Budapest Organization of Music-Schools. This year they are learning about the history of Hungarian music. There are also young people's concerts for university students in Budapest. The tickets are extremely cheap—those for the series of concerts for primary school pupils and secondary school students cost 40 forints for seven concerts.

The success of these concerts can be measured by the fact that the number of season tickets sold for young people's concerts at the Academy of Music this year was nine thousand.

4.

We have no space here to talk of everything—of musical instruction on the secondary school level in the Béla Bartók Music-School, nor of the regular opera performances for young people in the two opera buildings, the Hungarian State Opera and the Erkel Theatre. For children who live in the outlying districts of Budapest, the National Philharmonia takes music "to the spot" in programs arranged by the local cultural centres. The schools themselves are also "workshops" of musical education. There is no school without its choir and several grammar schools also have symphony orchestras. There are many schools where musical *study circles* help broaden the students' knowledge, and perhaps it is no exaggeration to state that in Budapest there is not a single child—including both those with no ear for music and also the most talented—who is not in one way or another *linked to music.*

A good many years ago, Zoltán Kodály issued the slogan "Let music belong to all!" For a long time this slogan remained on paper, but now, throughout Hungary, it is increasingly becoming a reality.

István Gábor

THE TÁTRAI STRING QUARTET

The great events of European musical life, from the Salzburg Mozart Memorial Concerts to Berlin's *Beethoven-Ehrung* and from the Prague Spring Festivals to the Music Festivals of Gand, have with increasing frequency included on their programs a Hungarian chamber-music ensemble, the Tátrai String Quartet. The quartet has been giving performances in the great cities of Europe for only a comparatively short time —since 1955—but this has been sufficient for the musical world to class it among the leading chamber-music ensembles of Europe. Of the Tátrai Quartet's Nuremberg concert, the critic of the *Neue Rheinzeitung* affirmed that "this was not a case of individuals making music; here a four-part instrument played... the highest aim of true chamber music." The critic of *Le Soir* of Brussels in a review of the Hungarian musicians' concert in the Belgian capital, wrote that "the Tátrai Quartet... through the richness and quality of its nuances, the intelligent precision of its rendering and its impeccable coherence, was a revelation..."

Of course, as in the case of every substantial artistic achievement, there is behind this exceptionally quick rise to international renown and appreciation plenty

of arduous work and dedicated perseverance. And—most important of all—there is a powerful, compelling passion: the devotion to chamber music of Vilmos Tátrai—founder and first violinist of the quartet.

I remember very well the afternoon when I was listening for the first time to Vilmos Tátrai interpreting chamber music. It was a crisp day of spring, 1945, with the wind whirling clouds of brick-dust from bombed-out buildings through the streets of a Budapest that was just staggering to its feet from its prostration during the Second World War. The creaking of the wheel-barrows of rubble-clearing gangs could be heard in the quadrangle of the Hungarian Radio's headquarters, while, in one of the few studios that had escaped the holocaust intact, a hastily gathered foursome was rehearsing Bartók's second String Quartet. The leader of the quartet was a lean and fair-haired youth called Vilmos Tátrai, first violinist of the Radio Orchestra, who with dogged perseverance was rehearsing with his three colleagues. After the dark years of war and following on the heels of an apocalyptic six weeks of siege, it was all like a dream. Peace—and Music! And, we were aware, Bartók too was alive, somewhere beyond the Ocean. It is difficult at a distance of sixteen years to give an idea of how much the Tátrai group's sacred obsession meant to us all just then, and it would be equally difficult to recall those long years of persistent artistic effort it has taken them gradually to endear chamber music to Hungarian audiences. Without acquaintance with conditions in the Hungary of old it is hardly possible properly to appreciate the fact that for many years now, in Budapest and other cities, chamber-music concert series have been playing to packed audiences, with the tickets sold out weeks in advance. The artistic efforts and didactic program policy of the Tátrai Quartet as well as its many performances in working-class districts and country towns were the levers of this progress.

The quartet whose début I listened to in the first post-war spring was the third chamber-music group in Tátrai's musical career. Its first predecessor was founded by Tátrai in the Budapest Conservatory, where he was then a violin-student. Let the names of the other three members of the set be recorded here: the second violin was played by Walter Wilkinson, a young Englishman, who was studying music in Budapest and who was killed in action at Tobruk, the cellist was Gábor Magyar, at present a member of the celebrated Hungarian String Quartet; and the viola was entrusted to Ernő Gál, who has since made a name not as a recital artist but as an improver of string instrument accessories and is now living in Milan.

