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# TIMES OF CHANGE

New periodicals have mushroomed lately in Hungary. Amongst them *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (National Assembly Correspondence) reminds me, in its title at least, of a handwritten, lithographed sheet issued by Lajos Kossuth during the 1832–1836 National Assembly, at the time of the pre-March 1848 Age of Reform. The method of reproduction in itself limited the size of edition but real circulation was much bigger. Reports of proceedings, regional and national sittings, not to mention those of the House of Magnates, glossed by Kossuth's own acute comments, were passed from hand to hand, and passionately discussed in the country casinos, the clubs of the gentry. Word of mouth thus ensured a wide circulation for ideas of reform.

I have no desire to continue the parallel, after all, at the time of writing no more than three issues of *Országgyűlési Tudósítások*—with Kossuth's counterfeit and a handwritten title—have appeared, it can nevertheless be said that the interest of public opinion in parliamentary debates has grown in an extraordinary manner. It may be too optimistic—though I hope it is not—that the work done by the Assembly these days is an earnest sign of the basic viability of the Hungarian body politic, although it must be admitted that—both in its composition and character—the present parliament still displays the features of an earlier period, being constituted following the 1985 elections, long before the May 1988 changes which started the ball rolling. Two thirds of the Members are members of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, thirty-four received their writ of summons figuring on what was called a national list which did not face the hustings. A great many members are county or other local party secretaries, veteran enterprise managers, public servants, office holders of various sorts. Nevertheless, this parliament, after much good work in committee and lively plenary sessions, passed a number of acts which place the life of the country on a new, more democratic, basis. These include acts ensuring the right of assembly, liberal-

ising entrepreneurship and regulating the right to strike. Legislation on parties, an electoral law, as well as the establishment of a Constitutional Court and of a Supreme Accounting Authority will all take place in the immediate future. It is perhaps typical that Imre Pozsgay, in this issue, discusses the timeliness of a new constitution, and barely three months later parliament already discussed the principles that should govern the new constitution, first in committee, then in plenary session. Some, of course, point to the dangers of this potentiated rate of legislative activity. There were even articles in the press that questioned the whole idea of a written constitution which is really alien to Hungarian legal history. The 1949 Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic meant a break with old, established traditions. Some argued that it would be better to think in terms of concrete legislation adjusted to the needs of the day and the concrete domestic balance of power, and not a fixed constitution designed to remain in force over a longer period of time.

Kálmán Kulcsár, the Minister of Justice, expounded the basic notions of a new constitution to Parliament. Right at the start he pointed to the dangers of taking over something that was alien to the past and the prevailing conditions of a country. History abounded with examples showing how serious the consequences could be. The objective must be a constitution which organically fits into the process of Hungarian social progress, as well as its present state and which, founded on the principles of a constitutional state, assures human and citizen rights, bringing about the separation of legislative, executive and legislative powers, at the same time creating a system which ensures the operative character of the constitution, and is able to defend constitutional rights in practice.

A basic feature of the new constitution will be that it will put an end to what is called the Party State, that there will be a separation between the State and the HSWP which exercises power. This separation will take place not within the present one-party system, but as part of a multi-party system which ensures the possibility of operation to every kind of political force, with the single condition that this operation does not offend against the rights and liberties of others. The separation of powers has been the dominant motif of liberal constitutions since Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*. Present constitutional thinking in Hungary is also manifestly influenced by certain aspects of the American Constitution. Kálmán Kulcsár referred to it a number of times, mentioning the system of checks and balances, both within, and between, agencies of power, which he considers to be desirable. The institution of referenda is an other guarantee. A referendum will be held on questions of crucial importance, or if a certain number of electors demands it.

A second is a President of the Republic to be elected by a direct ballot, and a third a Constitutional Court empowered to examine the constitutionality of legislation. The possibility of a two-chamber legislature is also a related issue. A second chamber is just one of many alternative options. Other open questions are the sphere of competence of a future President of the Republic, whether, for instance, he is to be the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. Placing the Armed Forces, the Police, and other Paramilitary Forces outside the sphere of politics was also discussed in the course of the constitutional debate. It was indeed a Member of Parliament who is a serving officer of field rank who most emphatically stressed that the armed forces should not belong to a single party, or power group but to the nation as such, and that the future constitution should formulate this in a manner that excludes all doubt.

Allow me to add something to what the Minister of Justice said. I propose to quote James Madison from *The Federalist* of the 8th of February 1788: "What is government itself but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men the greatest difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions."

It seems to me that such considerations ought to be borne in mind as the new Hungarian Constitution is drafted and debated.

Many alternative options have been considered and will be considered in the constitutional debate in and out of Parliament. Particular questions include the name of the country, should it continue to be the Hungarian People's Republic, or will it be Republic of Hungary. What will be the country's coat of arms? The majority of the population manifestly reject the 1949 coat of arms which is alien to tradition, but should it be replaced by the ancient arms of the House of Árpád, in which two supporting angels hold the Crown above the arms proper, or by what are called the Kossuth Arms, born during the 1848/49 Revolution, and, in keeping with the republican spirit of the times, dispensing with the Crown. Such questions will have to be decided later. The preliminary draft, officially titled "The regulatory principles of the Constitution of Hungary", was finally unanimously passed by Parliament. The draft will now be discussed by the general public at its various fora, including the media, and then be discussed

once again by the House in plenary session. Should it then pass it, a referendum will have the final say.

As I mentioned earlier, there are some opposed to the creation of a fixed written constitution as such. Amongst the political forces which have organised themselves under the aegis of the prevailing pluralism, a number entertain different notions on the nature of the transition to a multi-party system and a constitutional state. At present, the ideas of the HSWP still define the situation but the influence on public opinion is growing of what not so long ago were still called the alternatives who could already be called factors within a nascent multi-party democracy. Any sort of quantification is still out of the question. The size of their membership is not an index of their socio-political importance. One might add that, in Great Britain or America too the numbers that join a political party do not allow one to predict electoral success. The Hungarian Democratic Forum was the first of these forces progressing towards pluralism. Five hundred and fifty eight delegates representing a membership of thirteen to fourteen thousand, assembled in Budapest on March 11th and 12th with the aim of drafting a political platform. One of its essential elements is the demand for a Constituent Assembly since, to quote, "there is no organization or system of institutions in the country which enjoys confidence. If there is no confidence there is no chance that a government coalition should cope with the situation." The Hungarian Democratic Forum wishes to place itself at the centre of the political spectrum. In future, this journal intends to publish the views of a variety of trends within Hungarian political life, the current issue contains the text of a round table in which representatives of various schools of thought and organizations participated.

Sticking to tried and proven basic principles has long been typical of Hungarian foreign policy, lately, however, increased activity has been equally characteristic. This implies placing the country's foreign relations on a broader basis than heretofore, manifest in particular as regards the interests of Hungarian national minorities in neighbouring countries. At the Vienna Conference—part of the Helsinki process—which acted as the overture of long-term negotiations on the reduction of conventional arms in Europe, Péter Várkonyi, the then Foreign Minister, stressed that improved East-West relations, and the accelerated reforms in some socialist countries, created favourable conditions for successful disarmament negotiations. Mátyás Szűrös, who has since been chosen as the Chairman of the National Assembly, headed a parliamentary delegation that visited the European Parliament in Strasbourg. He submitted a package consisting of seventeen points

designed to establish much closer links between the Hungarian economy and the Common Market. Miklós Németh, the Prime Minister, was present at the ecological summit held at The Hague and was one of the signatories of a declaration demanding international measures to counteract the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere. The events I have listed and many others in recent months, are all evidence of that greater openness, of a desire for a better integration in Europe.

The present issue contains the text of an address which Gyula Horn, at the time Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now the Foreign Minister, gave to the UN Human Rights Committee in Geneva. Gyula Horn urged the extensive and effective application of the existing international control mechanism, as well as suggesting the elaboration of new forms. He proposed that *in situ* fact-finding groups and observers be appointed to examine offences against human rights. Gyula Horn stressed that it was the right and duty of the Hungarian government to speak up in cases of human rights offences, including offences against the rights of national minorities, particularly when these happen incountries that neighbour Hungary. Respect for human rights and making them effective does not depend on the alliance to which this or that country may belong or its social system. The fact that Rumania seriously offends against human rights and basic rights to freedom is a cause of serious anxiety in Hungary, and in other countries as well. Hungary seconded a motion by Sweden which suggested the appointment of a Special Commissioner whose duty it would be to examine Rumanian offences against human rights. The UN Human Rights Committee passed the resolution on the voices.

Much has already been published in this journal on the serious situation in which the Hungarian minority in Rumania finds itself, and on its many grievances. Pál Bodor, a writer and journalist who was born in Transylvania, who for a long time was an editor in Rumania, and now lives in Budapest, has contributed a detailed account to this issue which is based both on personal experience and thorough familiarity with the subject. He places the condition of the two-million strong Hungarian minority in the broader context of the Rumanian situation as such. Events in Rumania, anxiously watched by world public opinion, are of course not merely scenes in the tragedy of the Hungarian, German or Jewish minority in Rumania, but of the Rumanian nation as well.

The facts described by Pál Bodor speak for themselves. Let me add that so far around fourteen thousand refugees have come to Hungary from Rumania, some not going back after visits, others crossing illegally, at no small risk to their lives. The majority are Hungarians from Transylvania, but

there are a large number of ethnic Rumanians as well. Looking after them is no small matter, considerable state funds and private donations are devoted to secure them board and lodging, proper health care, and employment. At the suggestion of the government, Parliament decided that Hungary would join the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

It is three months since Iván Boldizsár has left us. His spirit, his wisdom, his philosophically optimistic essence are, we hope, still with us. In the present issue, Béla Köpeczi, the historian, writes on Iván Boldizsár's career. We also publish a late writing by Iván Boldizsár himself, a memoir of his friend, the writer Zoltán Szabó. They had been close friends at school already and the ties between them were forged closer still in the years of their young manhood when the interest of both centred on rural sociology. Zoltán Szabó wrote *Tardi helyzet* (The Situation at Tard), a classic of its genre, and Iván Boldizsár wrote the text of *Tiborc*, and a book on farming in Denmark, showing what could be considered as an example; that one could prosper and make progress while staying on the land. Later their ways parted. Iván Boldizsár stayed in Hungary and travelled along the mine-strewn road of Hungarian history to the end. Zoltán Szabó was unwilling to compromise himself in the Stalinist system and chose exile. Unfortunately, he did not live to see the present, the times of change.

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

# PROTECTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

by

GYULA HORN

The activity of the Commission on Human Rights, including the present session of this forum of the United Nations, is followed with keen interest in my country. The Hungarian People's Republic is convinced that respect for human rights and guarantees for their enjoyment form an integral part of international security in our time. Violations of the rights of peoples, national minorities, and individuals are contrary to the internationally accepted norms of the civilized world and to the obligations voluntarily undertaken by states.

Ensuring the exercise of human rights is basically up to individual states which bear responsibility for the observance of these rights primarily to their own people. At the same time, it is the inalienable right of the international community to monitor performance calling on states to comply with their obligations.

At the end of the twentieth century, it should be a fundamental recognition that the status of human rights has a direct influence on international relations. Violations of these rights have and adverse effect on relations between individuals and peoples, on interstate relations, on the situation of particular regions and, in the final analysis, calls for effective international cooperation for the protection and implementation of human rights.

Human rights are universal values, and their interpretation cannot be left to any single country or group of countries or any single social system.

We believe that states must not only ensure the reception of these universal values, but must also preserve them in the national and international context. I wish to emphasize in this context that, in the human rights field as well, Hungary takes its treaty obligations seriously and submits periodic reports on compliance to international fora. In harmony with the irreversible

An address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian People's Republic to the Forty-fifth Session of the Committee on Human Rights. Geneva, February 27th, 1989.

democratic renewal in Hungarian society implying the rule of law, priority is given to human rights guaranteeing this practice. Every endeavour is made to ensure that our domestic legal system and practice be fully in line with our international obligations.

In this spirit the government recently moved, and following a public debate the National Assembly of Hungary passed laws with wide-ranging guarantees of great importance, such as the freedom of assembly and freedom of association, including associating for trading and business purposes. The drafting of a new constitution, which will include a wide range of internationally accepted norms on human rights, is under way, as is legislation on such fundamental human rights as the freedom of conscience and religion, the freedom of opinion and speech, the freedom of the press, and an alternative to military service. A new electoral law is being drafted in keeping with the mode of social progress and a legislative work is under way on the individual and collective rights of national minorities.

The Hungarian Government is firmly committed to keeping the competent agencies of the United Nations informed of measures concerning the full implementation and legal guarantees of human rights.

### *International cooperation, new forms of supervision*

Hungary attaches great importance to strengthening international cooperation in the field of human rights. We are convinced that the United Nations and the Commission on Human Rights must continue to play a significant and constructive role in this respect.

I believe it to be indispensable that in order to strengthen international cooperation the Human Rights Conventions of the United Nations be universalized. I am convinced that a joint appeal will again remind states of the significance of universality and may well spur states that are not parties to these conventions of the need to base their policies and practice on these broadly accepted norms regarding human rights. As part of this process, Hungary has recently recognized the competence of the Human Rights Committee in accordance with Article 41 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and has acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. We hope that similar steps will be taken by an increasing number of states.

At the same time, with a view to full compliance with the obligations assumed, it is necessary for the existing international control mechanism to be fully and effectively applied. Hungary wishes to contribute to this effort

as well, by recognizing the competence of all United Nations bodies as stipulated in various conventions on human rights, to receive and consider complaints either from states or from individuals. We shall soon communicate with the Secretary-General of the United Nations in an appropriate manner to this effect.

I propose new supervisory forms additional to the existing international control mechanism. Such could be monitoring and fact-finding groups on location set up to consider violations of human rights employing methods already in use in respect to international peace and security. May I also suggest that consideration be given to the role of preventive diplomacy in the protection of human rights as well. This goal could be served by setting up a small task force, consisting of representatives of states, that might give advance notice of potential dangers of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

It would also be advisable to examine new and timely human rights questions, in which the United Nations and the Committee on Human Rights could take the initiative. In this connection it is necessary, as a starting-point to jointly select and discuss subjects that are ripe for legislation, but have not yet been given proper attention or which found themselves at the focus of international attention owing to the rapid pace of developments in our changing world.

The international community still has a long way to go to ensure the universal protection and enjoyment of human rights. Aware of this need, Hungary has reviewed and reassessed its policy with regard to the national and international implementation of human rights. I venture to say that this review has produced a number of significant results in our domestic practice. At the same time, we think the time is ripe to increase our activity in the international arena as well in order to contribute, as an equal partner, more effectively to joint international efforts to give effect to the norms governing human rights and to control their observance.

The anxiety felt by the Hungarian people, and the government, concerning violations of human rights is great wherever they may happen and whatever their form may be. In our view, discrimination directed against individuals is particularly dangerous. This is a most inhuman and most humiliating violation of human rights on whatever ground it may be committed. Breach of the prohibition of discrimination is tantamount to disregarding something of universal human value and a basic rule of international law.

We have raised our voice against South African apartheid as well as against the violations of the rights of people in the occupied Arab territories. We

have acted the same way on human rights violations in other parts of the world as well. We cannot do otherwise when confronting grave and continuous violations of human rights in Europe. We are deeply convinced that international conventions and norms apply to European countries in the same way they do to countries of any other continent. History teaches that violations of human rights in Europe can be a dangerous source of tension. There are many unfortunate examples showing that the absence of a solution for the problems of national minorities has generated tension both in individual countries and in relations between countries of the continent. It is one of the major duties of the United Nations to take appropriate measures or action to prevent or to deal with such problems.

### *Grave violations of human rights in Rumania*

The principle which forms our position is that the Hungarian government has the right as well as the duty to speak up against violations of fundamental human rights, including those of the minorities, particularly when they are committed in the immediate vicinity of Hungary. It is our conviction that respecting human rights does not depend on the kind of alliance a country belongs to or on its social system. We feel great anxiety because, in our judgement, human rights and fundamental freedoms are gravely violated in Rumania. This judgement is shared by many other countries. We have expressed our concern not only to the United Nations and at other international fora, but on a number of occasions, to those directly concerned. I am sorry to say that our readiness to help in guaranteeing human rights and the rights of minorities expressed in a number of suggestions and proposals, has proved fruitless.

International public opinion is well aware that not only the civil and political rights, but also the social, economic, and cultural rights of individuals and national minorities are impaired in Rumania. The demolition of villages, the destruction of cultural and historical values, deliberate restrictions on the use of the minorities' own language, forcible assimilation, or restriction on the freedom of religion are, in my opinion, all violations of human rights.

Our position, just as similar manifestations by other countries, is guided by a desire to improve the situation, to cope with existing problems. We feel all of us are responsible. After all, the protection and enjoyment of human rights are universally demanded. It naturally follows that we consider the fulílment of that requirement to be binding on ourselves as well. We invite

criticism of our policy or practice concerning human rights and do not regard that as interference in our domestic affairs. We recognize the role of the United Nations and attach great importance to the relevant activity of its fora.

In accordance with this position, we support the proposal made by Sweden to appointing a Special Rapporteur to examine violations of human rights in Rumania. In our view, this proposal is in keeping with the duties of the United Nations as well as with the position of the overwhelming majority of the international community that protection and enjoyment of human rights are the common duty of us all. It is in this spirit that Hungary stands ready to second this motion.

The United Nations deserves credit for considerable achievements in the protection and implementation of human rights since its establishment. Its legislation is undoubtedly most forward oriented in this field. The world organization can take particular credit for the fact that the prohibition of discrimination is recorded as a fundamental international norm thanks to the entry into force of several conventions.

As I have mentioned earlier, the extension of the prohibition of discrimination to other areas is a recognized requirement of our time. I am convinced of the need for the detailed international regulation of the protection and enjoyment of the individual and collective rights of minorities as well.

Alarming news have reached international public opinion and the governments of the world. More frequent and more flagrant violations of the rights of ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities have become known. The international community cannot evade close scrutiny of this question or taking the appropriate action.

### *The legal formulation of minority rights*

Hungary has a special interest in the situation of national minorities. Hungarians in neighbouring countries constitute the largest national minority in Europe. This is an added reason for obtaining recognition for the rights of national minorities, whether individual or collective, as an integral part of universal human rights. We propose the formulation of those rights taking the relevant provisions of the human rights conventions in force and the articles of the draft declaration now before the working group of the Committee on Human Rights as a starting-point.

Such legal formulation could be undertaken within a United Nations programme of action that would create the necessary conditions for the

genuine and full implementation by governments of the equality of national minorities.

Detailed regulation of the rights of minorities, inclusive of a sufficiently effective international control mechanism, should also cover the protection and preservation of their cultures, cultural values, and historical relics as well as the practice of their religion in the vernacular. There is a need to facilitate, support, and guarantee the use, study, and teaching of their native language at all educational levels. It is indispensable to guarantee their right to live in their native land, to provide appropriate state support and protection in the exercise of this right, and to recognize their right to leave their country and to return to it. It is necessary to guarantee their free and unimpeded contact with people in other countries, including their kin. The exercise of this right can be guaranteed for by the state concerned assuming relevant obligations. An institutionalized, state-supported framework for family reunification should also be created. With a view to the effective protection of the rights of minorities, it is essential to devise an international control mechanism, including a procedure for the submission of complaints, as an integral part of legal formulation.

Our proposals also show that Hungary considers the recording of the rights of minorities in a new international document of binding force to be a question of great urgency and timeliness.

I am convinced that the international community should confront this problem and by addressing it, we will do a great service not only to the minorities, but also to our time. Furthermore, Hungary proposes that, as part of the United Nations programme of action, the Committee on Human Rights should appoint a Special Rapporteur on violations of the rights of ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities.

In performing his function under mandate, the Special Rapporteur could seek assistance from states and international organizations as well as from institutions and, of course, individuals concerned with human rights and the rights of minorities in establishing the concrete facts of violation. His report would be thoroughly examined by the Committee on Human Rights.

By outlining our position regarding the question of human rights and fundamental freedoms and by introducing practical proposals I have tried to acquaint you with the approach of the Hungarian government in seeking common action. It is heartening that the new political thinking is gaining ground in our age. The time has come for the international community to place the universal protection of human rights, and guarantees for their exercise, on new foundations, along with the preservation of traditional values. Such rights are the rights of man.

# A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS FOR A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY

by

IMRE POZSGAY

We must not delay in drafting plans which, based on a thorough analysis of the situation, of the root causes of this state of affairs, will contain proposals for a comprehensive and general radical reform covering property relations and conditions of distribution, as well as power and political relationships. Without this determination, and an intellectual preparation for it, stabilisation and revival are inconceivable in Hungary. Now I wish to say something that may seem unusual to many but is, I think, nevertheless necessary, almost unavoidably necessary, and that is that it will be impossible to realise and enforce this radical reform and the alternatives implied in it unless the previous reform, and its execution, are subjected to severe criticism. That is to say, I think, the whole action will only be honest if we do not simply consider the operational disorders of the system but deal also with the problems of those who have long been trying to formulate progressive answers to them and have not yet found the right course of action. I think therefore that—somewhat amending the ancient wisdom—you cannot step twice into the same reform. To put it less formally: eggs once scrambled cannot be individually fried. The new reform requires a new way of thinking on our part for us to set about the affairs of the country which differs from the earlier one.

For such plans to take form, it is necessary to criticise not only those hostile to the reform but also its supporters and earlier notions connected with it. Such explicit and frank criticism can salvage the true values of the reform initiated in Hungary. This early reform contained elements which are still effective today and cannot be left out of account in the future either.

A somewhat abridged text of the address delivered at the November 24th, 1988 meeting of the National Assembly.

We can agree, I think, that no one who in earnest feels committed to the country, can desire the return of the state-controlled system of plan directives. One of the great merits of the reform initiated between 1966 and 1968 was that it repudiated this system and meant to introduce, at least in principle, methods of economic management taking into account as far as possible the law of value, commodity, money, and market relations. Important and precious features of the reform of that time were its promotion of private and individual initiative and, in general, a change of outlook that manifested itself in the definition and representation of interests. This was acceptable even if the initiative was half-hearted, infantile, and sometimes very vague.

We must not, however, leave out of consideration those circumstances either under which the reform was started and the restrictions imposed on the reform itself. Particularly the fact that the reform was not designed, overtly at least, to go beyond the economic sphere; that it narrowed, so to speak, by itself, the scope of action in which it was to start. We are well aware of the international and domestic causes of this limitation. That is to say, the reform ultimately remained within the domain of an abolutism that claimed to be enlightened, which placed the reform within the scope of a permissiveness granted by paternalism, failing to create for it the required irreversible conditions, including the political prerequisites. Vigilant care was taken that the reform should not grow into a major democratic social movement, arguing that this whole affair is the business of the few leading and competent specialists. The people, if they will be industrious enough, will have a share in the blessings of progress. Judged to be minors, the people have fully warranted such prejudices against them, for they appear as a mass of faceless political unknowns. They are not holders of property, not trustees in institutions, but—according to the logic of state socialism—a subject mass under state tutelage.

This view of things must be transcended, and the basic idea of this transcendence was formulated by the party conference of May 1988. I believe that the new reform ideas based on such a profound, comprehensive analysis are scientifically substantiated, being backed by the necessary knowledge of the political conditions taking shape today, in many a place, as a result of a true and rational understanding or sometimes, of course, only given the pressure of the crisis.

It should be made clear that the reform is not an end in itself, but a means which—changed and improved if necessary—must be employed to attain an end pointing far beyond it. Therefore, the attitude towards the concrete forms of the reform must be determined not by loyalty and commitment but by

the criteria of aptitude. It is precisely the reformers who must adopt a severely critical attitude towards all of their own plans. The end to be attained is a democratic, socialist Hungary in which every citizen is a proprietor who is conscious of responsibility for his work and who looks on his service to the family and the common good as his own interest.

### *Human rights, political freedom*

For this very reason, I think that though there are few who contest the decisive role of economics—for we have direct experience of all the consequences of the crisis—we have to point out that the fundamental idea of the reform is not of an economic nature. The causes of the troubles and conflicts of the economy are of social origin. Proceeding from this social point of view, the reform must take the initiative in humanising political conditions. I know—and I repeat—this is in general not the logical order of things in history, but since the Stalinist type of state socialism was politically constructed from the top down in the first place and rested on the motives of the central will, so the obstacles must first be removed in politics for welfare conditional on economic results to come true. In this connection, a misunderstanding must also be cleared up. The institutional structure of statehood resting on the new, but nevertheless classic, European culture is not created as a substitute for the economic reform. The constitutional guarantees of human rights and fundamental freedoms are not a consolation prize for worsening living conditions. On the contrary, they are needed because political leg-irons were placed in the economy, shackling the entrepreneurial spirit and risk-taking. Creative power was restricted, dogma prescribed to science what it should know. An all-comprehensive, radical reform is necessary for the economy to regain its decisive role on its own and for the supremacy of politics to take the lead in creating the freedom of human activity.

Without elaborating, but by indicating clearly the course to be taken, I should like to say what I have in mind when speaking about these political conditions. First of all—and this is vital—the relationship of party and state has to be clarified; and in this clarification we must at once accept, even as a preconception, since we have the necessary political experience and knowledge, that such an intertwining of party and state ultimately has a paralysing effect on political action. Even if looked at from the aspect of party interests, this situation is disadvantageous to the party, it stifles its militancy and reduces it to a bureaucratic organization which can barely maintain contact

with its own members, let alone society as a whole. Of course, it must be taken into account also that as long as a one-party system prevails in the country, the party responsible for government must act in public, the publicity of not only its own membership but of the whole of society, the publicity of party work should mean that people who are not members should also have control of the party.

### *Parliament as an expression of popular sovereignty*

Another important political requirement is that the so far merely permissive toleration of interests should be replaced by democratic and proportionate self-organizing representation of interests making it possible to work out alternatives. It is necessary at the same time to regulate, through guaranteed forms of interest representation, the place and order of social organizations and associations. From this point of view, I consider it particularly important to draft a law on associations which regards association as a subjective right of man, and not as a privilege, or licence, granted at discretion.

I cannot now undertake here to outline all related aspects of state life and state agencies, but of course it is essential to reconsider the place and the functions of Parliament on the basis of the principle of popular sovereignity. It is necessary to extend the legislative function of the National Assembly so as to enable it to control the government's activity, not exclusively through information supplied by the government, and to ensure that wider publicity shall change it into a political forum which may at the same time be the political school of the country as well as the principal public scene of political activity.

I think the most important requirement in local administration is the strengthening of autonomy, and this must be made clear in the constitution, because this possibility for self-government today exists only in the manner stipulated in the law on councils and in declarations based on its amendment, and not really in the conditions of its operation. What I have in mind here is, for example, that our budget system as a whole is even today contrary to the autonomy proposed under the law on councils. The electoral law should be amended so as to comply with the above requirements. The time has come to legislate on referendums to be held on matters that are not only of local but also of national interest.

## *A new constitution*

With a view to establishing the new statehood of Hungary and strenghtening the guarantees characteristic of a constitutional state, it must already be clear today (and this was more than was apparent when the revision of the constitution began) that a new constitution has to be drafted which joins human rights and European legal thinking with the values of specifically Hungarian constitutionalism.

Since the government favours a constitutional state and the legislature has also committed itself thereto, this means that certain legislation must take place on the basis of human rights; experience gathered from the history of law and legislation as well as the ensuing consequences dictate that the constitution should comply with the norms of human rights and not vice versa. There is nothing to hinder legislation pertaining to human rights even before the enactment of a new constitution.

Constitutional measures should provide for the separation of powers by balancing them against each other through reciprocal control, and by making their activity public. Points of resistance in society against the misuse of power must be created. The constitution will be the primary instrument designed to determine the future functions of the National Assembly, providing for the office of Head of State, for an executive body, and for a division of labour among the branches of government, i.e. for the division of power, and for the creation of the necessary balance between them. In connection with the judicial organization, I wish to emphasise also that particular attention must be paid to the establishment of a constitutional court. It may be possible to do this before the adoption of a new constitution.

A very important role will be played by this court, which will have new duties in respect of the protection of the rights of citizens and in the creation of public security indispensable to the pursuit of economic activity. Part of this duty is also to reconsider the entire system of the state or public administration. The constitution cannot, of course, evade this duty. State administration that can be influenced by coercive measures violating law cannot be efficient and cannot fend off corruption. The strange situation we all can see every day is that under political conditions which also limit freedom in many respects, we have set up a low-efficiency state administration which is not fit to enforce the law. This, and not whether a person is unlawfully imprisoned, is now the basic problem. Where the state can violate the law (and the administration can be forced to tolerate illegality), the law-abiding citizen is a rare exception. What is humiliating is not the exercise of power or the need for obedience, or the fulfilment of obligations, but the exercise

of a kind of power which people consider to be lawless. A power suffering from a serious deficiency of legitimacy is in a more difficult position than a budget grappling with the most serious deficit. It humiliates and frustrates the conscientious public servant and drives the citizen to ways of disobedience. This situation can be excused in several respects. I wish to provide neither an historical survey nor to refer to the antecedents, I should like to remark only that a state which undertakes too much, including tasks alien to its real functions, cannot abide by the law in spite of the best intentions. What has to be done always exceeds its possibilities and abilities. Consequently, the state is always confronted with the problems of overdistribution which it judges to be the result of overconsumption and the greed of the institutions, although the fault belongs to the existing state structure. This faulty structure gives rise to a freakish public administration which neither the state itself nor citizens can truly obey. They are unable to adapt themselves to it. That is why wrong decisions on modernisation have still been made in the past fifteen years in compliance with unsound economic policies. We now suffer the consequences of those decisions and are struggling in the traps strewn by them. For this very reason, I think that economic management is impossible without taking note of the above fact and the circumstance that a law of value is operating in economic relations, that exchange value is realised in commodity form on the market, i.e. producers contact one another on the market and are not brought together by some sort of bureaucratic coordination. All this is stark reality that must not be neglected.

### *The reform of property relations*

Without a reform of property relations the socio-economic foundations of democracy are absent. A self-reliant, autonomous citizen who is needed for the afore-mentioned institutions to be efficient cannot exist. A citizen dependent for existence on higher authorities and stuck in the hierarchy without having hopes of escaping cannot be an agent of democracy. In the socialist economy with mixed ownership the central form of property relations should grow out of a freely organized collective property which, together with a diversity of forms, results in a freer movement of capital and a possibility of accumulation and enterprise. Private property and state property are placed at the two ends of these property relations, starting with the assumption that the prevailing community relations determine the place of all the rest. Only in case of such an organization of ownership and constitutional safeguards for property, as an indication of property interests, is it possible

to construct an arrangement in which the participants are real proprietors and are primarily interested not in distribution but in accumulation, since today—precisely because ownership has no real subject, this capacity having been taken over by the state and its policy—everything urges people to distribute as early and promptly as possible.

The new type of formation and organization of ownership not only makes possible but calls for a civil society and political publicity, in which both law and ownership provide guarantees also for minority thinking. A minority has the right to exist and thus to compel the representatives of the dominant alternative to fight for their majority truth before the public, under social control. In this case the relationship between majority and minority is not a moral issue and will be decided not in the field of morals but in the world of material truths.

### *Organization on social and on political principles*

The intention to place the state on a constitutional basis is backed up by real needs and considerable political feeling, the most important being the party's effort to renew. Constitutionalism has further political consequences: the political relationships assume manifold forms—this is what is called pluralism—and make way for the most diverse kinds of organization. The first signs of this are already visible and fill a part of society with hope and the rest of it with alarm.

Alarming memories haunt confusion and anxiety but the confusion is created mainly by a lasting impotence jealous of power and by the paralysing, delicate balance between those who try to change the power situation. In the meantime, the crisis deepens further. Hagglings behind closed doors favour foul intrigues rather than strong initiatives aimed at solving the crisis. Failing publicity, an insufficient number of statesmen capable of displaying great resolution has come forward since this structure favours those office-holding politicians ready for accommodation who are guided by fear of decisions entailing adverse consequences for them rather than by determination and the responsibility needed to find a solution for the problems of the nation.

The reason why I must deal with this question here and now is that those in power and the government have a great responsibility for what they do considering the recently started and irresistibly proliferating associations and movements organized on social and political principles. Will these lead to anarchy, to the disintegration of society, or to the formation of a modern country which is intent on catching up with developments pursuing political

activity in public, backed by a strengthening civil society characteristic of a state resting on constitutionalism?

Forms or organizational formulae recommended from above are of no use in Hungarian society today, which is in need of partnership and compromise in the exercise of power. Compromise postulates a decision-making ability and resoluteness, not submissiveness. The achievements of a community accrue not from a loud mouth but from agreement between partners who are firm in their convictions and do not play with words. Who will offer guidance? Authentic statesmen perhaps who have clearly fought for their truth even in this hazy, opalescent political limelight and are unassailably sovereign and outstanding creative personalities, who stand on the platform of assuredly stable institutions and communities—nation, state, party, culture, science, church—and are able to indicate the way ahead to the citizen and the legislator. It must be shown that a genuinely constitutional state and pluralism are in preparation. It must be verified that this is not a game played by a power incapable of decision and resolution, which lets passions break loose and institutions fall apart in order afterward to resort to force, the means it finds most adequate.

### *Democratic socialism and stability*

The interest tied to stability and the strengthening of public confidence alike require the people of the country to know that it is not right to cover up the crisis for tactical reasons, that the government has initiated the transformation of the system of political institutions and the related legislation. The government is aware that things will not go on as they did before, and also that the use of force, on whichever side it will be applied, would push the country back to the deepest depths of the crisis, excluding it from the communion of European countries and from the civilised world. But this is something the people as well as the movements acting on their behalf must know. Everyone may be a party to the compromise preparing the way for a new Hungarian state, except those speculating on the crisis who, in their obsession with power, no matter on which side they stand, endanger stability and revival leading to national unity.

If a broadly based agreement can be reached on these issues, then what will be needed in Hungary is not a council of national salvation but perhaps a council of national consensus. Those who want to take part will sooner or later have to find a place in the government, and those who wish to remain outside on a platform of constitutional opposition must be given the opportunity to have their say in the legislature and in local government bodies.

The government's plan for political democracy and a constitutional state may also be the foundation stone of stability and order. It is intended to base the future of the country not on the unstable foundation of the infallibility and omnipotence of a single centre, but on the cardinal notion of democratic socialism: on the liberty of the citizen, on his spirit of initiative and capacity for autonomy. This state of affairs may ensue from the new constitution and new laws the framing of which is now proposed by party and government.

At the current stage of processes and events, great responsibility rests on state power and on citizens alike. It is the duty of the traditional and tested political institutions, as well as of those which have recently been created or are being established, to neglect their self-justification and their desire for a function, concentrating on helping to formulate the aspirations and passions of the people. They should help form the mass of political unknown alienated from politics into a society which is structured but has a shared civil consciousness and a sense of responsibility. They should help develop the people's political will where the intention to hold together is strong.

This task must be fulfilled at a time when people and government have to face one and the same burdensome inheritance, the crisis of the socialist model. But the crisis may also be the beginning of renewal and national revival if, with common accord, we find human standards for action.

It is evident that the solution will mean sacrifices. The Hungarian public is aware that it has to pay for the errors and serious mistakes committed by others. But it is prepared to pay the bill only of those it can trust. The crisis will last not until a suitable way of overcoming has been found but until society will have seen signs that give cause for confidence in the operation of the government. This government must therefore apply for a sort of credit which is extended under the most difficult conditions. The confidence of the nation is the currency for which the government must ask. If it is worthy of confidence, the people will demand only interest in the form of efficient public services. The public will understand the belt-tightening lying ahead of the mandate of those who impose it derives from the people itself.

Since the issue is the legal foundations of democratic socialism, I can imagine a society in which everybody looks on the law as his own work; in which the status of government derives from necessity and aptitude, and not power from above. It is a task of historical importance for the current National Assembly to pass a resolution sanctioning the government's plan and to legislate in terms of this plan.

ZSUZSA TAKÁCS

# POEMS

*Translated by the author and Meredith Stricker*

## MISSED LOVE

The thirsty undertow
of missed love, of the silvery
refused ones, sparkling
and shivering in the cold.
Their unfamiliar, imploring gazes
become a little less severe
emerging from the depths.
Starving fish,
they scour the yielding surface of water.
Why haven't I paid attention to their shining?
Why didn't I listen to their muteness until now?
How dense and compact it all turns out to be.
Forming a reddish membrane
it pulses now and breaks away
like a big heart, the last chance
to escape this cowardly, pale, avaricious body.

## TWO ROOMS

I followed him. Turned inside out
with mouth swollen and eyes burned by tears.
—Embrace me!—I asked,
please don't tell me, just decide—because
I may be wrong again and it will hurt you,

Mother-Father-My Love,
everything will be the way you want
from this moment until the end.
I was ashamed, feeling like glass
crawled over by a snail while the others watch.
I will put on my make-up before you come.
And when you arrive, I will have
no bad thoughts about you or myself.
I slip into the open palm of your hand.
I promise I won't leave home again, I will wait
for you at the doorstep. When it's time,
I know you'll lift me up and carry me inside
to bathe me or lay me down on the bed.
As if I lay on a wet bed sheet
or in blood holding my breath,
still waiting for you to touch my face
with your outstretched fingers.
Forgive me, I don't know why.
I'd rather stay hidden in your smile, keeping silent.
I'd rather lie with you alone
in the suffocating blanket. I wish you'd take me
to the winter playground, the broken ice where I used
to be taken to and left alone.

## I WAS LAUGHING, BUT HE

I was laughing but he suddenly
turned away, distracted.
He was stripping the bark of an imaginary
tree. I heard it crack. Why would he know
what I don't? I waited for him
to leave me alone.
The phial of opiate was in front.
It would be simple to give in
to death that proffered itself
and went on seducing me.

Everything stared in the same direction.

## AMBER

The insect
cries in the stone
to be taken away from here
to a safer place, it cries
with wings severed
from its body from now until
the end. I lay in your lap
paralyzed and eager to be
protected until you tear me out.
Lean over me and smile. The newborn
Hermes pretends to be good, but steals the herd
and lies back in the cradle again. I am so innocent
if you don't pay attention to me I'll
commit suicide. The sun pressed against skirts
on the clothesline. Menace glitters
in the air, predicting that you will swallow
me up or let me fall. I
shudder at being butchered
or not being chosen for sacrifice
like the lamb when the feast
approaches. The insect
flies to a safer place
away from the amber
when you reach
your hand
to me.

## BETRAYAL

She stole away from the haughty, unfamiliar house
because the corridors and underground cells
were whining and shaking as if someone
kept hitting them against each other.
A gap burned along the wall,
a window was broken. Wind from the outside
blew freely through her fingers.
She stole away to casual love.

While she lay back afterward,
and looked at the far away building,
she thought—it was me,
the whole house that collapsed
in front of my eyes and now seems so reduced.
It's ridiculous—she said. Her tremors
were rewarded by his hot tears.
Like a snail without a shell, she felt
slimy. The sky was moist, it became muddied,
it was stuck, horizontal streaks
mired there. It pained her to lift her head.
She was afraid of seeing another face beside hers.
And she saw one in reality. She watched the enlarged,
deformed features melt. She closed her eyes.
She heard the measured steps of collapse approach.
By then she became a mixture
of saliva, mud, and tears.
She became so small that she would have fit
inside a room in the palm of a hand,
in a pocket or swaddling cloth.
But she could not disappear. Among the numbers
on the dial, the hands of the watch moved abruptly
forward. She thought it was perhaps a cure.
She jerked her head from left to right.
on the ground until she reached climax.
By now the house disappeared, it was silent.

## BIRTHDAY

Trumpets, and the cold. Wild leaves still knock
hopefully against your window.
They are letters by you to yourself,
they are solitary animals chewed by sweat,
dim with passion on the fat breasts of dancing women.
Leaves made of hoarfrost are not yet eaten
by the starving sun who feels dazed
because it can't find any fruits,
only bloodless berries, dry foliage.
It's late November. Decipher the message

written in between fragile nerve-endings.
Long life!—they say—Good Luck!
Try to be better, wiser they advise.
Better and wiser? You burst out laughing,
high-strung, it sounds so funny
that you nearly break into tears as well.
The bell rings. You run into the open
surrounded by the warm bodies of children.
You wait in your high-heeled shoes with burning face,
while kisses fly and bouquets collide,
and the excited company of your guests
whirls you into the room.
And everything is just the way it was a few minutes ago—
you stand astonished—the room,
the covers on the table—
they didn't turn into an ice cave
and you didn't find wolves in the room
and this is why you are blinded by the crazy hope
that your country still exists and you're alive.
The ice-glass clinks high in your raised hand.
On this birthday.

## KALBECK IN THE GARDEN

The secretary was walking in the garden.
The door to Brahms' house was open,
his studio opened wide. Inhuman music
sounded outside. First he thought
it was the wind, the crack of a strap,
he thought, on the water's surface,
phantom ocean waves crashing, rearing up,
sounds moving in proud procession.
Suddenly the music stopped. Ashamed in silence,
the garden threw away its roses,
snails floated off the ground,
insects struggled against the bell jar of air.
Then the playing flared out again.
And again the piano trembled,
longing to throw off the shadow that bent over.

The monstrous figure continued
to strike, caress, hammer and implore.
Implore? Kalbeck heard a howling,
strange duet of music and wailing,
music and aching lament,
growling turned into a cry of pain.
*Does he keep a dog in the room*
*while he plays?* Quite astonished, he stood
without moving while the tormented refrain
continued inside. Brahms lured the arpeggio
to leap wildly, he kept on coaxing, seducing it
until he shone in his skin
like an embryo—entirely porous and transparent.
Newly created, he wept, grateful to be alive.
He saw himself making love to the prostitutes
from the harbour, and to Clara Schumann
—only in imagination. His tin soldiers
shivered in the cold, hidden in the drawer, while
he sat on the grandstand in his plumed helmet.
His throat overflowed with sound.
The piano no longer desired to throw him off.
But he wanted to pull away from the music.
It was only the obese, old man luxuriating
in success, the one with a mottled
complexion and cancer ripening in his liver,
who could keep silent—not his music—
it was only the sighing of wind,
only love that could keep quiet.
The piano surrendered to his cadence,
took flight in a rush of sound,
could not force the roaring back
into the unruly body that gasped for breath.
The struggle lasted half an hour.
Finally, the music ended.
Kalbeck turned toward the house. There was
no trace of a dog in the room.
Tears illumined the master's face.
Kalbeck made a note of them.
Brahms rose from the piano, his voice
unsteady. The secretary pretended not to see.

# THY KINGDOM COME

*(short story)*

by

SÁNDOR TAR

The crew broke up at noon, but then it hadn't been a real crew for some time; they had been told the previous week that they were to be laid off from the first of the month, well if there's no work now there will be sooner or later, said Sípos, running his bony fingers through his grizzled hair: it wasn't the first time they'd been laid off for a couple of weeks, there being no groundwork, plating, chocking nor even planishing to be done at the trenches, but they were always put back on again soon. Until then they usually hung around or else were broken up and tagged on to other crews. What's that you said, asked Deák, the one-time teacher sometime later, that there's no work for us, is that what you said? Or is it that we've been given the push? For good? They were sitting on precast slabs set on the ground eating their lunch and there was such a sudden silence that when Szigi coughed they all jumped. Let's get going, Sípos said later when they had all eaten what they'd brought, and no one said anything. At the end of the shift Szigi said that he'd much rather be filling in the trench than digging it, and wouldn't mind filling it up with a bunch of people either, like all of you, he told Deák, myself included, God rot them all. Szigi was twenty and so strong he could do single-handed what Deák and Sípos were unable to do together. They were better at the tricks of the trade, added to which Deák was as sharp as an old Chinaman, and as always he was the first to put into words what they all of them felt, gentlemen, we have been given the push, and it's up to us to figure out what comes next; at any rate, I for one am going to get drunk, can't go far wrong there, can you? They stacked up the planks, tidied up a bit, cleaned the tools and put them away in the shed, locked up, Sípos put the key in his pocket. Then Deák got drunk as usual and Szigi was beginning to look like he was ready to drop, he hardly ever slept at the hostel, sometimes a girl would walk him to work and they would kiss at the gate beside

the jagged wire fence for a long time and then the boy would slump about all day, yawning, but no one ever said anything about it. There was only one time that Sípos told Szigi to snap out of it but the boy rounded on him, What the hell for, he said, hasn't it come home to you that we have got the push and here you are still full of piss and vinegar. Deák shook with laughter. Molnár and Gyula someone or the other left as soon as they heard the news and no one had seen Téri, the machinist since he got off his machine the night before, he'd left a forwarding address where they were to send his money after him, when they opened his suitcase they found a pile of exercise-books in it, Deák leafed through them, there's some writing in them, he said, turning the pages, I didn't even know he could write, well how about that, shall I chuck them out, or what? What shall I do with them? Sípos took a look and said no, they might come in handy, the back of all the pages's still clean, they can still be written on.

There was only the three of them left in the room or rather only the two of them because Szigi had just been and gone, there was a lot of coming and going on every floor, everyone was packing and moving out, the decorators had already started on the ground floor, tearing down partitions and distempering the walls, the hostel had been sold and was closing down from the first of the month. There was no one at the reception desk, the empty beds were stripped, wardrobes and tables were carried out and from Thursday the gas was to be laid off. The bit of grass in front of the building was smothered with trash, everyone who moved out either chucked their unwanted junk out of the window or else left it in the middle of their room, the machinists on the third floor made a bonfire out of theirs and set it alight, then smashed all the windows and everything else in sight, bawling all the while, they had to call the fire-brigade to restore law and order. And everybody drank, a lot of them didn't even turn up for work, some were running around looking for jobs without much success because, as it turned out, there was some regulation or other that prohibited the taking on of provincials. Most were only waiting for nine a.m. to queue up in front of the shanty-store nearby, and came back laden with bottles to drink, play cards, loll about and nick things all day: spoons, knives, crockery, light-bulbs straight out of their sockets, they even screwed off the taps in some places and plugged up the pipe with a bit of rag or adhesive tape.