For the sake of historical completeness, let it be said that it was no mere accident that chamber music experienced such a revival between the two world wars, and in Budapest of all places, as to give rise to such world famous quartets as the Roth Quartet, the Végh Quartet, the Hungarian Quartet, the Lehner Quartet and the Waldbauer—Kerpely Quartet. Against the general background of Hungarian musical culture, it was Leó Weiner's activity that laid the foundations, nearly a generation ago, for the ensuing flourishing of chamber music. This outstanding composer, who until his death in September 1960 occupied the Chair of Chamber Music in the Budapest Academy of Music, has, directly or indirectly, had a decisive influence on chamber-music artists. He spared no pains in convincing the rising generations of musicians that the essence of chamber music is absolute limpidity, a purity of both content and style. He made conscientiousness the ideal around which his pedagogic activity pivoted, basing himself on the realization that human qualities are expressed at their purest in chamber music. The individual virtuoso gives rein to his own conception whereas in chamber-music different personalities conjoin, and this conjunction of divergent qualities results in a

performance of a higher artistic level. It was in the atmosphere created by Leó Weiner's activity that Tátrai found himself susceptible to the attraction of chamber music in his student years (while the immediate stimulus came from László Lajtha, who at that time was professor of the National Conservatory and taught the young Tátrai chamber music). This attraction has proved a powerful and lasting one and still governs his artistic activity.

The years at the conservatory over, the "pupils' quartet" broke up, and, in the early forties, Tátrai joined the Waldbauer—Kerpely Quartet. Then, after the interlude of the 1945 quartet previously described (from its inception a temporary formation), came the present third quartet, which in the fourteen years since its formation in 1946 has been welded into the German critic's "*vierteiliges Instrument.*" Its leader and first violinist, Vilmos Tátrai, has at the same time been the solo violinist of the Budapest State Concert Orchestra for the last ten years. The second violinist, Mihály Szücs, is the solo violinist of the State Opera, György Konrád plays the viola also in the State Concert Orchestra; and the 'cellist, Ede Banda, is professor in the 'cello department of the Academy of Music. The virtuoso Bertalan Rényi, who for many years played the second violin, was struck down by death virtually on the concert platform a few years ago. His art is conserved in numerous early recordings of Tátrai Quartet performances.

The formation of the Quartet was followed by several years of quiet, hard work. During that incubation period—in the later forties—Tátrai and his colleagues received strong encouragement from Otto Klemperer, who in those years spent a considerable time in Hungary. But those were the years also when the Tátrai Quartet's influence on musical activity in Hungary began to assert itself with increasing force. A few words have been said before about that persevering and—it is no exaggeration to say—didactic effort by which, in the broader context of the general advance of musical culture in this country, the Tátrai Quartet has been successfully winning a vast audience for chamber music. (Even now, despite time-consuming tours abroad, the Quartet gives some 35 performances in Budapest and other cities every season.) Another interesting development is that, inspired by the Tátrai Quartet's artistic achievement and encouraged by the new popularity of chamber music, several other quartets of youthful artists have been formed, some of which—the Weiner, Komlós, and Várkonyi Quartets—have by now achieved international standing. The establishment of a conductor-less Hungarian chamber Orchestra, whose repertory includes all the major works of chamber-music literature from the pre-classics to the moderns, is likewise a result of the revival of chamber music in Hungary. Formed four years ago, this orchestra works under Vilmos Tátrai's guidance.

Impressive though its record is, the Tátrai Quartet's ascendancy has not been an even one, nor was it devoid of problems. In part, this was due to the international situation, which, between the late forties and the middle of the fifties, obstructed international exchanges in the field of art. That is why a whole decade had to pass between the Tátrai Quartet's formation and its first tour of Western Europe, in which this mature quartet—long since popular in Hungary and of potential world stature—rose from complete obscurity as far as western audiences were concerned. In these days, when questions of music, both of content and form, are formulated everywhere with such pointedness, it is hardly surprising that the artistic maturing of the quartet has demanded enormous efforts on the part of its members. It is in chamber music, more than in any other department of music, that new musical ideas have in each succeeding age been formulated most profoundly and in their most varied problematic aspects. In his declining

years, Beethoven turned to string quartets as the sole medium for expressing his most deeply human thought, while so facile a composer as Mozart called the composition of quartets "*eine mühevolle Arbeit*" ('an arduous task'). What distinguishes the Tátrai Quartet's art is the fidelity of its interpretation and its reverence for musical creations of the most diverse periods and trends, a fidelity and reverence so great as to make audiences almost oblivious of the agency interposed between themselves and the work performed. The interpreters efface themselves for the sake of the composition, deliberately seeking to make the audience forget the virtuosity of the musicians themselves (astonished exclamations to this effect are heard again and again from reviewers of the Tátrai Quartet's performances). Thus the critic of the *Kieler Nachrichten*, signing himself J. F., used the following words in reviewing the quartet's performance last March:

"There is something remarkable about the unity of this quartet, so admirably and seamlessly welded together. Their rendering makes one forget about their own performance proper and enjoy only the work that is performed. This means that their interpretation is in such complete harmony with the conception of the composer as to meet practically every wish. Their purely technical superiority is coupled with a rendering of the musical substance that is polished and well-considered to a high degree. Their playing is held aloft by a healthy sensuousness and luminous intensity that never glides off into romantic sentimentality, but devotes itself vigorously to the subject matter. The most insignificant detail is fashioned with spirit and sure instinct; the dynamism is refined, the tonal expression, phrasing and shading are conscientiously realized. Moreover, the first violinist plays his part as leader unobtrusively and leaves the rights of the other musicians uncurtailed."

It is characteristic of the Tátrai Quartet's artistic achievement—if such achievement can be gauged by figures—that not only does its repertory of more than 200 works include all significant string quartets written by the classic composers (among them all of Bartók's quartets), but that it also undertakes first performances of Hungarian or other compositions. Many of these works are contradiction-ridden and bear the stamp of trial and error, but Tátrai and his colleagues are aware that only live performances of their works offer composers a real opportunity of perfecting their art. Since its formation, the Quartet has given world or Hungarian first performances of 28 Hungarian and 24 foreign works, including music by Bliss, Britten, Bush, Moeran, Vaughan Williams and Walton, to say nothing of the modern Hungarian composers, nearly every one of whose new chamber-music pieces has been introduced to the public for the first time by the Tátrai Quartet. The disks of the Tátrai-ensemble include all quartets of Bartók, three works of Kodály as well as numerous quartets of Beethoven, Haydn, Mozart, etc.

Audiences in Britain are becoming increasingly familiar with the art of the Tátrai Quartet. Its concerts in Britain (at the Rosehill Theatre, Cumberland, then at a public BBC recital in London) in the spring of 1960 have been followed by a new invitation to Britain. After a concert tour of Britain by the Budapest State Concert Orchestra in November—December, the Tátrai Quartet is scheduled to give a number of performances in the second half of the season, and, in the spring of 1961, it is due to go to Australia.

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

DOCUMENTS

AS WRITERS SAW IT

The Fate of Intellectuals in Pre-War Hungary

In order to understand present-day Hungarian life, and to make an objective appraisal of results achieved in the course of socialist development, it is necessary to acquaint oneself with the past—with the conditions that characterized Hungarian life before the liberation. This was the object of the extracts from the works of Hungarian writers of the period, published in the first number of THE NEW HUNGARIAN QUARTERLY (pp. 205—208), as a documentation serving to illustrate the life of Hungarian workers and peasants. In the following we reproduce some further extracts, representing the former life of Hungarian intellectuals.

Géza Gárdonyi (1863—1922), author of *Egri Csillagok* (Stars of Eger) and many other novels, began his career as a village schoolmaster. In 1898 this is what he wrote in his work *Az én falum* (My Village):

"This afternoon I told my class about the Babylonian bondage . . . The holy scriptures describe the earth as a vale of tears. I am not familiar with the region where the literary saints dwelt, and I do not know whether there is any March* there. . . We have neither goods nor money; we cover our houses with thatched roofs and on our tables are earthenware plates. . .