Sípos did not drink with them. He bought his half-litre bottle of cherry brandy but waited till he got back before he opened it, then lay back on his bed. He ate a few slices of cold meat without bread, then washed and took a look around their floor, nobody took the slightest notice of him, there was hardly anyone left anyway, then he went back and lay down again.

Twenty-five or is it twenty-six years since the left the village to come here, three hundred kilometres away because this was where he could make a living, this was where he was needed. They came to the village saying there'd be so and so much money, good jobs for everyone, and the co-operative was on its last legs and there were two kids at home to feed, three since then, and no work at all. Here there was plenty of work, plenty, and they even put him through a course, he was respected, and there was good money to take home. In the beginning they wandered around a lot, sleeping here one day, there the next, but then they moved into this hostel and it all worked out. They hit it off with Deák quite soon, he was a serious man, educated, though addicted to drink. But with Sípos he kept a tighter rein on himself, you just had to learn to turn a deaf ear especially when he was in his cups. Things always worked out left to themselves, one soon learnt that when one got home aching all over fit to bust with everyone shouting and scuffling and picking quarrels all around, then the best thing to do, the only thing to do was to take a drink, that drives it all under so one doesn't give a damn about anything, turns one deaf and blind; one shot or two in the beginning, then beer, but a short was better, it went to one's head quicker. He usually bought a two-decilitre bottle down at the shanty-store and took it up to his room because he didn't want to get involved with the crowd down there, they needed the money at home. True, as time passed the two-decilitre bottle proved insufficient, it wore off too quickly, usually in the middle of the night when the others were still hard at it, making a racket with the radio on loud enough to wake the dead and God knows he couldn't have gone back to sleep any other way. The half-litre lasted him out just fine, well into the morning usually when it was often very cold but one had to be out there digging the frozen ground no matter what the weather. That was how the years passed. No one ever saw him drunk and one thing to be said for cherry brandy is that it can't be told on your breath, not even from up close. Deák now, he drank a lot, and in the beginning he tried to get Sípos to keep up with him, but Sípos soon realized that wouldn't work out, there were times when almost all his pay went and he had to borrow so he could take something home and he was put out about that. So the way things worked out was that Deák went his own way from pub to pub and got back sometime in the middle of the night or halfway into morning and Sípos didn't even notice him come in though he sometimes sang in bed until dawn, and then the next day Szigi would say that the professor had been drunk as a brewer's fart again. Szigi did not drink except sometimes, he was a regular skirt-chaser and would always relate afterwards the two, when, where and even the how. Sípos would laugh and shake his head at him. Women were nuts

about Szigi, he just had to look at them and they were ready for picking; he liked to get himself up and would preen under the shower, parading the parts women loved about him most; his body wet from the shower was like a statue, not a hair on him except around his privates, every part of him symmetrical and strong, his face always laughing, and his hair fitted his head snugly like a soft, wavy, dark-brown garland that curled down to this eyes. He liked to show off in the nude and liked to gad about in brightly coloured undershorts at home whenever he was at home which was not often. He had been declared unfit for military service because his heart beat faster and his body temperature was higher than was normal and no one could tell why, when you stood up close to him you could feel the heat his skin gave off. Deák told him it was because his body burned up more energy and that he would not live long because of it.

Deák's wife had divorced him he could not rightly remember when, probably at the time he had been kicked out of some school or other, but why he had been kicked out he could no longer remember either. He had taught history or literature, he thought, but other times he thought it had been mathematics, it's in my papers somewhere, he would say, anyone who's interested just go ahead and look it up, he couldn't care less. According to his papers, he was an unskilled labourer. He was a flabby, pot-bellied man with a face like a mud-speckled egg, slovenly, his shock of hair always tousled and unkempt, who could not often be bothered enough to shave. He was forever raking his blackened teeth with his tongue and his eyes were always rheumy and red-rimmed. I was as handsome as Szigi once, he told Sípos one time when he was drunk, excepting I was fair, all my teeth were sound and I even took care to always walk in the middle of the road straight as the crow flies. Straight, roared Szigi, now that must've been a sight. Deák laughed with him but he still took the trouble to teach the boy manners, how to walk in the street, how to hold up his head, how to walk up the stairs properly, straight-backed, even to eat with his mouth closed, small mouthfuls, using a knife and fork. Szigi bore it all cheerfully, it was all a game to him, he had natural grace and after a while he did not buy every piece of junk that took his fancy, and when he did buy anything, a shirt or a pair of trousers that Deák did not approve of, he simply chucked it down the garbage chute and bought another. Sípos would watch them and think they're like kids both of them, he did not care much about his appearance, he ate, drank, worked and never once looked at his gaunt, gnarled, sinewy arms under the shower, just washed the soap off quickly, spat out the water and shaved every other day. I've got you dates, both of you, Szigi burst in happily a couple of times in the beginning, and once they did go with him, to a

strange flat, but Deák had had one too many and couldn't do anything and Sípos was flustered by the noise, Szigi and his date were tossing about in the other room as though they were killing each other and wouldn't stop for the love of God though they were long past everything but whimpering and kept running to the bathroom and back, washing all the time, afterwards Szigi explained why. After that one time they did not jump at Szigi's proposals, he and Deák, Deák said he could drink alone right well thank you and Sípos, whenever he thought of it, waited until it was quiet in the dorm, turned to the wall, went about his business and that was that.

It was on a Wednesday that they were told that their time was up and would everyone please get on with straightening things up, they would be paid one month's salary in advance but everyone would have to leave the hostel on the first. It was not the first time they'd been given notice but there had never been a fixed deadline because there was the sewerage to finish on the new housing estate and the roads, this and that, but as the number of workers diminished everything changed. No one bothered about anything anymore, whole crews took off and the machines were left standing as they had got off them, asphalt spilled everywhere, one of the mixers was left full of concrete gone hard, it was only the next day that someone noticed that the man who had worked it had left it full. The next day Sípos went to the central office to speak to the foreman to tell him how far they had got, like he usually did. The hefty, ruddyfaced man listened gravely to what he had to say, traced the track on a bit of paper with a ruler carefully, following Sípos's explanations as he had not been able to find the sketch-map offhand, then on another bit of paper he drew how far they were to go with the trench, where they were to go around to leave enough space for the siphon, this Sipos put away carefully in his pocket. Any machines left working, asked the foreman. No, answered Sípos, Téri's left. Aha, said the foreman, I see. He picked up the phone, asked for somebody, put it down again. There's nobody left, he said, get as far as you can, then we'll see. His breath smelled of wine, sour, and slowly, unmindfully he crumpled up the piece of paper he had just drawn on, all the best, then, he said, and looked out of the window. Sípos went up to the first floor to the planning department to look for Gombos, but a girl told him that the planning department had closed down and that Gombos was probably down in the canteen on the ground floor with the others. The office was being painted, they had taken up the lino and out in the corridor there was a confusion of bureaus, bundles of files tied up with string, pots of flowers and percolators all heaped up on top of each other. Sípos went down to the ground floor and found Gombos, the secretary of the party branch organization, in the canteen. The office-clerks were sitting at

the dining-tables amidst great stacks of paper chatting and wandering to and fro, Gombos was sitting on the corner of a table smoking. What's up, comrade Sípos, he asked when he saw the lean, wiry man, you still here? Sípos laughed, they shook hands, come on, seat yourself down if you can find a place to sit, said Gombos, and sat down himself. What I wanted to ask was, Sípos began, what's going to happen now? With the branch organization, the members I mean. Are we to go too? Everybody? Gombos took a drag at his cigarette, his eyes narrowing to slits for a minute, then knocked the ash off his cigarette, rubbing the smouldering end against the bottom of the grimy ash-tray. Well yes, he said presently, there should have been an announcement. He began to rummage among the papers on the table, I can't find anything in this mess, never mind, he said finally with a discouraged gesture, how do things stand, exactly? There's you, Salánki, Szabó and Becs from the machinists that are going, no one else, is there? Sípos counted on his fingers, and Szima, he asked, is he staying? Szima's with the mixers, they're staying, said Gombos, that makes the four of you then. I think Salánki's already left. And maybe Becs too. Hasn't he? I don't know, said Sípos, I didn't see him yesterday. He rooms up on the seventh. There was a silence, Gombos slowly stubbed out his cigarette, comrade Gombos, said Sípos in a little while, isn't there some way I could stay? I am a party member after all, and there's never been any objection against my work, I've got an Eminent Worker medal to prove it... Comrade Sípos, replied Gombos, believe me, I've tried everything it was in my power to do, especially on your behalf, I've been everywhere, but there is simply nothing to be done. This department is closing down and... A couple of youths came in noisily, trainees, and Gombos stopped, waiting until it was quiet again, they carried out tables, chairs, laughing loudly, wearing blue uniforms with their names embroidered on the front. Comrade Sípos, continued Gombos, we are living in hard times, you are leaving today, I may be leaving tomorrow, going places where we are needed more—us communists, because we are needed more than ever right now, believe me. Believe me, he said again, do you understand what I'm saying? I've never asked for anything before, said Sípos, running his bony fingers through his grizzled hair, the house is almost finished, back home, and we need the money badly. Oh, you'll always land on both feet, said Gombos, I wish I could be as sure of winning on the pools as I am of your finding yourself a job not two days after you've left us. He laughed and slapped the shoulders of the man sitting before him jovially. Sípos's face had gone gray, he was thinking hard. It'd have been twenty years of party membership soon, give or take a little, he said presently, taking out a cigarette, and offered the packet to Gombos, but he shook his head, and

twenty-five years of employment... Comrade Sípos, those aren't lost years, Gombos interrupted, seizing the opportunity, your years of party membership are valid everywhere, and your years of employment. They're valid all over the country! You'll get everything that's owing to you, and there's plenty of jobs in this country, dear me, plenty! Sípos looked at the wall and the counter where lunches were served, he had never noticed up till now that there was a clock on the wall, true, they rarely ate in the centre canteen, only when there was some inside job to do, or a meeting. What do you think I should do then, he asked, should I go over to the mixers? I'm afraid that's impossible, said Gombos, people are leaving from the mixers too, especially those from the country, the hostel's been sold, there's nowhere to sleep. I see, said Sípos, and looked at his watch, and the membership card, should I hand it in or what?... No, of course not, said Gombos, have you got it on you? Sípos took his wallet out of the pocket of his yellow overalls and took out his card and handed it over to Gombos. Well, said Gombos when he had taken it, I see you're not behind with your dues, wait a bit though, what I should do is mark you off the register, this organization is going to be dissolved... he looked about as though needing help, Irénke isn't here and I don't know where the register is... tell you what, you leave this with me and... no, on second thoughts, I'm giving this back to you. His voice grew more assured, Sípos' hand froze in mid-air, wherever you're going from here, you take this with you, report to the branch organization there and they'll mark you off and check you in at the same time, see? Get it done within three days, he said firmly, still holding the little red book in his hands. Sípos took it from him, I won't even make it back home in three days, he said quietly. Of course! said Gombos, what am I thinking of, of course! Within eight days! Not three! Can I offer you a cup of coffee? No, said Sípos, and stood up, within eight days then, wherever I end up. Yes, said Gombos, they'll know what to do. They shook hands. Comrade Sípos, said Gombos, I am certain that you'll keep your end up as you did here wherever you're going, he was about to add something but the trainees came in again as loud as before, bringing different kinds of tables and Sípos walked out of the canteen. Outside there was a fearful confusion, the main entrance was blocked by a jumble of furniture Sípos had never seen before, desks and bureaus, dark-brown in colour and brand-new, high-backed armchairs, one of the youngsters was spinning his pal in it round and round, the others were sitting on the steps shouting, the tall palm-tree from the lobby had been put out on the pavement.

He got on a bus, a fairly empty one, and stopped in the back, he did not want to muck up anybody's clothes with his overalls, he wouldn't have taken

kindly to it either, if it ever happened to him. The site was a couple of stops away, he watched the street, the houses from the window and thought that the secretary had been mistaken. It was the regional organization he should register with, once he got home, because he might not be able to find a job in the village or in the vicinity within eight days but the regional organization would take the necessary steps to ensure continuity, even if there were no party rule that applied to such a situation, this was the only way he could think of that would tide him over the break. The others, the simple members would have been pleased, though, if someone had taken the trouble to say a couple of words of farewell to them, he had thought of it, but decided in the end it was not something he should take upon himself to suggest. It made no difference to him one way or the other, but this way there's sure to be a lot of members dropping out and that'll be a pity. It all should have been better organized. And not everyone realizes like he does that one should register with the regional branch once they leave, and he decided he would look these people up and tell them about it. He smiled disapprovingly to himself, that Gombos, he was always muddle-headed, never could fend for himself, after all, it's not that difficult to think things out, is it? He had a shot of cherry brandy in the pub because he hadn't had time for breakfast, then crawled in through the hole in the fence. We were beginning to think you'd hooked it, said Deák, d'you know there's only the three of us left on the site, practically? Though it didn't come out quite so fluent, in fact he could scarcely stand, he was so plastered, Szigi had laid a shovel across the trench and was sitting on it, half-naked, sunbathing. Well, here are the plans, said Sípos, shrugging off his jacket, come on, get a move on. Sod the plans, said Szigi, can't you see no one gives a goddamn whether we're here or not? They can't wait for us to get the hell out of here so they can hand over the hostel. That's what you think, said Sípos, that's what you think. And what I think is that there's still jobs to be got with the mixers, and if they see us sticking it out here, it's us they'll shift over there. I bet they're watching us right now, watching how people're taking it. You know, devil take the hindmost. You'd better believe it. Because they'll always be needing men. But not just anybody. What did they say, asked Deák, and yawned, who did you talk to? Sípos did not answer him, just showed them where to dig, topsoil to the right, undersoil to the left, he said, cutting into the earth with his spade. Why, asked Deák, are we planting trees or what? I seem to remember hearing that before... Perhaps it was biology that I taught. Szigi was digging fiercely, tossing spadefuls of earth in a wide arc, then he stopped, and leaning against the side of the trench began to laugh. What are you laughing at? asked Deák. That us three, we wouldn't be able to do

anything else in the mornings except work. And in the evenings you two get plastered and I go where my prick leads me. And the next day's the same, and the day after that. I mean are we going to miss it all that much? I wouldn't mind chasing the birds all day as long as there was enough of me left to chase with, but they have to work too, beats everything, don't it? Sípos did not say anything but he remembered that there had been times when the boy had not turned up for two or even three days, and when he did he looked like a washed-out rag, they had to hold him up under the shower and when they put him to bed he clutched his privates as though life itself were hurting him and slept and slept and slept. Don't you trouble your heads over nothing, he said later, things'll work out.

The next day Sípos went back to the central office but got lost straight away. Unfamiliar faces milled around him, talking to each other over his head, very much at home, carrying briefcases under their arms, all wearing smocks. Looking for something? one of them asked him, I know what I'm looking for, he said, and continued up the staircase to the second floor, he was not wearing overalls this time, he knew what was decent, white shirt, dark trousers, the same he had come away from home in. He had not bought much in the way of clothes, there wouldn't have been much use. It was the manager he wanted. Mister Sípos, said the stout, kind-faced, elderly secretary, comrade Német is at the ministry, he won't be in at all all day, perhaps not even tomorrow, it's all finished here, you know. She put a pot of flowers on the table and watered them. Mucika was decent to everybody, especially to labourers, no one knew why. I'm only here to pass on messages, she continued, I don't know what's going to happen either, would you like a glass of brandy? Go on, say yes, she urged, then I can have one too. I can't take it home. Go on, seat yourself down. They're reorganizing everything here, she said, sipping at her glass, and pushed her glasses back into place, are you leaving too? Well, that's why I'm here, mainly, said Sípos, ill at ease, I thought perhaps comrade Német might be able to do something for me, there's still some places open with the mixers and as I've only a couple of years to go until I get my pension I thought. . . one wouldn't like. . . Mucika waved her hand sadly, Mister Sípos, the way things are now, comrade Német is glad there's a hole left up his ass to break wind with. . . There've been others here before you, almost everybody, but he can't do anything for you, poor dear, except shout himself hoarse to stop himself wetting his pants. Have another? And comrade Csendes? Is he around? Comrade Csendes? I think he's over at the drafting department, if you wait a minute I'll ask. With thick sausage-fingers she dialled. Hello, who's this? Mrs Porcsin? Hello, dear, d'you know where I can find Csendes? Well, find him for me,

there's a love, as quick as you can, there's someone here waiting for him. Muci speaking, over and out! Well, she said, and what can you be wanting from Csendes? I just want to speak to him, said Sípos, hedging, thank you very much, thank you. Mucika waggled her fingers at him as she drank, mmm, she said, and then, tata!

Csendes was sitting in the drafting office, this isn't my office, you know, he said, they're decorating ours, renovating or what have you, well, what was it you wanted, comrade Sípos, I hadn't thought it would be you with the secretary calling and... Well, what brings you here? Well, the thing is, comrade Csendes, I've been give notice, that is, the department's closing down and... Aha, said Csendes, as though he understood. Sípos stopped, waited. Csendes likewise. And? he asked presently, his face was brick-red and every now and then he suppressed a loud belch. Comrade Csendes, I'm in the workers' militia, and I don't know what I'm supposed to do in this case. I see, said Csendes, do sit down. Tell me again, briefly. I don't know what there is to tell again about it, we've been given the sack and I'm in the workers' militia. Sípos did not sit down and sensed that his voice sounded more irritable than it should. And? There was silence again. So what? asked Csendes. Well, you're my platoon leader so I came to you to ask what I should do. What do you mean what you should do, asked Csendes, staring at him with bulging eyes, I don't quite see what your problem is. Is it a transfer you're wanting or a certificate or what? Sípos stared back at him, he didn't see what was so difficult to see about it all, seconds passed, then he cleared his throat and asked, comrade Csendes, have you been given notice too? Me? No, why should I have been given notice? I just asked, said Sípos, but if you were given notice, what would you do? Would you get your discharge, hand in your uniform, gun, everything and strike your name off the register or what? Please tell me, I'm in a hurry, what would you do? I haven't much time, there's still five cubic metres of trench to be dug, d'you know how much five cubic metres of trench is? Sípos no longer knew what he was saying, he reeled off his platoon number, the name of his battalion, his equipment, the issue number of his firearm and his decorations, then fell silent. Csendes stared at him as though he were deranged. What's the matter, he said presently, would you please tell me what's wrong? Nothing, said Sípos, nothing special, I just wanted to ask whether I should come up for manœuvres and duty from Szamosrét because if you say I should I'll know what I have to reckon with, see? Szamosrét, asked Csendes, where the hell is that? I see! he cried at last, I have to strike you off the muster... That's about it, said Sípos, but leave it for now, it'll all work out in the end. All the best. Mucika, he said later to the stout woman in the secretary's

office, give me a glass of brandy. He could hardly get his breath, he swallowed once, and drank, give me another, Mucika did not say anything, she had seen people taken this way often enough before, she stood beside him, bottle at the ready, but Sípos had had enough, Mucika, he said finally, may the Lord God bless you. Well, the fat woman replied, isn't it about time you gave us a kiss then? Sípos pecked her cheek and when the woman hugged him his eyes brimmed over with tears. Come on now, she said, pull yourself together. What are you so sorry about? Is it these you'll be missing? My father served under Tito, he would've straightened things out here in no time at all, believe me. But they hanged him, none too soon for them either. There now, hush. And you'd best be off. Alright? Tata! She waggled her fingers at him took a swig straight out of the bottle, winked, lost her balance and clutched at the table for support. Out in the corridor they were pushing a bureau across the floor, the whole building resounded with the grinding screech of its passing.

Szigi? They could no longer remember how he came to join them. Deák thought they had been laying the gas-mains in a street when the kid appeared out of the blue and began filling in the trench, Sípos thought it had been them who had asked the kid to help, he'd been loafing around them for a while and they were fit to bust, Téri kept saying that the boy had wanted to borrow ten forints off him, which he hadn't given him. Someone else said that the foreman had brought him, but it made no difference either way, no one was too concerned over anyone else at that time, they were sleeping in shacks or trailers, there had been no hostel then, they were always working on different sites those days, most times with a changeover of people, always sent where they were most needed. The machinists stuck together more, ranking higher than the rest, they hardly ever got off their machines, were forever bawling at them from high up on their seats, shrouding them in clouds of acrid smoke. Szigi claimed he was of gipsy blood, but he couldn't be sure, back at the railway school he had wanted to be an engine mechanic but couldn't put his mind to studying and so found himself without lodgings as soon as he was released from school, and had bummed around a lot. When they moved into the hostel, into the room they shared, and he was home for once, he often spoke about the school. His only objection against the hostel was that there were not enough young people living there, if there were, he could have organized club meetings, with girls, which Szigi imagined would end with everyone sleeping together, and that it would all go on for ever. Szigi could look at a woman with such rapture on his face as though she were an angel, his eyes, his whole face would light up and he would lick his lips and speak gentle words, his voice velvety-soft, or else he played the poor

orphan and was all despairing and forlorn, and once he had got them he never let them go. Szigi was always happy, was never without money and if he was, someone always helped him out, was never without a place to sleep and spent all his money on clothes. He always told them everything and Sípos and Deák were happy to listen to him, and though they did look down on him a little they were both fond of the boy. Sípos wanted to get him to study to be a machinist or else to go to technical school but Deák told him to put that idea right out of his head, look where all that studying gets you, he'd say, if you haven't got it in you to be a crook all you'll end up with is the shaft of the shovel and you've got that anyway. Still he pruned and trained him and had him order a good suit made at a proper tailor's, which made him look like a filmstar except he never wanted to wear, it'll come off sooner or later anyway, he said, laughing, but he was proud of it all the same.

He was wearing it now. He was sitting at the window looking out when Sípos came in. What's up, Szigi, he asked, surprised, and the boy laughed and pointed mockingly at Sípos. My, just look at you, all poshed up, didn't you go to work then either, he asked. Sípos was a little drunk, he had dropped in the pub on his way back, his face was sweaty and tired. Where've you been then, asked the boy, looking for work? Where's Deák, asked Sípos, didn't he turn up at work either? Nobody turned up, said Szigi, there's hardly anyone left in the whole building, they're locking up all the rooms. Where're you going to go? Me? asked Sípos, after a short silence, I'm going home. How about you? Oho, said the boy with a sly grin, my girlfriend's coming to pick me up, that's why I was at the window, watching out for her. She said I could move in with her. Aha, said Sípos, is she coming up? Up here? 'Course, said the boy, why not? There's no janitor nor nothing, we'll just pick up my stuff and scram. What about our money? Oh, yes, I almost forgot, you're to go downstairs to the ground floor, they're dishing it out in the canteen. But only till noon, you'd better get a move on. What about our overalls? And I've still got the key on me. What key? The key to the toolshed. Oh come off it, said the boy, laughing, they've shoved the whole works off the site with one of them ploughs, you can go look if you want. Sípos sat down on his bunk, there was loud singing coming from somewhere upstairs, down in the street people were passing, cars, buses, as though nothing had happened. Sípos watched it all as though he were seeing it for the first time, the greyish walls of big blocks of buildings to one side, young trees with grass around them, how the time passes, he thought, and began to change, look sharp about it, mate, go pick up your money, the boy said, leaning on the window-sill, and you needn't hurry back, he said, grinning, I'm planning on having a bit of a tumble. Sípos was not paying attention,

he was standing in front of the wardrobe wondering what to put on. The yellow overalls have got to be handed in no matter what Szigi says, rubbish to think anyone can just up and take it home with them. His uniform was in his suitcase, he was taking that home with him. And there he came to a halt. What a mess, he thought, and where the hell is Deák? And his favourite shovel got left in the toolshed. Szigi switched his tape-recorder on, they both hated it but it made no difference now. All of a sudden the boy jumped up and rushed out of the room, she's come! he cried from the corridor, what did I tell you?

About time too, said the foreman when he saw Sípos, how long am I supposed to beg you to come collect your money? There's only you left, and Deák. Where's Deák? Sípos shrugged and stepped closer to the table. The canteen was empty and grubby. Have you handed in your overalls? Where should I have handed them in, asked Sípos, they're upstairs. The man shook his head disapprovingly as he counted out the money, here you are then. you'd better count it over for yourself and then sign here. He shut the small, iron strongbox and pushed a piece of paper over beside the money. You've all got to hand those overalls in for days now, and where, it was up on the signboard for everyone to see, but none of you can be bothered... Begging your pardon, said Sípos, no one told us about it. I made the rounds of all the rooms myself, shouted the foreman, prodding his chest, where were you? Working, said Sípos, we were working up until yesterday, and it's only a couple of days ago that I went to see you and you never said anything then. The man shrugged, the trouble with your lot is you're always drunk, too drunk to pay attention to what you're told, here's your work-book and you're to leave the hostel by tomorrow night the latest. Understand? Or have you had one too many again? It looks to me like... Sípos signed the paper, counted the money and put it away as the man spoke. You can't have seen me drunk very often, he said, unless you were drunk yourself, that is. And that was not such a rare occurrence, was it? But if you ever did see me drunk, then you should have kicked me out then, not now. But you needed everybody then, didn't you. Drunk or not. Alright, alright, said the foreman, sign here. The receipt for your workbook. And put it in a safe place, and your money, no complaints after you've left, you know. I've deducted the overalls, he added, Sípos was already on his way out, goodbye then, he said, all squared now, aren't we? All square, said the foreman, elbows resting on the table, all square, just let me see the back of you. There should be someone to say goodbye to one, to wish one all the best after twenty-five years in the same place, said Sípos to himself as he walked out of the room, it's not the thanks for having built up a city that one misses, just a kind word. It was

only in the corridor that he remembered that Szigi and his girlfriend would be hard at it by now, so he thought he'd take a walk, have a drink until they'd finished. He went down to the basement to go out the back way when he heard the foreman bellow after him, would you please send Deák to me? Hey, where are you going? He stopped beside the garbage chute, the container, full to overflowing, had been pulled out onto the pavement and the trap-door had been left open, he lit a cigarette and heard a kind of shout from up above, a grating, slithering sound and then a body shot out of the chute and landed with a terrible smack, opened out like a jack-knife and fell back flat, its head splitting open on the concrete, splinters of bone, splotches of brain and blood spattering everywhere. Here is Deák, said Sípos when he opened his eyes, his mouth had stayed open after the first shout and remained open until people had come running and began to collect around him, don't any of you touch him! Call for the ambulance, Quick! Everyone scram! cried the foreman, and quickly shut the door.

Did he fall in? Or did he jump? No one could tell, the mechanics had removed the fittings of the chute days before, aiming to replace them with new ones, the gaping hole stank, everyone used it to piss in. Deák had been up on the seventh floor, drinking and singing with the others, so they said later, but they were so drunk they didn't even know what had happened, somebody thought that Deák had gone down to the fifth floor for some reason or other, where their room was, but Szigi had kicked him out because he had a woman up there, but Szigi did not remember sending him away, he had pulled the table up beside the bed and covered it over with a blanket so the ends hung down, they were lying there behind it when Sípos went in. You couldn't see much of the woman, the boy's body covered her, kneeling over the whimpering, panting body like a pig-sticker kneels on the pig while he searches for the heart with his knife. They had laid their clothes on Deák's bunk and there was a big leather bag on the table to screen them further and the tape-recorder was on. Sípos sat down on his bunk and opened the wardrobe door, ducked behind it and took the half-litre bottle from beneath the bed and took a swig at it. And another, a longer one. It was not the first time Szigi had brought a woman up to their room, sneaking them in the back way through the boiler-room in the basement, no one knew how he did it, keep your peepers shut, he would say, and pull down the blanket from the upper bunk so that it screened the lower one like a curtain and in a minute they would have disappeared behind it. By that time Deák was usually too far gone to see or hear and Sípos would have a couple of drinks and after that it didn't bother him either, he would fall asleep thinking confusing thoughts which he never remembered later. He took another swig at the

bottle now because his mind still refused to go numb, Deák sometimes drank on top of pills, it's cheaper that way, he would say, and lasts longer, and now he's lying there with his brains dashed out, he should tell Szigi, Szigi doesn't know yet. Sípos drank again, better check what time the train leaves tomorrow, his mind registered between other hazy, confused thoughts, later he fancied he heard the woman's choking, heaving groans and Szigi's soothing rumble, and much later, half-asleep, scattering other, drink-induced images Deák suddenly swam into view, the night he came in drunk and walked over to Szigi's bed and, if he remembered right, knelt beside the boy's bed and laid his face on his chest, Szigi threw the covers off, he always slept in the nude, and said, his voice sleepy-kind, encouraging, go on, it's better than giving it to the wall, Deák caressed him, mumbling, then began to cry, lay down on his bed and said no one had ever loved him in his blasted life, Szigi covered himself up and fell asleep again, Deák sniffled for a long time after, Sípos reached down for the bottle but his hand remained that way, hanging down because half-way there he fell asleep.

The next day he slept well into the morning, he woke once or twice but only to take a swig at the bottle, he did not see Szigi and his girlfriend go though the boy shook him and shouted in his ear that Deák was dead and lying under a sheet of black foil and later when the hearse came to take him away, but it was no good. He found a note on the table, telling him he was to go over to the central office to give evidence about the accident, you sure were pissed like hell last night, the boy wrote at the bottom of the page, I'll look you up at Szamosrét! Szigi! Sípos turned the paper over, then threw it away. The bottle was empty and he was terribly thirsty but the water had been turned off and he could neither wash nor shave. Sod it, he said aloud when he was beginning to feel better, he sat for a while on the edge of his bed, yawning, then noticed the other note on Deák's bed. It was a proper authorization for Szigi to pick up Deák's pay, signed by two witnesses. It was probably this that he brought down, thought Sípos, then dressed, packed, folded up his bedclothes, he wasn't sure what to do with them so in the end he simply left them on his bed. Szigi had left his bed all tumbled, and Deák had stopped using bedlinen a long time ago, it was there in a neat pile at the head of his bed, undisturbed since it had been given him. Down in the shanty-store he bought a half-litre bottle of brandy for the train but turned back at the cash-register and bought another. He opened the first before he was out of the door, his hand shook as he raised the bottle to his mouth, and had another drink out in the street and felt better. He bought his ticket then floundered around in the station building until it was time to board the train, that's it then, he thought when he had found himself a seat, and took

out his bottle again. There were not many people in the compartment, he stretched out his legs, at least I'll be able to sleep all the way he thought as he drank. Then, lulled by the soothing, rhythmic lurching of the train, he fell asleep.

They woke him up at Szalka, his ticket was punched and lying on the seat beside him, he got off the train quickly, it was terribly hot outside, and looked to see when the next train was leaving. He found there was an hour to kill before he could go on and it was only half past one. Suitcase and bag in hand, he went in and sat down in the restaurant and ordered paprika chicken with noodles and a beer, he didn't see anyone he knew. Other times, when they were coming home, the restaurant was full of their crowd, eating, drinking, shouting to each other across the tables, banded together as they had come on the train, they were always singing, pissed to the ears most of the time. Looks like they all came by the other train, he thought, or else, they're all home by now. He ate the cold, greasy food set before him, the beer was good, then rushed into the men's and threw it all up. He washed, tidied himself up a bit, found his train and got on it. There was a tune running in his head all the time, later he realised it was the one Szigi had been listening to while he waited for his girlfriend, he kept winding it back, it was enough to send you round the bend. Then he thought of Deák, the loud smack as he had hit the ground, his head, his stomach churned and he ran to the toilet but nothing came up, his mouth drooled and his eyes ran from all the retching, he felt terribly ill, how can a man die that way, he asked himself. He looked at himself in the mirror, then went back and sat down. What the hell's the matter with me, he thought, ready to burst into tears all the time, why the hell? Maybe its the booze. Someone said hello as he passed by in the compartment but it wasn't anyone he recognized. On your way home? asked the man, but Sípos did not answer him, he closed his eyes as though he were asleep.

Deák had loved Szigi, would have loved him like a son or whatever, it wouldn't have made any difference to Deák as long as it was someone who loved him back. Sípos did not say anything after the incident (the time that Deák had knelt by the boy's bed), he didn't know what to say, he didn't know what to make of it then, hadn't known until now, just as Szigi had not known what to make of it and that was why he had said what he said, for Deák to go ahead, but Deák hadn't wanted anything from him, except to touch someone, anyone. He always used to say that if he had a home like Sípos he wouldn't be knocking about the world, not if he had a wife and family. But you had a wife, didn't you, asked Sípos, why did you leave her? To which Deák had no reply, except to say that he couldn't remember, he

must have been drunk. That's no reason, said Sípos, there has to be a reason, one doesn't just get drunk. I do, said Deák, laughing coarsely. He said it had started just like that but that couldn't have been true, he had been mixed up in something, one night the police came to the hostel and knocked them up, Deák hadn't wanted to get up, told them to shove off and leave him alone, he hadn't had anything to do with politics for ages and what did they want with him? One of them landed him one with his truncheon on the quiet, that was when Sípos began to come to, but by the time his head cleared they had gone, and Deák got up and went out, he did not come back for some time and when he did he asked Sípos for a swig of his brandy though normally they each drank their own. Sípos aimed to ask Deák what all the fuss was about but by morning he had forgotten the whole incident and Deák never mentioned it. Téri was still rooming with them then, he had the bunk above Szigi's but you could never tell whether he was alive or dead, it was like as if there was nobody up there, he sometimes talked in his sleep but they never understood what he said, he always came in late at night, crawled up into his bunk and never said a word to anybody, year after year. What he did before he came in no one knew and no one really cared. He was an insignificant little man who wrote letters, Sípos sometimes saw the envelopes but couldn't remember him ever getting any. He did not drink and did not smoke, sometimes disappeared for weeks on end and then was suddenly there again, as though he had left the room for a second and come back in again, he wasn't someone you noticed. It was Deák who filled up the room, and Szigi; Deák when he was drunk, Szigi half-naked, arguing, Deák sometimes said strange things, Sípos when his head wasn't fuddled listened to him sometimes but never could take it for long, all he knew was that Deák could be reported to the police for the things he said sometimes, but what those things were he couldn't have said, he never could quite follow Deák because he was tired and because he always dropped in at the shanty-store after work. At the far end of the store, there was a counter where you could eat sausages or black and white pudding and there was beer, draft beer, by the time they got back all they had to do was fall into bed, after digging so many metres of trench. Deák worked well, considering, the sweat used to pour off him and he drank water by the gallon. It's just that he was always filthy, and his breath always stank from all the drinking, and he never changed, he used to say that there was no other way to live except like an animal in surroundings like theirs, that was what was expected of them, and that way no one felt guilty when they saw them on the street, that was where they belonged, in the ditch, in the filth, in the earth. You couldn't always take him seriously because he was always laughing as he spoke. Sípos re-

membered a lot of things on the train as he sat there with his eyes closed beside the window, his head resting against the window-pane. He told himself he wouldn't drink from now on, though there was still the other bottle, and some of the first one left, then he did take a swig after all, a good-sized one, and the man sitting opposite looked on and smiled, it's Sípos, isn't it, he asked, Sípos from Szamosrét, Not yet, it isn't, said Sípos, not until we get there. And he shut his eyes again. I recognized you, said the man, though you look a lot older. Well, good luck to you then, said Sípos, I hope it's made you happy and let's leave it at that. It was what Deák always used to say to shut someone up and it always worked, as it did now, the man did not open his mouth again and soon got ready to get off. Take care not to drop off now, he said by way of farewell, the next one's your stop, you're almost there. Sípos did not say anything, did you hear me, said the man, louder this time. Sípos opened his eyes, knowing they'd be yellow, and his face was slate-grey, he looked up at the man, sorry, he said, alarmed, and scuttled off the train.

He passed through the front garden on his way in, nothing was shut, the door was ajar, the screen door put to and from inside he heard voices, raised, and the dog was nowhere about. Afternoon, he said loudly, the voices were stilled and a man appeared in the doorway, followed by a woman and a boy. Géza! Mr S.! they cried, almost at once, surprised, just look at you, Eszti, his wife cried, horrified, and how come... Come in on, said the man, Tibi, said Sípos suddenly, Tibi from next door. That's right, said the man, didn't you recognize me then? I brought over some feed for Esztike. What's the matter, said Sípos, isn't there enough to eat? Are you feeding off feed these days? No one laughed, they continued to stand about, fidgety, why didn't you write me you were coming, said Eszti in the kitchen, I've nothing to give you, there's a bit of bacon, or I can fry you some eggs if you want. We've already eaten. Andris, how are you, son, said Sípos, sitting down at the table, never mind what it is, just give me something to eat, he said, pulling the boy closer to him, what's the matter, are you afraid of me? Of course he is, said Eszti, you look like something the cat brought in, did you come through the village looking like that? How else should I have come, snapped Sípos, they all know me, don't they? That's for sure, said the woman, laying bread, sausages, the bit of bacon on the table. It's pretty, your kitchen, said Sípos, when did you get the panelling done? Tibi did it, said the woman, blushing, he helps me out a lot, here I am left to myself as you know very well and there's the house to finish and all. But it was done the last time you were home, said Tibi, smiling, sprawled comfortably in the chair, very much at home. I don't remember, said Sípos, maybe, I don't know. You don't remember, of course you don't remember, you were

blind drunk, weren't you, like you always are! The woman was jumpy, irritable, she sat on the edge of her chair and somehow no one wanted to talk, Sípos began to eat, he hadn't much of an appetite. Have you got anything to drink? he asked, it doesn't matter what, my stomach's all queasy. Where's the dog? He got knocked down by a car, the boy cried suddenly, and came closer, it ran over his head, it was all squashed... Sípos closed his eyes but the food he had just eaten came spilling out of his mouth, he clapped his hand over it and turned out of the kitchen. What's up, the woman cried after him, have you taken bad or what? Tibi, give him a glass of brandy, she said, and hurried after her husband. What's taken you? she asked in the bathroom, Sípos was retching into the basin, he did not reply, he washed his face, Tibi brought in the brandy, Sípos drank it, then they bathed him, his wife washed his hair, rinsed it twice and Sípos let her tend him like a child, all the strength ebbed out of his body, I'm going to bed, he said when they'd finished, we'll talk it out tomorrow. They turned down the bed for him in the back room, Tibi helping with everything, they made him drink another brandy, which made him drowsy but better, he kept dozing off and waking up again, sometimes heard voices, laughter, then through the open door he saw Tibi on his hands and knees crawling along the corridor with Andris on his back wearing briefs, laughing, then for a long time there was silence. It was the silence that woke him, for a minute he didn't know where he was, there weren't any bunks in the room, or chairs, he sat up, yawned, reached for the bottle, then laughed softly to himself, you're loony, Sípos, he told himself, you're back home, not at the hostel. He went out to piss, looked in on the boy, a good-looking boy he's turned out to be, he thought, like Szigi except that he's fair-haired and a child still, then he looked into the other room, his wife was sleeping with a thin little blanket over her that hardly hid anything. On an impulse, he cautiously slipped in beside her, you're all bristly, she whispered laughingly and rolled into a duteous position, awake now, he began to caress her expectant body patiently but nothing happened, then he whispered something in her ear, something he had heard about from Szigi, and drew himself higher up on the bed. What?! his wife hissed, and tore her hand out of his, what do you take me for, one of your city whores?! Alright, said Sípos, I'm sorry, he tried for a little while longer, you're getting too heavy for me, his wife said irritably, let's leave it till tomorrow, you're tired out. Alright, said Sípos, I am tired. They lay beside each other silently for a little while longer, then he got out of bed, went back to the little room, took the bottle of brandy out of his bag, drank, then turning to the wall sought the old accustomed gestures, perspiration streaming off him from the exertion, but nothing happened. He took a long swig at

the bottle and fell asleep with the sadness that seemed to be on him all the time now, close to tears.

Nothing happened the next day either, nor ever again. Though everything started off well. In the morning he shaved and dressed properly, his wife had already gone off to work in the pickling plant and Andris bore down on him with a battle-cry, guzzling an enormous quantity of cocoa, bread and butter and sausage, and did not stop talking all the while, does it mean that you're home now, dad? How long for? Did you bring me anything? Don't show me now, show me when I come in, I'll come home early and I'll bring Klári with me! Klári, asked Sípos, who's Klári? My fiancée, said the boy, how old are you, son, exactly? asked Sípos, twelve, said the boy, and he really was quite the young man already though his voice was a child's still, but deepening, and he was like a bit of quicksilver, strong and wiry, and his eyes were blue, a blue Sípos had never seen in his life before, clear as glass when he looked into his father's eyes. Sípos could not stand that clear gaze for long, it made him feel dirty with his yellowish, blood-shot eyes. Maybe they'll clear up, he thought later, standing in front of the mirror. Then he ate something and had a drink before and after, better slow down with the booze now, he thought, then stepped out into the street. He looked about but did not see anyone he knew, passed by the pub but it was closed still, never mind, he thought, I'll look in on my way back. He went to the county hall, said good morning at the door but no one answered. All along the corridor the office doors stood open, a couple of people were idling about inside, I'm looking for the party secretary, he said to one of them who was on the phone. Who are you? asked the person when he had put the phone down. Sípos told him, took out his membership card, his other papers, told him he was a member of the workers' militia, and had been given the Eminent Worker medal four times, and not out of boastfulness, mentioned that he had worked for the same company for twenty-five years. The man leafed through his papers but like as if it were the first time he had seen such, and these, he asked presently, what are these? Those are the decorations I received in the workers' militia, said Sípos, he would gladly have sat down but no one had offered him a seat. Sebők, the man cried, come here a minute. A stout, middle-aged man came in. What's up? he asked in his oily voice. There's a nutcake here with a lot of medals looking for the party. The party? The party's in Budapest. What's he want the party for? Sípos should have known that these people wouldn't know what to do either. He didn't say anything, just asked whether there were any party members about. Of course there are, said the fat man, they're everywhere, aren't they, but right now they're all out. And was he fired or what? Wait, interrupted the other, listen, he said

to Sípos, you find yourself a job, and look sharp about it, mind, then you can apply for admission to the party, the militia and any other gang you care to name if that's what you like, it's none of our business. That's right, agreed the fat man, you'd better go to Szalka or Kisvárda to the employment agency, getting a job is more important than playing war games, there's no flood or revolutions here right now, but we'll call you if there is, right, Zsiga? he said, slapping the other man on the shoulder, they laughed, alright then, thought Sípos, sweeping his medals up and putting them in his pocket. Were you here at the time of the flood? asked the fat man, no, said Sípos, we were covering the universities, in case, you know. Aha, said the fat man, I see, because those who were here, you know, they trampled over everything and anything the flood left they took away. They laughed over that, Sípos did not say anything, these two can't count for much around here, he thought, who's in charge here? he asked when he had put his papers away. In charge? He's out stripping flax with the rest, said the man called Dezső, or else tending the geese, added Sebők, the fat one, not to be outdone, and they both began to laugh again, as though it were a joke. You handy with a hoe? he heard as he was walking out of the building.

Szigi always poked fun at him whenever he put on his uniform, it's your shoulder-belt that holds you together, he would say, why d'you have to make a clown of yourself? They were usually detailed to one of the universities, standing guard in corridors or in the telephone exchange until they were relieved, young people came and went around them, some of them would sometimes ask something but he wasn't permitted to establish contact with them, that was not his task. As to what his task really was, he could not say even today, but someone surely knew. But who? Csendes? His platoon leader? Or Gombos? The party secretary? Where can Szigi be, right now? Poor Deák, what a crazy man he was. Let me go with you, brother, he had said, To your village. I'll be a farm-hand. I'll pet the ducks or whatever. Of course he wasn't serious. And Téri! And up on the seventh floor they sang and boozed it up every night, ten years, twenty, twenty-five, how can that be? Facing the county hall was the school Sípos had gone to as a child, beside it the church, there was a black-bordered paper on the fence, someone had died. He went into the pub, ordered a shot of brandy, drank it and went home. His wife came in around noon with the shopping, she pottered around in the kitchen while Sípos lay on the bed in the back room, a half-litre bottle of brandy at the foot of the bed. Is this the way it's going to be then, asked the woman, are you going to lie there drunk all the time now when there's so much to do around the house, there's the attic to finish and timber to be brought and the garden and the hens... Sípos paid no attention, it was like

the noise at the hostel, once he had had enough to drink he neither saw nor heard a thing. Did you bring any money? How much? Twenty-three thousand. Where is it? I gave it to the boy. To the boy? How come? What about me? You've got Tibor. Nobody has fair hair in our family, he said later, nor blue eyes. But I may be mistaken. The woman lowered herself slowly onto a chair. He's twelve years old, Sípos continued. You lied to me. He's always been fairhaired, the woman burst out, and blue-eyed! Hadn't you noticed? You always came home drunk, you never even knew where you were most of the time, you don't even know where the other two are, do you? They grew up without you ever seeing them! And how many kids have you sired with your city whores these past twenty-five years, I'd like to know. She wanted to cry but couldn't. Sípos took a swig at his bottle and did not say anything. Does Andris know? he asked finally. The woman shook her head. And Tibor? He knows, the woman whispered. Fine. Is he his godfather? Yes. Leave me sleep, said Sípos in a little while, I'm tired. There was silence. The woman began to speak of loneliness, fear, the daily drudge and a lot of other things but by then Sípos had blanked his mind out, her voice made him drowsy, his hand reached down for the bottle but remained hanging down because halfway there he fell asleep.