". . .I like to be what I am: a schoolteacher. Not as though I possessed a fortune or a great income. It's true I can't spend much on my appearance. But if I got married I would feel I was the world's most miserable man. Teacher's wife! Oh what a sorrowful title, and what a sad lot. Suppose she needed a new dress—she would not dare to ask for one, because she would know she could not get it. I would not dare to look at her, because I would know it was all in vain. Sometimes only a pair of shoes would be needed, occasionally only a pair of gloves. How much sorrow over such miserable trifles! And my residence. Two tiny rooms; I sleep in one, my mother in the other. My drawing-room and study is the schoolroom. If my wife were to have guests, how she would blush for having to offer them straw chairs to sit on."

And if despite Géza Gárdonyi's testimony somebody should argue that things were like this only in the remote Godforsaken villages, but that in the county seats, in the towns and in Budapest the clerical workers were well paid and assured of a decent livelihood—let him leaf through the pages of a short story *Reggeli kaszinózás* (Morning Chatter), written in 1915 by one of Hungary's greatest writers, Zsigmond Móricz (1879—1942), and reflecting the life of the clerks in a ministry. Before the councillor arrives the clerks are revealed chatting among themselves. In

* Gárdonyi alludes to the Revolution of 15 March 1848.

this short story Zsigmond Móricz depicts the life of these minor officials as follows:

"State-employed officials, at least those belonging to the 11th, 10th and 9th pay categories, whether they have families or not, are today living in utter misery. It is heart-rending to hear one of them saying, "I've lost over thirty pounds in weight," while the other answers, "and I've lost sixteen." It is worth recording what happened to one of my colleagues, a fellow official, who had already lost more than thirty pounds. One day his wife put some meat on his plate for lunch. He was much surprised, because neither his wife nor his three children had a morsel on theirs, and he asked them why he was the only one to get meat. His oldest boy, a fourth year grammar school student, stood up from the table and said:

'Papa, you are getting too thin, though it's you who are earning our bread; so we've voted that you should receive half a pound of meat daily. We children and mama can do without it. Please eat it, papa, four our sake.'

"And for three days the hungry, emaciated man ate the meat that had been assigned him by the family vote. But on the fourth day he could no longer swallow it. He burst into tears and they all wept, and since then they have not been eating any meat, neither the father nor the children."

Of course, here too somebody might object that this was in time of war, and that it was therefore only "natural" for everyone to suffer. In 1924, however, six years had already gone by since the end of the First World War. It was, nevertheless, on Christmas day of that year that Ferenc Móra (1879—1934), Hungarian writer, museum director in Szeged, and an archeologist of European fame, wrote the following words in an article entitled: *A kedves gondok ünnepe* (The Season of Pleasant Cares):

"It is quite understandable if a museum director of limited means like myself seeks refuge in his profession from his pleasant cares. I am a so-called head of family, and I speak from experience. In the past, when I had difficulty falling asleep, I used to lull myself to sleep with thinking of what I would do if somebody were to toss a million crowns in through my window. (At that time a million crowns was such a vast sum that a special window would have had to be cut in a normal petit-bourgeois home.) And by the time I had spent the first one hundred thousand crowns out of the imaginary million, I would fall asleep, because I had purchased a house, lands, a coach and horses, hired a court council, and even purchased a separate cinema house so that I should not have to go to one owned by somebody else, and I still did not know what to do with the money I had left. As things stand at present, I have for some weeks been unable to fall asleep because I simply can't figure out how many millions I would need if I wished to be kind to everybody, however modestly, at Christmas time. My wife needs a pair of slippers, to have something to govern me with, and then she ought to have a fur coat, so that she could stop borrowing my cape to go out to the larder for every spoonful of lard... But that involves so many millions that I had best begin at the bottom with my goddaughter, the smallest one, and then work my way upward. This little one would be satisfied to get a tiny doll with hair, one that can close its eyes and when squeezed say "papa, mama." Well, it turns out that such a doll with a girls' grammar school education would cost around three hundred and fifty thousand crowns. An illiterate doll that can't even close its eyes, a hundred and fifty thousand crowns...

"So after the lamps are lit I close my eyes and ponder on just how I would settle this problem of presents if I should be a poor man in the Stone Age... For in those times there were no tradesmen—no jeweller's shops, toymaker's shops,

chemist's shops, fashion shops, bazaars, or anything else! Iron hadn't even been discovered yet. Everybody pottered around and made whatever he needed out of wood, bone, clay and stone..."

And if somebody should insist that, after all, only six years after the war the country was still in a serious economic condition and the crown had lost its value through the inflation—but that later, in the era of the pengő, things were certainly put to rights, we can only affirm that, far from decreasing in the following years of the Horthy regime, the difficulties grew constantly. The treasure chest of Hungarian literature provides testimony to this too. In the Hungary of the gentry not only the teachers, petty officials, museum directors, but the intellectuals in general lived a life of bitter privations. Gyula Krudy (1878—1933), the most poetic of Hungarian prose writers, gave witness to the fact that poverty of the artists was not an isolated occurence, but a condition that characterized the whole literary world in Hungary. In 1931 Krudy wrote in an article entitled *Az ország legszegényebb emberei: a magyar írók* (Hungarian Writers—Our Country's Poorest People):

"My deeply honoured Editor Friend, I feel emboldened to call your attention to Gyula Indali, who, among the Hungarian writers of the 19th century, made himself memorable by leaping into the Danube on a dark night at a spot where, as yet, there was no trace of the future Francis Joseph Bridge. And I also call your attention to László Cholnoky (1879—1929), who, among the Hungarian writers of the 20th century, barely a few years ago, cast himself into the waves of the Danube from the already completed Francis Joseph Bridge, and that so circumspectly and in such darkness as to wipe out every trace of himself. Nor does his ghost return to haunt the place on those nights when the vanished figures of yesterday are summoned forth. Local history records this verdict: the above-mentioned writers deservedly met their deaths, for they violated the oath which the writer takes before eternal mankind at the moment when he becomes a writer; eternal humanity prohibits suicide, and it is precisely the writers who should be preaching against it and not setting examples of it... Yet nobody wondered that László Cholnoky no longer wanted to write on behalf of this world, even though four or five years ago the world still ambled along well enough by the token of hope, hardly ten years after the war, when the book vendors still sold their books for money, and not for sums equal to a beggar's alms—alms for which no one wishes to reach into his pocket any longer...

"In his lonely life spent as a roadside crucifix, he may write that in the month of moneylessness, when everybody was poor in Hungary, there was a man who was poorer than everybody... and this was none other than the Hungarian writer."

IMRE F. JOÓS

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

SZABOLCSI, *Bence* (b. 1899). Musicologist, professor of the Budapest Academy of Music, member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. An outstanding figure of Hungarian musicology, he is a member of the staff of editors that is preparing for publication the volumes of Corpus Musicae Hungaricae, originally begun by Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály and now directed by Kodály. Szabolcsi has published numerous monographs and essays on the most varied questions of music history: *Mozart*, 1921; *A 17. század magyar főúri zenéje* (Seventeenth Century Music of the Hungarian Nobility, 1928), *Tinódi zenéje* (Music of Tinódi, Critical edition of Songs of Tinódi the Hungarian "Minnesänger", 1929); *A 18. századi magyar kollégiumi zene* (18th Century Music of the Hungarian Colleges, 1930) etc. Outstanding works of his are: *A melódia története* (The History of Melody, in German too, English edition now in preparation), *Liszt Ferenc estéje* (The Twilight of Franz Liszt), *A Zenetörténet* (A History of Music), *A magyar zenetörténet kézikönyve* (A Handbook of the History of Hungarian Music—German edition now in preparation); *A magyar zene századai* (The Centuries of Hungarian Music); *Beethoven*. In recognition of his scientific work the Hungarian government has distinguished him with the Kossuth Prize. He is a member of the Editorial Board of our periodical.

DEMÉNY, *János* (b.1915). Library official, music aesthete and Bartók scholar. Has published Bartók's correspondence in four volumes (1948, 1951, 1955, 1960) and several biographies of Bartók. Is publishing literature on Bartók in the year-books of *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok* (Musicological Studies), edited by Bence Szabolcsi and Dénes Bartha.

NAGY, *Péter* (b. 1920). Literary historian and critic. Has published a number of works on modern Hungarian literature, and especially on the question of the Hungarian novel. His more important works are: *A klasszikus francia dráma fogadtatása Magyarországon* (The Reception of the Classical French Drama in Hungary 1943), *Móricz Zsigmond*, (essay on the oustanding Hungarian prose writer of the period between the two world wars, 1953), *Mérlegen* (In the Balance, critical essays, 1954), *Uj csapáson* (On a New Path, essays, 1956), *Szabó Dezső indulása*, (Dezső Szabó's Start, 1958), *Szabó Dezső az ellenforradalomban* (Dezső Szabó in the counter-revolution, 1960). The two latter works are critical evaluations of a controversial writer of the period between the two world wars.