Andris charged into the room, that was what woke him, the boy threw down his satchel, dad, he cried, listen, I came home early but don't tell mum, he stooped down, his face almost touching his father's face, he was panting and his face was burning, he must have ran all the way home, thought Sípos, and hugged him as he was, still lying down, he could feel the boy's heart beating, beating fit to burst, he held him close, so close it almost hurt, the boy laughed, bit into his chest and began to butt him with his face, his head, jumped on him, they began to tussle, then rolled off the bed onto the carpet, the boy knelt on him, pinned him down, here's when you should stick the knife in my heart, thought Sípos, I won, cried the boy, Sípos relaxed and they panted, laughing, for some time. What did you bring me? asked Andris in a little while, and got off his father. Bring me my case and the bag, said Sípos, the bells had just begun to toll, a car passed by, Sípos put his card, papers and the medals into the boy's hands, the boy looked them over avidly, are they mine? he asked, then caught his breath when Sípos put the wad of money in his hands, the money too. . . ? The money too, said Sípos, and put the bottle to his mouth. All of it? All of it. How much is it? You count it. The boy looked at him with those clear blue eyes in a way that made Sípos want to cry again, he heard questions and answered them but it was only the boy that he saw, his eyes, have you been many places, dad? Lots. Lots? Did you see a lot, dad? Lots. Lots? I didn't see nothing for twenty-five years, son,

except trenches and pits and dredges and ploughs. And spades and bunks and drunken men, some of whose names I never even knew, who I slept with, got cold and wet with. They came and went and there were some who died. Where's Erika and Gábor? Your brother and sister. They go to school in Szalka? Well, son, you're not going anywhere because I'm not letting you. He talked and talked, the boy too, but he could no longer look him in the eye, look, exercise-books, he said suddenly, taking Téri's note-books out of his bag, see what's written in them. Read them to me. There are prayers written in them, said the boy. Prayers? How can that be? As the hart panteth after the water brooks, the boy read, here's another, will this one do? It'll do. Alright. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord, Lord, hear my cry, Oh, said the boy, turning a page with the wad of money in his other hand, here's the Lord's prayer, he cried, I know that one, he began to read, Sípos reached for the bottle, drank, then laid his band on the boy's head, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, he mumbled together with the boy, thy will, son. Thy kingdom. The bells were still tolling. Sípos wanted to say something else but he couldn't think of anything else to say.

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*

# THE VIEWPOINT OF THE VICTIM

by

GYÖRGY KONRÁD

To Camus, suicide is *the* question for philosophy. To me, it is murder. And I would claim that all killing is murder.

To kill or not to kill? This is the fundamental moral dilemma, not that between believing in God and atheism, that between West and East, or that between North and South. Compared to it, the struggles between nations, classes, religions, and cultures are affairs whose intellectual significance is subordinate.

There can be no coherent system of ethics which does not include the prohibition of killing as an axiom. This taboo is the corner-stone of morality. Whoever kills with legal authority, out of duty, under state orders, is just as surely a murderer as one who does so without such authority, motivated only by personal interest or impulse. From the point of view of a moral judgement of his act, there is no genuine difference between a state murderer and a private murderer.

Man, with a moral conscience, cannot shake off responsibility and transfer the burden of his acts or omissions onto someone else, onto some superior. If I kill, I do it myself, it is I who make the decision to kill even if I have become involved in the act unintentionally.

Because a murderer does not eat his victim, he is no less barbaric than one who kills and eats his victim for good measure. Our civilization has put cannibalism and incest under taboo. Manslaughter it has not put under taboo. There is no reason whatever to claim a more merciful treatment for murder than for incest before the tribunal of moral conscience. We are faced with a moral revolution which is of the same consequence that Christianity has had, and in which the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" is the starting-point for all moral considerations. Without this moral revolu-

tion mankind is capable of exterminating itself. It is in a position to do so. And if people can do something, they mostly do do something. The commandment is actively not-to-kill: this is the eschatology at the turn of the third millennium.

Taboo is an absolute. An act put under taboo can never be justified. This is important, because self-justification is a fundamental human need. I have never yet met anyone who did not try to justify his acts to himself. Everybody has some explanation for what he is doing and why. The chain of ideas that these explanations refer to could be called ideologies. Everybody has his own ideology even if he insists on having none.

Explanations of who can, or cannot, be killed, make up an ideology: a partial, biased, and one-sided one, by its very nature. The cunning have always sought moral excuses to circumvent the ban on killing. "And what about the mad rapist and murderer who strangles little girls?" they ask. "If it were your small daughter, wouldn't you want to kill him?" I think these extreme situations, hammered out ingeniously, are mostly fashioned to make the absolute validity of the taboo a relative one. Let us answer the question with a question. How many mad rapists cum murderers strangling small girls would you find among the victims of war? And how many small girls?

I can already hear the next question: "And what about the tyrant? Wouldn't it have been right, for instance, to kill Hitler in time?" It would have been. He should have been killed. His murderer would have done a great service to mankind. But the killing of the murderer is also murder. The moral justification of tyrannicide does not invalidate the fundamental moral principle according to which nobody should be killed, not even a tyrant.

A collective taboo is the only firm foundation on which morality can be built whereas communal concepts are all biased and precarious; no reliance can be placed on them for they crumble into dust.

A moral revolution should mean the axiomatic interpretation of the fact that the individuality and dignity of all men are inviolable. The question is still fundamentally a religious one: is it admissible to kill? Moses brought down from Mount Sinai the tablets of the law with "Thou shalt not kill" on them, but when he saw that the people worshipped the golden calf, he had the idolaters slain.

Whoever kills a man, has committed the ultimate sin, because the life of a human being is an autotelic value that needs no kind of justification

whatever. In comparison, the interests of a native land are an abstraction. The only real person in the battles fought for communal ideologies is the victim, who, in dying, ceases to be communal. He alone knows what it is all about. The others do not yet know.

Who is capable of grasping the life of another man in all of its significance? The rulers who authorise murder are puppets rather than real people; they do not know what they say, they do not know what it all means. They are capable of calling murder a heroic deed, depending on its colour. They give preference to red murders or white ones, brown or black, blue, green or multicolour ones. The more you respect the national state, the more likely you will become a party to murders of some kind or other. Peoples, religions, and world outlooks take care not to look back in case they have to count the corpses left behind. He who surrenders not only his body to his masters but his spirit as well, is truly a servant. A clear view requires a kind of global-anarchist-pacifist irony; in its absence, we are inclined to a bragging or self-pitying identification with our community and become entangled in a collective self-regard, hating others. He who surrenders not only his body but even his soul to his lords, is truly a servant.

The victim's is an implacable viewpoint. It does not insist on revenge but it does insist on truth. It does not punish, but it does not acquit either. He who kills is a murderer. Once the stakes are placed, they stay placed. He who has committed the crime has inflicted the punishment upon himself. He who has killed, has sentenced himself to be a murderer. What happened cannot be undone either by remorse or through good deeds. It was an accident: crime was coming one's way and one could not evade it. The offence made him an offender. I admit that murderers are hapless men. I also know that innocence is a stroke of good fortune. Sometimes I think it is a gift of grace. So far I have succeeded in not killing and if I am lucky enough, perhaps I shall get away without it in the future as well.

There are many authors who concoct all sorts of things in order to be able to consider killing as something unavoidable, fine, and fitting. No one remains immune to the most frequently repeated stereotypes of his surroundings. Man naturally views the world through some kind of a standard lens. It is, and has always been, the habit, both in East and West, for ideological commitment to take precedence over analytical impartiality.

There are writer soldiers classifiable as government-party, opposition, and even revolutionary. What they have in common is that they are organization men. When of the same colour of uniform, they call the murderer

a hero. Their own dead die the death of heroes, for they too wanted to kill but were struck down first.

Heroism is licensed barbarism. War turns peoples against each other, telling them, "Now you can show how mean you can be." State murderers are authorized to consider themselves as exemplary patriots.

You swallow the pill of the noble cause and the noble cause breaks out on your skin like leprosy. The multitude around you is noble, those opposite you are mean. The team-leader, the spokesman of the community, is in an extreme case willing to sacrifice millions for the holy cause.

Military orders and independent intellectual creation are incompatible. Reflection is a civilian art, propaganda a military one. Civil society is built on contract, military societies are built on orders. A society is the more military the more the orders and the less the contracts based on equality that it includes. In an autocracy, civil servants are in fact also soldiers. The more soldierly the state the stricter the censorship. The image of the external enemy maintains the army, which in many of the world's countries act as the police. To uphold domestic order requires a frightening portrayal of the politernal enemy.

I claim a quiet old age for myself here in Central Europe. This is possibly not a sober desire, and may even be a kind of intoxication. I want a civil society which restricts the state, in which the citizen is led in his act by his own conscience and not by his superior. A human environment in which I cannot be ostracised, trampled under foot, and killed. I find the extent to which civilians make independent judgements insufficient. For words one can be killed whenever those bearing arms are very excited. My interest lies in that I should not be persecuted for what I am writing. This interest has a bearing on the taboo on killing. When times are bad, censorship can have people hanged.

"Be careful of what you say," has been the commonsense advice to me for as long as I can remember. I am a forebearing, self-possessed person, and what I write still irritates, but this is the fault of irritability. Every country has its particular stupidity which one ought to fall into line with. A civilized country is one in which I do not have to fear for my life for not conforming.

Wherever violence is oppposed by violence, I try to remain non-committed, not to be pleased that one party has a greater number of dead than the other. I have noted that people who are able to take pleasure in military successes are fairly ignorant in fundamental human affairs. They know neither their opponents nor themselves.

Tailored thinking, following the organizational objective, is the opposite of literature. Just as dam-keepers have to guard against floods and firemen against fire, so too intellectuals, in the classical sense of the word, have to guard, by virtue of their occupation, against violence. An independent intellectual is a professional civilian. A dependent mind is not an intellectual in the classical sense of the term.

I have lived through fifty-five years of history, and I am still alive. I have not been killed, nor have I killed anyone so far: I can consider myself fortunate.

In the middle of Europe, history is a local version of fate. It is a kind of force more powerful than us—dangerous, adventurous, hostile. It turns life away from its natural course, it does not want the things we want: in most cases it wants precisely the opposite. As if it wanted to prove that even sober hope is self-deception.

History is armed, it assaults a village and reduces it to ashes. In a peaceful small town one half of the inhabitants suddenly kill the other half. History means that they can kill you. History signifies disaster, and its harbingers are our fellow beings.

History has a taste for consuming murders. It is an archive of the crimes of communities, with many colourful notions and heaped corpses. It is a state mythology and state criminology. History is inseparable from the concept of killing; it may even be considered as the continuous violation of the Sixth Commandment, or rather blackmail involving its violation. It is the interference of arms in civilian life. I think fate approaches like a drunken driver rather than in archaic, tragic majesty. Why should fate be divine? It is rather the joint stupidity of the human race.

It follows from the nature of our species that nothing can thrill man more than the undoing of man by man. The prohibition "Thou shalt not kill" is joined by the desire and a cunning to break the taboo. We identify ourselves both with the prohibition of killing and the temptation to kill. We know it and are frightened of it. In our acute mistrust, we are inclined to forestall our presumed murderer.

We are afraid and so we step up the arms race. They are afraid too and so they over-arm as well. History is the shell for anguish. Since he is mortal, man needs anguish just as much as he needs peace.

Many people are unable to express themselves in any other way than through striking a blow and firing a gun. Rage does not want to be appeased, it wants to kill. Fighting is stronger than peace, since the desire for control

is stronger than the capacity for self-control. We belong to a species of mammals that is able to kill its like and does everything to improve this ability further. And man even has an explanation for why this is good. He likes to enter into explanation. Yes, war is much too human.

It is human, just as intolerance is. Violence implies precipitance. Execution, bombardment, the launching of nuclear missiles do not take long. Precipitance, by its very nature, is not time-consuming. Haste is an increasingly contemporary virtue, the nuclear bomb befits people who are in a hurry.

Aggression is the inability to wait, ineptitude for an intelligent treatment of time. It comprises short-term planning, leaving long-term effects out of consideration. Treaties call for much time and sense. To win somebody over to something does not require mortal threats.

Democracy, by its very essence, is a contracting, parleying outlook, which deduces power, or rather the legality of power, from the contract, this time-consuming creation. In contrast to democracy, which tries to apply the ethics of civilian contracts in interstate relations as well, tyranny applies the principles of war between states to the relations among its citizens, within the state as well. It has no time to negotiate, rather it gives the order to open fire.

The criminal is first and foremost impatient. He is obsessed by the fixed idea that he must act then and there. Aggression is the inability to wait, it is an immediate assertiveness, heedlessness and a hysterical impulse to action. The criminal, a hectic creature, always acts at the eleventh hour, always hard pressed for time. As he is in a constant state of panic, he is unable to commit himself to the flow of time.

He behaves as if life had not yet happened to him, as if he had still everything before him and nothing behind. If the most important thing has not yet taken place, he hastens to make it happen right now, at once. But it is to be feared that he is again mistaken. Perhaps he ought to be doing something else at this moment instead of what he is doing. Perhaps he has need of something other than what he has.

To know the proper moment is to know the proper act.

In anguish of fluster, circumstances cast a longer shadow. For the impatient man the boss constitutes the absolute circumstance. If the boss says, "Fire," the impatient man pulls the trigger. If he says, "Bind the rope round his neck and ankles, and make a proper noose," he will bind it. What if he were to sit down on the ground to consider whether it is correct now to shoot and

hang? In those rare feasts when many sit down, power collapses, for the anonymous soldier no longer obeys the order to kill. Such feasts can also be called revolution.

When a war criminal is called to account, he will only shrug: "The inside is small, the outside is great; I was only a victim in the iron grip of circumstances." Some people actually enjoy getting themselves into a position where they are compelled to kill. But there are also those who, to the utmost of their ability, try to wriggle out of these situations.

There is no time to wait, circumstances force us to fire on demonstrators, to ravish this village, to chop off the head of this guerrilla, after running him over with the lorry. We are forced by circumstances to throw the human-rights fighter out of the helicopter flying over the sea, to throw the priest out of the fast-moving train, or to beat on his face with our fists and cudgels, and push him, trussed, into the cistern. He is to blame for having come to this fate. Had he held his tongue, we would have not laid a finger on him.

If we do not act in time, the contagion will spread, all the dominoes will be overturned, and the enemy become impudent.

The revolutionary leader fumed: armed uprising must be sparked off at once! There is no time to carefully establish public freedom. Circumstances are evil, all the others are evil, but we are good and just even if strict. We would also like to be kind, to stroke people's heads, but unfortunately we must strike, strike, strike. We are ready to pave the way with corpses up to the triumphal arch. A professional revolutionary hits first and caresses afterwards.

Those who desire to fight think they are stuck fast in extreme circumstances. There is no time for reformist fiddle-faddle, for tinkering, the Gordian knot must be cut. There is no time to wait any longer: you must smash and splatter, and annihilate. Reality is scandalous, the idea is beautiful. The past is ugly, the future is enticing. There is the verbal haze of militant communism and militant anti-communism in the air.

What is important is to fight against something, no matter in what name, it is the fight that matters. The radical intellectual does not write with his pen—he fights with it. It is this kind of idealism which usually leads to real foulness.

The radical eye views so-called objective reality as hostile, stubborn, and treacherous. It should be attacked, destroyed, cut open, and defeated. Political and technical radicalism has thought material should be treated severely,

and equally severely should it treat nature, society, individual people, all the objects related to its functioning and everything that lives and exists. As Stalin put it, when wood is cut, splinters fall. Ten million splinters? Twenty million? Or more? It is the order of magnitude that the estimates of historians differ.

Militant ideologies have always been unpleasant to me. Passionate warriors have always found some soft-witted and abstract justification for fighting against any group of people I happened to have been a member of. When I was five, I heard on the radio (since I understood German) that I was the enemy. After that I was a class enemy as well, for my father was a well-to-do small-town ironmonger.

It stood to reason for me to become an anti-fascist. I was nine years old when the notion took shape in Berlin to liberate Europe for ever from those like me. A Hungarian-Jewish small town boy in 1944, I had a good chance of being killed. The odds of survival were two in a hundred.

These Jewish slackers slacken everything. The four greatest figures in modern Jewish culture, Marx, Freud, Einstein, and Kafka, wrote in German, and not badly at that. German ultra-nationalism judged this a degenerate accomplishment and disowned it, contrasting it with the Final Solution. Hitler, in all probability, was not mistaken when he saw in the Jews material that was alien to radical German nationalism and which was undermining it. The Jews would have liked the idea of a United States of Europe but they were not attracted by the idea of Hitler's New Europe under German rule.

The Gestapo came: where are the communist documents? Where is the hidden transmitter? And they took my parents away. A few weeks later, all the Jewish children from my small town had already been cremated. I, with three others, did a disappearance act from the gas chamber. By sheer accident I succeeded in avoiding the final solution. A surviving pest, here I am now worming my way along the paper, to fulfil the task of intellectual subversion which I have undertaken, in this little island of a Central Europe by and large dewormed of Jews, an island where the massacre of the Jews was not fully successful.

When Hitler came to power, presumably he did not yet see in his mind's eye the heaped corpses of Jewish children. If they were able to foresee the future, it is possible that perpetrators as well as victims would be horrified. And if would-be victims were enlightened, perhaps they would not let themselves be killed in such a benumbed state either.

It is unlikely that Hitler was heated by infanticidal desires. He is said to have liked to stroke the heads of children who came his way. What turned this Austrian dilettante into a Hitler was not a unique personal infamy, nor even diabolical power, but his diction. He spoke a language which he brutally simplified; the language of national-military collectivism. The idiom of radical nationalism.

Hitler systematically coupled this idiom with mass technology. It was the natural language of the state that represented order, superiority, the industrial state that was mobilising the masses. There were many in these parts who liked the commanding tone and the strong hand. One should just be told, in a peremptory tone, snapped out, what to do. During Hitler's rule, the mentality of a national-state collectivism was formulated with highly aggressive impatience.

Hitler was forced to exterminate the Jews, since they had not disappeared from here in time. They had nowhere to flee to, for the other states would not admit them. Hitler wanted to remove these pests only from here, from Europe. If they were wanted by those who live in America or Palestine, by all means let them take them. But if they were wanted by nobody, not even their own kind, then they are trash and to be turned into ashes.

Hitler decided this for lack of something better. In fact, he was not even responsible. If everything is determined by the circumstances, which compel haste and collective ideas justifying crime, man is innocent, guiltless and not responsible for whatever hideous crimes he commits.

The deliberate extermination of great masses of minors was an unusual course of action even in our barbarian age. It even had to be hushed up to a certain extent. Since Hitler was a gambler, who went for broke, he counted, and justly so, on the German virtue of carrying out commands unconditionally. How could such a great people, possessing the robust talent of attainment to a masterly degree, be involved in such an infamous situation? Well, precisely through its merits. Seduced and paralysed by the power of the word. Putting across the idea.

The ideological mass murderers of the twentieth century all became intoxicated by a kind of We notion. By some high-flying stupidity, whose very formulation called for a measure of literary quality.

We have no insurance against irresponsible ideological combatants seizing the wheel of government, just as we are not insured against a madman driving straight at us on the highway. Collisions may occur not only between cars but between states, and even between military alliances.

One should not forget that Hitler came to power as a result of normal

parliamentary elections and the forming of a coalition. And one should also not forget that Stalin was elected general secretary in compliance with the organizational rules of the Communist Party. Megalomania does not become apparent at the very outset. Hitler's *chef-d'œuvre* was all the many Hitlerites. Stalin's *chef-d'œuvre* were all the many Stalinists. Their tiny, small-scale counterparts, who trustfully surrendered their lives and their consciences into the hands of the leader. The *chef-d'œuvre* was the Unknown Soldier, with the Unknown Victim under his foot. Had the nationalists and the communists known what some states, including the one they had sworn allegiance to, are capable of, perhaps they would not have considered the organizing rigour of the state so attractive in comparison with the disarray of the market and Parliament. In our century, parties, movements, and ideologies have shown what they are capable of. It has been proved that they are able to deceive their citizens and that the citizens are utterly defenceless intellectually.

I do not believe in the existence of diabolic passion. The most efficient murderers were exemplary clerks.

I find people rather kind; I have rarely come across signs of utter wickedness, much rather signs of harmful stupidity.

Violence is a synonym for defective understanding, or indeed of a committed lack of understanding. The prevailing morality always finds updated arguments to compel others to kill. The mighty of this world do not have to be evil to destroy the world. They are benevolent, elderly gentlemen, grandfathers, who want peace. And yet it may happen that they annihilate the world. To err is human.

*

Those who are certain of having to kill occasionally are soldiers. They are soldiers even when out of uniform. And even if they live by writing books. The soldier is the organization man, he fights, or justifies the fight with some discretional philosophy. Those who give orders to use arms are realists. For them, it is an axiom that killing is inevitable whenever the occasion arises. It is absolutely clear to them that the right to decide when this occasion arises lies with them and their superiors.

The morals of a distinguished soldier—however much he has killed—are like a green meadow: he has served his country. He did his duty. He might be a gentle and kind man, but he has carried out the order, however many deaths are involved, with exemplary firmness, expertly. The more people he has rendered unfit for fighting, the more medals decorate his breast. He has

done a fine thing in annihilating rebellious bandits together with their villages.

*

A military character, be he conservative, radical, right-wing, or left-wing, will always find an organization to which he can subordinate his conscience. It respects hierarchy, unity, discipline, and above all, the leader. It requires some enemy image, to round off the world.

The largest amount of killing has been done by the founders of empires, next come the upholders of states, then freedom fighters and only then criminals. We could not be sufficiently wary of fighters for good causes. One encounters the dual metaphysics of political good and evil everywhere. One side is entirely good, the other entirely evil. The bomb is here with us: the species can exterminate itself. We will die together rather than yield to each other. The bomb bureaucrats form everywhere a generous majority, they defend the bomb.

State and market, state and society—these are sober, realistic, and decorous matters. The state-society undoubtedly atrophies both the economy and culture. The reality of today, however, is the block-state, compared to which a nation-state is already only a county. The block is not autonomous either. It is driven upwards along the spiral of fear by a paradoxical gravitation. The operatic finale in world history is the superkitsch of mutual suicide. The picture of a peaceful mankind surely resembles that of a dinner with all kinds of vegetables with only a slice of thick, underdone steak, naturally a bit bloody, missing.

*

It is open to question how real a nation or a military alliance are. As long as state interests are more sacrosanct than the life of the individual, world peace is in jeopardy. What is needed is intellectual domination over violence or else they will kill us. Everybody has a liberation case-history. The answers to the most important questions are provided by our own biographies. I have no more important interest and more reliable support than my own intellectual freedom.

If killing as a normal method of settling conflicts goes out of fashion, the limelight will move from the warrior to the artist. The artist does not fight, he haunts. He seduces his adversary.

If killing is prohibited, some other method must come into vogue to convince others. This method is enticement, as every mother with small children will tell you. She induces the child to do something—eat the spinach, allow his hair to be washed, go to sleep at last.

If killing is prohibited, personal conscience becomes the highest instance

There is nothing above it. Neither the Church, nor the party, nor the firm, nor even the family. They cannot absolve me from my crime, as they cannot absolve me from the memory of love or the inevitability of death either. God does not say. He will redeem me from the burden of my murder. His Vicars are not authorized to do so either.

Man grows into adulthood by distancing himself from a culture of killing. There are two certain realities: the individual and mankind. Mankind cannot speak, the individual can. If I were not speaking on my own behalf, I would feel I was lying. In moments of light man is alone. Anyone who was almost killed in childhood is closely bound up with the problem of killing, Those awake must care for those asleep. The civilian does not want to be left at the mercy of the armed. The things he does so that he should be less exposed I call anti-politics. I am interested not in the history of the politicians but in that of the people who try to survive the history of the politicians. Scientific preparations for a war cannot be assessed scientifically. Whoever can be killed in no time, at the bidding of faraway, unknown forces, is a victim, even if he does not know this about himself. Perhaps he remains defenceless only because he has not yet realised he is a victim. History is violence but has its stubborn counter-figures. Anyone can be the salt of the earth if he rejects violence.

ARTHUR KOESTLER

# BALL GAME

"Poppa!"

"What's the matter, sonny, what you crying for?"

"....."

"Now come and sit down, there's a good boy, and tell me what you're blubbering about?" (Puts down his paper.) "Well?"

"'Cos we played a game of *meta*...

"So what?"

"...because I... I am emigrating to Jerusalem."

"????"

"We had a P.T. class and we went and played *meta* in the playground."

"Excuse me, sonny, but what is this *meta* again?"

"Well, you see it's you have a ball set down in a hole and each boy has to choose a different nation and they have their hands ready over the ball and when the leader says, for example, 'Rumanian' then all of them run away except the Rumanian who's got to pick up the ball and throw it at one of them."

"Aha." (Recalling with pleasure.)

"And the one who's hit gets a penalty point and anyone who collects five points first is executed."

"And they executed you, eh? There's no need to cry over that. There've been plenty of other people executed too."

"But that's not all..."

"Yes?"

"It was that they called out the names in alphabetic order and we had to say which nation we wanted to be and when they reached Weiss, Hungarian and Scythian and Turanian and Indian were all taken and teacher asked me, 'What's your choice, Weiss?' I'm the last in the roll you know and I didn't know what to say."

"So?"

"So teacher asks me again. 'Come on, Weiss, you can't even answer a simple question like that?'"

Arthur Koestler's literary output in Hungarian is not yet completely known. The story *Meta* (Ball Game) found in the November 1927 issue of *Múlt és Jövő*, a Zionist periodical, is therefore justly worthy of attention. The text shows that the author had a perfect command of literary Hungarian.

"Aha."

"... 'Why don't you choose,' and all of a sudden I had this idea and said: Jew..."

(Mummy: "Woher das Kind nur solche Ideen nimmt?")

"...and there was this horrid silence and only ginger Varga chuckled to himself. And then the game started and at every turn everybody took aim at me and they all laughed their heads off, teacher as well though he does not usually and then the others didn't run away when the nation was called out because they knew everyone was going to throw the ball at me and then at every throw they just stood in a circle laughing their heads off and I had to run and once I fell and hurt my knee so bad it was something awful and from then on I couldn't run away but just stood there waiting to have the ball hurled at me and the Hottentot hit my nose so it started to bleed and it hurt something awful but I didn't cry."

"And what about the teacher?"

"Teacher was standing then with his back to us in another corner of the yard feeding crumbs to the birds."

"And then?"

"Then they executed me and the game started all over again and teacher said, 'Now then, Weiss, it's your turn to pick a nation first now that you've been executed.'"

"So?"

"And then I said 'Jew' once again."

"Why, you silly fool?"

"Because..."

"Answer when you're asked. Why did you say Jew a second time?"

"Just because. And you can hit me if you want to because I'm a martyr anyway."

"You are what?"

"Martyr. 'Cos then when the game started again and they all kept throwing this hard ball at me again and when my throat was choked and I felt that I was going to burst out crying then suddenly I imagined I was the Thirteen Arad Martyrs of 1849 and the autodafé which the Spaniards burnt and it was very nice and I felt I was only dreaming all this and there's no one else in the whole world because the others just went on grinning and I was all by myself and my heart was breaking."

"Schrecklich wie das Kind überspannt ist!"

"But then all of a sudden the leader shouted: 'Jew!' and I forgot at once I was a martyr and picked up the ball and wound up to throw it. But they just stood about there grinning and all of them seemed to say, 'Come on if

you dare!' And there I stood and they stood in a half circle around me and I felt the world go into a spin and I gave this Hottentots' skull a terrific blow with the ball and he passed out cold and I went and leaned against the wall."

"What then?"

"And teacher had a fit and gave me a lecture and entered my name in the form book but I don't mind as I'm emigrating to Palestine anyway."

"Who put that idea into your head?"

"Kelemen, who is in the 8th form and is terribly brainy and he said the Jews are a nation as well and in Palestine they are building a Jewish state and it's going to be like it used to be in the old times we learnt about in Religious Instruction. I mean when the Jews and a state of their own too and they were feared because there were great heroes, like King David, who used a slingshot to kill the giant."

"Ich hab immer gesagt, Du sollst ihn nicht mit dem Kelemen verkehren lassen, er verdirbt das Kind."

"And what happened next?"

"Then we had a Religious Instruction period and the visiting teacher said something about the Israelites having a mission and that they had to suffer among the nations because God wanted them to until the Messiah comes but it'll take a long time yet. And then I asked if it was part of the mission that the different nations always hit me with the ball playing *meta* and that, if I hit back, I should be entered in the form book as an admonition."

"How can you ask a silly thing like that?"

"It isn't so silly because it hurt me and my nose bled too. But the teacher only said that if I was admonished I certainly deserved it and started to change the subject. But I'm telling you I won't ever let them break my nose because it's not a mission but a lot of rubbish and I'm going to emigrate to Palestine and have already joined the club Kelemen belongs to and have left the useless marble club because those times have gone and I have grown serious and I am not crying anymore. You see I only cried before when it all came back to me and I am going to leave for Palestine."

"All right, son, but now leave me to read and get all that nonsense out of your head."

"...and I'll get a sling shot and like King David did Goliath I'll let ginger Varga have it if he comes the Hottentot at me again..."

1927

*Translated by László T. András*

# ARTHUR KOESTLER ON ATTILA JÓZSEF

*An unknown 1939 appreciation*

In 1933, on his way back from the Soviet Union, Arthur Koestler spent a few months in Budapest visiting his parents. It was then that he made friends with Attila József, the poet. He mentioned this friendship in his autobiography, *The Invisible Writing*, illustrating it with a number of poems. Koestler was among the few who early recognized József's genius. This is borne out, incidentally, by an obituary published in Paris in a German exile paper, *Das Neue Tage-Buch*, in 1939, two years after the poet had committed suicide in December 1937. The obituary was rediscovered by Pál Schweitzer, who traced it from a diary entry by Thomas Mann. This, dated May 22nd, 1939, reads: "Article in *Tage-Buch* by Koestler on the suicide of the poet Attila József committed with a deranged mind." I published a Hungarian version of the obituary in the Budapest journal *Mozgó Világ* (1983/6). Koestler agreed to publication.

Koestler began to exercise my mind when, in the course of my research on Ady, I met a few still living members of the early century Hungarian exiles and studied the papers of others. In the Jászi and Polányi family papers in New York, I discovered with surprise that most of those thought of as progressives in early twentieth-century Hungary were linked by ties of kinship or friendship. They argued much but they were held together by the spell of Endre Ady's verse and commitment to progress.

Fifteen years ago, I found Arthur Koestler's name as well in the New York collection of letters and photographs of the Polányi family.* In Hungary, he was officially condemned and known chiefly as the author of *Darkness at Noon*. Few were aware that he was of Hungarian birth. I saw there that at the age of six Koestler attended Laura Polányi's experimental school in Andrássy út, together with Laura Polányi's children, one of whom is the well-known American potter Éva Zeisel who, in the thirties, spent a year and a half in Stalin's jails. After her release, she told Koestler of her prison experiences who made use of this material in *Darkness at Noon*.

Six years ago, when I brought all the Polányi papers home to Hungary, I discovered there a reference to a poem by Attila József ("Happiness is an open book, read it please"), a lyric for a play written in collaboration with Koestler and Andor Németh. The play has been lost, but fortunately the poem has survived. Light on its history was thrown by a letter which Koestler wrote in autumn 1982 in answer to my enquiry. He wrote in English, but added the following excuse as a postscript: "Már sajnos nem tudok magyarul korrekten írni." (Unfortunately, I can no longer write grammatical Hungarian.) No wonder, since he has lived abroad since the age of fourteen, and went back to Hungary only twice in the thirties. With the exception of a few writings at an early age, he did not write any of his works in Hungarian, and none of his works was translated into Hungarian in his lifetime. But he spoke fluent and grammatical Hungarian throughout his life.

In the closing years of his life he wanted to visit Hungary, but at the Hungarian embassy in Vienna, where he applied for a visa, they wanted to extract a promise from him that he would not write about his experiences. Although he had not intended to do so, he was his own man and refused to accept such conditions. He certainly had longed to see the country of his birth again. Perhaps he bought a house at Alpbach in Tyrol to be nearer to Hungary.

I believe that it would have made him happy if he had lived to see the day when Hungarian publishers competed for the right to publish his works, as they do today.

ERZSÉBET VEZÉR

* *NHQ* 108

ARTHUR KOESTLER

# A DEAD POET IN BUDAPEST

At the age of 33, in the Hungarian village Balatonszabados* at a latitude of 47° N and a longitude of 14° E the poet József Attila, in troubled mind, lay down under a railway train. The village idiot of Balatonszabados witnessed the scene; in happy exultation he first gave the news to the family.

Hungarian reactionaries are now about to perform the rites of literary canonization. In his life they treated this man, after whom shortly an entire age of Hungarian literature will be named, as a scurry dog. Since reactionaries, and in addition Hungarian reactionaries are concerned, looking at it from this side, the case developed almost according to schedule, and would not deserve any further attention. What I should like to discuss is the attitude of the opposite camp.

József was, as were the best of this generation, a communist. He turned his back on the movement, the putrefaction of which cost many of the best of them their life or their mind. Like many of these best, he was never able to recover from this disappointment. He was never able to rid himself of this hate-love for the party, like others who tasted of it. This was the card on which everything was staked, on which everything was lost. Shortly before he went mad, he again approached the party, without illusions, nauseated, affectionate, resigned—repelled, not attracted by the fatal compulsion of the perception that the grimace of the opposite side was even more horrible. Consequently, his development was wholly logical to the end, on which the railway train placed the dot on the "i."

He was my friend, which means that he belonged to a clique of writers and journalists to which I also belonged; we were his friends and did our best to get him under the train; now we write obituaries on him. That I present the case of this Hungarian poet to the German readers in exile, whom this apparently does not concern, has a further cause: the case is so exemplary that it would not be possible to construct one more paradigmatic.

It would be commonplace if our man had been an unappreciated genius who was discovered only after his death—that would be the, so to say, classical pattern, it would almost be in order. But the salient point is that Attila József had been discovered as a great poet already at the age of seventeen, that we all knew that he was a genius, and nevertheless let him go to pieces bit by bit in front of our eyes. Because he was, before being

* Balatonszárszó (Editor's note).

canonized, that is while he was alive, quarrelsome, dogmatic, and difficult to put up with. Of course, we all knew from the history of literature that most geniuses were quarrelsome, dogmatic, and difficult to put up with. In essays and obituaries we have readily accorded a genius the right to possess these qualities; at the coffee-house tables of reality they irritated us. I myself, who was aware that he was blessed with genius, dropped him, because he did not interrupt his card game when I visited him in his city after an absence of several years.

Most of us were pleasant and tolerant to him, even helped him a bit, and treated him with that discreet condescending indulgence, which is more sure to destroy a sensitive man than rat poison. He could have been saved if somebody had cared for him really and radically. But actions of this kind demand a considerable and concentrated input of energy and time. One has unpleasant experience with such effusive saving actions: nobody wants to be a Don Quixote of the redemption of souls, so one remains a Sancho of philanthropy. The chasm between literature and reality, between the ideal and the social existence one discovers in such cases; this is horrible. It suddenly turns out that the humanistic values to which we accord an adequate place in writing and speech, cannot be ranked in the everyday practice of this civilization; and that the latter will have to be destroyed, on this account as well.

I am speaking about this case, because it is—in its acute form—typical. It took place in exotic Hungary, in the midst of a people of seven million, which—as the only one in Europe—has no neighbours which are related to it in race or language, and which is consequently the most isolated in Europe. Perhaps it is this exceptional isolation which explains the rare intensity of its existence and the frequency with which it gives rise to geniuses like this man; they explode over its narrow horizon like shells, afterwards one searches amongst the rubble. The hopeless isolation of this nation breeds its talents, its will to assert itself, and its hysteria; to be Hungarian is a collective neurosis. The rest of Europe knows only the export of its trash: the hacks of the press and cinema, the Ferenc Molnárs. Its geniuses, a Csokonai, an Ady, and a József, are born deaf and dumb for the rest of the world. This is why I dare to assert only haltingly and hesitatingly, first because it appears effusive, and second because the reader cannot check it, that this Attila József, of whom the world has never heard and will never hear, and who lay down under a railway train at the latitude of 47° was the greatest poet in Europe. A crazy sense of duty forces me to declare this conviction of mine, which does nobody any good; the poems of the dead poet still stay silent and the train does not stop.

I therefore speak about him, because his case continues to be repeated among us, on a smaller scale. We killed this man together, communists and anti-communists, political colleagues, aesthetes, dialectical materialists, idealists, intellectuals—abstract and mean as we all are. We brag of humanistic Donquixotry and remain good Sancho Panzas on the terraces of the coffee-houses. The unfortunate Tucholsky perished not so much owing to being despised by the persecutors but by being despised by the persecuted. This is the point I wanted to make in discussing this symbolic case.

An entire generation of intellectuals gazes at Moscow as if hypnotized —hypnotized by love or hate or, mostly, a mixture of the two—and nobody dares to say that the notion "Moscow," with all its implications, would never had occurred historically without the notion "Yasnaya Polyana"—with all its implications. (As an explanation for new-baked knowers of Russia: Tolstoy died at Yasnaya Polyana.) And now it seems—some feel it already, but do not dare to say it—it seems that the existential problem of the next generation of intellectuals will be either finding a synthesis between these two concepts—or to end up under a goods train as did the best of us.

Of course, there are more comfortable ways of bedding than on rails; the opportunities for intellectual prostitution have never been as varied and subtle as today. Never has it been possible to commit such base acts with subjective *bona fides*, to commit infamy, and to receive in addition as a dialectic bonus, a clean conscience. Never has it been so easy to convince oneself that one has given oneself out of pure love.

Our symbolic case in that exotic country also understood the dialectic; he even wrote treatieses on Hegel and nevertheless preferred to lie down on the rails. In addition to the village fool, the event was observed by two witnesses: a commercial traveller and the station-master, who signed the record. According to their description, the poet Attila József died the following way: at some distance from the station he stood for a time thoughtfully in front of the train; when the train then began to move slowly, the man kneeled down next to the rails on the railway bed; he bent forward as if he where kneeling on the banks of a brook, put his right hand on the rails as if he wanted to put it into the water; the wheel cut his hand off and at the same time an iron part of the brake smashed his head.

Since he was mad, perhaps he really thought that the rails were a brook. In any event, as he lay down, he was entitled to subjective *bona fides*.

(*Das Neue Tage-Buch*, Paris, May 19, 1939, Volume 20)

# IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR'S LIFEWORK

by

BÉLA KÖPECZI

He gave himself 70 years when musing on his "deaths." He departed at 76 after a life which would have sufficed for several people. Iván Boldizsár lived a life at full blast, he wanted to know everything about his time and its people, he wanted to pass on his knowledge, to act with his ideas in the interests of human relations, the *rapprochement* of cultures, social progress, and peace. He worked incredibly hard, for he wanted to be present everywhere, to express his opinions and to give advice. He shouldered the cares of his large family with the same intensity and worked for their welfare not sparing his strength.

There were many who said he wanted to be a mediator. The mediator has a difficult role. He may be mistaken about the intentions of those maintaining contact with him, and he may convey messages which prove to be false or are misinterpreted. These were pitfalls he could not avoid, yet usually he mediated with success and served good causes. In his youth, he endeavoured to keep in touch with both movements that divided Hungarian life, the rural populists and the urban westernizers. As a metropolitan man, familiar with the middle classes, and intellectuals, he wanted to discover rural Hungary, in search of the options of progress open to it. A book on Denmark, "The Land of Rich Peasants", published in 1939, was part of this endeavour. Writing about his wartime experiences, he did not glorify feats of arms but everyday life in the line. In the meantime, in conjunction with others, he prepared for the coming of another Hungary. After liberation, he supported the National Peasant Party but, in his weekly *Új Magyarország*, he urged a dialogue between the different political schools of thought of the young intelligentsia. In the age of anxiety there was no room for mediation, the sway of circumstances forced also him into a controversial role. His activities

Text of an oration at the funeral of Iván Boldizsár on January 6, 1989, with minor additions.

really took off starting with the early 1960s, when, in Hungary and abroad, he stood for the renascence of socialism, acting in the conviction that economic and cultural reforms would lead to national unity and social progress. The crisis symptoms of recent years filled him with anxiety, and although he already had to fight his illness, he was ready to take an even more active part in public life. As a Member of Parliament, he made efforts to assist in preserving achievements and formulating new reforms. He was preparing to speak in the financial debate at the December 1988 session of the National Assembly with a view to emphasizing the need to support culture and the policy of opening —but death stopped him. During our last conversation, he spoke of this intention with the excitement of a man who cannot be indifferent to public affairs even when he is afflicted with his own troubles.

His mediatory role was most evident perhaps in international relations, where he was interested most of all in two things: culture and peace. He took part in the Paris Peace Conference as an adviser; as undersecretary for foreign affairs he attended the founding session of Unesco. Starting with the 1960s as a member of the Hungarian Commission for Unesco or as consultant of the Unesco central office, he drafted proposals for the progress of cultural cooperation, in the interest of educating for peace, establishing an international system of communication, and disseminating the literatures of languages of lesser currency. As a leading member, and later vice-chairman, of the *Société Européenne de Culture* of Venice, he served the purpose of European cultural cooperation. Within the Hungarian and the International PEN Club, he encouraged contacts among writers and helped to make Hungarian literature known abroad. The greatest and perhaps most enduring of his undertakings in this field is *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, now in the thirtiest year.

He attended innumerable international conferences, and did so everywhere in the spirit of genuine dialogue. On the occasion of a common enterprise of ours, the Central European Dialogue in Vienna, I could see how ingeniously he argued in an effort to reach agreement without giving up his own position on fundamental issues.

When he put the question to himself why he liked travelling abroad, he replied: "I go because I enjoy seeing the battle array of ideas, the cavalcade of proposals, the blade-flashing of creative thoughts, the confrontation of opinions, the collision of objectives." He was predestined to this high-level cultural diplomacy by all his talents: his proficiency in languages, his profound knowledge of European culture and, last but not least, his spirit, kindness and humour; here he saw his mediatory role in acquanting the Hungarian reader with, as he said, "the leading ideas, movements, crises, and hopes of the wide world" and, at the same time, in seeking a place "for

the anxieties and ideas of changing Hungarian society on the intellectual map of Europe."

Iván Boldizsár was a publicist in the full sense of the term, which means service to the public, to its orientation, and literary activity. On that score he declared: "I always write prose I mean to be literature, I buckle down to my every travel diary, article, essay, newspaper report, and even to all my TV talks with the same intellectual tenseness and mental concentration and in the same state of mind as when I sit down to write a story. I attend to the elegance and informality of the style, the force and direction of images, the rhythm of sentences as if I wrote a novella or play." Let us add that the grace and vividness of his style, his talent for story-telling and the interest he took in details, his gentle humour, and his self-irony were present in all his writings.

He wrote novels like *Születésnap* (Birthday) in which he dealt with the problem of war and peace, in a general way, keeping in view the future of all mankind. In fiction, however, he generally preferred the short story, perhaps of novella length. Iván Boldizsár was a first-class teller of stories, in the tradition of that anecdotal literature of which the 19th century novelist Kálmán Mikszáth was the greatest Hungarian representative. He was able to describe personal experiences so as to make them sound characteristic of the age, of the man of our age. Many volumes of his short stories were published, and not only in Hungarian, indicating that what he told of Hungary was true not only of this country.

His reminiscences of the Second World War, including the tragedy of the Hungarian army on the River Don, the siege and liberation of Buda, then Paris and the Paris Peace Conference are of outstanding documentary value. The narrator is at their centre, a narrator who is well informed and aware of what is happening around him, even though he is unable to influence events. One of his most charming volumes, *Halálaim* (My Deaths), which ran into several editions, was an interesting combination of narrative with recollection, this time in the sphere of private life.

Reminding of the descriptive sociology he and his friends wrote in his young days, Boldizsár was happy to discover not only the typical and interesting places of his own little country but also those of foreign lands. In his highly successful *Rokonok és idegenek* (Relatives and Aliens), he wrote about France. (Unfortunately, this volume has not been published in French, though no doubt French readers would have liked to know what a Hungarian as familiar with their country thought of it.) In the second half of the 1960s, he published a book on England, *Zsiráffal Angliában*, it was published in English under the title *Doing England with a Giraffe*. Afterwards he went to

the United States and reported on life in New York "from minute to minute." He wrote a book on German–Hungarian relations, on what is called "historical *Hassliebe*." He produced perhaps the greatest sensation with his travel book *Fortochka* (Little Window), which was the first report from the pen of a Hungarian writer, a Hungarian journalist, on the Soviet Union, on everyday life in the Soviet Union, after the Second World War.

It would take me long to list all the writings outside journalism at which this noted witness to our age ever tried his hand. Suffice it to mention that, in addition to those named above, he wrote plays, film scripts, and fairy-tales. Besides, he translated from the English, French, and German, works by Aldridge, G. K. Chesterton, Richard Hughes, Aldous Huxley, Kafka, Jacques Lanzmann, Josef Roth, Françoise Sagan. It can be said indeed that not a day elapsed without his writing something. And if we add the great number of meetings of various organizations and of the friendly gatherings he attended, we can say he lived a complete life.