PŐDÖR, *László* (b. 1911) Holder of Ph. D. from the University of Budapest. Attended also the Sorbonne and the École Normale Supérieure in Paris. Taught Hungarian and French literature in secondary schools and now works on the editorial staff of Corvina Press, Budapest He has translated a number of French and Italian novels and essays.

ILLYÉS, *Gyula* (b. 1902). Poet, writer, leading and influential personality in modern Hungarian literature. (See also Introduction to his 'Rácegres Notebook' on p. 54.).

TAMÁSI, *Áron* (b. 1897). One of the most significant and most widely read of living Hungarian authors, born in a village in Transylvania as the son of a poverty-stricken peasant. After completing his studies, he lived in the United States for two years, then took up writing on his return to his native country. Tamási occupies a special place in Hungarian prose-writing. His writings have an atmosphere all their own, a unique style and descriptive manner, and are stamped with the original humour and quaint turn of mind and speech of his

people, the Hungarians inhabiting the eastern parts of Transylvania (Szeklers). His writing is a delightful combination of refreshing naturalness and stylization. His major works include *Címeresek* (Titled Nobility), 1931, a novel of manners; the "*Abel trilogy*," 1932—34, a diverting odyssey of a cheery and resourceful young Szekler all the way from his native village through Hungarian urban life to the bustle of America; *Bölcső és bagoly* (Cradle and Owl), 1949, a biographical novel; and *Szirom és boly* (Szirom and the Others), 1960, which is the story of a group of Szeklers resettled in western Hungary where they are building a cooperative farm village. Tamási's penmanship acquires particular pureness in his short stories. He is member of the Editorial Board of our periodical.

KOROLOVSZKY, *Lajos* (b. 1915). Journalist, former London correspondent of the Hungarian News Agency (MTI), member of the staff of The New Hungarian Quarterly.

FARAGÓ, *Vilmos* (b. 1929). Journalist and teacher of literature, member of the editorial staff of "Népművelés," a periodical dealing with questions of mass culture. His article "Building a Club in a Working Class District" was published in Vol. I. No. 1 of our periodical.

POGÁNY, *Gábor* Ö. (b. 1916). Art historian. and critic, director general of the Hungarian National Art Gallery. Studied in Budapest, Berlin and Paris. His major works include *Magyar szobrászat a 19. század első felében* (Hungarian Sculpture in the First Half of the 19th Century), 1935; *Modern polgári művészet* (Modern Bourgeois Art), 1947; *A magyar festészet forradalmárai* (Revolutionaries in Hungarian Painting), 1947; *Magyar szobrászat* (Hungarian Sculpture), 1953; *Magyar festészet a XIX. században* (Hungarian Painting in the Nineteenth Century), 1955; and *Magyar festészet a XX. században* (Hungarian Painting in the Twentieth Century), 1959. Editor of the monthly magazine *Művészet* (The Arts).

SÁNTA, *Ferenc* (b. 1927) writes of himself as follows: "My first short stories are about childhood. However, the main role in these is not played by my own person, my perceptions and so on, but by immeasurable poverty. This was my greatest experience; its companions were defencelessness and humiliation. My first volume appeared in 1956, *Téli virágzás* (Winter Flowering—"Magvető" Publishers). The majority of my more recent short stories are set in the Second World War and generally in the period of the fascist dictatorship. The problems of the realization of socialism interest me with ever greater fascination, and I am increasingly dealing with them in my short stories. I work in the library of the Literary Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and this place is of particularly great help to me in that it assures me, with its constant exchange of periodicals and books, of the continuous possibility of reviewing new foreign literature and literary life abroad."

SÓS, *György* (b. 1927). Originally a physician, he is at present collaborator of the Hungarian Radio's Department of Dramaturgy. He began his literary activity at the age of 26 with a comedy *(Pettyes)*.

SURÁNYI, *Imre* (b. 1913). Took a doctor's degree in Arts at the Budapest University. Teacher of history in a grammar school and author of essays on cultural history.

VAJDA, *Miklós* (b. 1931). Essayist and literary translator. Studied English and Hungarian Literature at Budapest University. Has translated into Hungarian Jack London, Irwin Shaw, and H. E. Bates. Recently transcribed the medieval alliterative poem of chivalry *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

VÁLYI, *Gábor* (b. 1922). Art historian; literary manager of Corvina Press.

SIK, *Csaba* (b. 1934). Acquired a teacher's diploma at Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest. At present reader at a publishing house. Writes studies and reviews.

BAJOMI, *Lázár Endre* (b. 1914). Author, journalist and publisher's reader. Spent nearly twenty years in France. Has devoted his energies to the propagation in Hungary of French culture. Translator of prose works of Aragon, Aymé, Claude Roy and Peyrefitte and plays by Sardou, Romain Rolland, Druon, Duras and Soria. In 1957, published a novel on Saint-Just *Az üstökös* (The Comet). Has written a monograph on Rabelais and one on the French Cinema Today.

DÉGH, *Linda*. Ethnologist, lecturer on Universal Ethnology and Folklore at the Eötvös Lóránd University of Budapest. Folk-tale art (fairy-tales, myths and sagas) constitutes her particular field of research.

KEMENES, *Egon*. (b. 1924). Economist. Author of essays on market-research.

KIS, *Eta*. Economist, author of essays concerning problems of consumers cooperatives.

HUBAY, *Miklós* (b. 1918). Playwright, translator of works by Musset, Sartre, Marceau, Miller and Sheridan. For further biographical notes see Number 1, p. 235.

GÁBOR, *István* (b. 1928). Journalist on the staff of the national daily *Magyar Nemzet*. Was for some time schoolmaster in a secondary school. His experiences in the teaching profession form the subject of a series of articles, which won for him a prize at the Warsaw World Youth Festival in 1955.

HALÁSZ, *Zoltán* (b. 1914). Journalist and author of books on cultural history. *Das Buch vom Ungarwein* (also in French). *Budapest felfedezése* ('Exploring' of Budapest). Member of the staff of The New Hungarian Quarterly.

KERESZTURY, *Dezső* (b. 1904). Literary historian and aesthetician. Took his degree at Budapest University and was appointed a lecturer at the University of Berlin. From 1945 to 1947 he was minister of education. At present he is head of a department at the National Széchényi Library. His books are: *Arany János*, 1937; *Ungarn*, 1938; *A német irodalom kincsesháza* (A Treasure Trove of German Literature), 1942; *Helyünk a világban* (Our Place in the World), 1946; *A magyar irodalom képeskönyve* (Hungarian Literature in Pictures), 1956; *Dunántúli hexaméterek* (Transdanubian Hexameters), 1956; *Lassul a szél* (The Wind is Dying Down), 1957. A *magyar zenetörténet képeskönyve* (Picture Book of the History of Hungarian Music), 1960; *Balaton*, 1960.

GYERTYÁN, *Ervin* (b. 1925). Film aesthetician; member of the editorial staff of *Filmvilág* (Film World).

A SHORT ENCYCLOPEDIA

of some places, historical events, personalities and institutions mentioned in this number

ÁRPÁD DYNASTY. Descendants of Árpád, leading chief of the Magyar tribes that conquered what became Hungary in A. D. 896. The Árpád dynasty reigned for 300 years; the last of the Árpáds, András (Andrew) III, died in 1301.

ERKEL, FERENC (1810—1893). Composer, conductor and pianist. Founder of the Budapest Philharmonic Society; first director of the Budapest Academy of Music. Founder of the Hungarian National Opera *(Hunyadi László, Bánk bán).*

ERKEL THEATRE, Budapest's second opera house, the largest theatre in the Hungarian capital. Formerly called Municipal Theatre.

IBUSZ. The official Hungarian Travel Agency.

KECSKEMÉT. Town between the Danube and the Tisza (pop. 100,000).

KERNSTOK, KÁROLY (1873—1940). Studied in Munich as a pupil of Simon Hollósy's, in Paris under A. Bouguereau and finally in Budapest at the Benczúr Master's School. Belonged to the 'Eight' group. Was a member of the Artists' Directorate of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, and therefore had to emigrate after the fall of the regime. Lived until 1926 in Berlin, then returned to Hungary.

KÖLCSEY, FERENC(1790—1838). One of the most commanding personalities among the Hungarian poets of the Reform Era. Outstanding among his classicist poems was the *Hymn*, which became Hungary's National Anthem, with music written by Ferenc Erkel *(qu. v.)*. As the deputy for Szatmár County, Kölcsey played an important role in the 'reform' Diets.