To live like a man, to live meaningfully, to be more of a man, more of a Hungarian—these were his favourite phrases when speaking of living. We can say also that, as an observer and journalist, as a participant in an existentially trying age full of great changes, he fought like a man and a Hungarian, and bequeathed to us a lifework which is the mirror and testimony of half a century of Europe and Hungary.

# ON ZOLTÁN SZABÓ, ON THE DAY FOLLOWING HIS DEATH

by

IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR

In the summer of 1983, when I started writing *Lebegők**, Zoltán Szabó was still alive. He died on August 18, 1984. Page 160 was on the typewriter when I learnt of his death a day later, which was a Sunday. A wonderful woman of over ninety, the mother of Lili, Zoltán's first wife, called me. She had been telephoned by Zsuzsa, his third wife, from the small town of Josselin in Bretagne (the second had been Judit, Count Károlyi's daughter, whom he had divorced) and told that Zoltán had not woken up from his sleep the previous morning. Zsuzsa had asked her to inform Zoltán's son, Ádám, who lived in Budapest, as well as me. I asked what had been wrong with him. His former mother-in-law did not know, Zsuzsa had not told her.

I immediately dialled the Josselin number, which I know by heart though I did not call him frequently; I phoned less often than I would have liked to, Zoltán hated the telephone, I had to keep his number secret. It was one of the whims of his later years that no one should call him from Budapest in case someone might visit him and—he kept his address secret too. I respected this wish, yet this is what had spoilt our last meeting. Although after sixty years of friendship, we parted in August 1983 for the first time with a touch of bad feeling on the seashore of Bretagne, I called him again almost a year later, on his birthday, June 4th, the anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Trianon—something we had commemorated annually in our student years—and gave him my best wishes. His voice was more tired than usual. Are you ill? "Hell, no," came the usual reply. We agreed that it was good to get old because the alternative was even worse, but being old was bad all the same.

"Are you writing?" I asked as I had always asked since 1961 when I met

* From the posthumously published *Lebegők* (Floating People). Magvető Publishers, 1989.

him for the first time in London after he had made up his mind not to return to Hungary. He did not welcome the inquiry but I kept making it since I believed that it would be a mortal sin for him to let his enormous talent go to waste. For many years he had avoided giving an answer, but in recent years he had replied with a wavering *yes*. Once, some eight or ten years ago, he even showed me a large bundle of manuscripts in his London flat on the bank of the Thames. "Can I read it?", I asked. "Later." When I called on the occasion of his birthday, I asked him whether it would turn into a book. "Perhaps," he answered. I did not persist. The book, his semi-posthumous volume, *Ősök és társak* (Ancestors and Companions), was already at press in Munich. Semi-posthumous, for he had read the galleys.

### *Twice three decades of a friendship*

For three decades we lived in a sort of symbiosis which this piece also testifies to. We were away from each other for three decades but he was present in my consciousness every day. Whether I was also present in his I do not know, I never asked, he never told me, he was always more reticent in his feelings. I missed being able to compare my thoughts with his, to learn of his ideas at the hour they were conceived, share views with him, listen to his comments, show what I was writing to him, be the first to read the words he committed to paper. In the course of the second span of three decades—three and a half, actually, for it was in 'forty-nine that he decided, together with Count Mihály Károlyi, not to return home from the legation in Paris—we did not see each other for twelve years; afterwards we did and in some years on several occasions. I wrote of our first meeting in London in my *Giraffe*.* Let me quote from it, for more than twenty years have passed since it was published. Just like all the other travel books I have written, it is a diary. Under October 30th, I wrote that I had been wakened by a call from Budapest early in the morning: my wife and children wished me a happy birthday. Then I continued:

"Hardly had I put the receiver down when the phone rang again. A hoarse, slightly lisping masculine voice. It was Zoltán Szabó." (I wrote Z. Sz., since at a time when we had just emerged from the age of the personality cult and the tragedy of '56, his full name could not be written down. Or did I only assume so? Even the initials received a great deal of attention. Good friends of mine also asked how I dared to write it down, was I not afraid of

* *Zsiráffal Angliában*, Budapest, 1965. In English: *Doing England with a Giraffe*. Macmillan, London, 1969.

getting into trouble or of my book not being published. I was not that afraid, yet I did not write his full name; just as he did not even set down my initials in *Új Látóhatár*,* and in his posthumously published book, he was afraid of causing me harm by doing so.)

"Z. Sz., Pollux to the Castor of my childhood and adolescence"... was how I continued my diary, but here I again have something to insert. In *gimnázium* we were referred to not only as Castor and Pollux: in the greater freedom of speech of the upper forms Castrated and Pollutio were also used to refer to us. "...my constant companion through the first poem, the first publication, the first disappointment; through the literary paper we began together, the first rural rides, the first temptations and weaknesses, the first experiments, the first failure and success. After so many unforgotten and unforgettable 'first times', how many common ventures, and struggles and suffering to follow; and how few shared successes... Let's have dinner together, suggested Z., and I thought that in the evening, in the heightened atmosphere of a birthday reunion, when we look back on the past, I would tell him that I had taken his fate as a mirror to look at mine, and looking deep into it, I had never been more at peace."

*From the primary school in Balaton utca to the village of Tard*

Is this now, perhaps, the time to write about this first meeting of ours? Should I leave pending the moment when I started dialling the Josselin number on August 19th, 1984, and stopped after dialling 22? I saw Zoltán as a small boy in the primary school of Balaton utca, then on the 16 tram on the way to *gimnázium*, then on our first rural ride to Tihany... People say that your life flashes before you at the moment before your death. I do not know whether this is so. During the war, when I was in the state of clinical death in a typhoid hospital, I felt a soft, weightless sinking and nothing else. What I was now experiencing, the receiver wet from a sudden access of sweat, at the moment of being informed about the death of my brotherly friend, was that I was all of a sudden re-living our life in common. The first picture in my memory was of the small boy in shorts and, along with him, another boy, Sándor Szalai, who also attended the school in Balaton utca, but then the pictures emerged out of my memory, in the submemorial loom, not in chronological order.

With the receiver still in my hand, I saw ourselves on the 16 tram. We travelled on it every morning to school and waited for each other at Margaret

* A literary journal published by Hungarian exiles in Munich

Bridge. Zoltán came from Visegrádi utca and I arrived from the Újpest Embankment. We travelled together to Petőfi tér. Once or twice a week, Zoltán did not wait for me to come. I was late, ran, travelled alone, jumped off the tram before it reached the stop on Petőfi tér to gain half a minute before reaching Piarista utca. Zoltán was never late. We were in the same form but not in the same class, he was a student in class A and I was a student in class B. There was constant competition between the two classes, a lot of fighting as well; only the two of us concluded a class peace treaty at the end of the first year of the secondary school. We came upon this term —or rather not this one but class struggle—as early as the seventh class, when Father Balanyi was giving an extra lesson to some of the students of the two classes on social science one afternoon. Who will believe us that we heard the names of Marx and Engels as well as a description of their works from a Piarist priest for the first time? Our future careers were outlined in the tenets we learned at an early age, and even more so by the intellectual generosity, the wide tolerance radiated by György Balanyi and Sándor Sík as well as most of the Piarist teachers.

What else did I see on that August morning, next to the telephone, half-lying on my bed?

The first poem on a bench under the statue on Petőfi Square. By that time, in the 6th form of the *gimnázium*, both of us had become imbued with the poetry of Ady. Or was it at the beginning of the 7th? We made up our minds to become the new Ady and the new Babits. We did not divide the roles precisely. Soon it came to light that András Mihály Rónai, from the Berzsenyi Gimnázium, wished to become a new Ady too. Then we decided that we would remain ourselves. I was the one to write the first poem, Zoltán brought his on the day after.

I saw poems again but this time in print. We are editing *Névtelen Jegyző* (The Nameless Notary). I can see clearly its black title-page with white letters and the emblem of the statue of Anonymus in the City Park. Why is it that the next memory which pops into my mind from among the thousand and one others is the minute when on the way home from Berlin, Zoltán is showing me a poem, but not one of his own for he had sent all of them to me to Berlin, but a small volume privately published? It was *Három öreg* (Three Old Men), Gyula Illyés's peculiar half-narrative, half-lyrical poem. The last line of the poem on his grandfather went straight to our blood at first reading, both as a poetic *aperçu* and as a landmark: "...the century-old gentle poverty." This is what impelled us in the direction of rural sociology and not the revolutionary closing line to the collection: "A new Dózsa with a new army!"

There then followed an impatient jump in the biographical and autobiographical memories that flashed before me. We are in the teacher's house at Tard; his name was Rózsa, later on he found himself in plenty of trouble because of Zoltán's book. We are looking at the embroideries made in Tard. József Rózsa—his Christian name has just this second come back to me—was one of those who helped collect questionaries for the sociographical team, Young Hungary; we are trying to find the village we are going to write a book about; I believe it was Rózsa's personality and the fine embroideries which induced us to decide on Tard, it was a book we intended to write in collaboration and to bind in the embroidery of Tard. The latter we did in fact do but the book was written by Zoltán alone, he was a free young man and I had a job and a family; then it was very painful to me, but now, at the end of the road of human life I tell myself that this was the best way, as I told Zoltán and not just once, both in London and prior to London, and I would still tell him so if I only could. The receiver is still in my hand, its interrupted tones indicating that it is engaged, that I should put it back to its place. But I do not stop, I call Josselin.

A man's voice answered the phone. Ede Bene, an old friend of ours, then professor in Rennes, who has since died. He had gone to Josselin to help Zsuzsa. Zoltán had been feeling unwell for some time, he had gone to the hospital of Vannes for a check-up but the doctors had found nothing. The morning before he had quietly fallen asleep for ever. Then I asked where he was now. I did not say the body, and as it came to light later, Ede Bene misunderstood and thought I was asking after Zsuzsa's whereabouts; he answered, "lying in the next room." Since I had in mind Zoltán's body, I thought he had died at home. But he was already lying in the mortuary of the hospital in Vannes. It was only months later that I learnt, when I called on Zsuzsa, who had in the meantime moved there with their little daughter, that Zoltán had died in hospital and the doctors' negligence may have been a contributory cause. Zsuzsa had taken a taxi by herself to the nearby town, requested the body, dressed it, the men in the hospital seated it into the taxi, Zsuzsa took it home, lifted it out of the car with the assistance of the taxi-driver and laid it onto his bed. This is the story of a woman's greatness, worthy of Zoltán Szabó.

### *The Counsellor at the Legation in Paris*

When I arrived in London on October 10th, 1961, I left my luggage at the Russell Hotel and immediately dialled Zoltán Szabó's number. I had

last spoken to him twelve years and five months earlier. On that occasion we had also talked on the phone, he had called me from Paris. "I'm still at the legation," he said. I knew already what this "still" meant: Mihály Károlyi had resigned in protest over the Rajk trial and had chosen a second exile. "I'm calling because I don't want you to hear of it from someone else," he said. He did not have to specify what it was; this was also clear from the word "still." I thanked him. "I hope I'm not causing you too much trouble," he continued. So do I, I replied. I was a Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry responsible for information and cultural activities abroad. It had been part of my job to recommend a candidate for the post of cultural counsellor at the legation in Paris. I had recommended Zoltán Szabó. József Révai called me a few days later. He told me that this was agreeable, but asked me whether I could vouch that my friend would not remain abroad. I had done so.

It did not cause me any great trouble. The sectarian elements of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept dropping hints for weeks, and then openly accused me of being responsible for the Zoltán Szabó affair, saying that I had sent out my best friend to Paris and that we had obviously agreed about it beforehand. At the same time they wanted to get rid of me too, for a long time they had considered me a pain in the neck, they could not bear a state secretary who was not a party member. They would probably have managed to break me—which meant more than just losing your job at the time of the Rajk trial—if it had not come to light that József Révai had approved of Zoltán Szabó's being sent to Paris. This made the foreign affairs chorus keep their mouths shut. All Révai said to me was: "Nice little friends you've got." A month later, he asked me in a joking tone, as if Ivan Karamazov were making a joke, whether I kept in touch with Zoltán Szabó. I was not at the time. "How is that possible?", he asked, "you were the best of friends." I do not even know his address, I replied. Within a few weeks, Révai gave it to me. I did not write to him even then. First of all, out of cautiousness —perhaps Révai and his men were interested in our correspondence. But what could I have told him after all? Why he had not returned? Or that he had not, after all, led me into any serious trouble?

We rarely exchanged letters following our reunion in London, whereas at the time of our first, peeceful parting, when I was a student in Berlin, we had written to each other every week, frequently in Latin. Our youthful ambition caused us to imagine, and this we did not try to hide, that once when we had become real writers, we would publish our correspondence. Or a young scholar would discover it and edit it for publication. For a long time, we both kept the letters. Naturally, he had not taken the letters I had written

to him with him to Paris, they were left in Pest and were lost. I carefully retained his letters up to November '56. The men who ransacked my home had no aptitude in literary matters, they took with them the bundle of letters tied with a piece of cord in the blue folder. When my suitcase was returned I did not find them in it. How useful they would come now, some of them included in this present piece.

When saying good-bye to each other on the phone, Zoltán asked me from Paris to look after myself. He added that he sent his regards to Josette, my wife. And if I was thinking of. . . I interrupted by saying I wasn't. "I know, he answered. "We are going to London." You do not speak English. "I shall learn English. Good-bye." True. Good-bye.

*An evening in London*

When hearing my hullo on October 10th, 1961, he said "Iván," and immediately called out to Judit who spoke French better than she did Hungarian: "C'est Iván." They had been expecting me, I had written to them that I was to arrive that evening. I had once seen Judit in Paris, at the very beginning of 'forty-nine, when I had been sent to try to dissuade Mihály Károlyi from standing up for Mindszenty who had been arrested in December. It turned out that he had no intention whatsoever of taking sides. Judit who had served in the French resistance, had inherited her mother's lovely face, irresistible complexion, wonderful body but she had not inherited her mother's adamant will-power and purposefulness. Her overwhelming gentility fascinated me. "When shall I see you?", Zoltán asked at the other end of the telephone line in London. In ten minutes, I answered. He could not make it that evening. They expected a visitor. But next day, I should take a taxi at six, drive to their place, have a glass of wine with them and then go out to dinner in Soho. And Judit? I asked. They had already discussed that between them. Judit did not want to disturb us. Some other time, perhaps; on this occasion we'd better be left alone, the two of us.

Judit was right. I myself did not mind for I would not have to inquire about their child. All I knew was that the child was not living with them but in an institute. It was a Down's syndrome child. The tired Károlyi and Andrássy blood could not be reconciled with that of the Szabós' only three generations away from serfdom. This was what Zoltán said, not on our first meeting but a year later when I saw him again.

The next evening, I was unable to find the street starting with the letter "L" where Zoltán lived. I have forgotten the full name of the street. Na-

turally, I did not take a taxi, I had to save every penny. I looked the street up on the map, but I did not know then that a number of London streets changed their names at crossroads and then emerged again a few streets farther under their old names. Fortunately, I had set off early and so I was not late. Zoltán was waiting for me in front of his house. Some twenty years later we would surely have embraced each other, in the early 'sixties habits were more reserved: it would have been difficult for us to bear the pathos of men hugging each other. We shook hands, pushed each other away to have a better look, like a painter steps back to look at his picture. "Well," Zoltán said, "you are not so fat after all." For he had had a visitor from Pest who had informed him about my body weight. But you have remained thin. "If we were British, we would be starting to talk about the weather." "But we're not. Are you not even a British citizen?", I asked. We were already walking up the stairs of the narrow, very English staircase. Zoltán was half a step in front showing the way. He stopped. "I'm not. And I never shall be."

Judit was not at home. The shelves were full of books, some of which were familiar to me from his last flat in Gül Baba Street. I had a glass of cognac. Zoltán had three, perhaps four. It did not seem to have any effect on him. We got into his car and drove to an Italian restaurant in Soho. He wanted to know everything about the past twelve years. I wanted to know everything about him. I already knew that he had ended up with Radio Free Europe. But what did he do there? He wrote reviews once or twice a week. On books, exhibitions. On music too, that was something we laughed at. Both of us had been known as stubborn *aphoni* in the school. It was only later that we had come to like music. Later, in 'fifty-five, when I was thrown out of *Magyar Nemzet*, I was blacklisted but I was allowed to write for the music review programme of Hungarian radio. Zoltán too was led in the direction of listening to music by the broadcasting needs of the radio—but a completely different one. He had marvellous records. We put Bach on the record-player. His reviews were mostly read out by others but once a week he read one himself. Somehow I had never heard him. All the same, I knew about it, if from no other source than Zoltán's mother whom I had visited in her lonely little house in Érd. Zoltán was grateful to me for having thought of his mother. For a while he had been receiving letters from her again. (The anticlimax to our friendship was when his mother died, I telephoned to let him know, adding that the funeral would be postponed until he came home. I told him that he could come without running into any trouble, I had been promised that. He did not come.)

But at the time of my visit to London, she was still alive. "What message did she have for me?". "That she is well and sends you many kisses." I did

not tell him what she had actually asked me to tell him. I could not. Almost twenty years had passed since I first asked him whether he would like to come home. To visit at least. At that time doctoral dissertations were already written on the situation in Tard, on his works of village research, and some publishers had come to me imploring me to ask him if he would approve their publication.

But on that first evening we talked about everything but going home. We were happy to see each other. We were happy to be alive. We felt extremely old: we were to be fifty next year. I looked ten years older than Zoltán. True, he had always been more youthful than me, always thinner, up to the age of fourteen a head smaller than me, afterwards taller, his fair hair still copping the huge cupola of his head, his movement easier, his appearance slim. In school he had been so thin that we called him Gandhi, while I had been fighting a battle with weight all my life, my specific utilization of food being as high as that of a good fatted animal. We had heard this term at the very start of our career as rural sociologists. When I used it again, we felt very old for those days seemed to have passed us by a long time before. Zoltán looked younger, obviously, also because he had not had to fret through the nights of the tyranny of the personality cult, the midnights watching for the black car, the self-deprecating positions taken, the worries over our families, should our turn come. He had not lived through the period of the Rajk trial and '56 had not cut new furrows into his forehead. He was ill as infrequently as I was, but he had not known the cares of being penniless for five years his old schoolmate had in the state of being unemployable from 'fifty-five till 'sixty, with a break of six weeks in the autumn of 1956—editing *Hétfői Hírlap* from the end of September to the beginning of November '56.

### *The last meeting in Bretagne*

We met in Bretagne in the summer of 1982 but we did not conjecture that it was to be the last time. Recollection is like the Russian doll with all the smaller dolls inside one another. The doll of the meeting in London hides the meeting in Bretagne and that one hides the painful, irreparable question of why this last one had come off so badly. These dolls are offensive, they are impossible to shrug off. After so many good talks in London—and once we were together in Menton too, at the international congress of PEN—finally, we had not seen each other for years. I began to count and I refused to believe it: more than five years had passed since they had moved to Bretagne from Richmond on the outskirst of London, from the banks

were the Thames narrowed to a trickle, from a lovely little old house which Zoltán, a man of great versatility, had transformed into the counterpart of his former house in Gül Baba utca. I had never seen the house before. Although I travelled to Paris every year, I was never able to spare two days for this trip of five hundred kilometres.

Finally, in 1982, I did manage to get to Bretagne: I was spending the holidays with the family of friends, with my wife and my granddaughter Ágnes, then twelve. On the evening of my arrival—this had become a tradition—I immediately called Zoltán. When can I come over? It's not far, only a hundred and twenty kilometres. He told me not to bother because he had something to arrange nearby a few days later. After several phone-calls, we finally agreed upon a date. I waited all day. Zsuzsa called in the evening: something had come up but they were already in the small neighbouring town, they were spending the night there, she asked us to come and visit them at noon the next day. We did. Zoltán was in a bad mood. With his first words, he gave me a—there is no other word for it—dressing down: why had I given his address to an old schoolmate of ours? Was this what he considered most important after not seeing each other for five years? Never had a conversation started between us with such an unpleasant overtone. I told him that the Kossuth Publishing House wanted to republish *A tardi helyzet* (The Situation in Tard) and perhaps some other works of his as well. He told me to leave him to deal with that. He had entrusted Lóránt Czigány with the matter. Half an hour later he said good-bye, he had to go over to another town in Bretagne, they were to meet the people for whose sake they had come. But he proposed having dinner together. A phone-call came at dinner-time: their daughter was feeling ill, they had to go back to Josselin at once.

Because of this unsuccessful meeting, I became angry with him for the first time in the history of our friendship. The anger lasted until August 19, 1984. Now only the skies of our common youth cover us, with shining stars of Zoltán Szabó's works, not only *A tardi helyzet* (The Situation in Tard) and *Cifra nyomorúság* (Tacky Misery) but the lyrical prose of *Szerelmes földrajz* (Geography in Love), *A vaskapun túl* (Beyond the Iron Gate), the book on the journey we made to Rumania together, which he dedicated: "To Iván, my companion in travel, censor, and annotator," as well as *Összeomlás* (Collapse), the heart rending diary of the French tragedy of 1940.

The smaller doll is that of our outward appearance. When we were sitting on the beach in Bretagne, my granddaughter could hardly believe that the four-year-old little girl, also Ágnes, was not Zoltán's granddaughter but daughter: she was even more surprised that we used to be classmates and

were of the same age. Zoltán's face had acquired wrinkles, his hair had grown thin, only his Gandhi-like quality was what it used to be. And his intellect.

It seems as if nature were giving back to me at the end of my life the few years by which I used to look older in the first half of my life. But it is also possible that problems, more work, frequent excitement, the constant obligation to write, the tempo that does not slow even for a minute, preserve the cells better and keep the veins flexible. Now when I throw myself into the deep water of the history of our youth, seeking the main stream as well as the banks to be reached, I always see next to me his arms diving into the water, I can hear his breathing, the bubbling of the exhaled air, I can feel in my muscles the competition which neither of us wanted to win, for we were not rivals and welcomed the success of the other more heartily than our own. What I regret is not that we were cut off from each other, because we always found each other even though at long intervals: all that I feel sorry for is that while he thought that he was swimming out of the Rákosi cesspool into open water, as a writer he found himself in a dead sea while the waters back home began to regain their oxygen.

I have not foresaken the larger doll either. When I started to talk with Zoltán in Soho about his having been saved from a whole host of vicissitudes by his absence, he grew grim. "Do not envy me for that." "I don't." "I envy you," he said. "How was it?"

I started my story. It became apparent that he knew everything. More exactly, he knew about everything. This is something I saw later in a number of other Hungarians living abroad, especially those who had not been cut off from Hungarian affairs. They read the Hungarian papers far more carefully than we do. They look upon every item or every second item of news as a box with two bottoms. They look for what is hiding behind news and statements. Zoltán read Hungarian papers very rarely. He mostly read the papers which his acquaintances sent him cuttings from or which his friends in the radio called his attention to. Still, he knew about everything. Thanks to his enormous intellect, outstanding sense of connection, as well as his great powers of imagination. Still, I would put it that he knew about everything and not that he knew everything. This came to light especially sharply in how he judged Ferenc Erdei.

He was connected to Erdei with ties of friendship, dating back to the time we were rural sociologists: he was with him in Debrecen in the winter of 'forty-five too, for Zoltán did not wait for Budapest to be besieged, he went to meet the Russians through the Nógrád County he knew and loved so well and he was in Debrecen at the very beginning of the beginnings. (He wrote about his adventurous trip in one of his London pieces, so very limited

in number, unfortunately.) Erdei—who for a while shared lodgings with him—as Minister of Home Affairs entrusted to him the editing of the gazette *Magyar Közlöny*: this was the first new sinecure in the new Hungary. Zoltán performed his duties elegantly, as he always did. Later, he drifted away more and more from Erdei's policy, of supporting the Peasant Party, and drew increasingly closer to the policy pursued by Imre Kovács, to whom he had been bound more closely in friendship in our early days than he had been with Erdei. On the very first evening in London, he poured scorn on Erdei, blaming him for the whole Rákosi agricultural policy. In vain did I try to prove to him (then and on several subsequent trips too) that there would have been no new type of Hungarian cooperatives without Ferenc Erdei and that he was one of those who had inspired and executed the whole new rural policy. Zoltán would not listen. The clock of his memory had stopped in 1949, or even earlier, in 1948 when he had gone to Paris. In his mind, the policy of Erdei and the policy of Révai had merged into each other, mainly as Révai's rhetoric and manipulations. No matter how sovereign an intellect he had, he was unable to rid himself of the spell cast on him by the fate of the emigrants. The film of his life was interrupted the day following his departure. One can only turn a new leaf when coming home. That Zoltán did not manage to return, that his prejudices could be overcome neither by the improvement of the fate of his homeland, nor by the reports of those who had returned home and come back again, nor by our friendship, for his prejudices surpassed even his soaring intellect, is the irreparable harm done to Hungarian literature. This is the cause of the gap in Zoltán Szabó's immortality achieved anyway and of my personal grief and loss.

The first meeting in London was that of happy, newly found friendship between two men, made truly adamant by the great games played in childhood, the *gimnázium*, scout camps, excitement, first loves, writing of poetry, the adventures of youth, bloodless treaties. Both of us loved and frequently quoted Babits's adjective adamant which the poet had borrowed from the English language. Now, in the place the word had been born we used it with special pleasure over the second glass of *valpolicello*. At last we could say to each other openly that our work on the villages had been important.

Zoltán had the upper hand and had kept his position: *The Situation in Tard* had become a standard work in his lifetime, and *Fancy Misery* was brilliant. I was the midwife. This is the word with which Zoltán dedicated to me *The Situation in Tard* and Imre Kovács his *Néma forradalom* (Mute Revolution). Recalling this, now Zoltán added, by way of consolation, "you were the one to conceive it too."

In the company of Zoltán Szabó, my extrovert nature turned inwards,

while his introvert one opened up. This is what happened that evening, and it became the forerunner of later meetings in London. In the Hungarian circles in London, Zoltán referred to our friendship—using Churchill's expression for the British–American connection—as a special relationship. That is what it was. We felt happy together because we knew details from each other's lives which no one else knew: we also knew things about each other which the other had forgotten. It felt good to talk about remembrances but there were times when we did not have to say a single word: they were present and at times they were heated on the wavelength of tertiary references as well.

"Do you remember?" we asked one another and we did remember. Almost all the memories were related to our period of rural sociology. Do you remember when we had an emblem drawn for the series of Service and Writing? It was drawn by Iván Szabó, the sculptor. What news of him? He is still alive. But it was not him who had drawn the emblem: it was Sándor A. Tóth, the graphic artist. This was a question we did not argue about. Do you know, Zoltán, that today no one remembers the series back home any more? People remember *The Situation in Tard* but they no longer remember the series of books. Of course, *Tiborc* is not remembered either. Since that time, it has been published again. Corvina published it in the autumn of 1987 in a fine, facsimile edition, with my epilogue. It was the most beautiful present for my 75th birthday. And do you remember how we started? "You came home from Berlin in the summer of 'thirty-two, and brought with you the word sociography." That I did not remember. And that is not the way it happened, either. Sociography was already here in Budapest. "Yes, but we didn't use it." Maybe. I read in Berlin that it had beeen invented by a sociologist named Steinmetz.

Zoltán had looked up the book by Steinmetz in the British Library earlier. Although German was not the language he knew best, he read it and remembered it better than I did. I had read it in Berlin, in the Dovifat seminar, in 'thirty-two. This man with this strange name taught a discipline which was even stranger, for it was useless, *Zeitungswissenschaft*, the science of journalism. Those who completed his two-year course received a diploma in journalism. I finished this course in addition to studying medicine and this is the first time in my life that I have written down that I am the possessor of this diploma. In spite of that, I did acquire some skills in writing and editing newspapers. In the Dovifat seminar, the book by Rudolf Steinmetz was compulsory reading: we had to buy it stenciled in lilac for twenty-five pfennigs—what strange things occur to one when writing! Professor Dovifat compelled us to read Steinmetz's study because his ambition was that his

students should cultivate journalism at a scholarly level, with the discriminate taste sociographers cultivated sociography. What had remained of Steinmetz's study and Dovifat's lectures by the time I arrived back in Budapest was a simile: the task of sociography in Europe is the same as the task of ethnography in relation to primitive peoples. What I was attracted to was the word sociography itself, for it reminded me of my reading, mainly the studies of Róbert Braun in my father's library. Steinmetz's study had appeared in a journal whose name I cannot remember any more, but I have not forgotten the date, 1913, and I have not forgotten either that Róbert Braun's *A falu lélektana* (The Psychology of the Village) appeared the same year. I told Dovifat this too.

What Zoltán mainly remembered from Steinmetz was that he had been unable to define what sociography was. This reminded us of Raymond Aron's famous lectures in the Sorbonne in which he had talked about the difficulty of defining sociography. Their paperback version had been read by us both, he in London, myself in Budapest, to which we, of course, had to raise our glasses. After clinking glasses we agreed that we recognized Róbert Braun as our forebear and let Steinmetz be referred to by the scholarly.

We had ravioli to start, I ordered *solaglia*, sole as my main course, Zoltán chose *osso bucco*. By then we were already into the second bottle. I remembered that Zoltán was not very fond of sweets for earlier too he had smoked one cigarette after the other, he was a chain smoker. Now he started smoking a cigarette after the meat course, but, to my surprise, he also ordered a *zuppa inglese*, which, contrary to its name, is not a soup but a dessert similar to the Hungarian sponge trifle we call *somlói galuska*. He ate half of it, then pushed the rest toward me, in keeping with our progressive habits which could be traced back to the old Hubertus restaurant in Víziváros. If there he had, very infrequently, ordered a dessert, I had been entitled to half of it. This time I said No, thank you, not because my stomach had become more choosier but obviously smaller. These were the times when I was sorry that I did not smoke: it would have been good to smoke a cigar as he did, leaning back on the chair and discuss the probability of a new war. We agreed again; just as we had no doubts about Hitler's starting a war in the 'thirties, this time we were sure that, in spite of the cold war and the nuclear bomb, there would be no war. "How do you know?", Zoltán asked. Again true to our traditions, I answered: I feel it in my urine. "You cannot say such things in London." I feel it in my stomach juices. Then he asked "And back home? Are you afraid of war?" But he did not wait for my reply, he knew, and he knew well, that we were not, so he continued immediately. "People are more afraid here." It came to light that he actually knew only a few British

people, Judit knew more, but—as I gathered from several conversations of ours later on—he knew more about British opinion by way of osmosis than those who were living in the very heart of it.

It was around midnight when he asked for the bill. I will do half... I started to say, but he waved his hand. I have daily expenses, I protested. "I have my monthly expenses." I would have liked to ask how much, but it just did not slip through my mouth. If he were not working just for Radio Free Europe... but perhaps not even then. He is still living in another world, I cannot make him uneasy either through his salary being much higher than mine or through its being less than I assumed. The proprietor of the Italian restaurant brought the bill. Zoltán paid it but he did not put his wallet away immediately. He held it out to me: "Are you sure you have enough money?" Not enough, but I have.

We began to get up from the table in high spirits. The owner hurried away with the bill and the money but called back to us to wait. He returned with two small glasses of the almost black-brown Fernet Branca. He said it was on the house. We insisted on him drinking with us. He waved towards the bar and his waiter brought him a small glass of cognac. We raised our glasses and drank. We have done what... I began and Zoltán continued: "...the homeland demanded." We were having a fantastic time.

In the street Zoltán looked round, took a few steps, opened his arms: "I have no car. It's been stolen." I grew sad. The gods do not allow mortals born in 1912 even one or two hours of undisturbed happiness. What shall we do? "You will take a taxi," said Zoltán, "I'll go to the police. There is a police station nearby. Call me tomorrow morning." You should call me, you know that *je suis matinal*, and you sleep longer. I said it in French because we had used these words for the last time in Paris, at least twelve years before. Zoltán had always got up late, found it difficult to wake up, while I was *matinal*—this can be better expressed with the French word. The circuit which had been disrupted when we realized that the car had been stolen was back to normal again. A taxi passed by, I got into it. In the end both of us were laughing.

The next morning—at dawn by Zoltán Szabó's standards—he called me at eight. "I've got the car. It had not been stolen. We were drunk." A little, but we should have been able to see at least. "Wait a second. The Italian restaurant has two entrances, from two streets. We went in through one door and came out through the other." *Evviva.* It would have been good to live our lives together.

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# TRANSYLVANIA

## A MINORITY UNDER ATTACK: THE HUNGARIANS OF TRANSYLVANIA

by

PÁL BODOR

Every commoner in Rumania is a second-class citizen. The members of national minorities are third-class. If classification in terms of human rights is at all possible, one could speak of discrimination within a total absence of rights.

The difference between Rumanians and non-Rumanians is the difference between bad and still worse.

Of course, the oppressed are hardly made happy by the knowledge that some are still more severely oppressed. He who is comforted by the thought that his next-door neighbour is still more devoid of rights, will never be free either. Being a prisoner, he is a gaoler.

This is why an approach to human rights in Rumania from the angle of minority rights gives an inaccurate, distorted picture. A discussion concentrating on Hungarian or minority grievances circumvents or even covers up unwittingly the general state of deprivation of rights, i. e. the grievances of the entire population, members of the majority nation included. A purely general approach, however, closes its eyes to the particular minority tragedy, takes no notice of the discrimination of national minorities.

Exclusively minority optics cannot see or show the whole. The same is true of a viewpoint that conceals the doubly handicapped situation of the minorities.

All this can easily be illustrated by a single example, rural development in Rumania. As appears from the world press, the accelerated implementation of a plan conceived long ago, proclaimed by a presidential address in March 1988, unless hindered by international protest and the lack of funds, envisaged the liquidation of about seven thousand villages.

There were some who were shocked only by the consequences for the minorities and interpreted the plan as merely a means of forced assimilation, and there were others who considered the affair in an abstract way, and were

concerned only about the general aspects of interference by force in the lives of millions.

Let me therefore say a few words about this crude utopia as it was originally conceived.

One of the characteristics of the political system of Rumania is the methodical and rapid rotation of leading officials. This does not apply, of course, to the two at the top of the ladder, Nicolae Ceaușescu or his wife Elena. The likely explanation for rotation is the desire to make it impossible to create a constituency or power base.

The amalgamation of villages is in reality the extension of rotation to millions of people. A man induced or obliged to leave his house and holding is bound to lose even the illusion of the last vestiges of his material, and not only material, independence. However ruthlessly he may have been oppressed by delivery obligations disguised as a contractual relationship, he could save for himself at least some of the food he produced in his household or in his garden. As soon as he is moved into a housing estate of an agro-industrial centre, his absolute dependence on the state, his helplessness even in respect of basic food needs, is made explicit. A still more serious consequence is that while in his village he felt at home and was familiar with his surroundings—i.e. he knew who he could count on and who he could not, who he had to be afraid of or be wary of. He could rely on an implicit defensive and offensive alliance of kith and kin, friends and acquaintances for mutual defence and assistance—all this is lost when he becomes an immigrant in a housing estate. Inevitably he is alienated, left to himself, his defencelessness is unequivocal. Not to mention that police surveillance is much easier technically in a housing estate than in the dispersed homesteads of a village; in a housing estate it is, in any event, easier to control comings and goings. It is therefore understandable that the impending danger of resettlement is a serious trauma for all concerned; waiting in suspense and uncertainty even in an indeterminate transition period further diminishes the anyway feeble inclination to produce; doing something about one's future is paralysed by an aggressive paternalism. If the plans become implemented, the changes imposed from above in modes of life will, instead of leading to organic and gradual modernisation, but off millions from their roots in peasant culture which are deep indeed in Rumania.

Thus far all this holds equally true of people in Rumania, be they Rumanians, Hungarians, Germans, Serbians, Russians, Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Slovaks or whatever.

There is, however, a substantial difference.

Over and above this, the Hungarians, Germans and other minorities

pressed into the high rise flats of agro-industrial centres are torn out of their specific, traditional native language culture. A Rumanian peasant in a country with a Rumanian majority is exempted at least from this danger.

It is understandable, therefore, that the national minorities in Rumania are even more afraid of the redevelopment of villages than the Rumanians. They have also something special to fear. And, being aware of the general and long-standing trend of minorities policy in Rumania, and having bitter everyday and historical experiences, they can entertain no doubts in this respect. They have every reason to be concerned for their ethnic identity.

This example, on a *pars pro toto* basis, may be a fairly clear indication of the connection of the general situation, quality and state of human rights in Rumania with the individual and collective rights of the national minorities. The foregoing shows also the type of power structure of which plans like this are typical. In this article, however, I do not in the least intend to deal with a comparison between the present situation in Rumania and Stalinist structures, in no way do I aim to discuss personal power or the cult of the personality. I shall, in outline and by no means exhaustively, discuss a number of processes of the distortion of the collective lives of the national minorities in Rumania. I shall do so in the knowledge that the distortions in the life of the Rumanian nation, of the majority, are profoundly connected with those in that of the minorities, in the knowledge, therefore, that neither the majority nor the minority can be free in isolation. General human rights cannot be effective where they are denied to any national or religious minority.

* * *

In a healthy country, a common sense *raison d'état* obviously dictates that the morale of minority should also be high. This is so obvious that it is almost a political commonplace. The larger the minority is (as, for example, in Rumania) the greater the weight at home or abroad of the minority's grievances.

This is also why countries and empires today do sacrifice more in order to ensure that their national minorities be satisfied. It has long been clear that such efforts pay. The minority is, in its own vital interest as well, a good ally of an order which guarantees its rights.

Why then is it that Rumania, quite to the contrary, takes ever more cruel measures, and sacrifices more and more, financially and politically, maintains an apparatus, shows legislative resourcefulness, simply to lower the morale of the minorities.

It seems there are two principal reasons. A long-term, one might say,

strategic aim: the creation of a homogeneous nation state, and a direct though perhaps not merely tactical reason, which one might call a want of enemies. The system wants to induce a psychosis in the Rumanian nation, making it feel treatened. It wants to make the nation believe that this threat is embodied in the minority. This psychosis can induce the majority to unite and mobilise.

### *Germans, Jews, Hungarians*

In Rumania, for decades now, a political will to create a homogeneous nation state, a purely Rumanian country, has been more and more marked. The growing pressure on the minorities serves this aim in two ways, by driving them away and by forced assimilation, which both reduce their numbers.

Oppression has prompted hundreds of thousands of the members of minorities to leave the country. The exodus of Germans and Jews has already lasted for dozens of years, and recently the Hungarians have followed suit. Those in power have provided the incentives for the minorities, through a discrimination additional to the generally worsening situation; they have also earned praise and money to boot. Liberal emigration policies were rewarded by political and trade concessions, and they were paid and are paid a ransom in hard currency for the Jews and Germans they allow to leave the country.

What further promotes the idea of a country free of minorities (reminiscent of a related National Socialist slogan and not of what is commonly understood as socialism) is assimilation.

You either get used to things, or run away. He who does not emigrate should assimilate.

Assimilation did not apply to Jews. On the contrary, the aim was the dissimilation of assimilated Jews, inducing them, ultimately, to make their escape. The threat of Hitler had moved many Jews to the Left, there to join others who had always been there, and many held high office in the ruling Communist Party after the end of the Second World War. Their elimination had already begun at the time of Gheorghiu-Dej. This did not require any explicit anti-Semitism. The party screenings of 1949 were according to class. They removed those of unsound social origin. It is evident that this covered mainly people who under earlier regimes had also been amongst the oppressed not because of the class they belonged to but because of their ethnic origin. Many Communists in the inter-war years had felt oppressed because of their race, an oppression which grew with the rise of Hitler and

of the Iron Guard, the extreme right wing and antisemitic party in Rumania. The purge conducted from a class point of view in the party (and not only there) afflicted first of all Hungarians, Bulgarians, Jews, Serbs, Russians and Ukrainians. At the same time, it became possible for Jews to emigrate, and since every Jew who had relatives abroad was branded as unreliable—the elimination of Jews contained an in-built snowballing effect. Today, 20,000 Jews at most live in Rumania, but, as they say in Bucharest, the decline in the number of Jews led to a growth in per capita anti-Semitism. Cornel Vadim Tudor, a fashionable court poet and author of texts for great national occasions, three years ago produced a scandalous openly antisemitic poem.

The possibility of leaving the country for Germany put paid to the assimilation of Germans.

The greatest pressure is naturally applied to Hungarians, the largest minority. There are several reasons for this. First of all, after the Second World War, these more than two million people did not consider emigration.* For many years afterwards, there was nowhere to go even for small numbers.

The frontiers between the existing socialist countries were hermetically sealed for a long time. Possibilities of travel were reduced to a minimum. Moving to Hungary from Rumania was possible only in extraordinary circumstances, e.g. following marriage, but this too involved procedures lasting many years. In the 1960s, trips—visits to relatives, holiday travel—grew in frequency, but a Rumanian citizen of Hungarian ethnic origin visiting Hungary had no chance at all to stay on in Hungary with a passport merely authorizing a brief visit. Eight years ago, when visitors moved between the two countries on a large scale, a new interstate agreement eliminated the possibility of dual citizenship. This meant and still means that a Rumanian citizen, regardless of his ethnic origin, can only obtain Hungarian citizenship after the State Council of Rumania first releases him or her from Rumanian citizenship.

Their powerful and organic national consciousness and culture, their deep roots in their thousand year old native land, prompted the Hungarians of Rumania to stay on and hold out. Until the second half of the 1980s, the number of Hungarians, unlike that of Jews or Germans, was not reduced by mass emigration.

Those who dreamt the dream of a nationally homogeneous, purely Rumanian, Rumania, thus had no choice. The only way to deal with Hungarians was to assimilate them.

* Following the Great War, Hungarians in Rumania, primarily officials, professional people, members of the middle classes, opted for Hungary in several waves.

The position of Germans and Hungarians differed in other respects as well.

There is no German-Rumanian dispute concerning priority of settlement, although in the Hungarian view the Transylvanian Saxons settled there before the infiltration of the Rumanians into Transylvania following a call by the Kings of Hungary. The Swabians migrated to the Banat in the 18th century, following the expulsion of the Turks. On the other hand, controversy rages between Hungarians and Rumanians as to who got to Transylvania first. The Hungarian position is that this question is up to historians, archeologists, students of toponyms and of the genesis of languages and other scholars, and should not be of present political or legal relevance. Full equality of rights should not depend on whether the Hungarians appeared in Transylvania in the 9th or the 12th century, or on whether the Rumanians and their ancestors have lived there for six hundred or four thousand years. But the official Rumanian position is that any questioning of Rumanian continuity is an underpinning of Hungarian claims for a revision of the frontiers. The history of Transylvania published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences a short time ago which, needless to say, was not admitted into Rumania, is—according to official Rumania—Hungarian irredentist, nationalist and chauvinist propaganda demanding the return of Transylvania. Suffice it to say that Volume III of this work, based on Hungarian sources, clearly states that in the 18th century already about 60 per cent of the Transylvanian population was Rumanian. A work which states such cannot be accused of being published to support the revision of frontiers.

The difference in the political status of Hungarians and Germans thus follows also from the fact that Rumania marches not on Germany but on Hungary, that the Germans cannot be accused of making territorial claims.

At the time of the 1930 census, still nearly 750,000 Rumanian citizens declared themselves to be Jews by religion. Their number—as I mentioned—has dropped to below 20,000. Jews therefore are not a problem. The number of Germans is today one third of what it was earlier, having fallen to below 200,000. It continues to decline, soon they will be no problem either. The numbers of Slavs (Serbs, Russians, Ukrainians, Lipovenes, Bulgarians, Slovaks) are relatively low and declining. The Gypsies, estimated at around a million, are not mentioned in Rumania at all. The Hungarians are the only national minority of any size, who are conscious of their national identity, culture and tradition, whose numbers do not decline in spite of pressure and statistical manipulation. They, what is more, have shown themselves unwilling to leave in large numbers.

Homogeneisation must therefore cope, first of all, with this national minority. This is a serious problem and a difficult task, but this problem involves also great, immediate political advantages, for the sake of which the present Rumanian system surrenders those more important future advantages which, however, would accompany high morale among the minorities.

It is possible, in connection with the Hungarians of Rumania, to stir up a psychosis of national danger amongst Rumanians. The fantasy of this threat to the nation serves to maintain and justify the notion of a national emergency, affecting politics, law and order and victualling. It acts as a call to the majority to close ranks. In such a situation any sacrifice can be presented as justified. Cold and darkness, hunger, the barrack-room spirit and dictatorship are justified and made supportable by the threat to the nation. People everywhere are willing to endure much when their country's territorial integrity and the vital interests of the nation are in danger.

It is important, therefore, to make the Rumanians believe that their vital interests and the territorial integrity of the country are threatened by the Hungarians.

The mechanism for this functions in a relatively simple manner. The measures taken against the minority are bound to lead to complaints and protests. Every complaint and every protest by a Hungarian in Rumania, let alone anything said in Hungary, will then be described as an attack on Rumania. Whoever demands rights for the Hungarians in Rumania is presented as someone who really wants to take away Transylvania.

In Bucharest, the Budapest demonstration of the 27th of June 1988 against the destruction of villages was described as nationalist, chauvinist, irredentist, anti-socialist and anti-Rumanian. Yet a direct broadcast transmitted by the Rumanian-language programme of the BBC World Service that same evening read out the three major slogans on the banners carried, in both Hungarian and Rumanian: "We do not want Transylvania, we want a life fit for men in Transylvania!" "The issue is not Transylvania, the issue is Ceaușescu!" and "Rumanians, do not let yourselves be deceived—Hungarians are not your enemies!"

It would appear that the present Rumanian system directly needs to maintain the delusion of a threat to the nation.

This need also has a world political aspect.

In the socialist countries dissidents and oppositionists have enjoyed mass support wherever a national issue was harnessed to the cause.

By raising the banner of threatened national interests, i.e. that of nationalism, the current Rumanian system has preempted the prime organizational potential of an opposition.

### *More than two million hostages*

Such tactics also have a direct connection with foreign policy.

The growing insupportable pressure to which the Hungarians of Rumania were subjected also put the Hungarian leadership in a very difficult position. A Hungarian leadership which, it should be remembered, is lately closely associated with reform, openness, support for market forces—as against plan directives—the spirit of enterprise, socialist pluralism: all policies to which President Ceauşescu is profoundly hostile. Thus, these anti-minority measures led to profound disquiet in Hungary and, at the start, to insecurity in reaction. This was very likely intended. Hungarian public opinion made its voice heard, demanding that the government should protest against the oppression of the Hungarians in Rumania, addressing international forums to this purpose. This was too much for the Hungarian leadership in the Brezhnev era. What it did try to do by secret diplomacy and confidential contacts at the party level (excluding the public), proved unsuccessful, and, because of the very secrecy, was of scant comfort to the Hungarians of Rumania who felt abandoned and people in Hungary were far from satisfied. Future historians will establish whether or not the Hungarian leadership of the time made full use of the limited means at its disposal. I think it can be said already now that obligations which it was presumed devolved from membership of the same alliance were given priority over the national interest.

In the autumn of 1985, the Hungarian leadership broke its public silence at the European Cultural Forum, which was part of the Helsinki Process. It was as a response to this Hungarian move that the Rumanian delegation made it impossible to agree to a communiqué.

Since that time Hungarian politicians have spoken ever more loudly against the violation of individual human rights and collective minority rights in Rumania. True, this change has so far manifested itself only in the fact that the government now reacts to Rumanian measures openly and in plain words. There is yet no comprehensive Hungarian policy based on a long-term strategy which, furthermore, is ready to take the initiative. The reason is probably that Hungary still has its hands tied by Rumania being in possession: the more than two million Hungarians of Rumania are hostages, and this still paralyses much of Hungarian policy. In a broadcast

address on the 25th January 1988, however, Mátyás Szűrös, then a Secretary to the Central Committee of the HSWP, stated that Hungarians living beyond the country's frontiers also form part of the Hungarian nation, Hungary feels responsible for them, and is obliged to admit the Hungarians of Rumania who feel forced to flee to Hungary since they suffer persecution as Hungarians. By that time, thousands of Hungarians from Rumania who had travelled with tourist passports or on visits to relatives were in Hungary. And not only Hungarians, Rumanians as well and people of other ethnic origin have ample reason to leave the country. Many make the crossing of the frontier illegally without travel documents, risking their lives. The first—ingenious—Rumanian countermove was soon made. The President amnestied many thousands of common offenders who were in a position to escape across the frontiers. In quick succession, within a few months, as if responding to Hungarian protests, the Rumanians took the following measures: for the first time for many decades, the Hungarian Ambassador was not permitted to give his usual radio and television broadcast on the 4th of April, the National Day of Hungary; it prohibited the use of Hungarian and German place-names in Rumania, in practice in Transylvania and the Banat; an unpublished measure enforced in practice prohibited the giving of names to newly born children which cannot be translated into Rumanian (e.g. Hildegard, Attila); instructions were given to transfer some of the pupils in the final two years of vocational secondary schools of Transylvania, about 1,200–1,500 children in every county, to the purely Rumanian schools in Wallachia, on the other side of the Carpathians, on a contractual basis for five years, transferring as many children from those regions on the same conditions to Transylvanian schools(which means in practice the separation of mainly Hungarian children from their parental home, their native language, their familiar environment, and the resettlement of Rumanian children in towns inhabited largely or partly by Hungarians, i.e. a forcible population transfer). Characteristically, the authorities took care to place boys and girls in different towns and villages. The Rumanian authorities closed the Hungarian Consulate General in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, and organized meetings where local speakers (including Hungarians "persuaded" to do so), requested the Rumanian government not to permit the reopening of the Hungarian Consulate General. In mid-November, Rumania declared the Hungarian Commercial Counsellor *persona non grata*. He was first accused of using a stolen car, then of having caused an accident, and finally of having distributed leaflets urging people to revolt against the régime. He had allegedly done so on the eve of the first anniversary of the 1987 mass demonstration at Brassó-Braşov-Kronstadt.

It is worth speculating on the meaning and purpose of this move. Whoever accuses a Hungarian diplomatist of having distributed leaflets hostile to the régime wishes to establish a connection in the minds of people between a foreign, notably Hungarian, diplomatist and hostility to the system. The suggestion is that all those who object to the régime serve foreign (principally Hungarian) interests.

Thus, the Rumanian political leaders do everything in their power to associate internal tensions with an artificially fomented Rumanian–Hungarian conflict, in order to ensure that discontent will turn not against the leadership but against the internal and external enemy: the Hungarians.

A really enlightened national minority policy based on the Helsinki Final Act and on respect for human rights would, within a relatively short time, satisfy the minorities of Rumania, including the Hungarians, reduce internal tensions and their foreign policy aspects, and overcome the country's international isolation which has become increasingly evident in recent years. Hungary as well as the Hungarian leadership would only be glad to see the situation of the minorities of Rumania improve. The situation of the Hungarians of Transylvania has put them in a politically highly embarrassing, disagreeable and awkward situation: it has increased the pressure brought to bear upon them from below at home. The Hungarian government would be happy to see a solution—although, of course, the Rumanians accuse it of speaking in support of the Hungarians of Rumania without any justification since, as they claim, the national minority problem in Rumania has been solved in an exemplary manner, and once and for all.

### *Modest realist demands*

In a speech in Bucharest on the 30th of November 1988, Nicolae Ceauşescu expressed himself again, and for the nth time, in these terms: "Socialism has finally solved, and in keeping with its principles, the question of equality of rights for all citizens." Can any question, let alone the granting of full and equal rights to nations and minorities, be solved once and for all? Ceauşescu went on to say: "It is inappropriate to quote formulations of different historical periods. The general objective laws, the principles of scientific socialism, are not dogmas but a guide to the continued development of the revolutionary theory under new conditions, in close connection with the new stage, with the new realities...", thus promptly contradicting what he himself said about the final solution of the national minorities problem.

Are demands of the Hungarian minority exaggerated? Is the accusation justified that all the aspiration of the Hungarians of Rumania are an expression of nationalism?

A slight knowledge of the history of national minorities in Rumania is enough to show that the accusation is completely unfounded. Compared to the status accorded to the Swedish minority in Finland, the demands of the Hungarians of Rumania are modest indeed. Their experience is bitter. Their grievances are not recent. Even slight improvements were always gratefully acknowledged.

Hungarians of Rumania have ever been political realists. This was convincingly demonstrated by their reaction to the liberal national minorities policy of Prime Minister Petru Groza, between 1945 and 1949. They displayed loyalty to the Rumanian state and to the Rumanian authorities. They accepted the frontiers drawn by the Allied Powers and they resumed life as a national minority, albeit they expected an improvement over the interwar situation. Their representative political organization, the Hungarian People's Federation, although it did not include all Hungarians in Rumania, doubtless enjoyed mass support. It delivered about 600,000 votes at the elections of the 19th November 1946 in support of the government which, in March 1945, had regained its administrative powers over northern Transylvania, following Soviet military administration, and then cooperated willingly and hopefully with the Rumanian authorities. Confidence in the anticipated future was demonstrated by unheard-of efforts to create their own institutions within a surprisingly short time. The university of the Hungarian national minority, the Bolyai University of Kolozsvár, and an Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology, were soon established, as was the training of agricultural scientists, artists, actors and musicians, all with government support. Elementary and secondary schools were founded, many of the latter continuing the work of centuries-old colleges. After the Great War, many Hungarian state and local government officials, teachers and judges had refused to take an oath of allegiance to the new authorities established by the Treaty of Trianon; after the Second World War, however, the overwhelming majority of Hungarian professionals in Transylvania stayed in their places and got on with the job. Neither writers nor actors, artists or scientists withheld their labour. They put their trust in the democratic promises of the established left-wing powers that be.

True, there were sceptical intellectuals, not of the left, who had not forgotten that the former Rumanian authorities had also made far-reaching promises at Gyulafehérvár (Alba-Iulia) seventy years earlier. They had undertaken guarantees regarding the protection of minorities under the Treaty of Trianon, but had not kept them for long.

These less optimistic Hungarians therefore attempted to exert influence on the Great Powers not to restore the provisions of Trianon fully. They desired frontier rectifications that reflected the ethnic boundaries. Before the Paris negotiations, the British, the Americans, and even the French, were sympathetic, but Molotov's opposition was categoric. Hungarian government feelers met with a similar response. Those Hungarian intellectuals who were less or not at all optimistic—among them Áron Márton, the Roman Catholic bishop of Gyulafehérvár—were presumably afraid that the Groza line, the minorities policy reassuring the Hungarians, would only last until the Paris treaty of peace was signed. The leaders of the Hungarian People's Federation also endeavoured, before the signing of the Paris peace, to ensure minorities protection legislation (the draft text, which was discussed at Székelyudvarhely, has recently been published by the periodical *Kritika*), and the Hungarian commission for the preparation of peace also formulated its own proposals. The Paris Peace Treaty of 1946, however, contained no guarantees for the protection of minorities, and National Minorities Legislation was soon forgotten. (The text of it is to be found in an interview filling a whole volume,* which Rudolf Joó conducted with János Demeter, a leader of the Hungarian People's Federation.)

Unfortunately, events proved the sceptics right.

### *Anti-minority measures in the guise of the class struggle*

First it was the institutions which provided the financial background of the Hungarian People's Federation (and of Hungarian minority life in general) which disappeared or merged between 1947 and 1949, into similar, centrally directed Rumanian institutions (e.g. the Hungarian Economic Association of Transylvania, the *Hangya* and *Kaláka* cooperatives, etc.); as early as late 1947. Gyárfás Kurkó, who opposed this process and was committed to minority protection, was removed from his post as president of the Hun-

* On the Road towards the Equal Rights of National Minorities. Kossuth Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 1983.

garian People's Federation, and from 1949 onwards eminent Hungarians in this organization—sceptics and Communists, Catholics and technocrats alike —were imprisoned (Gyárfás Kurkó, János Demeter, Edgár Balogh, Lajos Csőgör, József Méliusz, Lajos Jordáky, József Venczel, Bertalan Bodor, Pál Szász, Ede Korparich, István Lakatos, not to mention Bishop Áron Márton); liquidation or merger awaited the Transylvanian Museum Society founded by Hungarians, the Móricz Zsigmond and József Attila colleges established for the further education of poor Hungarian students (1949); the Association of Hungarian Writers of Rumania was merged, after barely three years of existence, with the Rumanian Writers' Union, and so forth. All this happened between 1947 and 1950.

The anti-minority import of these facts, however, has only lately become clear. At the time, for a number of reasons, they looked to be part of the radical and, in many respects, violent, general social, political, economic changes imposed from above which shook the whole country, and other East-European countries with similar systems. Nationalisations followed in 1948–1949 and a start was made on the collectivisation of agriculture. This caused a great trauma. The National Liberal and National Peasant Parties, the historical parties of Rumania, were proscribed and their leaders were imprisoned, the Rumanian Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party merged, many political, social, cultural and religious societies and organizations were dissolved. The gradual restriction of the activities of the Hungarian People's Federation, the stifling of its functions concerning national minorities matters until its formally decreed dissolution in 1953, were next; other bodies such as the German Anti-Nazi Organization and the Democratic Jewish Committee suffered a similar fate. This hardly attracted notice, it was all part of the "class struggle becoming more embittered."

Two examples should be stressed.

The change of functions of the Hungarian People's Federation and then its dissolution were decided by those in power on the pretext of the need to fight against "unprincipled national unity." This was formulated, as early as 1947, by Central Committee Secretary Vasile Luca (he is also known as László Luka, being of mixed parentage). The essence is: genuine unity is possible only on the basis of class warfare, not on a national basis. Therefore, there can be no question of any sort special Hungarian organization in Rumania. ("The Hungarian proletariat and the Rumanian proletariat join forces against all exploiters and all reactionaries.")

Before long, however, Gheorghiu-Dej condemned Vasile Luca a.k.a. László Luka to death though for quite different reasons, of course. Sentence was not carried out and the principle remained in force. And since the real danger to

Communism in Rumania was represented first of all by Rumanian forces declared reactionary, also because of their weight, and because the minorities were afraid of Rumanian right-wing nationalist forces—it was not difficult to enlist the support of the Hungarian masses "for the fight against all reactionaries." This helps explain why in the post-war period the Hungarians of Rumania were accused of being the pace-makers of Stalinism.

During the first post-war decade, right-wingers and Communists as well as middle-class intellectuals, mostly Rumanians, were imprisoned in their thousands and condemned to forced labour, where many perished. Thousands of Rumanian, Hungarian, German, Serbian, Bulgarian kulaks, and peasants classified as such, were compulsorily relocated. Under such dramatic conditions it was difficult to discern the first shoots of an undeclared anti-minority policy which was frequently dressed up in the guise of the class struggle. And yet this was already evident during the verification procedures conducted in the party late in the 1940s.

Another example. In 1948 an educational reform was carried out and the schools were nationalised. This was a class-struggle measure and similar steps were taken also in most of the neighbouring countries. Who would have said that this was an act hostile to the minorities? Too true, but the Rumanian Orthodox Church had few secondary schools. Such schools were run by the Roman Catholic Church which had mainly Hungarian as well as Swabian (Banat German) members—it suffices to mention, the Notre Dame, the Ursuline, and the Piarist teaching orders or the schools of the Hungarian Calvinists, the Hungarian Unitarians and chiefly the German Lutherans, or think of the famous Calvinist colleges of Kolozsvár, Nagyenyed, Marosvásárhely, Zilah, the Enyed teachers' training college, etc. As regards the stated purposes, the secularisation of church schools was not anti-minority step, but it was that in its consequences.

Amid the great confusion and fears it was then easy, as it were, to take incidental anti-minority steps. In September 1956, for example, Hungarian intellectuals of Kolozsvár already felt compelled to lodge a protest, with a Secretary to the party Central Committee, Miron Constantinescu, against the suppression of the only newspaper for Hungarian youth, *Ifjúmunkás* (it was suppressed despite being the organ of the Communist youth organization), and the only Hungarian labour weekly, *Szakszervezeti Hét*, was discontinued (although it was the central Hungarian-language weekly of the trade unions controlled by the Party); it was said that in vain had it been demanded for years that the Kolozsvár monthly *Korunk* should again appear, although it had been a Marxist-oriented paper until its suppression at the time of the Vienna Award; up to September 1956 it was requested, pro-

posed and demanded, equally without success, that young Hungarian children should again have a periodical, such as *Cimbora*, edited by Elek Benedek, the great story-teller, between the two world wars. Even more characteristically, at that time, in the autumn of 1956, the Hungarian intelligentsia was compelled to protest most vehemently against the limitation of bilingualism in all fields of life, in dealings with the local authorities, in the administration of justice, in trade and in trade-signs. The training of Hungarian agricultural specialists had ceased by that time.

### *An Autonomous Region without genuine autonomy*

True, the 1952 Constitution created the Hungarian Autonomous Region, which included almost the entire Székelyföld. Outwardly, this seemed a good thing, and in the beginning it caused even Hungarians to entertain illusions. At the same time, it doubtless irritated certain Rumanians who objected to this recognition of the local Hungarian majority, and saw in it a violation of the territorial integrity of the country and of Rumanian sovereignty. Within a short time, it was clear that genuine autonomy was out of the question. The Region was in reality neither Hungarian nor autonomous; bilingualism, i.e. the use of the Hungarian language, was common for a long time, but there was nothing to define the essence of autonomy, to clarify its functioning in practice. Soon the majority of the leading officials of the Region were Hungarian only in their names. What is more, a Rumanian by the name Iosif Banc*, believed to be a nationalist, became the First Secretary of the Party Committee of the Hungarian Autonomous Region and later became president of the council. He was to play a key role in the intensifying Romanisation of the seat of the Region, Marosvásárhely/Tîrgu-Mureș. The Region was first renamed the Mureș-Maghiar Autonomous Region, then by a decree of 1967 already during the Secretary-Generalship of Nicolae Ceaușescu, a part of it, reorganized with Marosvásárhely as the centre became simply Maros/Mureș county.

The Mureș-Maghiar Autonomous Region which was definitively dissolved in 1968, had been only a diversion, albeit it could have been a reassuring reality.

In 1952, the Region was probably created in order to prepare the ground and the atmosphere for the liquidation (to follow a year later) of the Hungarian People's Federation. It was good as a rhetorical trick. What need is

* Later Iosif Banc rose still higher: for a surprisingly long time, by comparison with the usual political practice, he was a member of the supreme organ of the party, the Political Executive Committee, and a Secretary to the Central Committee.

there for a Hungarian organization where the state, willingly and of its own accord, grants autonomy to the Hungarians in a zone where they constitute an absolute majority?

Secondly: by the creation of the Region the validity of Marxist–Leninist nationality policy was suspended by implication with regard to Hungarians outside the Region. Although more than two thirds of the Hungarians of Rumania remained outside the Autonomous Region. It was necessary to curtail the Hungarian character, first of all, of the real capital city of Transylvania, Kolozsvár. The Hungarian Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology had long before been transferred from Kolozsvár to Marosvásárhely; followed by a similar transfer of the Hungarian Academy of Dramatic Art (the Szentgyörgyi István College of Dramatic Art) and of the Kolozsvár periodical *Irodalmi Almanach* (the name was changed to *Igaz Szó*) and all this meant the relocation of a considerable proportion of the intelligentsia. Marosvásárhely, the Székely capital, also possessed important Hungarian institutions: among them were the Székely People's Ensemble with a full orchestra, dance company and children's ensemble of its own; the Székely Theatre, one of Rumania's best companies, attracting a public from the entire country, which successfully performed in Bucharest (even pieces by Ion Luca Caragiale, the Rumanian dramatist), the Székely Theatre where leading Budapest actors also appeared. Marosvásárhely was the location of the Teachers' Training College which trained teachers for Hungarian general schools.

The third chapter of the diversion unfolded only slowly at that time, but it did so all the more perfectly.

Today there is no longer any teachers' training college at Marosvásárhely.

The Székely People's Ensemble has been renamed the Mureş Ensemble: its brief is no longer to present on stage Székely and Székely-Hungarian folk art, its choir was detached from it and attached to a philharmonic orchestra; its children's ensemble was dissolved and its repertoire includes just one Hungarian piece; the staff was methodically reduced in order to employ individuals of almost exclusively Rumanian ethnic origin. The direction of the ensemble is now entirely in Rumanian hands.

The former Székely Theatre functioned as a State Hungarian Theatre for a time, then it opened a Rumanian section; at that time, the manager and chief director were still Hungarians. There is a National Theatre at Marosvásárhely which has a Hungarian section, too, but all the leading executives are Rumanian.

The former Szentgyörgyi István College of Dramatic Art first slowly, quasi tacitly, lost its name (István Szentgyörgyi was one of the greatest Hungarian actors of Transylvania, in Kolozsvár, around the turn of the century),

then it was supplemented by a Rumanian section. Those in charge are now mostly Rumanians, and the number of actors in the Hungarian section dwindles year by year.

The Hungarian character of the Marosvásárhely Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology has vanished, Hungarian teaching staff has not been appointed to it for many years. The rector and dean as well as almost all professors and heads of department are Rumanians, the language of instruction is mostly Rumanian. Since many young Hungarians, particularly from Székelyföld, continue to enrol there, and although their admission is hindered by all manner of means, still the Institute has many Hungarian students, the central authorities have decided in recent years that the vast majority of medical practitioners and pharmacists graduating in Marosvásárhely should be given jobs not in Székelyföld but in the purely Rumanian areas of Moldavia. (This principle prevails also in scattering other Hungarian young professional men and women.)

At first, considerable Hungarian intellectual forces in Rumania were concentrated in the capital city of the Mureș-Maghiar Autonomous Region and, under the pretext of this achievement, Hungarian development was held back in other regions inhabited also by Hungarians, where official data showed the presence of more than a million Hungarians, then at Marosvásárhely, as in a ghetto, the institutions of the Hungarian intelligentsia were slowly eroded. The Literary Publishing House's section established at Marosvásárhely disappeared long ago, there has long been no institutionalized opportunity to pursue Hungarian historical studies. No objective possibility of doing such research exists anywhere. The Bolyai Secondary School which was purely Hungarian twenty years ago, the successor to the centuries-old Calvinist College, today also has a Rumanian section and, what is more, the Hungarian section is declining and the Rumanian section is growing; the school, which is more than four hundred years old, has been ordered to remove from their walls all Hungarian signs, the group photographs of school-leaving classes, and today, for the first time after four hundred-odd years, the headmaster is Rumanian. The same is true of many other schools where there is no Hungarian section at all anymore. The Marosvásárhely radio station that used to broadcast Hungarian-language programmes for more than three hours a day has closed down, Hungarian street-names have been changed, thus Vörösmarty utca became Strada Măraști, Kossuth utca became Strada Călărași.

What I have said of Marosvásárhely has happened, by and large in a similar way, though even more rapidly here and there, to the institutions of Hungarians left out of the former Hungarian Autonomous Region.

## *The fate of the Hungarian University*

In 1959, under the direction of a certain Nicolae Ceaușescu, then a Secretary to the Central Committee of the Party headed by Gheorghiu-Dej, the (Hungarian) Bolyai University of Kolozsvár was merged with the Rumanian Babeș University of Cluj. The reasons given were "putting an end to isolation, strengthening of fraternity under the same roof." Those in charge, the teachers and students of Bolyai University as well as the Hungarians of Rumania, were promised that the united Babeș-Bolyai university would secure the positions of Hungarian-language instruction equal in rank with Rumanian, that the percentage ratio would be observed in the teaching staff, and among the students, and also in appointments to leading posts. It should be noted that the Bolyai University of thirty years ago was a modern university with faculties or departments of law, economics, philology, history, philosophy, psychology, education, physics, chemistry, geometry, mathematics, biology, etc. The university trained teachers, scholars and scientists.

A few years ago, the name of the united university was changed: instead of Babeș-Bolyai, which reminded one of the union of a Rumanian and a Hungarian university, it is now called the University of Cluj-Napoca—which would in itself be all right. Nor would it perhaps be such a big thing that, not once in the past thirty years was a Hungarian the rector of the united university. But twenty-nine years ago, at the time of the union, not even the most hardened sceptics, those who trusted Rumanian state power least of all, would have believed that by 1989 only a single department would be teaching in Hungarian there. Hungarian language and literature are still taught in Hungarian; however, graduates with a Hungarian teacher's diploma in their pocket, are assigned, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to jobs in purely Rumanian regions, where they have to work not as teachers of Hungarian but of some other obligatorily chosen subject. University graduates in Rumania must accept the job assigned to them by the state. Those who for three consecutive years refuse to take up an assigned post lose their diploma and can be obliged to repay the costs of their education.

All this naturally caused unthinkable hurt to the Hungarians of Rumania, particularly to the intellectuals. After the union of the two universities, Dr László Szabédi, a poet, author of an interesting linguistic theory and a brilliant translator of modern French poets, Rumanian novels (by Mihail Sadoveanu) and of Rumanian folk poetry, was humiliated and insulted in public by Nicolae Ceaușescu and consequently threw himself before a train. Dr Zoltán Csendes, engineer and economist, one of the best statisticians of the country, the first Vice Rector of the united university, committed suicide

shortly after his installation, then his wife also took her own life. Before long, Dr Miklós Molnár, Professor of Economics, also killed himself. Starting with the late 1950s, the régime of oppression hounded a great number of outstanding Hungarian intellectuals to death: the poets Domokos Szilágyi, Gizella Hervay, and Kálmán Szőcs also chose to die by their own hand. Jenő Szikszay, a prominent Brassó teacher of Hungarian language and literature, could not bear the burden of humiliation and put an end to his life after the Securitate, the Rumanian political police, had beaten him up. In circumstances unclarified so far, Árpád Visky, an actor at Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfîntu-Gheorghe) lost his life. And, unfortunately, one might list many more such cases.

### *The imprisonment of intellectuals*

On the pretext of counteracting the influence of the 1956 events in Hungary, the merger of the Kolozsvár University was prepared by drastic police measures designed to break down the resistance of the Hungarians of Rumania, especially the young intelligentsia. Similar police measures were taken also early in the fifties, when nearly an entire school class, Hungarian pupils aged sixteen, were condemned to long years—some of them worked in lead-mines!—a good number of whom are today well-known or even famous writers or poets like Ádám Bodor, today in Budapest, Zoltán Veress, today in Stockholm, Magda Telegdi, today in Stockholm, Zsigmond Palocsay, today in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca). In the two years preceding the union of the university a number of students and young teachers were imprisoned. Those sentenced to 5 to 7 years included the writer and poet Géza Páskándi, today in Budapest, the sociologist István Várhegyi, today in Saarbrücken, the poet Ferenc Bartis, today in Budapest, the painter and poet Lajos Pál (who lives in Korond today), the drama critic György Koczka, today in Temesvár/Timişoara, and many others. The charge levelled against a good many of them was based on the programme of university autonomy which they submitted, at the request of the CC secretary in September 1956, to the Party organization. The public prosecutor requested the death penalty for the Kolozsvár lawyer István Dobai, the author of a memorandum which he addressed to the United Nations in protest against the oppression of minorities and asking for help, Dobai was sentenced to twenty years of penal servitude, and many years of imprisonment were meted out to his associates, two of whom died in prison.

It should, however, be added that, at the same time, even though for

different reasons, numerous Rumanian intellectuals, mainly university students, were arrested and imprisoned, they were selected primarily among those who were in agreement with 1956 in Hungary. Let us not forget that Rumanian Stalinism had, and still has, much to fear after the 20th C. P. Congress in Moscow. It was after Stalin's death, in April 1954, that the predecessor and master of Nicolae Ceaușescu, Gheorghiu-Dej, ordered—after a speedy and secret trial—that Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, his principal rival, who had already been languishing in prison for six years, be executed by a shot in the nape of his neck, fearing lest—like Gomulka in Poland who after release from prison became the first man in the party—the more popular Pătrășcanu might succeed him. Gheorghiu-Dej, had the hide to declare soon afterwards that "there is no one alive to rehabilitate."

The Rumanian history of the past forty-five years is therefore not merely the history of the oppression of Hungarians. Hungarian intellectuals could not ignore the blows dealt to Rumanians and to Rumanian intellectuals. They suffered together, by the hundreds and thousands, in prisons and forced-labour camps. And even though anti-minority policies increasingly came to the fore, the overall picture was confused and muddled up by a dictatorship which curtailed and impaired Rumanian national values and interests as well.

There is one more reason why the picture has often become obscure: the high tactical sense of Rumanian politicians. They are able in difficult situations to use ingenious tricks and spectacular concessions with a view to easing tensions temporarily, conciliating and appeasing, and winning over the most discontented, playing for time and gathering strength, and again creating a more favourable situation for itself.

Mention has already been made of the consultation at Kolozsvár in September 1956, where Hungarian writers, scientists, editors and university professors submitted a list of national—and not only national—grievances to the secretary of the Central Committee of the Party. The repercussions of the Khrushchev secret speech were then culminating in Rumania. Originally, the CC Secretary convened the conference in order to reproach and intimidate participants. But the speakers showed themselves adamant, they were equipped with arguments; they spoke of the delivery of produce, the new aristocracy, the abuses committed by the Securitate, the small-minded and dogmatic control of the press and propaganda, of cultural and peasant policies, but they expounded also their national demands in clear terms.

At that time, the Rumanian leadership obviously held the view that the situation was overstrained and dangerous, that is why they made concessions. The participants were informed that the publication of the youth and the

trade-union weekly would again be licensed, the reappearance of *Korunk*, and a children's newspaper, would be endorsed, and that the prohibition of the training of Hungarian agricultural scientists as well as the question of bilingualism and the use of the native language would be reconsidered. Twenty-four hours later bilingual trade-signs reappeared in Kolozsvár. The participants at the discussion rose from their seats in the awareness that it had been worth reminding the party leadership of the mistakes committed in the practice of minorities policy.

A month later, however, after the 23rd of October 1956, the "courageous speakers intent on improving things" were already branded as revisionists, right-wingers and nationalists. In 1957–1958 disciplinary procedures, dismissals, exclusions from the party, then arrests, court sentences and imprisonments followed.

### *The beginnings of the Ceaușescu era*

After Gheorghiu-Dej's death in the spring of 1965, his successor, Nicolae Ceaușescu denied any connection between him and the actions of his former master; he rehabilitated Pătrășcanu, condemned the personality cult, the concentration of power in one hand, the accumulation of state and party functions, and instituted reforms in a number of fields. Culture was given greater freedom and financial support; although cautiously, people heaved a sigh of relief. Even the national minority situation relaxed somewhat. At least, state and party authorities did not hamper so categorically the operation of national minority cultural institutions.

In 1968, Nicolae Ceaușescu opposed intervention in Czechoslovakia. Rumania refused to join the military action of the member states of the Warsaw Pact. In a famous spontaneous short speech on Palace Square in Bucharest on the 22nd of August, Ceaușescu, with a passionate outburst of national enthusiasm, urged resistance to a possible intervention, meaning Soviet intervention in the first place. This had an extraordinary effect: thousands and thousands joined the party and the workers' militia, and he created a considerable stir abroad as well.

There are many who claim today that the Secretary General of the Rumanian party then put himself in Dubček's position only inasmuch as he wanted to defend his personal power at all costs, that he defended not the independence and sovereignty of the country, but the independence and sovereignty of his own rule. But this is alleged by unsympathetic critics in the light of later events.

When Nicolae Ceaușescu urged resistance to possible outside intervention, he was bound to broaden mass support. This, as I mentioned, was started earlier, long before his August speech. During his well-considered political manoeuvre he made important moves in relation to the minorities as well. He separately met prominent Germans and Hungarians. These meetings differed from the usual formal functions. He invited also persons who had been recently released from prison: people who had been ignored and by-passed and persecuted for a long time.

The meeting with Hungarians lasted twelve hours. Participating in it were, besides the Secretary General, leading party officials and important representatives of the government including the Prime Minister Ion Gheorge Maurer. Around twenty Hungarian intellectuals rose to speak, and with a couple of exceptions, all openly formulated the serious grievances of the Hungarians of Rumania and their proposals for the improvement of the situation. Although Nicolae Ceaușescu was not able to control his irritation at times—thus, he indignantly interrupted the writer István Nagy, who objected to the fact that a young man from a Székelyföld village cannot pass his driving test in his native language—the meeting was soon to bring results. István Nagy, the peasant who had become a writer, Ceaușescu's former fellow prisoner in the salt mines of Doftana, was within a short time dismissed from all his public functions, he was not re-elected to the Central Committee of the Party, or to Parliament; although he had been a Communist Party member since the 1920s, the central party daily, *Scînteia*, did not publish an obituary when he died. As a result of the proposals made at the meeting, Kriterion, an independent minorities publishing house of Rumania, was established in Bucharest, then the second cultural weekly of the Hungarians of Rumania, *Hét*, also appeared; Rumanian television started a programme in Hungarian (and German), a miniature institute for research into the national minorities problem was created on paper, Hungarians were soon appointed to a few establishments of higher education, Hungarian rectors were elected (e.g. by the Technical University of Kolozsvár and the Ion Andreescu Institute of Fine Arts in Kolozsvár), a Hungarian Deputy Minister was appointed to the Ministry of Public Education and a Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture, where a national minorities section was organized; a Deputy Subdepartment Head was appointed to direct the propaganda department of the Central Committee of the party; there was formed, as a consultative forum of the party, the National Council of Hungarian (and German) Workers (and similar bodies at county councils where the population included Hungarians or Germans), it was made possible for the youth of national minorities to sit for their university entrance examina-

tion in their native language; the decline of Hungarian-language instruction was for a time arrested at the Babeș-Bolyai University of Kolozsvár and at the Marosvásárhely Institute of Medicine and Pharmacology. A series of measures were taken making people believe in a change of winds. The morale of the national minorities in Rumania improved somewhat, and that was precisely what the leadership wanted. Those who thought this was only a beginning of an upswing were again filled with hopes. They were full of hope in spite of the fact that the Hungarians of Rumania looked forward —if they did—to this "new upswing" from a far worse starting position than twenty years earlier, in 1948. They no longer had a political organization of their own, their own university had been closed down, their native-language schools had been reduced in number, and all that they now received, at their insistent demand, and what was granted to them "generously", was only a meagre fraction of what they had been robbed of.

### *Homogeneisation*

Twenty years have passed since then.

Television broadcasts in Hungarian (and German) have ceased. The Hungarian radio programme in Rumania, which had been extended to seven hours a day after the 1968 compromise, was reduced to one hour daily. The radio stations of Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely were dismantled. (And so was the Temesvár/ Timișoara Radio which had broadcast in Rumanian, German and Serbian.) The Council of Hungarian National Minority Workers is now called the Council of Rumanian Workers of Hungarian Ethnicity, among its members we can no longer find any known or respected Hungarian in Rumania. Formerly, at the very outset, they included András Sütő, the writer; Edgár Balogh, the veteran journalist and militant; Géza Domokos, the manager of Kriterion; Zsolt Gálfalvi, the former head of the national minorities department of the Ministry of Culture and literary critic; József Méliusz, the writer; Károly Király, the former First Secretary of the CP committee of Kovászna/Covasna county and member of the Political Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the CP who was divested of all his functions after he had written Nicolae Ceaușescu a letter criticising the negative development of his minorities policies); Dénes Bálint, an economist and former secretary of the Central Committee of the Young Communist League, whom his frank and honest stand had got into a position where he felt compelled to emigrate; Dr András Antalffy, a doctor and university lecturer who had left the country for similar reasons, and

many more. Probably, however, a good number of them would not have waited till they were dismissed. For the Council of Rumanian Workers of Hungarian Ethnicity, when it is convened once in a blue moon, meets only in order to issue a profession of allegiance to the increasingly nationalist state, and "to condemn" the "irredentist, chauvinist, antisocialist and anti-Rumanian ambitions" of Hungary. And all this, of course, in Rumanian, for in what language could the Hungarian Council—that is to say, the Rumanian council of Hungarian ethnicity—conduct its business if not in Rumanian?

What happens if a member of the Council is unwilling to read out the prepared statement put in his hand? One Ferenc Bálint of Szászrégen/Reghin was reluctant to read out the text put in his hand at a Bucharest meeting of the Council, a text which was couched in terms denouncing "irredentist, nationalist" features in Hungary and the work on Transylvanian history published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences—and he died that same day, in February 1983, under circumstances unexplained to this day. Rumour has it that his family received back his body in a closed coffin which had to be interred without being opened.

Not only were most of the concrete institutional results of the 1968 compromise destroyed, not only their substance was changed, distorted or reversed. The most serious change or distortion was that those in power openly expressed that even the last remnants of the most relative protection of minorities were done away, i.e. that there were no reasons of either internal policy why they wished to maintain even the semblance that the relationship between the national majority and the national minorities was regarded as a permanent partnership. The minority is not a state-forming partner of the majority even in appearance, words or form.

Towards the end of the sixties and in the early seventies, Nicolae Ceauşescu still emphasised (for the last time in March 1971 at a joint meeting of the Hungarian and German councils) that the national minorities, just like the nation itself, had an "enduring" historical future ahead of them. Meaning by that an ideological guarantee that the system did not strive to break up and assimilate the national minorities. At that time, government and party documents alike talked of coinhabiting Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Jews, etc. coexisting with Rumanians.

This terminology had become obscured and gone out of political use by the end of the seventies, and in the first half of the eighties the predominant idea, which had earlier been mentioned only occasionally, was already the notion of a totalitarian "socialist nation" whose organic parts are "all citizens irrespective of ethnicity." This was perhaps an old idea of the Secretary

General, since still at his famous meeting with Hungarians in 1968—although his main aim was to win their favour—he said in his closing speech: all citizens of Rumania are Rumanians, just as all citizens of Switzerland are Swiss, all citizens of the United States are Americans. He did not feel embarrassed a bit by the painful illogicality of that comparison—for he did not wish to define a state of affairs but wanted to offer a programme. This is how there arose the new terminology openly advocating the policy of assimilation, this is how it became possible to formulate official and less official texts which no longer speak of Hungarians, Germans and Serbs of Rumania but were about Hungaro-, Germano- and Serbophone Rumanians.

Nicolae Ceauşescu indicates the notion of a homogeneous future people *poporul unic muncitor* also in a recent speech in November 1988. Its liberal interpretation might be "integrated working people" but the word *unic* means not only "integrated" but also "unique." Earlier, he still spoke of an enduring historical future which the national minorities had before them, on other occasions, as also in his just quoted statement, he refers only to their past: All citizens of Rumania, regardless of their closer or more distant national origin. . . " states chapter VIII of his address "Development of the nation in socialism: Party policy conceived in terms of ensuring full equality of rights to all citizens of Rumania." The title mentions only the progress of the nation, without uttering a word about national minorities. It is recognised that there exist citizens of such and such national origin, but there is no question of collective existence, rights and future. *Popor unic muncitor*. . .

In Rumania, unfortunately, xenophobia has ever been strong, and it was further fomented, just to intensify the persecution of minorities, also by failing to prohibit it. State-supported *ethnocratic* impulses broke loose: the conception and practice of an ethnic-inspired hierarchy are not of recent origin. The concept of the ruling nation, even that of a *Herrenvolk*, are not new either.

Confidentially manipulated ethnocratic considerations of staffing policy already prevailed at the time of Gheorghiu-Dej, and his heir eagerly embraced them. While the only consequence was that the minorities were not allowed to be members of the general staff of the armed forces and of the state security organs, that they could not become senior officers, ambassadors, consuls (diplomatists in general), that national security, national defence, the secret services, counter-espionage, war industry could not employ in third-rate functions Rumanian citizens who could not prove that they were of third-generation Rumanian ethnic origin, the whole thing was no bother to the Hungarians, Germans, Serbs, Jews, Bulgarians and other minorities in Rumania. The ethnocratic point of view, however, prevailed more and more

extensively. As the oppression of minorities was intensified, so citizens of non-Rumanian origin proved to be unreliable from the start. In regions inhabited by minorities, they were ousted slowly even from third-rate political, economic, cultural and educational positions. In the counties formed out of the former Hungarian Autonomous Region, this process can be accurately traced. In Maros county, the First Secretary of the CP committee and the council president, just as the First Secretary of the CP committee of Marosvásárhely and its council president are of Rumanian ethnic origin as are also those in charge of the ideological, propaganda and cultural affairs of the county and city. Today the First Secretary of the party committee of Hargita county with an 80 per cent Hungarian population is already a non-local Rumanian. He is not only unfamiliar with the Hungarians of his region but he does not speak or understand Hungarian either. In Kovászna/Covasna, the third Székely county, the First Secretary is a Hungarian on paper, but he makes up for this congenital deficiency by refusing to speak Hungarian in his office, even in private. His wife is Rumanian, and he chose a Rumanian name for his son, which cannot even be translated into Hungarian (Răzvan), which, of course, is his good right. In the past ten years, the majority of Hungarian factory managers in purely Hungarian region and towns, too, were replaced by Rumanians. A perfect illustration of the ethnocratic principle, of the conception of an ethnic hierarchy, is that when Rumanian sections were instituted in Hungarian schools, it was thought inadmissible to retain a Hungarian headmaster, because the principal of the Rumanian section would also have been a Hungarian; thus the Hungarian school principals are replaced at a rapid rate: 80 per cent of them are reported to have been dismissed after 1986.

These measures also have deeper psychological consequences.

The national minorities are thus forced to develop a sense of inferiority: the Hungarian, Germans, Serbs, Jews and Bulgarians of Rumania are bound to become conscious of being second-class citizens in view of their ethnic origin and language.

Schoolchildren, who are forbidden to use their native language in the playground, develop a consciousness of a hierarchy of languages to the effect that there is a dominant language, Rumanian; that science can be studied only in this language; and that there is a subordinate language, their own. Their native language.

An ever growing number of Hungarian children are compelled to attend Rumanian schools. (Relevant data are given below.) They acquire their knowledge and culture, the terminology of the intellectual sphere in Rumanian. They can use their native language only in the backyard of life, in the

kitchen and the bedroom. They can still ask for a piece of bread in their language but cannot say anything in an intellectual way. They are wise in Rumanian. People more willingly speak the language in which they are wise. These children, these youths, particularly owing to the unceasing pressure brought to bear upon them, can never forget for a minute that they are members of a minority, they are non-Rumanians but are intellectuals only in Rumanian. This is a mass schizophrenic situation.

This humiliating position of dissenters is aggravated by the fact that they cannot study and know their own history, Hungarian history, their own culture and their past, their folklore, ethnography and music. This is why their ethnic consciousness, at least as regards this substantial knowledge, is fragile. The substantial knowledge of their ethnic consciousness is replaced at most by sentiments which, under the conditions of oppression, can easily grow into anger. Young people deprived of their history and forced into illiteracy concerning their national culture are not only defenceless in their ethnic affiliation, but have no support in arguments, and thus are an easy prey to provocation. The deliberately created situation and the forcibly imposed psychic distress are aggravated by the fact that, for example, in Rumanian history lessons, and not only there, Hungarian children are taught that their ancestors were cruel barbarian encroachers, an Asian horde, consequently they are merely tolerated in their native land. For eight to twelve years they are taught lessons only about the ancient noble descent and bravery of the Rumanians, and about the defeats, treachery and brutality of the Hungarians. Hungarians who cannot be ignored in Rumanian textbooks are made to appear as Rumanians. György Dózsa, the Székely-Hungarian leader of the great peasant rising, becomes Gheorge Doja. King Matthias of Hungary, merely because he was Rumanian on his father's side, is Matei Corvin; János Hunyadi, Regent of Hungary, is Iancu dela Hunedoara. The Transylvanian princes, regardless of their origin are transcribed in a deceptive way: thus Gábor Bethlen becomes Gabriel Bethlen, István Báthory becomes Stefan Báthory, Ferenc II Rákóczi appears as Francisc Rakoczi and even Racoţi; Pál Kinizsi, a Hungarian who defeated the Turks, is renamed Paul Chinezul; the name of the great Székely-Hungarian student of Tibetan culture, Sándor Csoma of Kőrös appeared in the Rumanian press as Alexandru Soma. Nothing is taught of Transylvanian Hungarian cultural history, but Hungarian participation at the celebration of the centenary of Béla Bartók, whose native village is part of the territory of Rumania today, as well as of Károly Kós, a great Transylvanian writer, architect and graphic artist, were prohibited. Hungarian students are not allowed to observe, in Hungarian, the traditional valediction ceremony of school-leavers; they are not allowed to sing in Hun-

garian the farewell song usual on such occasions. The social functions of the Hungarian sections in the schools are also obligatorily conducted in Rumanian. At the end-of-year festival of the Brassai grammar school of Kolozsvár a Hungarian student was supposed to recite a poem by Endre Ady. At the last moment, he was ordered to speak in Rumanian, to translate it off the cuff, instead of reciting it, a poem of that Ady who had written in unparalleled warm words about the necessity and beauty of rapprochement between Hungarians and Rumanians.

In the past five years, as appears from reports which are difficult to verify because of the secrecy of official data, the number of Hungarian children being taught in their native language has declined by at least 40 per cent in general schools, and by nearly 50 per cent in secondary schools; during the same period, the number of teachers of Hungarian (in the said two types of school) allegedly declined by 40 and 75 per cent respectively. This happened mainly in consequence of the fact that the teachers of the national minorities are usually given posts in Rumanian schools, while Rumanians (possibly men ignorant of Hungarian) are appointed to Hungarian classes. The last independent secondary school with Hungarian as the language of instruction was closed down, or "sectionalised," in 1985; since that time teaching in Hungarian takes place only in Hungarian sections, in classes and often only in half-classes. In numerous kindergartens in Transylvania, bilingualism was compulsorily introduced for Hungarian children of the youngest age-group who attend the still functioning Hungarian section; the Hungarian staff have been forbidden to speak Hungarian to each other. In many schools, which had been purely Hungarian in the past, and in which today, of course, a Rumanian section also functions, the Hungarian teachers have been forbidden to speak Hungarian to each other in the staff room.

With the exception of textbooks of Hungarian language and literature, which are more and more reduced in volume, and from which many prominent Hungarians who are contributed to universal culture have been omitted, hardly any Hungarian schoolbooks have been published since 1987. In many places the young are compelled to use Rumanian textbooks even in the still existing Hungarian sections; thus, when studying the Constitution, the Hungarian children are informed only in Rumanian that they can freely use their native languages as their civil right.

It is to be noted that the Hungarians of Rumania found it only natural and even necessary and advantageous to acquire a knowledge of Rumanian. This aim, however, would have been served better by the creation merely of a possibility rather than compulsion. It is hard to take a liking to a language

which is forced on the learner. It is painful to speak a language which is it almost impossible to like in this way.

True, this compulsion, at least in the case of the first generation has advantages as well for the minority. The more forceful assimilation is, the greater is passive resistance.

### *Language and ethnicity*

It should be noted that the relationship between language and ethnicity in eastern Central Europe differs from that in Western Europe.