LÓRÁNTFFY, ZSUZSANNA (1600—1660). Wife of György Rákóczi I, Prince of Transylvania. Energetic patroness of Hungarian learning and culture.

MATTHIAS, Renaissance Court of. King, Matthias I (r. 1458—90) was the son of János Hunyadi, who acquired European fame as commander in the Turkish wars. (King Matthias adopted the byname Corvinus, after the raven (L. *corvus)* in his escutcheon.) Under the reign of Matthias, humanism flourished in Hungary, and famous humanist scholars and poets lived at his court. The first printing shop in Hungary was established under Matthias. He founded universities in Pozsony (now Bratislava) and Buda. In his palace at Buda, he had a rich library of ornately-bound manuscripts, the Corvinae. Under the Turkish occupation in the 16th century, the famous library fell into the hands of the conquerors. Thirteen out of a registered total of 170 Corvinae are preserved at the Széchényi Library in Budapest.

MOHÁCS, Battle of. Outside the town of Mohács on the Danube, the Hungarian national army was annihilated on August 29, 1526, by an invading Turkish force of overwhelming numbers. After the Battle of Mohács, Hungary lay open before the advancing Ottoman Power's northward thrust into Europe, spelling the subjugation of Hungary for over a hundred and fifty years.

"NAGYATÁDI" LAND REFORM of 1921. The upsurge of revolutionary activity after the end of the First World War forced the Bethlen Government to attempt

a partial redistribution of landed property. In an abortive land reform, 1,278,000 acres of land of mostly inferior quality were redistributed. One-third was carved up and allotted to 300,000 poor peasants, whose average allotment was thus less than 1.5 acres. The greater part was distributed among loyal supporters of the counter-revolutionary regime—army officers, gendarmes, parish-clerks, etc. The very high price of the land had to be paid in instalments. Because of the heavy burdens, 80 per cent of the 'beneficiaries' were ruined within three years. István Nagyatádi Szabó, author of the 'land reform,' was Count Bethlen's minister of agriculture. The whole concept of the land reform, and the way it was carried through, was essentially intended to discredit the very idea of land reform.

PÓR, BERTALAN (b. 1880). Studied in Budapest, Munich and at the Académie Julian in Paris. Member of the 'Eight' group. At the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, made very effective posters and had to emigrate as a result. Lived in Slovakia, in Moscow, Vienna, Berlin and Paris. Returned to Hungary in 1948, becoming professor at the Academy of Fine Arts. Twice awarded the Kossuth Prize. Compositions of anecdotic content, portraits, also significant graphic works and illustrations.

STEPHEN I (St. Stephen, István) (r. 1000—1038). First King of Hungary. The destruction of tribalism and creation of a central power as well as the conversion of the Hungarians are associated with his name.

THE 'EIGHT.' A group of post-impressionist painters in the 1900's. Its members—Róbert Berény, Dezső Czigány, Béla Czóbel, Károly Kernstok, Ödön Márffy, Dezső Orbán, Bertalan Pór and Lajos Tihanyi—were young painters, mostly at the beginning of their career, who engaged in bold experimenting and embraced extremist art trends.

WORK-DAY UNIT. Members of co-operative farms share in their cooperative's annual income in accordance with the number of work-day units they have accumulated. Work-day units are fixed for all kinds of work in farming, stock breeding and other activities. As the work-day unit is set in terms of the labour power of the average worker, cooperative peasants may accumulate more than one unit per day. The net income (that part of the gross income which remains after deductions have been made for the collective fund, reserve stocks and other payments) is distributed according to work-day units in the settlement of the yearly accounts.

CZIGÁNY, DEZSŐ (1883—1937). Studied in Munich, Nagybánya (Baia Mare), Paris and Berlin. Was a member of the 'Eight' group. After 1919, emigrated to Paris, and lived subsequently in the South of France. Returned to Hungary in 1927 and painted landscapes around Lake Balaton and at Zebegény on the Danube, also still-lifes and portraits.

'DISTRESSED LOVE, HAPPY LOVE' *(Kesergő szerelem, Boldog szerelem)*. The first and second part of Sándor Kisfaludy's (1772—1844) very popular cycle of love-poems entitled *Himfy szerelmei* (Himfy's Loves).

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