The history of the past couple of centuries shows that whoever in the eastern and central parts of Europe lost his native language, has inevitably changed nationality. In the West, the loss of language has not necessarily involved the loss of ethnic consciousness. Many Basques, Irishmen, Bretons and Scots do not speak their languages but are attached to their ethnic identity. The Basques cry out in Spanish or French that they are Basques; the Irishmen and Scots proclaim in English that they are Irish or Scottish.

In the environs of the Carpathians the change of language results in an irreversible change of nationality within one or two, or at most three, generations.

It may happen that this will be different in the case of the minorities of Rumania. In particular because of the power aspects linked to forced assimilation.

In these parts of Europe, there have already existed powers intent upon denationalising other peoples. There were also Hungarian efforts to assimilate others, mainly after the Austro–Hungarian Compromise of 1867. But they did not possess the totalitarian instrument of a police state which exists in Rumania today. The state did not control the livelihood, position and jobs of one and all nor did it control the press, the schools, the Church. Before the Great War, the Rumanians had their own (national) political party; the Rumanian Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches maintained many of schools and a number of teachers' training colleges; the Rumanian cultural society, Astra, was a large and lively organization, and it had financial backing (Albina) established on a Rumanian national basis. As a consequence of the "centuries of Hungarian oppression and policy of Magyarisation" much talked of in Rumania today, as late as 1910 only 12 per cent of the Rumanians in Hungary knew Hungarian. And those who knew Hungarian did not lose their native language. True, a great part in this was played by the Rumanian national movement whose political, cultural and educational activities kept alive their national feelings.

In Rumania today, it is an act hostile to the state and a nationalist conspiracy if a Hungarian teacher asks that a Hungarian child be enrolled not in a Rumanian but in a Hungarian class, that is if he demonstrates, adduces statistical proof that Hungarian children leaving secondary school after examination in their native language have a better chance of being admitted to a university—even if they must pass a university entrance examination in Rumanian—than those Hungarian children who enrolled in a Rumanian secondary school after leaving elementary school. Their knowledge is more compact and more profound, since they have not been disturbed by the trauma of the change of language imposed on them at the age of fourteen, and their competitive efficiency has also remained unbroken.

But no one in Rumania is allowed to go unpunished if he writes or talks about this fact.

Hungarian-language education in Rumania was not doing really well in 1956 either, yet it disposed over 33 academic secondary schools, 41 vocational schools, 18 technical secondary schools, 2,089 elementary schools and kindergartens. At present there is no Hungarian secondary school in Rumania. Today's young people know nothing of the fact that in the latter half of the 1940s, on the initiative of the Hungarian People's Federation, about a hundred Hungarian-language schools (including a teachers' training college in Bákó, or Băcău in Rumanian) were established for the Csángó speaking an archaic Hungarian in Moldavia. All of it has by now disappeared without leaving a trace.

Until 1974, it was possible to set up minority classes already with 15 pupils, only when the number of children was smaller than 15 was it necessary to ask for special permission. Parents established, through joint efforts, hundreds of classes with fewer than 15 children each. It was already proposed at that time that if several hundred such classes were needed anyway, the obligation to ask for permission ought to be annulled. Let the right to set up classes come within the competence of the schools themselves.

The opposite happened.

The obligatory number required for setting up a school class was raised: to 25 in general schools and to 32 in secondary schools. This happened in 1974, at the time when the Public Education Act was amended, and in spite of energetic opposition to the amendment by the leadership of the Hungarian National Workers' Council, an opposition endorsed by the then Hungarian secretary of state (since removed) in the Ministry of Public Education, and by the then Hungarian Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, János Fazekas (retired because of ill health). The consequences of the amendment are evident. If the number of children is greater than 15 (i.e., always

and everywhere if the number is smaller than 25 or 32 respectively), such a class can be set up only with the special permission of the Ministry. But the granting of permission is no routine matter: the parents must undertake all risks of organization, collecting signatures and submitting applications. I know of cases (at Szatmár/Satu Mare, for example) when and where the political police would not let the delegate of parents board a plane and take the application to the Ministry in Bucharest.

A telling fact is also that the Hungarians of Rumania officially make up 8 per cent of the total population, but the ratio of university students of Hungarian ethnic origin was not even 3 per cent in 1980.

There is today not a field of life where the use of the minority language is not limited.

There is hardly a trace of Hungarians in Transylvania in the Kolozsvár Ethnographic Museum which was founded by Hungarians. The Sepsiszentgyörgy Székely Museum (designed by Károly Kós), which had been established, in accordance with its geographical location and destination, to present the historical, cultural and ethnographic past of the Székely-Hungarians, has become, considering its exhibits, a Rumanian museum. In Marosvásárhely, the works of Imre Nagy, an outstanding painter who left his paintings worth millions to the city, are not on display although they are on show at Windsor Castle. The material of the Transylvanian Hungarian archives (including the Church archives) was transferred to state archives still in the middle of the seventies; and since in Rumania the state archives are under the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs, as are also the police and the Securitate, the material is not accessible in practice.

### *An intellectual embargo*

The limitation and prohibition of the use of minority languages takes some appalling forms. The meetings of the Kolozsvár Hungarian Theatre must be conducted in Rumanian. Hungarian actors and directors are compelled to discuss in Rumanian the questions concerning their Hungarian-language performances. Another example: the closed circuit radio transmission by Kolozsvár university students included also a Hungarian-language programme of two hours a week. On the 17th of September 1988, the Hungarian student editors were told that their two-hour Hungarian programme would be stopped, instead they would have half an hour every week, as part of the Rumanian programme, and they would have to broadcast in Rumanian. This meant that the Hungarian student editors must prepare a "Hungarian

programme" in Rumanian for their Hungarian colleagues. (This may make it clear what should be meant by "Rumanian of Hungarian ethnicity.")

All possible barriers are erected between Hungarians and their own culture.

Late in the 1940s and during the early 1950s, the Rumanian state publishers (no other publishers exist) brought out about 3,000 titles including 700 to 900 in minority languages, 770 titles in 1949. Rumanian book publishing as such almost doubled the number of titles, but the number of minority language publications declined by half. (In 1977, for example 497 titles were published in minority languages—but since this figure includes textbooks as well [about one third], and since, as mentioned above, text book publishing, at least for secondary schools, declined to a great extent—it is easy to understand that the earlier modest supply of minority language books is today at a formidably low level.) Around 1980, only altogether 200 titles were brought out for the two million Hungarians of Rumania, and the number of copies printed was two million. This number, which has since dwindled further, included everything from Nicolae Ceauşescu's speeches to the Hungarian translation of anti-Hungarian historical and literary works by Rumanian authors. The activity of the only publisher for the minorities and working honestly still at the cost of unheard-of efforts today, Kriterion under the direction of Géza Domokos, is obstructed by the roughest methods possible. From the early 1980s onwards, the publishing house was forced to carry out structural modifications (regarding subjects and genres) which made it downright impossible for it to nurse the minority's past, history, traditions and language. Since then, Kriterion has not been free to publish works on Hungarian history, cultural history, linguistics, ethnography, folklore, local history, etc., concerning Rumania. The publication of a monumental Thesaurus of Transylvania compiled by the Kolozsvár Professor Attila T. Szabó, one of the greatest lexicographers of our century, was stopped in 1964 at Volume IV which reached the letter H. The first volume (extending to the letter F) of the Hungarian Literature Encyclopedia of Rumania edited by Edgár Balogh was issued in 1981, the publication of further volumes that were ready was prohibited. The Hungarian book production of the publishing house of the party, Political Publishers, amounted to as many as 40 volumes a year during the seventies, including many original, mainly sociological works: in 1984, however, the office was abolished in practice, the publishers bring out hardly anything in Hungarian except translations of CP pamphlets and resolutions, and of the presidential speeches. The two successors to the Youth Publishing House which survived until 1969, Albatros and Creangă, today publish less than a third of their production of twenty years ago. Dacia of Kolozsvár which

publishes Hungarian and German books, is restricted and loses in importance, No Hungarian books are issued at all by the Academic, Musical, Meridiane, Medical, Scientific and Enycclopedia publishers and many other state publishing houses.

The Rumanian–Hungarian book exchange agreement concluded at the end of the forties was intended to supply books for the Hungarian public in Rumania. The idea was that Hungarian publishers in Rumania would concentrate on Transylvanian Hungarian works, and that Transylvanian readers would obtain Hungarian literature and works on Hungarian culture from Hungary. But the Rumanians continually reduced the quantity of books ordered from Hungary—in the seventies one book imported from Hungary was the share of every sixth or seventh Hungarian of Rumania; but what is still more striking: the Rumanian orders were distorted in their composition from year to year. Rumanian orders were not for works of universal, classical and present-day Hungarian culture, but increasingly for books which if possible had nothing to do with the Hungarian past and present, with Hungarian culture and national consciousness: preferably for books on handicrafts, hunting, fishing, and cookery, on dog-breeding, cat-pampering, amateur photography, and only classical works of international literature which had already been published in Rumanian; only sporadically and ever more rarely they ordered writings by classical and contemporary Hungarian authors, and naturally never books on Hungarian history, cultural history, ethnography, sociology and economics.

The Hungarian–Rumanian cultural agreement, which was first signed at the time of Prime Minister Petru Groza, is irrelevant in practice today. Rumania unilaterally disregarded fulfilment or failed to carry out its provisions. There is today neither a student exchange, nor exchange of scientific experience, nor cooperation between historians, nor an exchange of performing ensembles. This is also an organic part of the strategy intended to hermetically isolate the entire population of Rumania, including the Hungarians, from the outside world, thus mainly from Hungary. In Rumania it is now practically impossible to subscribe to the Hungarian press. In 1987, even the Budapest periodical devoted to world literature, *Nagyvilág*, which formely had a large readership in Transylvania, only had seven permitted subscriptions. All seven subscribers were central Rumanian libraries.

Of course, the Budapest party daily, *Népszabadság*, and the newspaper of the Patriotic People's Front, *Magyar Nemzet*, are not available in Rumania, neither is the daily of the Hungarian government, *Magyar Hírlap*. The decisive majority of papers and books mailed from Hungary are not delivered. At the frontier, every Hungarian printed word is impounded; and there are cases

when a traveller is sent back because he had bought, before departure, that day's Budapest paper.

But Rumania is not content with this intellectual embargo.

Draconian rules to limit personal, human relations are in force. In 1974 it promulgated the Lodging Act, under which foreign citizens are allowed to stay only with parents, children or siblings in Rumania. This was a blow first of all to Hungarians and Germans, more precisely to their many relatives, friends and acquaintances. At the same time, it was decreed that a Rumanian citizen may speak to a foreign citizen only after obtaining preliminary permission, or he had to present, within 24 hours, a written notification of any such contact. This law has since been renewed and further tightened. This hardly calls for comment.

Over and above the great variety of embargoes, which are meant to prevent Rumanian citizens from getting an authentic picture of the outside world, including Hungary, Rumanian press and propaganda do everything possible to stir up anti-Hungarian feeling. This aim is served not only by Ion Lăncrănjan's much debated extremist work *Cuvînt despre Transilvania*. A whole series of works have come out which deal with the period immediately following the Vienna Award and the war and fan passions to white heat: Romulus Zaharia's novel *Ademenirea*, several books by Francisc Păcurariu (e.g. *Geneza*), a work by the historian Mihai Fatu published by the Orthodox Church about Hungarian oppression after the Vienna Award, of Rumanian priests and churches in Northern Transylvania, Raoul Şorban's great interview in the yearbook of the literary magazine *Luceafărul* (which was intended to demonstrate that only Hungarian fascism existed, that Rumanian fascism had been benevolent and humanistic), etc., etc. According to refugees, political education in the armed forces has lately been confined mainly to the reading of books on the atrocities of Horthy fascism, and there are units where young Hungarian recruits must stand to attention during the lecture and listen to the text as if they were responsible.

Despite the extremely severe control by state security, the Hungarians of Rumania have endeavoured to express their protests and have sometimes found Rumanian help in such efforts. Géza Szőcs, the poet, who now lives in Switzerland, one of the editors of *Ellenpontok*, a Hungarian samizdat publication of 1982, together with the noted Rumanian poet and prose writer and essayist Dorin Tudoran, who is now in the United States of America, and with the highly respected Károly Király, perhaps the best known of Hungarian minority self-protection movement in Rumania, wrote a memorandum on the minorities problem addressed to the United Nations. Recently, *Kiáltó szó*, another samizdat publication, appeared in Transylvania, a work

written jointly with Rumanian co-authors. Like *Ellenpontok, Kiáltó szó* occupies a constitutional position supporting peaceful coexistence and understanding with the Rumanians against national oppression.

The Stalinist pattern has been preserved most firmly in Rumania, the nationalist model of the national minorities policy is also inspired by Stalinism, but draws much from the war-time right and extreme right. The general marks of the Stalinist spirit, of personal power and the personality cult, an inflexible, dogmatic policy rejecting any reform, all afflict the entire people, Rumanians, Hungarians, Germans and others in the same way. The national minorities policy, in conjunction with nationalism, prevents the majority and the minority from joining forces. The present situation in Rumania is, unfortunately, a factor of instability which not only hinders détente in Europe but, indirectly and directly alike, also handicaps the progress of the spirit of Helsinki.

Every state is as strong as the respect for human rights in it. The state can reckon only with really free people, those who oppose the violation of individual and collective freedoms.

Whoever supports human rights works for the progress and prosperity of the community.

# INTERVIEW

## APPREHENSIVE PATRIOTISM

*A conversation with Sándor Csoóri*

The September 10th, 1988 issue of the Budapest weekly *Film, Színház, Muzsika* carried an interview with Sándor Csoóri.* The poet and essayist, and author of many film scripts is well known for his moral and political position and the courage he has shown in arguing his case. Like many another writer, he has been opposed to earlier, officially sanctioned ways of thinking yet cannot really be considered a member of an opposition. Csoóri is now 58 and is the son of poor peasant parents.

In his introduction, László Ablonczy surveys events is Csoóri's life that have been signposts in recent years: the silence imposed on him, following the appearance (in Hungarian) of his preface to a book on the plight of Hungarian minorities written by Miklós Duray, a Hungarian in Czechoslovakia, published in the US without the approval of the Hungarian authorities; the award to him of the Herder Prize and a lecture tour of the US where he addressed Hungarian audiences; his recent appearances at the newly founded Hungarian Democratic Forum and other public functions.

For a long time, officialdom frowned on the poet's tolling of the tocsin concerning matters where, for petty and opportunistic reasons, not doing anything seemed to be more appropriate to them. Developments since have justified Csoóri. Now the poet vindicated by events can put forward his views on all important public issues in the press, and on the air. In this respect, including his powerful commitment to the rights of the two million Hungarians in neighbouring countries, mainly in Rumania, where they are subjected to forceful assimilation, he is the successor of Gyula Illyés.

At the start of the conversation they discussed István Csurka's tragedy *Megmaradni* (Surviving).

Q: *Why do you think that István Csurka's play Megmaradni* (Surviving) *is important?*

*A:* I saw the piece two months ago but I consider its writing and production to be as important an event as I did in the half hour after the curtain came down. Once again Csurka was the first to step into a minefield surrounded by no entry notices, above which, so far, dread, a bad conscience and despair circulated, as well as the tact of those condemned to death. For the past forty years the tragic fate of national minority Hungarians could only appear on stage in Hungary as a whisper, as a subordinate event in brackets; now, however, a whole piece struggles around this question. I have read a few criticisms of this play. The wisest decision is not to say anything about them. Discussion must be

* See poems by Sándor Csoóri in *NHQ* 27, 43, 64, 92, and "A Swallow in Church," 110.
Reviews of work: "Song about Infinity and Other New Books of Poetry" by László Ferenczy, *NHQ* 80, and "The Voice Is the Poet," by Balázs Lengyel, *NHQ* 98.

postponed to days more suitable for meditation. At the most, let me note that one might have expected a certain fairness on the part of the keen-eyed critics, since if they are that keen-eyed they ought to know that subjects which could not be discussed for decades can only be stuttered and stammered about on the first morning when speaking out is possible since justified offence makes one's throat ache.

Remember what László Németh said about such a situation in literature? "Great works need large, evenly settled foundations. Poetry, drama, fiction can only find a secure place on soil where there is at least a consensus the size of a clearing in feeling, taste and interpretation, where the writer does not have to clear the ground himself. We lack this reliable soil. One felt that until the ground was prepared, building did not make sense. The house will be small, or it will collapse." Csurka was obviously aware of these shadowy traps in architecture, but he nevertheless wrote his play. Just to show them? In my opinion more likely at the command of despair. A man is murdered in the play, one of the respresentatives of Transylvanian Hungarians. This is not fiction, cunning murders happened in reality as well, like the murders of Árpád Visky, Géza Pálfi, Ferenc Bálint. Csurka's play is therefore a plea for the prosecution, an emotional and intellectual protest. I could call it a prelude to the demonstration a hundred-thousand strong on Heroes' Square, which was not the work of one or two men but of the whole nation. Looking at things from the aesthetic point of view, there is a thing or two one might object to but we know all the same that we were the witnesses and participants of extraordinary events.

Q: *Do excuses have to be made for Csurka's play?*

*A:* No. Looking back we remember many works that were perhaps even more fragile as art but nevertheless decisive in the crucible of history. There are minor poems by Mihály Vörösmarty without which Petőfi could not have written as he did in 1847 and 1848. I think much the same about Csurka's *Surviving*. In that work the Hungarian people that had long been condemned to silence found its voice, in a tragic situation, with fear in their guts. I think we must give that start to those who turn up their nose that what they will write on the subject will be more moving and more polished. I am not saying they can already freely do it, but now, after Csurka, they can start on the job in a more relaxed way.

Q: *Well known facts are presented to us in the play—nevertheless we watch events on stage with anxiety and a dry throat.*

*A:* Yes, because we have been living in a continuous drama for years now, quite apart from the events on stage. We are amid questions of life and death laid bare. Could be that on this sunny August morning you too are troubled by this sombre tone but there is no exaggeration in it.

Until recently, many just poopooed such 'apprehensive patriotism', but the Rumanian village destruction plans will now convince everyone of the nature of the stake. Forty-nine Hungarian and Saxon founded towns have survived in Transylvania. Of these, seven were founded by the Saxons and the rest by Hungarians. The Hungarian character of the most important Hungarian-founded towns has been altered. If, after the towns, the features of several thousand Hungarian villages are also wiped off, the Transylvanian Hungarians will end up as a terminal fragment, who will in next to no time be absorbed by the Rumanians. This is the goal. All possible means are used to achieve this purpose: terror, lies, promptinf of tens of thousands to flee their homeland. How would we survive the mental, linguistic and cultural destruction of two and a half million Hungarians? We would come out mentally broken. If for no other reason, then because we would be eye-witnesses to the crime who had not tried to stop it in time. We ought to have stated openly in front of the whole world; we lost the war and have been punished for that many times

over. Rumania, however, has lost the peace in an ignominious way, and has to answer for that. Crimes committed in peacetime are perhaps even more terrible than crimes committed in wartime.

Q: *The determined declaration of truth is an act of creation, of art: this is a bitter characteristic feature or our life in eastern Central Europe.*

*A:* Truth is not only hard to speak, it is hard to find. Experiencing injustice and defeat is not enough, nor do times suffice when more favourite winds are blowing in politics. A society cannot produce truth as though it were iron or corn, unless the necessary conditions exist. Here, in Central Europe, the circumstances have always been hostile, and the last forty years have been especially disastrous. Life is characterised by petty tactical strife, and for this reason we have not taken even the opportunities that were there, and remained dwarfish. The Irish poet W.B. Yeats once said that it was a great age that can employ its talents. Our age has mostly frustrated them. I think we have to create again such circumstances in which individuals can accumulate as many cares, thoughts and feelings as are necessary for the new truths and new ideas to be born. In this accumulation of values, philosophy and art must assume the most important roles.

Q: *With literature among them.*

*A:* Naturally.

Q: *You have moved away further and further from the theatre. Season after season the Gyula Castle Theatre announces the production of the stage version of your still uncompleted filmscript,* Star in Mourning, *about the decimation of the Székely in the 18th century.*

*A:* I have always had plans for plays which I kept to myself. Mainly in the early 70s when, studying Hungarian folk ballads, I realised they had a cathartic quality that was similar to that of Greek tragedy. They lack epic elements, there are no explanations, they are pervaded by the moving and cleansing force of the inevitability of fate. I should have liked to create Hungarian kin of some of Lorca's plays but my plans have remained suspended. In order to experiment with theatre, alongside poems and essays, I need much more time for complete immersion. I need more time for concentration. Perhaps if I had turned my back on public affairs, I might have made it. Unfortunately, however, there was need of me in politics. I grasped that politics has never had an influence on history as direct and as tyrannical as at present. And since I hold this to be harmful, a symptom of universal superficiality, I could not stand aside. Naturally, I do not claim sympathy for my martyrdom. On the contrary, this is selfishness, pure self-interest; a stubbornness that is reborn again and again. Ever since I have grown up, I have had to realise that man can approach freedom only by overcoming the greatest recalcitrance of the medium. In any event, if, in an age doomed by politics, a writer evades politics of all things, sooner or later all he will produce will be intellectual idylls and quality chatter.

During twenty-five years of to-ing and fro-ing, I have often been told that I stick my nose into politics because I like it. I don't know what it is that is so attractive in the affairs I stirred up, a stirring up for which I have been severely punished, on several occasions, sometimes by being openly prohibited from speaking in public, or publishing writings, on other occasions secret instructions were given with the same effect. I only want to point out one of many. In 1977, thirty-four of us signed a declaration of solidarity with the Czech Chartists. Immediately after that, Hungarian Radio and Television were put out of bounds to me. For ten years, I was not allowed to read out a single line or state my opinion on anything. Yet there was much I could have spoken about, sharing my opinion, desperation, anger and ideas with other Hungarians.

Q: *One banning followed another; still, the educational actions of the powers-that-be did, not teach you to act differently.*

*A:* Paradoxically enough, these punishments reassured me in the knowledge that

I was doing the right thing. Was mine the right way? At least it was my own, I could have been restricted in a hundred ways, yet I always called a spade a spade, nor have I called political illiteracy the considered tactics of taking small steps. I have always felt this simple-minded method of saving face was much too petty. Public obstinacy was not my way, I longed for a public exchange of ideas instead. What I wanted to do was to edit a journal. One morning in the late 70s, I woke up with a strange feeling. I looked through the papers and suddenly a kind of self-reproach overcame me. The fact that we are Hungarian, I thought, is obvious in the papers only when it comes to delicate matters. Or in connection with false questions. In our age, we showed ourselves unable to accumulate any emotional or intellectual capital which the next generations can use. I felt I was reading the petty papers of a misled country which lived only for the present. That is an absurdity. We have to create ourselves anew. We have to will ourselves to become such as we can be. Ten years have passed since that painful morning, and some of us have turned blue from the exertion, but we have not been granted the right to publish a paper. Even Gyula Illyés's name was not enough to obtain a licence. It is on the record that only hours before his death he asked about the Bethlen Foundation and the paper. I wonder how those responsible—János Kádár and the Political Committee, and György Aczél, who was in charge of culture—for the refusal will account to Illyés's spirit and to us for the decade lost.

Q: *And what is the present position concerning the journal* Hitel?

*A:* We have applied to the new government for permission to launch the journal. The reason given for a refusal was a shortage of paper. This is a humiliating discrimination! As if we were not taxpayers and responsible citizens of this state! Those editors, for instance, who had abjectly served the earlier political leadership, who made sure that the country would not get to know our thoughts and ideas, can carry on with their job. All their costs are covered by the state. We did not ask for a single farthing for our paper, no state subsidy—only a licence.

Q: *What are your present hopes?*

*A:* I think that the new obstacles were put in our way by bureaucrats whose reflexes still function in the old way. Sooner or later these will have to be removed. Perhaps the licence will be available by the time this appears in print.*

Q: *What is your aim in publishing* Hitel?

A: *Hitel,* in accordance with Gyula Illyés's wish, is meant to be a forum for new Hungarian progressive forces, and not only for populists, as had been bruited about. Hungarian progressive forces include all who let the present historical situation enter their mind and soul and who respond to it morally. The title itself speaks volumes.** The first association with *Hitel* is Széchenyi, the man and his ideas. He organized a new nobility to get Hungarians back on their feet again, and granted an idea of moral independence to the nation that is still alive today. The traditions we identify with are thus clear. But *Hitel* can be interpreted for the present sense too. Credit is what we have to regain for human feelings in this misguided, fragmented world, in order that history be history, not just clay for ideology, and that society be a community. Credit is needed in the moral, not just the economic, life of a country. It won't be easy. I can feel stagefright even before we get going. But come what may, we and the coming generations have to learn to think as a continuous process. If the exchange of ideas is not continuous in a country, there will be no real alternatives, and no real choice, just an acceptance of whatever fate may bring. Man is

* It was reported on September 5th, 1988, that *Hitel* would appear in 20,000 copies as a fortnightly and the first issue was published on November 2nd. Since then, it has appeared regularly.

** *Hitel* literally means credit.

free only in the act of choice. And this holds for entire nations too.

Q: *Aren't you afraid you'll be called a nationalist if you emphasise the importance of national consciousness to such a degree?*

*A:* I am afraid only of a lack of talent and of corruption. A nation that has found its true self cannot commit errors as we have done. A nation that has found itself won't rush into paranoia or sadism. On the contrary, it can make distinctions, and is amused by differences of opinion. As for me, I intend to work for a high-profile Hungarian national identity. Fate compels us, and urges us, to accomplish this. A small and diminishing nation like ours will be kept alive not by its biological strength but by its consciousness. When watching the evening news on television, we look at the map of a remnant country that has been trimmed right round, dramatic recognition strikes us like a bolt of lightning that we are unlikely ever to conquer anything except inside to make conquests outwardly, only inwardly. We can still conquer ourselves. Every age gave a different answer to the question: who and what is an Hungarian. If I were asked now I'd answer: an Hungarian is someone who is a genius or would like to be one. All right, I'm perfectly aware it's a shocking desire. Rather than miracles, it is only aims like this that can get us to take off.

Q: *And what are our chances?*

*A:* We must have a go. Tell me, have you ever thought of what a new Hungary should look like? What should a rural and an urban Hungary be like? The majority can, at the most, say what it should not be like. Instead of creation, criticism. If you are in, say, Finland, you realise promptly that this northern country has features of its own. You can recognise them in the buildings, the objects, the features of the lakes and the woods. But you can also discover them in the nature of their politics. There was good reason why, in 1975, Helsinki was chosen as the scene of an international conference of 35 countries. The Finns have been able to behave in the 20th century as can be expected from a nation with a marked character. The consciousness, spirit and tastes of a nation show even in the tiniest matters. For instance, in the colour and shape of houses. We have lost that too, and much else. When I was a child, the dominant colour of village houses was white. Today they are greenish-yellow, blue, cement-grey, carcass-brown, at places liver-coloured, in other words, unsightly. I don't have to explain what this mess is indicative of. One thing is certain: style is impossible without awareness. A sense of continuity. This, too, has been leached out of us. Or to put it more precisely, it has been eradicated out of us. Take a good look all over the country: litter everywhere. Paper and rags and fridge doors, empty bottles, cans, rusted pots, disembowelled sewing-machines and the like scattered about. Not to mention weeds reaching to the sky. When you cross the border from the West, well, yes, you drop your eyes. Weed-covered ditches and villages, and disgusting dunnies. Have we been invaded by the Balkans? Let us not pass the buck for our sins so easily to others. We ought to have resisted even at the banks of the ditches!

Q: *You said in an interview that having written so many filmscripts you have had enough. "Unless some local miracle peppers me up and fires me," you added. This may have happened when you wrote the script of Thorn under the Nail, am I right?*

*A:* First I thought that was so, but later I realized that both Sándor Sára and I ought to have gone deeper. Still I am glad the film was made. After all those documentaries, Sára made a feature film again. I am more and more inclined to believe that art is not only an act of inspiration, it is also continuous practice. Both Sára and I had a gap of ten years. The imagination gets rusty or misfires after a long time like this. That the film won the Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary not only surprised me but also made me very happy. Secretly, I daydream, with quickened heartbeat, excitement and a sense of guilt, about a few films I could still write.

*Q: How do heartbeat and a sense of guilt meet?*

*A:* The explanation is that after each job I complete I am filled with shame. I wanted to do something else, in a different way, more deeply, less predictably, and I always eagerly hope for a new chance to pass the test.

*Q: While sitting and conversing here, my eyes wander again and again to the strong features of Gyula Illyés. The portrait was painted by János Orosz. What would Illyés think about the recent changes in our lives?*

*A:* It is difficult for me to answer. I saw him in quite a few historic situations, and he never got stuck in any of them. He stood head and shoulders above the rest. Head and shoulders? The metaphor is imprecise. It would be more precise saying that, in difficult situations, Illyés seemed to be able to think with two heads. If we told him about the plight of the Hungarian minorities in other countries, he would turn white and say he could never have imagined such atrocities could have taken place as had happened since his death. The devilish work of genocide and soul-destruction, which is performed in modern Rumania not on a stage but on the site of destroyed villages, in gaols, expropriated schools and terrorised eyes. I am convinced he would have called on the writers of the world, the Rumanian writers in the first place, to protest. Perhaps he himself would have gone on pilgrimage to European heads of state, imploring, and even warning, them that they too are responsible for the destruction in Rumania. Not long before his death he spoke to President Mitterrand in this vein. What did he say in his poem on Bartók? "For troubles grow when they are covered." It follows clearly that now Hungarians ought to uncover all facts and mobilise all truths, and present them to the world. What I am going to say may astonish some. Illyés was thinking most soberly and was most hopeful when in the greatest danger. Like someone who had a presentiment about reaching the depths of Hell. But speaking about him now, we should render him justice too. Not long ago, an article he wrote in 1978 in reply to Mihnea Gheorghiu was published in the daily *Magyar Nemzet*. The Hungarian party bosses and establishment of the time did not permit publication. Even Illyés was not able to get it printed! Now that this article has appeared, his volume *Spirit and Violence*—was it confiscated? held back?—should be published. The masses demonstrating on Heroes' Square need not only slogans but also ideas worked out in a disciplined way.

*In one of his essays, Csoóri recalls his first public appearance when still a child. A historical tournament of the time of the Turkish occupation of Hungary was staged in Székesfehérvár. The villagers of Zámoly were cast as extras in the role of complaining refugees. He too had to take part in the amateur production of this historical vaudeville. Perhaps his sense of calling as a writer and public figure has its origin here, he hates being compelled to act in a comedy and protests against it. He says, and not only in his own name, that he refuses to live and think as an extra appearing in a staged comedy, obeying the director's instructions. He thinks that we should cry and laugh as we feel under any given circumstances, irrespective of what the scenario prescribes.*

LÁSZLÓ ABLONCZY

# IN FOCUS

## THE BŐS (GABCIKOVO)-NAGYMAROS DAM

In Hungary, political life has gathered momentum recently, and numerous associations are being formed. The goals and names differ, scouts, Hungarian Democratic Forum, independent trade unions, greens, but in one thing they all agree; they oppose the Bős (Gabcikovo in Slovak)-Nagymaros hydroelectric scheme.

This project which has dragged on from Stalinist times, was redesigned repeatedly, and appears oversize and outdated to Hungary. One of the issues is the fate of the picturesque Danube Bend, once the *limes* of the Roman Empire. More than twenty fortifications have been excavated, some of which have already been destroyed by the bulldozers. Visegrád, facing Nagymaros across the Danube was a Royal Seat in the Middle Ages and the terraced ruins of a renaissance palace built by King Matthias, catch the eye of river boat passengers as well. In the long run, the expected environmental damage is the main hazard. Most worrying is the potential pollution of the filtered wells along the banks providing drinking water and of the huge drinking water reserves stored by the pebbled soil structure under the Szigetköz islands.

Of all hydrological structures, a hydroelectric power station producing peak energy interferes most with nature. The reason is that it is not satisfied to make use of the natural water flow, but collects water in an artificial basin insulated by concrete and impermeable artificial materials, in order to be able to supply energy at peak hours. The operation in the peak mode demands also that the river should be diverted at a length of approximately 25 kilometers from its natural pebble bed into the concrete canal, where again the natural link between the river and its environment is interrupted. Similar power stations in plains built on the Rhone and on Siberian rivers should have acted as a cautionary tale. It has also become clear that the damage to the environment can be avoided with power stations of this type only if considerable attention is paid to sewage treatment. However, in 1977, Czechoslovakia and Hungary signed an international agreement deciding the fate of the project without a single reference to sewage treatment.

The project which has been postponed several times owing to the environmental risk and the shortage of funds is further complicated by the fact that the bed of the Danube, which has been an international border since the Peace Treaty of Trianon, has to be diverted onto Czechoslovak territory along a 30 km section.

Environmental groups have done all they could for years. After the Spring 1988 party conference, they were encouraged by declarations by Károly Grósz, Prime Minister and Secretary General at the time, to try to per-

suade the hydroelectric lobby to abandon its original plan. As a first public manifestation, at the end of May a large crowd marched to the Austrian Embassy carrying banners to present a protest to the Austrian Ambassador, arguing that Austria exports its own Hainburg environmental problems to Hungary, and thereby creates work for its large state enterprise, Donaukraftwerke AG. In payment, Hungary will supply the entire output of the Hungarian part of the power station to Austria for over twenty years, starting in 1995. The May demonstration opened up the barriers of information, and articles criticizing the hydroelectric system kept pouring in.

Outstanding among the functions arranged by the opponents was the International Danube Conference organized by the Danube Circle, the Worldwide Fund for Nature, and the International Rivers Network at the beginning of September, where noted foreign and Hungarian ecologists, geologists and engineers spoke of their reservations, strengthening existing anxieties. The conference was a success, under the weight of its findings the invited and non-invited representatives of the hydrological industry were routed and retreated, but they did not change their views. The conference found that the project had to be stopped immediately, the situation should be surveyed by independent experts, and a referendum should then decide. All this did not influence the government one iota. At its next meeting, it decided to continue the project, though the news leaked out that the decision had not been unanimous. It was said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had reservations on account of the frontier problem, the Ministry of Finance and the National Bank of Hungary on account of a shortage of funds, and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences because of the disregard of environmental considerations and the loss of the frontier river nature of the Danube. The declaration of the conference, also published in the weekly *Heti Világgazdaság* was delivered to all concerned, including all members of Parliament. This was fuel to the fire, and the well-organized and disciplined hydrological industry went over into open attack, as well as speeding up construction work.

For a better understanding, one should remember how the Hungarian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water Management was established. The powerful Hydrological Authority gobbled up the small and weak Environmental Protection Authority. As a result, there is no state authority to represent the environmental interest. The great power of water management was created by Hungary having often been threatened by serious floods. During the press battles concerning the Bős-Nagymaros hydro-electric system, the hydrological lobby found itself in a difficult situation. With the exception of the daily of the HSWP, all the printed media supported the opponents. The hydrological lobby retaliated. They took nearly all members of Parliament on a freebee to Greifenstein, the most successful Austrian hydroelectric station. They too arranged conferences, commissioned television programmes, and even opened an exhibition.

In the meantime, the opponents arranged spectacular actions. Two or three weeks before the October session of the National Assembly—which had to decide whether they adopted the report of the government on the construction—30 to 40 000 gathered in front of Parliament House. In the name of the protesters, they handed a petition to the Chairman of the Presidential Council, in which they demanded the suspension of construction work and called for a referendum. The slogans of the demonstration unequivocally linked the construction and democracy, and according to the protesters the two excluded each other. The peaceful demonstration that moved huge masses, the contrary opinions held within the government, the position of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (an expert committee established by the Academy once again examined the economic and political consequences of standing down, postponement and further construction, and

recommended as an optimum the abandonment of the construction) raised the vain hope that a genuine debate would take place in Parliament and a compromise could be reached which would satisfy everybody. There were, of course, warning signals and incidents which seemed insignificant at the time. The projection of a film had been announced in the House of Soviet Culture and Science, which presented the destructive effect of the big hydro-electric schemes in the Soviet Union. A good number of members of Parliament and other distinguished personalities showed up when it was announced that, for technical reasons, the film could not be projected.

Watching the broadcast of the October 5th parliamentary session, one could suspect what had been said during the preliminary briefing given to the Communist caucus—75 per cent—of MPs. The representatives of the ministries which had still expressed reservations during the summer remained silent, members speaking in favour of the project were applauded, when opponents spoke they were met with silence and ironic smiles. This was also the fate of Professor János Szentágothai, who—when President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences—had opposed the project already ten years earlier, and now declared this *urbi et orbi*. The Minister of Environment, László Maróthy, explained that democracy and hydroelectric scheme could only exist together. In the end, by 317 votes against 19, a resolution was passed advocating the speeding up of further construction. This vote cannot be called a glorious victory for the protection of the environment. Although the Minister promised that primary attention would be given to ecological considerations, it is difficult to believe this when the state coffers are empty, and the original budget made no mention of sewage treatment plants. But if this had been taken into account on the Hungarian side, the situation would nevertheless not be reassuring. The international agreement does not force Czechoslovakia to build sewage treatment plants, and 95 per cent of sewage reaches the Danube from Czechoslovak territory.

Referring to economic difficulties, the Czechoslovaks are unable to keep up with the speeded-up pace of construction dictated by the Hungarians, and can build only a fraction of the necessary sewage treatment plants before the commissioning of the power stations. And even extreme hydrologists have been forced to admit that the peak mode of operation without the clearing of sewage means the pollution of theenvironment.

*Heti Világgazdaság*, No. 38. 1988 October 2

A. V.

## A REVERSED SEQUENCE

Professor György Osztrovszki, Vice-Chairman of the National Atomic Energy Commission, was a member of the *ad hoc* committee of scientists which submitted an opinion concerning the report to the government and to Parliament by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Management. After the parliamentary resolution accepting the report and recommending the continuation of construction, György Osztrovszki summed up his reservations in a letter which was to be considered his professional last will and testament, for he died soon afterwards.

The 50 cu.m/sec. run-off and the from time to time 200 cu.m/sec. flush-out into the bed of the Old Danube between the Szigetköz and the Csallóköz islands are insufficient. In order that the Old Danube should remain a live watercourse worthy of a frontier river, a permanent run-off of 200 cu.m/sec. and from time to time a flush-out of 590 cu.m/sec. are necessary. The other big problem is the obfuscation around sewage treatment. Competent design offices considered in their plans sewage treatment plants at 85 towns and villages, but the Ministry of Environment reckoned only with half of these, and it completely disregarded the sewage treatment of industrial plants for lack of information. So far the state budget has pro-

vided five thousand million forints for this purpose until 1995, however the design offices mentioned estimated this amount in 1986 to be 18 000 million forints, and by now this amount has to be doubled. Since the power station at Dunakiliti will operate already in 1990, this would shut off the bed of the Danube, and Professor Osztrovszki warned: "In my opinion it should be laid down as a basic principle and should of course be adhered to that at the three dams of the Bős-Nagymaros system: Dunakiliti, Bős and Nagymaros, banking-up the water must not be started until the treatment of sewage has been arranged for the entire water catchment area affected, including the valley of the River Morava. The news lately received from Czechoslovakia does not offer any guarantee whatsoever for this. On account of economic difficulties water purification does not enjoy priority there either."

In order to get a clear picture of the financial resources necessary for sewage treatment a comprehensive plan and costing is needed, which should be compiled by a relatively independent body. The construction of the Nagymaros dam should therefore be postponed, and the international agreement of 1977 should be complemented by an amendment guaranteeing sewage purification.

Dr Károly Perczel, an architect and laureate of the Herder Prize, who had fought against the Bős-Nagymaros system for several decades, also expressed his views at the time of the budget debate at the end of 1988. In natural conditions an average 2000 cu.m of water per second flows in the bed of the Danube. After diversion to the canal, 50 cu.m. is planned per second. If this flows freely, it is capable of self-purifiation. Without banking-up, there would be time left for sewage treatment although biological sewage treatment is justified in 1988 even without banking up. Due to the dams, the flow of the river is slowed down considerably along the banked-up section, and thus self-purification is no longer assured, the settling polluted mud pollutes the filtering stratum of the wells along the banks. Consequently, sewage treatment plants are indispensable.

The Danube flows in a bed of pebbles and pebbled sand, and it is out of rivers with such beds that good quality drinking water can be obtained at the lowest cost from filtered wells along the banks. This is high value also because in one-third of the towns and villages the drinking water reserves have already been damanged. After 1990, 97.5 per cent of the water of the Old Danube will be diverted to an insulated concrete canal, and thus the possibility of opening up filtered wells along the banks is lost along a 31 kilometer stretch. The drinking water assets so lost can be estimated at approximately 500 thousand million forints. In the fifties, we were aware of 25 pollutants, today we know of 150. One can therefore say that the Bős-Nagymaros system is being built in reversed technological sequence. The construction of sewers and sewage treatment should take place first, and only after the completion of these is the banking-up of water permissible.

At the 588 towns and villages of the affected section of the Danube, the construction of sewers and biological sewage treatment would cost 32,500 million forints at 1988 prices. The budget allots approximately 5800 million forints for this purpose until 1995.

This is insufficient. Consequently, if banking-up is started in 1990, the sewage treatment plants will still be nowhere. In Slovakia the situation is even worse, since 95 per cent of the sewage that flows into the Danube comes from there. There are 400 towns and villages in the catchment area of the Morava and 440 in Western Slovakia. The cost of communal sewage treatment plants in Czechoslovakia is in crowns corresponding to at least ninety thousand million forints.

"Osztrovszki György végrendelete" (The last will and testament of György Osztrovszki). *Magyar Nemzet*, November 19, 1988. Perczel, Károly: *"A vízlépcső korlátai"* (The Limits of the Bős-Nagymaros Dam). *Magyar Nemzet*, December 12, 1988.

A. V.

## FOR A REALLY BRAVE NEW WORLD?

A new data protection act is being drafted in Hungary. This is done in a country where every citizen is given a personal identification number at birth, which accompanies him or her throughout life, figures in every document, is entered on every payment slip and forms part of every property register. And who knows, in how many other records this identification number figures!

The moment favours legislation. Civil society is beginning to revive from the pressure of the state. Civil rights, and especially personality rights are becoming more important. (In the continental approach to law, personality rights* correspond approximately to privacy, although their function differ, as can be seen from an earlier book by László Sólyom.) That a technical security of data should exist is a point of departure also from the aspect of the protection of citizens against computerized information systems. This is up to computer engineers. Beyond this it is also necessary to institutionalize the right to information and the freedom of information.

Everybody should be entitled to disclosure and use of his or her personal data. Data processing without consent can, according to this principle, be stipulated only by legislation. (Probably it is an insufficient safeguard if this can be done by a state administrative authority. Authorities are too keen to collect all sort of data.) But the freedom of information involves precisely the free flow of information, the end to secrecy.

How can these two aspects be reconciled? Openness must apply to the work of the authorities, i.e. files must be made accessible to the affected persons. This has already been recognized by French legislation. It is further necessary to divide information power, so that all information should not be concentrated in a single state authority, as its monopoly. It is not yet clear whether the data of the 1990 census will be linked to other data identifiable by name, and whether the census would make this technically possible.

Since the protection of data protects fundamental civil rights against a threatening bureaucratic power, it is unimaginable—in the opinion of László Sólyom, which he tried also to include in the draft bill—that the affected persons should not be entitled to legal protection in court. In addition, it is desirable to have an ombudsman for data protection.

Nevertheless, the functioning of society demands some privileges which contradict the protection of personal rights. The defence of the state demands privileges, but so do also such safeguards of democracy and progress as mass communication and scientific research. The Hungarian draft bill—unlike rules that apply e.g. in the Federal Republic of Germany—does not recognise the privileged position of television and radio. According to Sólyom, scientific research will not become freer either if students do not have to ask for the consent of the affected persons for the collection and archivisation of their particulars. However, since the data collected for scientific purposes are not of an individual nature, it would perhaps be superfluous to demand here a consent for the collection of data—precisely for the sake of the unhindered functioning of science—beyond protection against abuses. At least, this is the view of those who are engaged in empirical research.

Sólyom, László: "A szabadságjogok biztosítékai" (The safeguards of civil rights). *Magyar Tudomány*, 1988. Nos. 7–8 pp. 502–509.

A. S.

* *NHQ* 102

## RIGHT OF PETITION

The right of petition means that any group of citizens can send their complaints concerning state authorities or other proposals, direct to the agencies of popular repre-

sentation: the municipal councils or parliament.

The right of petition originates in the feudal era. Nevertheless, Katalin Szamel, a student of civil rights, is of the opinion that attention has to be paid to this institution also in the course of drafting the new Hungarian constitution. Traditionally, petitions were successful when the applicants represented adequate social power. The English Petition of Rights had to be confirmed several times, until it could finally become the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights recognises the right of petition as an individual right, and declares that arrest or indictment on account of a petition is illegal.

Although the international conventions of political and civil rights do not deal with this institution, Katalin Szamel surveys the position of the right of petition in numerous countries. In West Germany, the Parliamentary Committee on Petitions has developed an extensive practice: the right of petition is an individual right which is also due to organizations. With the exception of court sentences, any matter can be its object. Petitioning is also closely linked to legislative initiative. The institution is present in the Czechoslovak and the Yugoslav constitutions, and the constitution of the GDR and Poland regulate it among the rights of political participation of citizens.

According to Katalin Szamel, the safeguards of the law offered by the state can be inadequate, and consequently the rights of individual and collective complaint, criticism and proposal are needed, on the basis of which anybody can address himself to a body of representation which has the duty to deal with the petition on its merits.

The protection of rights offered by the ombudsman is the other recommended way, as practised in Scandinavia. However, in some countries (United Kingdom, Poland) the two institutions coexist.

As far as Hungary is concerned, the right of petition is not excluded either, but institutionally guaranteed petitions on matters of public interest proved to be insufficient. Public complaints are addressed mainly to the media or to the central party authorities, which frequently intervene. Adequate constitutional changes may ensure that parliament should be able to examine the petitions having also the apparatus at its disposal.

Szamel, Katalin: "A petíciós jogról — alkotmányközelben" (On the right of petition—approaching a new constitution). *Jogtudományi Közlöny*, 1988. No. 12 pp. 675–679.

A. S.

## PARTY INTERVENTION AND INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Between 1945 and the first half of the 1980s the number of Hungarian industrial enterprises declined considerably. Smaller firms and cooperatives were either merged or taken over by larger enterprises. The number of mergers were above average in the engineering and the light industries. In contrast to the processes which are usual in the market economies, 1. as a rule it was not the largest firms that swallowed up the smallest, but barely larger ones swallowed the somewhat smaller ones, 2. the majority of mergers occurred among firms with the same form of ownership (state, municipal, cooperative), and in addition these were under the control of the same authorities of state and party administration, 3. the majority of mergers occurred within the same county or capital city district, i.e. regionally they fell under the same authority of state and party administration. The article offers evidence that efficiency was not the issue, but other goals of economic and social policy, and that they were implemented on the initiative and under the control of the regional party- and state authorities.

The author uses two indices for comparing firms: profit per unit of asset, and the state subsidy per unit of asset. According to the data of the firms affected by the mergers

within the Hungarian engineering industry, in the majority of cases the profit index was higher before the merger in the acquired firms affected by the mergers within the Hungarian engineering industry, in the majority of cases the profit index was higher before the merger in the acquired firm than in the acquiring firms, and the state subsidy index was higher in the acquiring firms than the acquired firms. In other words, in general, the less efficient firms swallowed the more efficient. Furthermore, in the case of the acquiring firms, the profit index mostly fell after the merger, and the subsidy index rose. Consequently, the merger did not increase but reduce efficiency. It can therefore be claimed that the mergers in the 1970s did not improve but reduce the economic efficiency of the Hungarian engineering industry. Why did this unfavourable reorganization nevertheless occur?

The article discusses first the role in economic control of the local (county, city and district) party committees — and the local council dependent on them. Local state administration as well as the party branches of the firms and institutions are subordinate to the apparatus of their regional party committee, including the members of the county, city and district party executive committees and the paid officials of the party committees. This intermediate level of party organization is under the control of the national apparatus of the Central Committee.

The division of functions within the party apparatus simply duplicates the state administrative authorities. Furthermore, while after the economic reforms of 1968 the ministries issued direct plan instructions in exceptional cases only, and the firms could take their economic decisions independent of the ministries, in the party the old methods of planning and control continued.

The regional party organs were able to influence the economic decisions of the enterprises in several ways: 1. they had a decisive word in the appointment of the managers, 2. they were able to control the activity of managers by periodic party investigations, 3. they were able to put together annual action plans for the firm, in which they could define the most important economic targets (profit, turnover, investments, etc), 4. not only the party branch of the firm but the executive committees of the regional party authorities could work out such action programmes, and these they then reconciled (and consequently the action programme of the firm had to adjust to the regional action programme), 5. they could expect the firms to modify their market-oriented decisions, if they judged some other considerations more important. Through these means the local party apparatus had great power in controlling the economic management of firms. The local party apparatus followed the guidelines received from party headquarters.

The article distinguishes two periods in the regional industrial policy of the 1960s and the 1970s. In the first period, which lasted until the first half of the 1970s, the most important guiding principle was to ensure full employment outside the capital city. The reason was that in the second half of the 1960s—owing to the mechanisation and chemicalisation of agriculture much labour—mainly unskilled female labour—became redundant there, and some inefficient mines were also closed down. Since, after the economic reforms, it was unclear what role the sectoral ministries would play in influencing employment, the local party apparatus was given the duty of inducing the enterprises to create new jobs. It was able to offer incentives of cheap and ample labour, buildings, an industrial infrastructure, and housing for managers and leading staff. It was in this way that they were able to convince Budapest firms to establish plants in the provinces. Consequently, the number of factories grew.

However, by the mid-1970s the local labour reserves had been exhausted. In addition, the new or larger factories frequently operated at a very low efficiency, and since

the amount of available state subsidy diminished, industrialisation caused tensions after the capital city also in the country, primarily because the development of the infrastructure did not keep up with industrial development. The central governmenal goals of economic policy gave more emphasis to restructuring and selective development. This was expected also from the local party apparatus. It was possible to claim that the mergers served restructuring and selective development. But in reality, they reduced rather than increased economic efficiency.

The intervention of the local party apparatus in this direction was assisted also by the fact that, after the attacks on the economic reform between 1972 and 1974, at the 1975 Congress of the HSWP the supporters and opponents of the reform entered into a compromise whereby the basic principles of the reform continued, but on the other hand the expectations versus the enterprises and the central instructions were given a bigger role in the control of the economy.

The main lesson of the phenomena described is that not even a radical economic reform is sufficient to give scope to market influences if various non-market institutions, including the regional party- and state administrative apparatus continue to be able to influence economic decisions.

Laki, Mihály: "A területi párt és állami szervek szerepe a magyar ipar centralizálásában" (The role of regional party- and state authorities in the centralisation of Hungarian industry). *Medvetánc*, 1988. No. 1. pp. 213–229.

R. A.

## BUDGET CENTRALISATION

The study examines Hungarian budgetary expenditure between 1950 and 1987. In 1950 the budget centralized 45 per cent of GDP and 55 per cent of national income. This was an extremely high figure. Among the corresponding data of 29 capitalist countries, 30–34 per cent was the highest value. In that decade centralisation reached its peak in 1953, when the budget covered nearly one half of GDP and 60 per cent of national income. At the end of the fifities, after the producer price changes of 1959, these figures fell to 34–35 and 42–43 per cent respectively. The reason for this was that after the change in the price system the subsidizing of firms took place in an indirect way, through prices.

The 1968 reform created a paradox: compared to 1967, central income and expenditure rose from 42 per cent of GDP to 50 per cent. In the seventies and eighties, among the socialist countries included in the international comparison, the ratio of central expenditure to national income was highest in Hungary. This suggests that, in the indirect Hungarian system of economic control and management, the extent of centralisation is higher than under direct economic control. The author believes that this is due to changes in the instruments of control. This corresponds to Jánor Kornai's theory: within bureaucratic coordination, the weight of the plan bureaucracy has fallen considerably and the role of the fiscal bureaucracy has gradually grown. The share of the budget rose especially after 1973, and reached 65.5 per cent of GDP by 1975. The economic leadership did not respond to global economic challenge by increasing the role of market influences but by strengthening bureaucratic coordination. This is one of the reasons why the ratio of expenditure of an economic nature is relatively high in the Hungarian budget. It is the largest item in the budget, and is a multiple of the ratio usual in developed capitalist countries. It is another particularity of the structure of the Hungarian budget that, by international comparison, the role of the central government is outstandingly high in expenditure, while local government disposes of conspicuously little money. In most countries, most is spent on the infrastructure, in Hungary a particularly high share of budgetary allotments of

an economic nature are spent on mining, manfacturing and construction.

Muraközy, László: "Milyen a magyar költségvetés? (What is the Hungarian budget like?) *Közgazdasági Szemle*, 1989. No. 1

M. L.

## SCHOOL IN THE MARKETPLACE

In the past thirty years educational reforms in Hungary had many ambitious reform goals, but these were seldom accompanied by the necessary resources. In the eighties the situation has become intolerable and it is pregnant with conflicts. There have been strikes and protests at the Szeged and Budapest universities and the state promises further reductions.

Facing this situation, Péter Lukács seeks possibilities for overcoming the educational crisis. His point of departure is that it is not permissible to start a new, centrally initiated general reform which would affect the entire educational system and "again and again shock the entire system." "Not a reform of educational affairs is necessary, but on the contrary, a new structure of control which makes it possible for schools to be able to adjust to the changing social environment."

A reform of control is needed, which would mean primarily decentralization with the growing independence of schools, and the assertion of market mechanisms. He proposes the winding down of central regulation concretely in three areas: (1) the rigid central stipulation of the school entry figures should be abolished; (2) the detailed central definition of the curriculum should be abandoned; (3) the financing monopoly of the state should be abolished.

It is understandable that, among Lukács's proposals, the third has created most controversy. The majority of the profession and of politicians committed to education believe that the state should continue to play an exclusive role in the financing of schools. The author opposes to this that, in the four decades in which the state reserved the monopoly of financing, an unbearable shortage came about, which was hardly reduced despite huge quantitative changes.

Péter Lukács discusses the question which is one of the most sensitive in the contemporary debates in Hungary concerning educational policy and which is likely also to give rise to most passion in the future. It is necessary and possible to increase the share of education in state expenditure; and would this offer a solution to the present ills of the schools? The contestants belong to two camps. According to one, the biggest problem in education is the shortage of money, which is rendered especially grave by the neglect over several decades, and consequently they consider a growth in funds made available by the state to be most important. The other camp, recognizing the shortage, considers the wasteful utilization of resources and the irrational utilization owing to central control to be the bigger ill, and in the present situation of the Hungarian economy considers it hopeless to make even justified demands. They urge a reform which does not need more money. Péter Lukács supports the latter view.

Lukács, Péter: "Iskola a piacon — avagy hogyan kerüljük el az újabb oktatási reformokat?" (School in the marketplace—or can we avoid new educational reforms?). *Mozgó Világ*, 1988. No. 5. pp. 3–18.

G. H.

## CIRCULAR GOLD DISCS AND THEIR CHRONOLOGY

Sometimes it may take as much as a century for scholarship to decipher the puzzles of the past.

Towards the year 2500 B.C., in the early Copper Age, the Danube south of the Danube Bend was a clear dividing line between races. In the east, in the Plain and in Transylvania, the ancient civilizations carried

on almost undisturbed. They engaged in trade with the Black Sea coastal regions. They exploited the copper and gold deposits of Transylvania and the Ore Mountains (Erzgebirge) and the sand of the Transylvanian rivers which was rich in alluvial gold and silver. (The spectacular golden treasures of Mykene were mostly made of this alluvial gold.) No such gold sources were available in Transdanubia, some gold could be washed from the Danube between Vienna and Győr; that was all, and the economic and social evolution of this area was linked mostly to be Western Balkans and the Alpine region. These differences are made obvious by metal finds. In the West hardly any copper jewelry and copper tools came to light, and in the east hundreds of heavy copper adzes and axes, often weighing several kilogrammes, were found. There are golden objects from both regions, and these are reckoned the earliest precious metal finds of the whole of Europe. In them too, there is an unequivocal difference: in the East exclusively gold-ring pendants and tabled pendants were fashionable, in the West circular round discs with three embossed knobs and repoussé dots.

As a consequence of chance and other circumstances, some of the pendants were found in the Plain in the course of expert excavations, and consequently their age can be fixed precisely. On the other hand, in Transdanubia, in Austria and Croatia one had to wait more than a century to be able to establish the dating. All 19 spectacular gold discs known so far were fragmentary finds. The weight of these discs varies from 20 to 120 grammes, and they are today in museums in Budapest, Vienna, Berlin and Stuttgart (more than half in the Hungarian National Museum).

For decades, the archeologists had merely speculated on dating. Ferenc Pulszky (1814–1897), the 1848/49 representative in London, had argued already towards the end of his life that they were of Copper Age provenance. Decades passed until in 1952, in the south-western corner of Transdanubia, at Csáford in Zala County, two specimens were found, which are the most beautiful pieces of their kind. But no archeologist was able to establish then or now the exact circumstances, and thus one could only suspect that they might have been hidden in the course of some sacrificial ceremony.

Finally, an answer was given in 1984. The southwestern end of Lake Balaton, the area of the Little Balaton is being restored to its pristine condition for environmental considerations. In connection with this, archeological excavations are also being conducted. Near Zalavár, a well known archeological site—near a hill called Basasziget—finds of the Lasinja-culture of the early Transdanubian Copper Age were found. In one pit, there were fragments of a vessel, a splendid copper axe and also a copper disc. Although the latter was strongly corroded, it nevertheless betrayed one thing: Ferenc Pulszky's guess proved sound. The gold discs of a completely similar form and ornamentation are finds of the early Copper Age. And what a coincidence: within a year or two copper specimens were also discovered in Moravia and in South Western Germany, in Baden. Archeologists now look forward with excitement to one of their number coming across the first authenticated gold disc.

M. Virág, Zsuzsanna: "Copper Age finds from Zalavár—Basasziget". *Archaeológiai Értesítő*, 1987. No. 113. pp. 3–13.

J. M.

## IMPOTENT JUSTICE

Many Germans lived in multinational medieval Hungary, and in several towns they made up the majority. Their lively economic and cultural contacts with German towns were given a new impetus by the Reformation, in mid-16th century. The Reformation, its emphasis on the vernacular particularly in religious life, found its first echo among German burghers in Hungary.

Medvecky presents a projection of this influence in art. Renaissance wall paintings were studied and restored in a burgher's house in Leutschau, Lőcse in Hungarian and Levoča in Slovak, one of the towns of the Zips, Szepesség in Hungarian, which was once inhabited by Germans. These sported moralising inscriptions in German, fragments of which have survived. One of the two most important figurative compositions was made in 1542. On this, various birds attack an owl, which defends itself with patience and perseverance. The woodcut predecessor of this wall painting had been identified already earlier as one of Dürer's woodcuts of 1515. The other wall painting was produced in 1543, and its original has now been identified as a 1525 copper engraving by Barthel Beham, a young artist working in the entourage of Dürer in Nuremberg. On this, Impotent Justice is chained to the Tree of Lies. She is asleep, and a treacherous fox chasing a goose escapes with her sword.

Beham's work was engraved in the year of the German Peasant War. Around that time, Beham was run out of Nuremberg because of his radical views. He condensed his view of the world and all his resignation into this engraving. He wrote over the image of chained Justice the inscription "Der Welt Lauf" (The way of the world).

It is certain that the owner of the Leutschau house chose Beham's engraving as a motif, because he agreed with its message. It was then that the Reformation gained ground in the Zips, as it did in Hungary in general. Roman Catholics, Lutherans of the Augsburg persuasion, and the more extreme Anabaptists as well as various sects clashed here. The burghers of the time witnessed many unexpected changes and what nowadays would be called U-turns. It was in this atmosphere that the wall paintings of Leutschau were produced. They were probably commissioned by Ladislaus Polierer, called also Messingschläer, who has studied in Cracow. The Reformation became locally dominant while he was Burgsmaster. He, too supported the Reformation, and he bought his house in the main square of the town from the earlier leader of the Roman Catholic party, the parish priest, János Horvát, who around that time turned his back on the Church and married the daughter of a local citizen. The educated citizen of the period expressed his judgement on the world surrounding him when selecting the models or the subject for the wall paintings and for the texts accompanying them.

Medvecky, József: 'Der Welt Lauf'—Egy 1543-ból származó lőcsei falfestmény és nürnbergi előképe" ('The way of the world'—a wall painting in Leutschau dated 1543 and its Nuremberg precursor). *Ars Hungarica*, 1988. pp. 181–187.

G. G.

## POSTERS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC WALLPAPERS IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN DWELLINGS

In the past ten to fifteen years, approximately ten million posters were printed in Hungary. In the beginning they were of the size of advertising posters and were mostly reproductions of works of art. Major successes included Pál Szinyei Merse's 1874 portrait of his young wife, "Woman in Lilac" in verdant, sunny surroundings, of which 186,000 copies were printed in two sizes between 1976 and 1986. In recent years, giant posters covering entire walls, and door posters have become popular. These are usually landscapes, autumn woods, forest in autumn, a southern shore with palm trees, snow clad mountains or mountain burns. Animals and nudes have also grown in frequency.

*Forrás*, a journal published in Kecskemét with the support of the Bács-Kiskun County Council, devoted the whole of its November 1988 issue to them. It is an example of the competion amongst journals published by provincial county councils which extends to both new subjects and new talents. In this

issue, the Kecskemét intelligentsia which also makes its weight felt in other areas such as exhibitions, museums and galleries, an experimental theatre and animation studio once again confronts the Hungarian public with a novelty. What is at the back of it is a survey, supported by the National Centre of Access to Culture directed by the ethnographer Ákos Kovács, He had earlier investigated other aspects of visual culture such as Great War monuments, oleographs, needle work on kitchen walls, and tattoos.* The issue includes poems and literary reflections on posters, but most of it is devoted to hirtorical, critical and sociological studies of Hungarian poster-fever and its antedecents. Photos present views of Hungarian dwellings where giant or normal posters are on the walls, and furniture and people in front of them. Another series of photographs in colour are of couples, brides, whole families in front of giant posters, an interesting contribution to their social role, and status.

The art historian Katalin Sinkó ("From optical indoor travels to a housing estate paradise" pp. 15–22) discusses the history of *trompe l'oeil* on walls. In the baroque and rococo era it was already a universal habit to paint the ceilings of churches or aristocratic halls as skies with angels and saints or mythological figures. In the mid-18th century domestic walls were also decorated all round with illusion-creating ideal landscapes, painted on canvas, or executed by the sticking on cheap woven fabrics or wallpaper. The genre and technique lived on as panoramas. According to Katalin Sinkó, these panoramas which were operated by coins in slots, are the predecessors of the giant landscape-posters. Many had town, or landscapes, or historic events as their subject. The aim was not art but the duplication of nature, an illusion of reality. The posters forming the imaginary space of today's dwelling usually offer the ideal of pristine nature untouched by the hand of man, exotic landscapes in the tropics, high mountains. No people, and buildings are exceptional. No cultivated landscapes or built up areas, not even well-tended gardens. They bring into the bleak concrete of housing estates an imaginary, contemporary Garden of Eden using the age old method of pictures as magic.

Who hang such posters in Hungary today? Katalin Sinkó refers to a survey according to which giant posters are in 63 per cent of housing estate flats. The posters are published in Hungary by the Publishing House for Fine Arts. This firm has also commissioned a survey for marketing purposes which covered 1,100 families. László Molnár sums up the results ("Public opinion response to the range of available posters and marketing prospects", pp. 82–93) 63 per cent are said to like the posters, but they are in the homes of 37 per cent only. Only 17 per cent rejected them. It seems natural that the young favour posters more than their elders, but it surprises me that posters are perhaps even more popular in villages than in towns. The posters are most frequently in the rooms of children, in lobbies and in weekend cottages.

What aspirations and choices are evident in fashions and who are the most important consumers? The sociologist Ildikó Szabó argues that giant posters are characteristic primarily of the upwardly mobile. They are not bought for the sake of the illusion they provide or the beauty of the depicted landscape. The purpose is the social message, the documentation of being well-off, an illusion of wealth. She sees the proof of this also in the fact that the fashion of taking photographs in front of posters is spreading, i.e. the taking of family snaps in the company of carefully selected objects in front of the photographic wallpaper. The wallpaper and the objects are both tokens of an unachieved but targeted way of life. ("Red plugs in the autumn bush, or what makes us happy," pp. 48–53.)

The historian Miklós Szabó in his "Back

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to nature—from Che Guevara. The Hungarian posters and the Hungarian wave of nostalgia", pp. 56–69, looks back to posters hung by young intellectuals and compares the rebellious new-leftishness of West European, American and Hungarian young people. In the sixties and seventies, the political poster and the advertising poster, i.e. the decoration of the street, intruded into homes. This, he argues, meant a confrontation of dominant tastes and values, an emphasis on a youth identity. In the rooms of the young, the image of Che Guevara, Martin Luther King and of pop-stars and film stars stressed their separation from the part of the home inhabited by their parents. The communes in the West declared war on bourgeois ways by decorating their flats with the images of their folk heroes. They declared war on the consumer society and individualism. In the Hungarian society of the sixties, in Szabó's terms, a career-society came about. The critique of consumer society and new-leftism trickled also into Hungary, but rather as a fashion reinterpreted to fit the Hungarian career society. The youth culture of the New Left reveals a hidden political alternative meaning. Non-conformity and identity confusions increased the importance of the home and created ripples of nostalgia. In Szabó's view, the posters showing idyllic landscapes, often exotic ones, are expressions of this nostalgia. They express a desire for harmony, and are not sentimental. They are, in fact, the opposite of the earlier avantgarde and political posters, but they are also their heirs being expressions of separateness.

*Posztervilág—Édenvilág* (Posters—Garden of Eden). *Forrás*, Special issue, November 1988

T. H.

## THE AESTHETICS OF NUDE POSTERS

The publishing of nude photos was prohibited for some time in Hungary, as also in other East European socialist countries. However, taboos concerning nakedness have become more relaxed in recent years. After much controversy, nude sun bathing has become accepted, and full-fronted nudes in the theatre are no longer rare, sometimes even men show themselves nude on stage. The New Year's Eve (corresponding to Mardi Gras further west) issue of the central party daily prints soft porn which often graces various magazines, advertising, and postcards. The female form in the most authentic detail is available on mass circulation calendars and posters. The Hungarian wave of nakedness following the West after some delay gave the opportunity to Gábor Klaniczay to survey the Hungarian nudes on posters.

The author teaches Medieval and early Modern cultural history at the University of Budapest. He has published extensively on the avantgarde and post-avantgarde in art. His approach to nudes is visual, the visual culture of our times and mass manifestations of art are at the centre of his interest. He first put up a foreign nude poster of Japanese provenance on the wall of his room around fifteen years ago when he was a university student and he thought that this expressed a useful and non-bourgeois attitude, proclaiming that when it comes to the female body, he was in favour of complete freedom. But, however beautiful and attractive the girl may have been, after a while he had his doubts. He wondered why he gazed precisely at this unknown woman day after day. New posters were put up beside the first, the beauties sort of started to compete with each other—and finally they disturbed his original ideas concerning interior decoration. His feminist girlfriends protested that these images abused the female sex and debased women. So the pictures were slowly removed from his walls—the one remaining is on the walls of the loo. All this is perhaps characteristic of young intellectuals, and perhaps indicates also that the nude tide is on the way out.

The author considers the commercial

nude photograph a particular kind of work, which does not strive towards a higher aesthetic substance (as the nude in art does)—but exploits the uncovering of the intimate sphere, presenting it directly, in an erotic way, according to its own rules.

The nude suggests a certain contact between the viewer and the woman shown. This can be the visible offering of the woman of herself, some theatrical situation, or voyeurism. When artificial studio presentations proved a flop early in the eighties, this spying on women sunbathing, taking a swim, or dressing in the garden seemed to suit prudery. The nude poster shows concrete naked women, not the abstract female form. It is therefore important that the face should also be clearly shown and that the model should have expressive features. What excites is the connection between the normally hidden intimate parts and the face and the eyes, which display individuality. In presentation, the emphasis is on the parts of the body which are erotically of the greatest interest, tit and bum, in English anatomically eponymous of this type of photograph. These are the main characters—and it sometimes causes a problem to the photographer what to do with the rest of the anatomy which has a subordinate role. Arms and hands are sometimes given objects to hold in a way that does not look natural, although objects, jewels, drapery can also have a role in the composition of the picture but Hungarian photographers make little use of such opportunities.

The author reproaches the Hungarian nude photographers for frequently violating elementary rules, by not creating harmony between the eyes and the posture or bashfully covering up the face. Their work is not sufficiently varied—and sometimes cheap. In Hungary an unclothed girl often lies on a lilo and not on tiger skins. Sometimes a composition intended to be funny fails or the surroundings look posed.

According to the author, this is a commodity with a banal subject which at the same time forms part of our life. In the last resort, it is a derivation of the very ancient tradition of aesthetically cultivating the female nude. T. H.

Klaniczay, Gábor: "Nők a falon. Gondolatok az aktposzter természetéről" (Women on the wall. Thoughts on the nature of nude posters). *Forrás*, 1988. No. 11, pp. 27–40.

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*Heti Világgazdaság*—a Budapest economic weekly

*Magyar Nemzet*—a Budapest daily

*Magyar Tudomány*—a monthly of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Jogtudományi Közlöny*—a monthly of the Legal and Political Committee of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Medvetánc*—occasional publication of the Youth Movement Committee of the University of Budapest

*Közgazdasági Szemle*—a monthly of the Committee for Economic Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

*Mozgó Világ*—a monthly of literature, art and sociology

*Archeológiai Értesítő*—a journal of the Hungarian Archaeological and Art Society

*Agrártörténeti Szemle*—journal published twice a year by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Ministry of Agriculture

*Forrás*—a literary monthly published in Kecskemét

# THE CHANCES OF PEACEFUL TRANSITION

The Budapest daily *Magyar Hírlap* on February 4th 1989 published a round-table discussion, "Dialogues and Pleadings," on the vital problems that are hampering revival in Hungary. The discussion was led by András Lukácsy and Éva V. Bálint for the daily and those taking part were mostly closely associated with new oppositional political organizations. The Hungarian Democratic Forum (M.D.F.) was represented by the historian Lajos Für, and the Association of Free Democrats (Sz.D.Sz.) by the historian Miklós Szabó. Other participants, speaking as individuals, were the writers György Konrád and Iván Sándor, the critic György Poszler, the historian Miklós Vásárhelyi, and the sociologist László Bruszt. What follows is a somewhat abridged version of the discussion.

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*András Lukácsy:* We have the choice of two solutions to the issue raised as a preliminary. One is entirely democratic in form, saying that freedom of speech applies to the past as well and everybody has the sovereign right to talk out imaginary and real grievances. The other holds back the old disputes by the voice of common sense and prefers mapping out constructive programmes. My vote for the latter, with particular regard to the fact that the dance-floor on which the political movements are standing is, for reasons beyond our control, rather constricted, and it is not a matter for indifference if ballroom dancing goes on there or a don ny brook.

*Éva V. Bálint:* The logic often prevailed here that, for the sake of some lofty aim, dissenting opinions had to be swept under the carpet. And there they were left. This is not the logic of compromise but that of a paternalistic way of thinking which does not believe that adult discussion can take place in this country. Instead of leaving things unsaid, I would propose that people keep a rein on their temper. I do not think that this is conducive to a state of chaos, even though order was also born of chaos. Nor do I think that the dance-floor is really that constricted.

*Lajos Für:* Pointing a finger at each other is not simply something East European. In the modern history of Europe every major catastrophe or disturbance has inevitably been followed by efforts to establish and decline responsibility. This is the time to point a finger. It was like that after the French Revolution and it was like that also in 1848/49. The other phenomenon which is rather accusations are bound to intensify when a dictatorial régime committing crimes against society eases off pressure—for earlier it has suppressed all criticism, every different type of thought. Well, at such times the question poses itself as to who kept silent, who is it who collaborated, who it is who was subservient to power. And at such times the scabs come off wounds which were inflicted upon smaller or larger groups, upon injured individuals. (. . .) In my view, we are now at this stage. Since 1939 we have been silenced by governments and régimes relieving one another, by drastically contradictory events. To my mind, the letting out of the tempers kept under control is only natural. As regards the oppositionist or alternative combinations engaged in politics today, aggressive finger-pointing has fortunately not gained ground among them. (. . .) We can justly say that ours is a mature society, and the airing of old grievances follows from the particularity of our historical development over the past 50 to 60 years.

*Miklós Szabó:* (. . .) Unsolved problems come up again at certain historical points of junction. This is not unhealthy. A different case is when these problems are put aside unsolved by life, because they have lost their timeliness. (. . .) Old grievances would reappear after historical disturbances, but there are instances for their being remedied by

society. Let us just think of France, where a general taking of revenge was followed by silence on the subject of collaboration and then both sides were able to come together in prospering system. There the problem was solved by life. But there is another way of approach too. When problems of primary importance are the order of the day—thus the fundamental issues of the political system—there is unity. When these are not to be talked about, the side issues come up, and the conflicts that arise from them are put on the agenda.

*György Poszler:* I think that the coming into the open of emotions is natural when certain questions have been suppressed over several decades. But one ought to avoid, by some collective wisdom, the formula of mass psychology that may result in those questions erupting like an explosion. I believe that one of the fundamental tasks of the intelligentsia is to avoid this. The questions which are to be talked over must be discussed properly in a responsible manner and in a proper style. As to the things to be talked out, I think they range from the largest social problems right down to personal problems. But these personal issues may always be interpreted more broadly. There are people who have done something and there are others against whom it has been done. Nor can one rule out the historical experience that victims may also have been guilty in a given situation and vice versa. There is a social situation involving extremely tragic contingencies, a situation in which the persons of victim and offender are confused. What I mean by this is that I do not want to smart under a collective guilty conscience, because this is unproductive, I only wish to point out that the difficult decades do not always make these fronts clear.

*Iván Sándor:* I would not oppose freedom of speech and common sense. Both should be applied to confrontation. Out of the blind alleys that we followed for more than a century and a half we have in recent decades come into a new blind alley, with new anomalies of power and existence. Due to tragedies which could not be talked out or resolved for more than half a century, the unsolved issues swept under the carpet are such that today's state of affairs can no more be called—to quote Bibó—a deadlock situation. It is an overall swamp. It may be possible to back out of a blind alley for a small length of time to take fresh air before coming to a new deadlock. In the swamp, one can get along in any direction only by first injecting into it the concrete pillars of thought, plain speech and law. If in such a situation the morass is deepened by political tactics and personal emotions, it will be accordingly that much more difficult to inject cement into it. (. . .) If there is no open confrontation and debate based on freedom of speech, if there is no objective ground acceptable to many on the basis of common sense, the swamp will grow deeper. I regard the plain speech of injecting as a fundamental question in order to retain solid and stable points to build upon and move forward from.

*Miklós Vásárhelyi:* I can understand András Lukácsy's fears that our scope of action may be limited by many things. But I cannot agree with his interpretation. We all claim to favour liberty and democracy, and we are therefore ready to extol them as ideals. We have to take into account that social systems built upon these principles run very serious risks. And the point of the dilemma is precisely that these risks must be taken. (. . .) Thus, if we now open a certain channel, or declare it open, this will inevitably entail the danger that disputes might take a turn in an undesired direction. But our task is precisely to face this danger. (. . .) If we ourselves were to raise obstacles, this would give cause in itself for arbitrary actions. This is a greater risk than if we accept liberty and democracy with all their attendant hazards. That is the first point I want to make. The second is that I do not consider this to be a particularly Central European or Hungarian problem. (. . .) In the life of every nation there are shameful, sorry, and mournful periods which people take pains not to look in the eye—and

not only those who are responsible and guilty but many others too because the facts are hurtful to national pride. It is undeniable, however, that the development of national consciousness requires these questions to be elucidated, but what must be taken into consideration is that man and humanity develop reactions which are not thought over in a logical or scientific way. I have a high regard for their ethics, but I do not believe that such disputes as have lately taken place in this country could be avoided if we merely preached morality. They can be avoided if we go beyond these personal disputes and do not allow them to damage much greater general interests and if we try, by arguing responsibly and frankly, to continue clarifying the questions.

*László Bruszt:* In Socialist Eastern Europe we have as yet no experience of a successful transition to democracy, but we do have such experience from Latin America and Southern Europe, both East and West. The principal lesson to be learnt is that there are no rules on how far one may go with the conflicts. Transition to democracy in one country begins with an idyllic interlude, in others with a very serious political confrontation. There is, however, a highly important element which may well be of interest in Hungary today. Namely, that in the first phase, during the transition from dictatorship to democracy, the first agreement, the first pact, is concluded between those striving for democracy and those in power. In this phase one of the questions is whether or not a political playing area can be created with a minimum of certain rules of the game. Until this has been done, a sort of dialogue of the deaf is carried on. And there is a really great danger involved in this, not in the fact that someone undertakes the conflicts. In general the minimum rules for the game are the non-use of force, recognition of each other as partners in negotiation, that is, not in the matters of principle but in the way of talking politics. But part of the issue—and this is what we are now talking about—is that certain questions are not even being raised in the first round, or it is stipulated that certain questions must not even be discussed. Such topics include in Hungary anti-Semitism or the conflict between populist and westernising writers.

*András Lukácsy:* Ultimately every movement seeks its own legitimation. But I again consider it particular to Central Europe that we must look for legitimations of 40 to 50 years, while it is questionable whether these are valid today in the form that they were suspended in 40 to 50 years before.

*Miklós Szabó:* (...) Legitimacy does not follow from consolidation. The fact that a régime is able to consolidate does not make it legitimate. The proof of legitimation is precisely whether the willingness to obey the régime when it is destabilised remains or vanishes at once. The great example of how a legitimate system functions was set by Great Britain in the Second World War when Churchill made his "blood, toil, tears and sweat" speech. That is the voice of a government which is aware that it can count upon the people's willingness even if it suffers defeat. This cannot be done by nations which are not fully, or not at all legitimatised. In 1945 the Hungarian régime was established by outside force, thus it does not have legitimation, and in so far as I can judge the matter, it has never had it to this day. In the past thirty years the citizens' willingness to obey was determined by interest based on whether they could profit by it. Now that economic decline has reached a point where citizens can not gain by obedience, the apparent willingness has turned out never to have existed in this sense. Nor do I regard the existing social order as legitimate. Such a situation can be created only by an agreement with political forces that really represent society, with organizations which both the government and the large masses look upon as representing society. In this way the present government would obtain a kind of legitimation.

*Lajos Für:* I fully agree with Miklós Szabó

that consolidation is not yet legitimation. It is time to understand that this power is all the less legitimate because, though pretending to be Hungarian, it has, up until the last couple of years, never represented the Hungarian nation. And to my colleague András Lukácsy I would say that this search for legitimation is not specifically Hungarian either, since such is the case in all socialist countries of Eastern Europe, since an alien, Asian, Stalinist structure has been forced upon us and the rest of the East European countries.

*György Konrád:* Besides legitimation there arises another question. Who is it that has a moral right to initiate personal attacks in the press? Who is it that is entitled to act as a counsel for the prosecution? And if I am to continue speaking of this moral issue, let me go over to a more analytical area. When régimes alter or are in process of altering, value patterns are also changing as are ways of thinking. I remember that in 1956 I regarded as a little grotesque the superciliousness of those who, say as early as 1954, had begun to sing a different tune against those who had done so only in 1955 or in the spring of 1956. This questionable judgement has an aesthetic element, too, because winging, reproach, and forced self-regret are rather repulsive, though they are certainly an accepted convention. Everybody refers to his suffering and immediately finds a target, someone to accuse. This practice is probably an inevitable consequence of the changes of pattern, and I feel it is antipathic in style; indeed, I might as well call it unfair, or not sportsmanlike. If a democratic change of pattern follows, then the appropriate way to behave is not vilification growing into personal abuse, but much rather the practical evolution of a new value or, if you like, new rules of conduct. I consider myself a citizen who has for quite a time belonged to the democratic opposition. Personal emotions have not been particularly vehement. When we engaged in discourse with those who happened to take up this line later, we were more moderate, the latter more vehement. This was somewhat like the case where those who behaved more or less loyally with regard to essential business in the office personally had very nasty things to say about their bosses or their management. A democratic revival calls for a new scale of values, new norms of behaviour. (. . .) I do not wish to underrate the merits of the political struggle going on in public. This is inevitable. I would rather say that the structural transformation and the practice of today should be more disciplined. And personal matters must be handled with the necessary self-restraint which is everyone's duty to exercise with regard to taste and morality.

*György Poszler:* (. . .) The chances of democracy seem to have grown in 1988. (. . .) But let me say that I do not quite believe in the possibility of a choreography of the growth of democracy. I am sceptical, for we have here a crisis which is economic, and political and shows itself elsewhere two, a crisis in morality as well, and public morale. I speak of morality because traditional bonds and values have loosened. By traditional bonds I mean the bonds that derive from the awareness of nationhood. This morally difficult period has led many of a neurotic disposition in to a moral crisis. In that light I one way well ask whether this way of talking things over can remain within such an ethical, aesthetic, and stylistic framework. The intelligentsia has to contribute responsibly always and take part in this process in such a way that the disputes should remain within certain aesthetic, ethical, and stylistic bounds. Thus I hold certain personal questions to be unavoidable, but I consider it absolutely necessary for the answers to come properly and calmly from a suitable moral height. Why do I find this question particularly dramatic? There is no need even for a dramatic formulation, because the situation itself is dramatic, because a neurotic society where moral standards are non-existent searches for scapegoats as a knee jerk reaction. I see an old problem nodding back and

an ominous new problem emerging, and both are variants of the hunt for scapegoats and are related to racial prejudices or hatreds. One is that the Jewish question can always be cycled and used once again in the process of looking for scapegoats. I know from my experience as an educationalist that a few years ago the young were not at all interested in this question. The problem did not exist for them but it does today. The Gypsy question in turn is knocking at the door. This may lead to hostility and rejection on a society wide scale. That is why I take the view that the intelligentsia has an extremely great responsibility. I emphasise that on the level of everyday consciousness the question is present in the minds of people talking on buses and it casts baleful shadows.

*András Lukácsy:* It is indeed true that we live in a neurotic society but it is also true that there is latent in it, beyond the crisis, also a danger of explosion. I wonder whether this danger does not add to the responsibility of the intelligentsia, with particular regard to the fact that an explosion would not necessarily favour the forces of progress.

*Iván Sándor:* I think nobody wishes for an explosion. As to the point András Lukácsy has raised, I should say that for several decades power has always created crisis situations in which the question could arise. This is why I hold the view that it is only by discussing helpfully, sincerely and as thoroughly as possible every touchly problem and by attempting to deal with them all is it possible to reach a stage where this danger is no langer immanent. If you will permit a metaphor that may perhaps sound moralising: the windows cannot be cleaned with a dirty cloth. The other remark I wish to make is that I find important what Lajos Für has said about the most essential questions and those of lesser priority. I also think that agreement is needed on the principal issues in the first place. We know well from experience the impossible tasks and the demobilisations that have followed where, at historically specified moments, a wedge could be driven between those striving for one and the same goal. But this is not so simple because in reality the secondary and tertiary issues are intermixed with the most important ones. I think we ought to learn and put into use a technique which, with a view to joining forces and emerging out of the crisis, can intensely concentrate on the primary issues without leaving the others unsolved. Because if these secondary and tertiary issues, which concern only very few people in a given situation, are left uninterpreted and unresolved, this will again contribute to their being swept under the carpet. Cases of non-elucidation, manipulation, and aggressiveness shine through and back upon one another in the principal and the side zones. Within millions, however, they are alive. And the millions do not inquire into the classification of problems and neuralgias. So it would be necessary to draw up jointly a political, intellectual, moral coordinate which, while the main questions are suitably classified, will make it possible to develop an open-minded, moral attitude towards many other dilemmas, too.

*Lajos Für:* I fully agree with György Konrád, in the first place that instead of discrimination it is impossible to pass into a position of counter-discrimination or anti-discrimination. But this is not only a matter of morality or, if you like, ethics or style. In my judgement we are confronted with much more profound, much more serious problems. I think that, as avoidance of an explosive situation by political means is in question, one must not confound personal grievances arising from individual or narrow group interests with general problems that affect the nation with political issues, with the problem that during the past few decades the party in power has pursued a policy bringing the economy, society, culture, and public morals of the country to the point where they are now. What the earlier leadership of the country has done wrong must be talked over on the plane of generalities, on the plane of politics, in order to take the first step towards avoiding the danger of an explosion.

This is a prime duty of the party which is still in power today. If it fails to carry it out, the various alternative or opposing forces will have to act. But, over and above this, the danger of an explosion can be averted—since I do not think society is as yet in the state it was in during the months preceding 1956—also if the lawful conditions for revival on the road to democratisation are secured in compliance with the principle of progressivity. Either within the framework of a new constitution to be enacted by a Constituent Assembly or with the introduction of general elections under a multi-party system, that is with democracy guaranteed by law and in a way as it functions today in accordance with the normal European tradition in the countries of Western Europe. If we create these conditions, then the self-movement of society may develop a sensible consensus and bring to the surface ideas which, if reconciled and put to use, can shepherd accumulated conflicts into public life, the sphere of politics. But this must be taken seriously. We must take seriously the democratisation of the constitution to be drafted, we must take seriously the democratisation of the roads leading to it. For if we fail to do so, and if those in power and the various forces of the opposition do not think in this way, in this spirit, then a new catastrophe—which nobody wants—may really occur in the foreseeable future. Speaking also for the Hungarian Democratic Forum, I say this is the way we see the chances for a common revival.

*Miklós Szabó:* I do not think that the position of the Association of Free Democrats substantially differs from that of the Hungarian Democratic Forum. Our policy is aimed at consensus, at political cooperation, at avoiding an explosion and reducing tension. In connection with what has been said, I should say, at variance with the others, that the danger of explosion does not exist. Great tensions, certainly, but they are countered by the superior force of the power-enforcement machinery which will be able to preempt any explosion in the foreseeable future. Those who lay too great stress upon the danger of explosion wish to justify this superior strength of the forces of law and order. This is why they try to scare people. In the language of political science the explosion is called destabilisation. The greatest trouble with the past thirty years has been overstabilisation. This is the particular morass mentioned by Iván Sándor. This is where the real danger lies, not in the explosion. The existing danger is that the country, if reduced to a state of immobility, will gradually without any dramatic events, sink to the level of the third world. This can and must be avoided by constructive changes.

*Miklós Vásárhelyi:* Let me add that the time factor is very important. For a year now already we have been listening to a very well articulated reform language, and in the meantime nothing has happened. Pieces of writing denouncing corruption are published every day, light has been thrown on many things which would have been unthinkable a year before. But let us not delude ourselves, people are irritated by all this. They see that only those are brought to justice who are caught in the very act. At the same time nothing is being done to change the mechanism that has generated corruption. I too do not see any immediate danger of an explosion today, but I am not sure this spring will pass as smoothly, not to mention various things which we are witnessing on the job, where people work. These are crisis symptoms which are different from those of even two months ago. And if no concrete measures are taken, there may arise a tense situation whose control will slip through the fingers of the intelligentsia too. Even of thosewho are committed reformists, as are all of us here. We, who belong to different groups of the opposition, agrre in terms of this development along the road of reforms. But there may come a time when people will realize that they are running their heads against a wall. Events may occur which we have no desire to see. That is why time is pressing for action.

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

# KÁROLY PULSZKY—CONNOISSEUR, FOUNDER OF MUSEUMS

*Commemorative exhibition in the Budapest Museum of Fine Arts*

It is exceptional that an exhibition in a museum should be held in the memory of an art historian. This is just what happened in the Museum of Fine Arts: a major display evokes the memory of Károly Pulszky, an outstanding Hungarian art historian of the second half of the 19th century. In the 1880s, Pulszky gave shape and substance to the idea of a Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest which, (to quote his own words) "should endeavour to grow into a collection comparable to its counterparts in Berlin and London where not only every great master is represented by at least a few characteristic works allowing one to form an idea of the nature of their work but where those entrusted with organizing the collection do their best to ensure that the various schools of painting are adequately represented in proportion to their significance." The National Gallery of which Pulszky was the director at the time, fell far short of this ambitious objective. But then, the constellation prevailing at the end of the century, although shortlived, was favourable to Pulszky's idea.

Hungary enjoyed economic stability, and the cultural authorities looked favourably on art patronage. The budget passed by Parliament allotted substantial sums to purchases by public collections. Since major Western European galleries happened to suffer financial restrictions at the time, which reduced their purchases, Pulszky had a few good years when he could acquire paintings, sculptures and drawings for the future National Museum of Fine Arts in favourable circumstances. He worked at a feverish rate and very successfully. Barely three years were enough to create the backbone of the collection. It was no fault of his that he could not realize all his ideas. Political intrigues put an end to his career and made it impossible that his life's work be completed. This is why the Museum of Fine Arts does not belong to the same category of museums as the London National Gallery, as Pulszky would have wished and eventually might have achieved. However, one of his basic ideas was realized: the museum does present all the schools of old European painting, and it has also valuable sculptural material.

## *The Pulszkys*

Károly Pulszky was a member of a family which had long played a major role in Hungarian public and intellectual life. The Protestant Pulszkys had come to Hungary from Poland in the middle of the 18th century. Here they could practise their religion in freedom. In Hungary, they became part of that lower nobility which fought for the ideas of enlightenment, and for changing a country with dominatiating feudal traditions into a bourgeois civilization. All this got going in the Age of Reform early in the 19th century. Ferenc Pulszky (1814–1897), Károly's father was a member of the reform-parliament, later he was secretary of state in the government of 1848, and he represented the country fighting the Habsburgs in London; after the lost war he became one of the leading Hungarian exiles in Britain. His articles serving the Hungarian cause were published by Lord Palmerston's paper, the *Globe*. Later he was the emissary of Lajos Kossuth who organized anti-Habsburg-actions in Italy. When all these plans failed, he renounced his political position and returned to Hungary.

Károly Pulszky (1853–1899) was born in London while his parents were in exile. His taste for art and art history showed itself early. Generations of his family had been art collectors, and his father had been taught and directed by his uncle, Gábor Fejérváry, an outstanding collector in his time, on journeys to Italy, France, the Netherlands and Britain. Ferenc Pulszky inherited Fejérváry's collection of antique *objets d'art* and ivory carvings; it created great sensation when exhibited in 1853 in the premises of the Society of Antiquaries on Pall Mall.

Károly Pulszky first intended to study medicine but soon realised that his inclinations and interests pointed towards a life as an art historian. He switched from the medical to the arts faculty and concluded his studies at the University of Leipzig.

After their return to Hungary, the Pulszkys played an important part in the country's life. Ferenc Pulszky was elected a member of Parliament, he took part in the constitutional debate and was then appointed director-general of the Hungarian National Museum. From then on, he spent the greater part of his energies on enlarging the museum's holdings and promoting the cause of museums in general, and on archeological research. His eldest son, Ágost Pulszky, taught the philosophy of law at Budapest University, and later became secretary of state for justice and a member of the government. His daughter, Polyxena Pulszky, married József Hampel, an archaeologist whose excavations included Aquincum, the Roman town and military camp on the site of the future Budapest.

Károly Pulszky first worked on the creation of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Budapest. The idea of such a museum derived from the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, at that time still the South Kensington Museum, and from the Great Exhibition held in 1867 in London. The Hungarian delegation had brought home a collection of English pottery and deposited it "for a future Arts and Crafts Museum." The 1873 budget earmarked considerable sums for the museum and Károly Pulszky was commissioned to make the necessary purchases. His efforts were successful: barely one year later, there was enough material to organize a temporary exhibition of arts and crafts in the hall of the National Museum. Later Pulszky's life led him away from the Museum of Arts and Crafts; in 1881, he was appointed keeper of the art collection bought by the State from Prince Esterházy. First, he was appointed keeper, then director of the National Gallery, and his work centered on establishing the National Museum of Fine Arts.

The Museum of Arts and Crafts continued under György Ráth, it turned into one of the most important arts and crafts collections in Eastern Central Europe. Its Art Nouveau building—an attempt to create Hungarian national style in architecture—was erected in Budapest between 1893–1896. The architects were Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos.

### *The era of big purchases*

The heroic age of Károly Pulszky's collecting activity started in 1883 when he started buying for the future Museum of Fine Arts. He bought the bulk of the pictures in Italy but made purchases also in the Netherlands, Germany and Vienna. His partners were the well-known art dealers of the age—Gisenti in Brescia; Resemini in Venice, with whose help he was able to obtain works of Sodoma and as well as many other pictures, by e.g. Filippino Lippi, Goldstikker in Amsterdam, from whom he acquired Dutch and Spanish paintings, Alois Hauser in Munich who helped him to acquire Van Dyck's *Portrait*. With regard to the museum's collection of prints, the material obtained from J. C. Wavro 48 copper engraving and woodcuts by Dürer, 92 copper engravings by Rembrandt, and 41 pages of Van Dyck's *Iconography*. Soon Pulszky added

more engravings of Dürer and Rembrandt including the *Hundred-florin sheet* and the copper engraving *St Jerome in his cell.*

The purchases continued at a feverish rate until the mid-1890s. Pulszky did everything to exploit the never-recurring market situation. He was just about permanently *en route* on the business of acquiring masterpieces for the Museum of Fine Arts: mostly the works of Italian painters such as Moretto da Brescia's *Saint Rochus*, Moroni's *Madonna*, a fraction of Lorenzo Lotto's altar, the frescoes of Romanino Ghedibeli and his *Self-Portrait*, Paolo de Caylina's murals. On the occasion of the Budapest exhibition an *In Memoriam* volume was published* which included a catalogue raisonné of the murals, panneaux, banners, altar-pieces and panel-pictures which he secured for the museum. Apart from the above-mentioned the catalogue lists the works of Alessio Baldovinetti, Pieter Brueghel the Younger, Denis Calvaert, Pieter Claesz, Cornel Cornelis van Haarlem, Lorenzo Costa, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Lorenzo Credi, Gerard David, Van Dyck, Davide Ghirlandajo, Jacopo da Montagnana, Gottfried Kneller, Johann Kupezky, Sir Peter Lely, Pietro Longhi, Moretto da Brescia, Paolo da Venezia, Sebastiano del Piombo, Pieter Paul Rubens, Sodoma, Giovanni Speranza, Cornelis de Vos, Jan Weenix, Jacob de Wit.

*Béla Józsa*

REMBRANDT: CORNELIS CLAESZ ANSLO, MENNONITE PREACHER, 1641. COPPER ENGRAVING

The *Portrait of a Man* by Piombo listed in the catalogue was bought at an auction in Milan. It had been part of the Scarpa-collection and was originally considered to be by Raffael. Pulszky thought that if he appeared at the auction and started to bid, the price of the picture would rise immediately, so he asked an acquaintance, the Countess Chévigné, to act for him. The scheme worked well, with the help of the Countess the painting was obtained at a relatively low price. Unfortunately, the participation of the Countess of doubtful reputation in the transaction, and the circumstance that the picture was after all not by Raphael but by Piombo, provided an opportunity for Pulszky's enemies to start their long-planned attack against him.

Before describing the circumstances of the campaign against Pulszky which had a tragic ending, here are a few data about his purchases of sculptures. The 121 pieces he acquired make up the backbone of the museum's holding of old sculptures.** He concentrated on 14–15th century works and broke with the earlier practice which had favoured works of marble or bronze; he bought also sculptures of wood, alabaster and sandstone. He extended his search beyond Tuscany and Siena to the whole of Northern Italy including local schools. Early-Renaissance works merit a special mention, including Agostino di Duccio's *Archangel Gabriel* and Michelozzo's *Madonna*. János Eisler lists objects which the museum obtained thanks to either Ferenc Pulszky's or Károly Pulszky's activity on the basis of Jolán Balogh's 1975 catalogue supplemented by data

* See the contribution by László Mravik and Ágnes Szigethi in "Károly Pulszky: In Memoriam", Budapest, 1988, published by the Museum of Fine Arts.

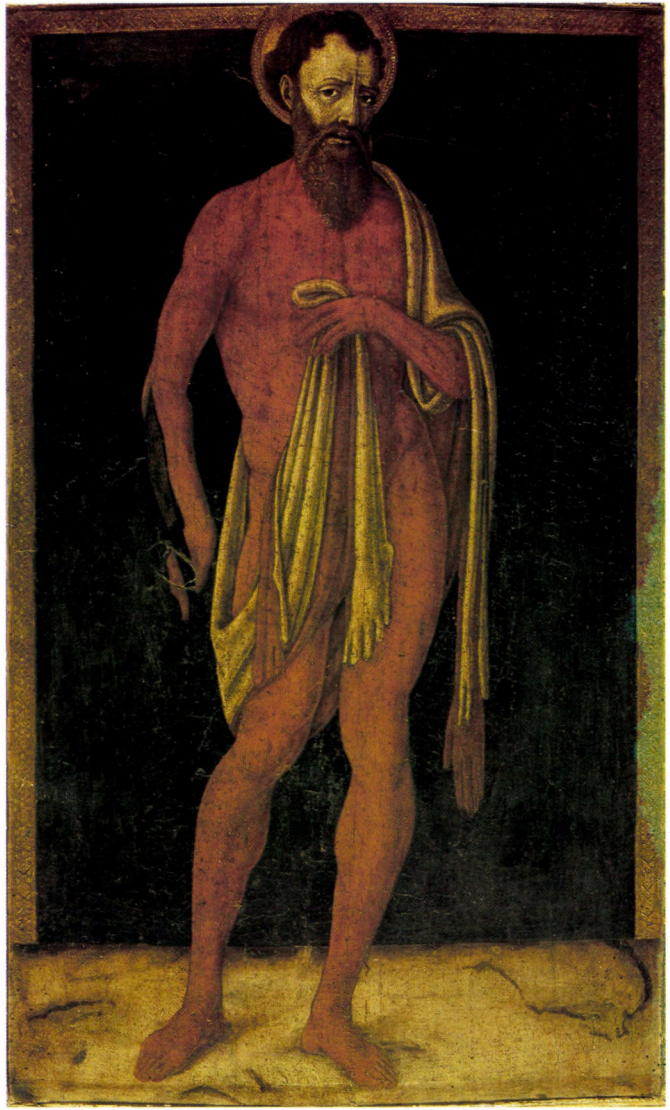
** The purchases of sculptures are listed in János Eisler's contribution on page 70, op. cit.

Sebastiano del Piombo: Portrait of a man, About 1485–1547, Oil on poplar board, 115×94 cm

*Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest*

Alfred Schiller

FILIPPINO LIPPI: SAINT ANTHONY OF PADOVA INTERCEDES WITH THE VIRGIN



Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest

MATTEO DI GIOVANNI: SAINT BARTHOLOMEW. 15TH CENTURY.

Alfred Schille

AERT GELDER: ESTHER AND MORDECAI, 1685. OIL ON CANVAS, 93 × 148,5 CM
*Museum of Fine Arts ,Budapest*

Girolamo Romanino:
Portrait of a man,
about 1520.
Oil on poplar board,
82,5×71,5 cm
*Alfred Schiller*

*Mária Szenczi*

Albrecht Dürer:
Saint Jerome in his cell, 1514.
Copper engraving
*Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest*

from later publications. Italian 8th–14th century works include Giovanni di Agostino's *Worshipping Angel;* among the works of 15th century Florentine masters we find Benedetto da Majano's *Christ and the Woman of Samara,* Giovanni della Robbia's terracottas *Abbot Saint Anthony* and *Judith and Maria with the Child,* Central Italy is represented by Jacopo Sansovino's *Standing Madonna with Child,* Andrea Verrocchio's *Imago Pietatis* derived from Ferenc Pulszky's collection.

*Mária Szenczi*

CORNELIUS DUSART: PEASANT COUNTING MONEY, 17th CENTURY. BLACK AND RED CHALK, 294×202 CM

*Politics interfere*

The 1890s were a time of passionate struggles in Hungarian politics: the liberal government which stood on the platform of the Compromise of 1867, became the target of vehement attacks. Political contradictions often degenerated into scandal-mongering personal campaigns, carried on also in Parliament. Ferenc Pulszky was one of the targets of anti-Semites on the extreme right since he had supported Jewish emancipation and other reforms. Because of a slanderous attack, Károly Pulszky fought a duel with Károly Várady a member of Parliament, standing in for his aged father. Várady missed, and Károly Pulszky did not avail himself of his right to shoot.

The same Károly Várady was later the initiator of a parliamentary attack against Károly Pulszky. The accusation, supported by a section of the press, was that Pulszky had not accounted properly for the huge sums he was entrusted with to make purchases. Furthermore, according to Várady, there was a suspicion that he spent much of the money on worthless things. This was a reference to the portrait bought at the auction in Milan, i.e. to its not being by Raphael. It is an irony of fate that the *Portrait of a Man* by Piombo is now judged to be one of the most valuable items in the Museum of Fine Arts.

Unfortunately, Pulszky himself laid himself open to attack since he was not a competent bookkeeper and the accountant ordered by the minister to deal with financial matters was reluctant to accompany him on his incessant, exhausting journeys. Then he had to pay out much money on the spot to sextons, customs officers, and others, to ease passage. Such payments were not recorded on bills.

The real target of the attacks against Károly Pulszky was his family which had a tremendous influence on Hungary's intellectual life, primarily his father, the deist and freemason Ferenc Pulszky whose ironical, and dispassionate speeches in Parliament, exemplifying his considerable erudition would have fitted better into the House of Commons rather than the passion-ravaged debates of the Hungarian national assembly. These speeches more than once confused and perplexed his fellow members. The other targets of the attacks were Ágost Pulszky who fought for Hungarian legal reforms, and the Pulszky-salon which was highly important socially especially since Károly Pulszky's

wife was Emília Márkus, a leading actress and one of the most beautiful women of her age, known as the 'fair wonder'.*

When I gathered the material for my book on the Pulszkys** the 1896 volumes of the records of the House of Representatives offered evidence of the vehement personal accusations against Károly Pulszky: that he took his wife on holidays in mountain resorts spending money freely, that he had an affair with the Countess Chévigné with whose mediation the picture was bought at the auction in Milan and of course also that the work in question had not been painted by Raphael, and was thus "worthless".

The attacks fulfilled their purpose: Károly Pulszky was unable to produce all the bills. He was 56,000 florins or guilders short, a large sum in the currency of the time. An investigation was started and he was suspended from his post. His overstrained nervous system broke down and he had to be transferred to a sanatorium for nervous disorders. When he improved, he was held on remand, then he was set free because his brother Ágost Pulszky paid the missing amount. During the examination, more missing bills and accounts turned up and the final missing sum was established as a paltry 43 florins and 97 groats. "Tant de bruit pour une omlette"—the storm which had troubled the country ended with a petty difference in the accounts which could have been the result of a simple bookkeeping error. By the time all these matters had been cleared up, Ferenc Pulszky had died on September 9th, 1897. He was eighty-three, had been poorly and all these excitements probably contributed to his death. Károly Pulszky, released from prison, travelled to England and then to Australia but was unable to begin a new life there. He sold insurance and then, in a state of deep depression, he shot himself near Brisbane in Queensland. He was buried there in the cemetery of Toowong. Pious Australian and Hungarian hands tidied up his grave a few years ago. Thomas Shapcott found it and was inspired to write a novel about Pulszky.***

Large-scale purchases based on a far-sighted policy stopped when Pulszky left. His successors turned their interests in other directions, they spent the sums allotted to the Museum mostly on the acquisition of the works of Hungarian painters, alas not of lasting value. Later, the deterioration of the country's economic situation and the sky-high rise in the price of works of art reduced possibilities to a minimum.

Károly Pulszky's ideas did not fully come true; compared to his plans the holdings of the Museum of Fine Arts remained a torso but even so, it is an important collection of European rank proving the soundness of Pulszky's policy, his sure artistic judgement and his genius as a museum organizer. The recent exhibition also demonstrates this fact.

* One of their daughters, Romola, married the dancer Nijinsky who in the Second World War was nursed in the Budapest house of Emília Márkus.

** Zoltán Halász: *A Pulszkyak* (The Pulszkys), Kozmosz, 1987. In Hungarian.

*** Thomas Shapcott: *White Stag of Exile*. Allen Lane, 1984; published by Európa, Budapest, 1988, in a Hungarian translation by Péter Balabán.

# VERSE TRANSLATION

FREDERICK TURNER

## THE JOURNEY OF ORPHEUS

### *On translating Radnóti*

The cast of the ghostly and beautiful mythic drama in which we, the translators, have become involved, includes as the hero the poet himself, his twin brother who died as he was born, his mother who also died in childbirth, his wife, for whom he lived, and ourselves, his two translators. One of us, Zsuzsanna Ozsvath, is a native speaker of Hungarian who, rescued by a series of miracles from the Holocaust in Budapest, shared some of Radnóti's experiences; the other, Frederick Turner, is an English/American poet with no knowledge of Hungarian but with a devotion to the ancient forms and meters of poetry which parallels that of Radnóti.*

In the course of translating Radnóti, we have made what we believe to be some valuable discoveries, both about poetry and about the art of translation.

Our actual method of translating is as follows. Each week Ozsvath selects a poem to translate, a selection based partly on its thematic connections to the ongoing discussion of Radnóti which continually accompanies our work together. At a weekly meeting, between three and four hours long, Ozsvath and Turner go over the poem in three stages. The first stage is constituted by two readings of the poem in Magyar by Ozsvath, one as she would read it at a poetry reading, the other giving greater emphasis to the verseform. From these readings Turner is able to ascertain the meter, tone, cadence, and often the emotional colour of the original. The rhyme-scheme is established, and any internal rhymes, assonances, alliteration, etcetera, are noted. If the verse-form is a classical one, either in the Hungarian tradition or in some other tradition, such as the German, the Latin, or the French, or is for instance in Magyar folk-ballad meter, the implications for the tone and mood of the poem are discussed.

The second stage is a literal, word by word oral translation of the poem by Ozsvath, which is written down by Turner. Here the first priority is the word order and idiom of the original, even when they make very strange sentences in English. Only later does Ozsvath clarify the grammar, if that is necessary.

The third stage is an exhaustive analysis of the connotations, derivations, cognates, and synonyms of the words of the poem, together with an analysis of its lexical and syntactical pecularities—archaisms, neologisms, compound words, slang, folk-language, dialect, and foreign words. Significant facts about references in the poem, its date relative to political and biographical events and to the composition of other Radnóti

* For poems by Miklós Radnóti translated by Frederick Turner and Zsuzsanna Ozsvath, see *NHQ* 112.

poems, and other relevant matters, are raised now if they have not been already. Turner frequently quotes analogies from English, American, Latin, and European poetry, ranging from Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton through Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Hopkins, and Yeats, from Dickinson to Stevens and Eliot, and from Virgil to Baudelaire and Pasternak; and Ozsvath responds by pointing out the similarities and differences of tone, and with quotations from her own favourite German or Hungarian poets. There is a continuous interaction between Turner's own poetic work and the work of translation, so that a poem of Turner's will sometimes gloss or anticipate a poem of Radnóti's. Certain special moments in the original are pointed out by Ozsvath, who guides Turner through their feeling; he describes this as being like the way Helen Keller's tutor guided her pupil through the reality of language. Such moments include the "great cold ferns, that slowly stir and bow" of "Letter to my Wife," the prune marmalade of "Forced March," the "somber-gonging tongue" of "Skin and Bone and Pain," the loony rhymes of "In the Gibbering Palm Tree," the simplicity of "world is but wormeatenness" in "Root," the "fuzzy-wuzzy" green stems of the poppies in "Steep Road," and the cluster of "au" sounds in "October" (in "Calendar"):

> *All is golden-yellow, where*
> *yellow corn does not yet dare*
> *pawn the cornsilk gonfalon:*
> *so it flaunts its golden awn.*

This process is a highly interactive one, and there are often differences of interpretation between the two translators, which must be fully resolved or, better still, incorporated as tensions in the translation. For instance, in "Root," "Like Death," and "Two Fragments," one of us felt more strongly a flavor of darkness and horror, the other the mysterious power of poetry which flourishes even in those realms of darkness. The translations reflect this ambivalence.

Turner now works with the several pages of translation and notes to produce by word processor a tentative verse translation, which he reads to Ozsvath some time during the following week (usually on the phone). If the tone and music sound right, the result is polished according to Ozsvath's advice and printed up. Some time during the next few weeks, after both translators have lived with the poem for a while, they take a look at it again and correct any problems that remain. Both translators correspond with Mrs Radnóti, the poet's widow, and her very perceptive suggestions and criticisms also result in changes in the text.

What is significant about this method is, we believe, a combination of three factors. One is the highly oral nature of the process; the poem never feels like just words on a page, but like a living communication between persons. This applies even before the translation process begins; Ozsvath knows most of the poems by heart, in part or whole. Turner first encounters each poem simply as a set of verbal/musical sounds. The second factor is related to the first: the process is highly interactive, with a feedback of understanding taking place between the two translators and their dead master. The third factor is the role of interpretation: we are interpreting the poem from the moment we begin, even before one of us has a literal understanding of it. This could only occur through the *lingua franca* of meter.

Radnóti's own metaphor for the process of translation was the myth of Orpheus. Though he himself left tacit some of the ramifications of that metaphor, we believe that an exploration of them may be valuable in this time; valuable not only for the reader but also for other translators who may find themselves in the dark wood of the translator's task and feel the need, as we did, for a guide.

Radnóti died in a strange lonely place, a sort of marshy delta-land where one of the Danube's tributaries, the Rábca, winds under leaning willows and high-circling birds to

join the great river. When we went there, and later when Fanni Radnóti put into our hands the notebook containing her husband's last poems, exhumed with his body from their mass grave, we felt as many did who knew him: that there must be some reason, some solid historical account, some humanly-comprehensible explanation of his death. But the more we sought it among his friends and among various literary, religious, and political survivors, the more it fled away before us, or diverged into contradictory accounts, like a river losing itself in the tangled web of its distributaries.

Yet his own work contains a triumphant and tragic myth of his death, which, if we followed it carefully, pointed to an entirely different kind of meaning than that of the various political and religious worldviews——Nationalist, Christian, Communist, Jewish, Modernist, Socialist—that can claim him. But to follow that myth was to follow him into the land of shades, the underworld of roots and burial where he himself had his great adventure. A myth is a clue given us by a wise witch to find our way out of a labyrinth; a severe but trustworthy guide; or perhaps also the hope and promise of Mercy Herself, that there is a way back up into the light.

These are not just metaphors. The problem with translation is that, on the everyday surface level, there is no equivalent at all in another language for the words of a poem. The words of another language do not know the words of a Hungarian poem, and they are as incapable of understanding them as is someone who knows no Hungarian, or as rocks and trees and animals are. If translation is a matter of finding equivalents in a horizontal, one-to-one way—idioms in English that map the Hungarian idioms, grammatical ingenuities that preserve the ambiguities of the original, parallel puns, and so on—then perhaps translation should not even be attempted. Radnóti would remain dead to us and to the English-speaking world—and the metaphor that Hungarians persistently use to describe the isolation of their language is that of being cut off from the mainstream, the mainstream being English.

But Radnóti believed that translation could not only reproduce the life of the "original," but even *improve on it*. In his memoir *Under Gemini*—and we will return later to the related myth of the Dioscuri—he tells of a conversation with a scandalised friend in which he makes the deadpan claim that his translation of some lines of Tibullus is better than the Latin. "Better" can only mean that it is closer to something that both Radnóti *and* Tibullus are trying to reach. If this can be true, then our whole model of the relationship between languages—of language itself—needs to be transformed. The myth is the alchemical process by which this can be done.

In the myth of Orpheus the poet sang such melodies that the very beasts and trees and rocks listened to his song. One day his wife Eurydice, a wood-nymph, stepped on a snake and died of its bite. Orpheus followed her down into the underworld and played so sweetly before king Hades and Queen Persephone that they agreed to release her and let her return with Orpheus to the land of the living, on condition that he not look back at her until they had passed the gates of the underworld. But he did look back and she was lost forever. Later, as a priest of Apollo, he censured the orgiastic rites of the Dionysian mysteries, and was torn to pieces by the Maenads, the frenzied female votaries of Dionysus. Still singing, his head and his lyre drifted down the river Hebrus and to Lesbos, the island of poets, where the head became an oracle, while Apollo placed the lyre among the stars. Strangely enough, he was regarded by the devotees of the Orphic mysteries as a true avatar of Dionysus.

Many poets have consciously or unconsciously followed this myth: Homer, who takes his Odysseus down into the land of shades; Virgil, whose Aeneas follows him

in turn in Book VI of the *Aeneid;* Dante, for whom Virgil himself became a guide in the *Inferno*, and so on. A female muse or angel often protects the poet in his terrifying journey; for Dante, most eloquently, it is Beatrice. The land of shades is often imagined as a place of reeds and wandering rivers, and the soul is often imagined as a bird.

In the related myth of the Dioscuri, Castor, the mortal twin, was killed in battle, but Pollux, the immortal, begged to share his brother's fate. As a result, they live alternately one day in heaven and one day on earth.

Many of these themes can be found again and again in Radnóti's poetry; the sense of debt to his dead twin in "Twenty-Eight Years" and other poems; the female guardian saint, the Angel, almost throughout, variously identified with Radnóti's dead mother, his living wife, his fate, and the dawning of a new age of freedom; the strange delta-land of such poems as "Twenty-Nine Years" and "Song"; the underworld of "Root" and many others; the winged soul and poetic apotheosis in "The Fourth Eclogue," "Twenty-Nine Years," and "Hexameters in Late October," the sense that death will not stop his song ("In a Troubled Hour," "Neither Memory nor Magic"); perhaps even the persistent sense that the poet brings sentient life to all of the animate and inanimate creation. In the second of the "Razglednicas" the tiny shepherdess stepping into the lake catches in one image that peculiar combination of the pastoral and the Hadean that informs this theme of poetic death-transcendence. And Radnóti's prophetic fury against the blood-orgies of his persecutors in "Fragment" and "The Eighth Eclogue" recall the reason for the dismemberment of Orpheus.

For the translator the myth holds special gifts. In order to recover the life of the dead poet, the translator must follow him into the land of the dead, must go underground with him and be reborn with him in his apotheosis. To translate is to die to one's own language as the dead poet died to his, and to go back to their common source. The poet, as in "Root," lives underground, nourishing to branches of the flowering tree. Every poem is a flowering branch; to translate is to retrace the source of that branch's vitality down to where the other language branches off from the common root and to follow it up into a new bough of blossom. The tree of life is the tree of tongues; and under every poem's words are an ur-language in which it was spoken before the poet himself translated it into Magyar or Latin or English. The "original" has never been written down, and every poem is an approximation to that Orphic song which comes from the land of the dead, of the ever-living. Translation is not between leaf and leaf, flower and flower, but a descent through the fractal cascades of the twigs, the forked branches, to the root where the original poem issues, and then, by the power of song, to reascend along another branch.

By the "ur-language" we do not mean some actual prehistoric language, like Indo-European. One of the emphatic features of Hungarian is that it has no linguistic relationship to the Indo-European languages. The ur-language is the deep language that we share to some extent with other higher animals, the language of childhood, the words we sometimes speak in dream and which dissolve when, having awoken, we try to remember them. The world itself speaks a sort of objective poetry, formed out of the harmonious relations of all registerings, sensations, and perceptions of it; and this poetry is the scaffolding of its next leap of growth. It is that poetry which poets hear, and which is the inner melody of their poems. The history of the evolution of perception and finally of esthetic perception is the history of the evolution of the universe into concreteness and time, and into that densest and deepest kind of time we call eternity. The reason the rocks, trees, and beasts come to listen to Orpheus is because they want to hear how their own story comes

out; for the ur-language that they speak is unconscious of itself and does not know its own meaning.

The poet is the womb of that meaning, and needs the historical language of his or her culture to embody it.

To translate Radnóti is only possible because he never cut himself off from the living tradition of poets and prophets. Like Dante and Blake and Rilke and Yeats, he conversed on equal terms with the spirits of the dead from the past, and the angels of the unborn future; and the piety that enabled him to do that also renders him available for conversation with other poets, even though the earth of the grave divides us. In the Eighth Eclogue he speaks with Nahum; and Nahum's home is not just ancient Israel but the primeval dustcloud out of which the Universe evolved.

To be a part of that tradition is to have mastered, and to have kept the faith with, certain ancient magics, one of the greatest of which is metrical form. In "O Ancient Prisons," a perfect sonnet, we see that faith and mastery. The poet teaches how to know; and he does this only by speaking in measure and in form. Perhaps the deepest element of the conversation between the translator and the dead poet is mediated by the struggle to resurrect the meter of the original. In "À la Recherche," which, as its title implies, is itself an attempt to resurrect the dead poets who were the friends of his youth, Radnóti describes the adjectives as dancing on the froth and comb of the meter; in other words, images come alive only when embedded in a metrical cadence that holds them in the correct, vital position with relation to each other. Images are like the bases of an enzyme, that are effective in their work of cutting, joining, and catalysing only if the molecular structure—or verse form—of the enzyme presents them at the right angle so as to form an "active site." Radnóti can only remember and preserve his dead friends when he remembers the measure of their poetry; and for him the pressure of their hands in their last handclasp is the same thing as their characteristic "hand" or handwriting in meter. In his great elegy for Mihály Babits, again it is the Measure (capitalized in Radnóti's poem to suggest Babits's initial) that preserves the inner life of the poet.

The struggle to resurrect Radnóti's meter in another language results in a terrifying revelation, and demands an absolute faith. The revelation is of Radnóti's almost inhuman, his Mozartian virtuosity with meter. Consider, for instance, the meter of "Twenty-Nine Years"—which even Radnóti himself confesses, in the poem, to have found horribly difficult—with its regular pattern of tetrameters and pentameters, its "nines and twenties" as he punningly puts it, its fiendish system of feminine rhymes. Every poem he wrote is metrically unique, and he was in his brief time (again like Mozart) divinely prolific. (Like Mozart, too, his artistic joy seems to rise to an angelic shriek the grimmer his existence becomes and the closer he gets to death; Radnóti's friends were scandalized by the fact that he found the activities of Herr Hitler and company of secondary interest to the sweet wrestle with poetic form. But Radnóti was right. One day Hitler will be known as a tyrant who lived during the time of the poet Radnóti.) To render Radnóti's delicate interference between a meticulous and complex verseform, and an infinitely various cadence, seems simply impossible; a blank wall.

But there is also the faith; for after all the cadence of poetry is already prior to and in common between all languages. One of the unnoticed peculiarities of the Orpheus myth is that though Orpheus is described as a poet rather than as a musician, it is the sweetness of his song, of his lyre, of his music that persuades the masters of the Underworld to release Eurydice. We think the problem can be resolved by interpreting music in the myth as poetic meter: Minos and Rhadamanthos might not understand the surface language of a particular national lexicon and

syntax, but recognize, as the root recognizes the sap, the ur-language of measure and cadence. So if the translator has faith in the ur-language—one might almost say, if he does not once look behind to check whether the "literal" sense is following—he may yet lead the redeemed meaning up into the light. In other words, since English is descended from the same deep root as Magyar, any music of which Magyar is capable exists also in English. To recover it is like, as Michelangelo put it, cutting away the stone to reveal the statue; the statue is waiting in the stone, if one has faith that it is.

Translating metrically one must be prepared to give up everything, to sacfifice everything to the meter. Only after that kenosis, that descent and submission, is everything miraculously restored, not always where it was lost, and sometimes in a form which is not at once recognizable—in the connotation of another word, or in a grammatical ambiguity enforced by the meter—but without loss. Of course some Radnóti lines simply write themselves in English:

*And in the brilliance, bold calligraphy*
*Is idly, glitteringly, written by*
*a boastful, diamond-budded dragonfly*

("Calendar:" "June")

But elsewhere, as in the tiny "Ikon" of Mary, the meter will not allow enough room and the pillows on which the doves rest in the original have to be sacrificed.

*Look at her hands! they're a flower*
*slain by the snow. In her hair,*
*loosening, nestles a dove*

But the pillows return in the word "nestles," and as the dove now nestles in her hair, it has become her bosom, and so the pillows both of the infant Jesus and of the lover have reappeared in another form, as the doves themselves, but chastened by being in the singular—another shift demanded by the meter. In "A Pink Unveils," faith to the meter demands a straining of the language, so that the cicadas "flirt their hips;" but this usage might well be the discovery of an English or American poet: the poet that Radnóti might have been if his mother tongue were English. (Radnóti sometimes jokingly referred to himself as the English poet Eaton Darr, a phonetic reversal of his own name.) The same recovery of the original intensity of the image, through faith in the measure, can be found in the line about the "pales of grey" in "Paris," and throughout such poems as "Floral Song," "In Your Arms," and "Dreamscape"; and the Hopkinsian wordleaps that occur in our translation of "Hexameters in Late October" were forced on us by the rigors of the hexameter.

Now these observations about the recovery of the original are not the translatorial self-congratulation that they may appear. The point is that these things happen through the force of Radnóti's own genius, given the deep affinities between all languages, and the blind faith of the translators that the original cadence lies buried in English, just as it did in the Hungarian. This faith is absolutely essential; the translator must reject *every* halfway acceptable rhyme or metrical solution, until the right words are found. Those words are at the same time utterly unforced (though they may sound very strange, expanding the very notion of what is "natural" in English) and utterly in the spirit of the original. Without that faith one would not know that one had not yet reached the answer, because one would not believe that the answer existed.

This faith requires the translator to jettison many old and new superstitions about what is metrically possible in a given language. Such superstitions include the belief that English does not take kindly to feet that begin with a strong stress (the dactyl or trochee, for instance); that feet with two light syllables (dactyls, anapests, amphibrachs) necessarily result in an unpleasant gallop in English verse; and that lines longer than the pentameter—especially the hexameter—will not work in English. All these

problems are matters of technique. Chiefly the answer lies in a consideration of the length as well as the stress of the English syllables. Few poets who work in English meter pay the conscious attention they should to syllabic length, though if they have good ears they will generally opt unconsciously for a safely pleasant pattern of syllable lengths. If the heavy and light stresses in the English hexameter are patterned against a harmonious counterpoint of syllables of greater and lesser duration, many of the problems of this long line disappear. Another recourse is alliteration, which wonderfully ties the line together. In all of these matters Radnóti was our teacher, as he himself was a faithful servant of the classics whom he translated. Our experience with Radnóti encourages us to believe that even tonal meters, like those of classical Chinese poetry, could be made to work in English, even though tone is used grammatically in English rather than lexically, as it is in Chinese. Magyar, we feel, once possessed a systematic lexical/tonal element, which still surfaces sometimes in poetry.

The uniqueness of each of Radnóti's poems has much to do with the different mood and mindset that is generated by a given meter, and to which the imagery, wordplay, logic, and degrees of grammatical licence and semantic ambiguity are tuned. In "Hymn to the Nile," for instance, the short lines and heavy rhymes are tuned to the repetition of words and whole lines to produce an incantatory or invocatory effect. This in turn contrasts with the exotic subject and the compounded neologisms to create a strange ritual chant, the aural equivalent of Egyptian hieroglyphics; while the light dancing energy of the rhythm makes the poem into a celebration. Meanwhile, the playful paradoxes, expressionistic diction, and grammatical freedom set the poem loosely within the symbolist movement and thus suggest a more immediate relevance. Take the meter out of this complex system, and the meaning of the poem disappears, like the colours of a tropical fish when it is left to gasp in the bottom of a boat. "In Your Arms" is an even more telling example. It would be quite lifeless without the lullaby meter. More subtly, the epic/pastoral hexameters of the first and eight eclogues are fundamental to their meanings, recalling the power of Homer, the moral complexity of Virgil, and that strange Hadean combination of the arcadian with the heroic that we associate with the descent to the land of the dead.

The chief superstition that we found we must give up was the superstition that "free verse" is an adequate or acceptable way of translating a metered original. And our experience with translation confirmed our growing suspicion that by abandoning metered verse the modernists were abandoning the very heart of poetry itself. In translating Radnóti, we hope that his spirit will be released into the English language, released from the marshy delta-land beside the Rábca and into the freedom which Radnóti always envisioned beyond the dreadful foreshortening of his own life and fate. The poetic stagnation which has occurred since the Second World War, partly as a result of the terrible events of that war and partly because of the modernist mistake of giving up poetic meter, may thus give way to a new freshening and opening of poetry, so that the spiritual Nile may once more flow unimpeded:

*All hail, thou greenglowing!*
*O Nilus, sweetsmelling,*
*thy cisterns thou breakest,*
*thy pastures sunglowing*
*thou floodest with growing,*
*thou, overflowing!*

GEORGE SZIRTES

# HAUNTED BY OBJECTS

*Between*. Selected Poems of Ágnes Nemes Nagy.
Translated by Hugh Maxton. Corvina / Dedalus. 91 pp.*

I ought to start this review by saying that in my opinion Ágnes Nemes Nagy is one of the finest living poets, not only in Hungary but in Europe, indeed anywhere. For those who do not know her work I will try to characterise it in a few words which, I am quite aware, will be both inadequate and subject to such risks as may be imagined when a foreign (or in my case, semi-foreign) writer reads poetry in a second language which, however hauntingly familiar as a first language, remains imperfectly known.

Nemes Nagy was of the generation whose early work began to appear immediately after the war, in the interregnum between the fall of Fascism and the rise of authoritarian Socialism. During that brief flowering she was a central figure among the group of writers associated with the magazine *Újhold*, or New Moon. This group included most of her remarkably talented generation, of whom Pilinszky is the best known abroad, and it could in many ways be regarded as the heir of the earlier, similarly gifted Nyugat group of the twenties and thirties. This is not the place to discuss the details of literary let alone any other politics, enough to say that the magazine was closed down in 1948 and its contributors silenced for many years afterwards. One of the most interesting literary phenomena of the last few years has been the reappearance of *Újhold* in the form of an important hard-bound biannual anthology of new work under what remained of the original editorship, as if some thirty five years had never intervened.

The work of the original group is not readily classifiable since its individual writers rose above easy generalisation, but very broadly speaking it tended to be formally disciplined, intellectual rather than emotive, urban rather than rural, compact rather than discursive, classical rather than romantic. Like Pilinszky, Nemes Nagy has been sparingly productive, even taking into account the years of enforced silence. Her first book appeared in 1948, the second in 1957, the third ten years later, and the fourth thirteen years after that in 1980. Enlarged editions of collected poems followed. Concentration has been her essence and the source of her power. The qualities her translator attributes to her —intellectual passion, a cool eye for physical detail, an awareness of the crisis of modern civilisation and the responsibility of the individual—are all functions of this tigerish concentration. She rarely writes directly about human beings or human relationship but seeks her correlatives in a fragmented version of nature which serves as symbol but transcends symbol to become something so hauntingly concrete that it can properly be described as monumental. Nemes Nagy's poetry is about the paradoxical otherness yet closeness of a physical world which makes moral demands on us, the chief of which is integrity. The tremendous moving power of her verse resides partly in this, partly in what appears to me to be the unaffectedness of her language which states rather than encompasses, and which employs the patterns of normal speech but under conditions of the severest discipline. This very monumentality infects the temperament and imagery of whatever self-images she chooses to give us. These

* Part of Hugh Maxton's introduction, together with his translation of Ágnes Nemes Nagy's *The Garden of Eden*, appeared in *NHQ* 111.

are non-sexual (it is quite misleading to talk about her as 'a woman writer', as the blurb does, since gender exercises minimal influence on her work), fragmented (usually the asexual image of a shoulder only), heavy (objects have a supernatural weight in her world), and tragic (self-surrogates drown, fall, suffer and survive, without tears in a world of silence). If I had to put it very simply I would say that she is the finest living tragic poet we have, her tragic theme being the contradiction between the permanence and the passage of the real. One may object that the delights, the vicissitudes, the affection, the humour, and what Cluvia in the Roman scene of *The Tragedy of Man* so touchingly calls "The hundred sweet and idiotic things/ That give our feast its flavour" are all missing: that these monuments are not supple, are simply inhuman. It is true the humanity is sublimated, but the monuments are not mere stone. Eternity may weigh them down, but they are crystallised flesh and blood: they exist and cannot be avoided. If I wanted to state the case for the international importance of contemporary Hungarian poetry I would start with her. If I were looking for a writer of comparable temperament I would point to Beckett.

The reader will have noticed that I have used no quotations and have made the merest allusions to a few individual poems. This is partly because the corpus is homogeneous, but more importantly because this is an English language magazine, discussing a translation into English. The first major collection of Nemes Nagy's poems in English translation was the work of the American poet Bruce Berlind, * and the introductory essay that Nemes Nagy wrote on that occasion precedes the new larger volume. This is translated by Hugh Maxton.

Hugh Maxton is himself a very good Irish poet, meticulous, intelligent and sensuous in his use of language, and while it is not a *sine qua non* for a translator to be an outstanding poet in his own right (indeed some outstanding translators have not been poets at all), it is nevertheless reassuring that he should be a more than competent craftsman and have a poetic identity. Where a purely academic translator will often be more careful to reproduce the linguistic characteristics of his original, a poet will sniff out the essence of a poem and give that essence a more lively if sometimes less immediately life-like form. The ideal solution of course is a combination of the two, but speaking for myself, I think that if I had to choose I would prefer to survive in lively corruption than to be accurately embalmed in the rarely frequented corner of a vast museum.

One of the advantages of the Hungarian language over the English as a medium of verse translation is its ready supply of rhymes, another is its metrical adaptability to both stress and quantity. Its great and much lamented disadvantage is that only a very small fraction of the world's population is likely to appreciate this. English is relatively poor in rhyme (particularly in feminine rhyme) and tends to work by stress alone. Classical metres are imported caviare to the general. Its great strengths lie in its historical resonance, subtlety of tone, the tradition of empiricism, and its enormous and expanding wealth of usage through the world. Of this, *English* English is just one variety, the original part, but a part that is capable of being refreshed by other parts—including of course Irish English (many of the present leading 'British' poets are in fact Irish). In any case, as Nemes Nagy herself has pointed out in an essay, the translator can always rely on the great pan-European iamb to pace out the common ground.

Despite what Auden said about a poem being never finished, only abandoned, poems are generally considered to be final. They have the ideal Renaissance characteristic of being unalterable once known. Auden may have been articulating every poet's sense of ultimate failure, but the reader rarely feels this. If he loves poetry the miracle of the

* *NHQ* 83

poem, with its personality, its solutions and discoveries, remains an ever deepening miracle. To the poet it is merely something in the past, an object he left somewhere, remarkable in its place (he is grateful that it happened), but one that seems oddly irrelevant to his current situation. He would not write precisely that poem now. With a translation though, even the reader feels uncertainty. Better versions can always be imagined. Somewhere there is an original: the poem in its own language has no original, it simply is.

In order to be fair, this particular reader must to some extent forget he knows the originals. He must read the translation as he imagines an uninformed newcomer would read them. Maxton, I believe, worked from rough translations, but with considerable knowledge of the cultural background, and with the advantage of being able to consult —I dont't know how frequently—the poet herself. The result is a highly readable, occasionally idiosyncratic book, in which there is a more than usually high rate of success, if by success we mean the creation of a number of impressive poems. He works best at a stretch, so the prose poems and the longer formal poems sond most natural. 'Statues', 'The Sleeping Form', 'Storm', 'Between', 'The Garden of Eden', most of 'Lake Balaton' and of 'Akhenaton', not only read well but assure us that we are in the presence of an important poet: they cast shadows. The sensuousness of Maxton's language is like Irish clothes on a European body—you can tell the wearer is not Irish but he doesn't look unnatural. His very air of strangeness makes him impressive. To take an example from 'The Garden of Eden':

*One fat poppy dawdles*
*where field meets forest,*
*just one poppy its lug*
*dropy as a rabbit's.*

*It's the century. Fern swaddles*
*an armlong hedgehog:*
*he tumbles into the glen*
*a pot-bellied bruin*
*printing the sand*
*with his soft, spiky skin.*

The first verse here is almost native. The language is working hard to impress us so, and this is just about perceptible. The second six lines tell us quite clearly that the writer is not native: "an armlong hedgehog", "tumbles into the glen", and "a pot-bellied bruin" are clearly solution to extrinsic problems, which is to say that I can't easily see Maxton using such phrases in his own poems. It sets the English or Irish reader's teeth slightly on edge. He is now on guard, not because there is anything wrong or funny about any of this—it is not the dreaded 'translatorese' which puts an immediate end to all pleasure—but because he understands that this strangeness comprises some possibly cryptic message. The hat fits very smartly, the coat almost fits, the feet that stick out at the bottom are unusual, but—if the reader will bear with this metaphor a little longer—the onlooker has the feeling that the stranger is an imposing figure and that he is carrying important documents in his wallet. These are his identity.

It is unquestionable that in his best translations Maxton has succeeded in giving Nemes Nagy an impressive identity. Whether this identity is recognisable to a Hungarian reader is a different issue. I think on the whole it is recognisable, although, no doubt, in an equally half-exotic guise. If the stature of the figure seems a little smaller on its return, it is because the Hungarian reader will be more aware of failures than successes. The shorter, more gnomic poems are the casualties he would chiefly notice. In Hungarian, the compression of these poems is not at the expense of clarity of diction. Their rhyme and metrical grandeur makes them memorable. Maxton, in his appended commentary, makes a perfectly good case for

precedence of matter over rhyme and line length, but of course he knows as well as I do that very often shape and content are one and the same thing, and that while there may be differences between the way this relationship works in various languages, the epigrammatic quality of a European poet with a classical temperament is best captured in similar, on the whole international, forms. 'I Carried Statues', 'Bird' and 'Diary' lose their sense of permanence. They seem mistier, more cryptic, more incomprehensible, more merely wilful than they are. The brilliant clarity of the originals is the source of their power.

One more small bone to pick. The commentary partly illuminates, partly obscures. I think there are both fewer and more contextual parallels than the translator assumes, and that many of those proposed are of no great value to the reader who, to take one example, will neither know nor care that Nemes Nagy had blonde hair in her youth and that another long-dead Hungarian poet of whom he will not have heard, had made a passing reference to a character who happened to bear the same Christian name as she does. Interpretation in this light is bound to be fanciful. Scholarship sometimes gets carried away by such ideas.

But let that be. The great and most important issue is that there is an identity here, something that impresses itself on the language in which this article is written, something that once read will not be easily forgotten. As always with translations one can imagine better, but to actually do better is going to be very difficult. Congratulations are in order.

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# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

JÁNOS KORNAI

## ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ECONOMIC THEORISTS, ADVISERS AND POLITICIANS

*Preface to the Russian edition of* Economics of Shortage*

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to have my *Economics of Shortage* published in the Soviet Union.

The facts there discussed are well-known. Hungarians and Soviet citizens, Chinese and Rumanians, Cubans and Poles are all equally aware of what it means to queue for meat and shoes, be on the receiving end of rude remarks from shop-assistants instead of getting the goods requested, wait for years for a flat from the Council, or to find production stopped in the factory because there is a lack of raw materials and components. From shortage ensues a diversity of losses: it reduces consumer satisfaction, hinders proper production, and takes away important incentives for technical development. What is, perhaps, the heaviest loss of all is that the seller has the advantage over the buyer; the individual's autonomy and freedom are violated. The seller's domination frequently places the buyer in a humiliating position, either as a customer in the shop, or as a worker in the factory. We have here a most specific field of political economy: we are not studying the relationship between man and things but are discussing social relationships among people when trying to clarify the causes and consequences of chronic shortage.

Soviet economists recognised this problem early. The present book also refers to works written by L. N. Kritsman in 1925 and V. V. Novozhilov in 1926. Later on, however, for decades people only talked about shortage at home, perhaps when standing in a queue; shortage did not figure as a topic of scholarly research. Here it is worth stopping for a moment to consider what the actual task of the economist investigating the problems of socialism is.

In the long period of time when economists in the socialist countries carefully avoided discussing the phenomenon of shortage and other, similarly delicate questions, their philosophy was determined along the following

* For an English-language edition see János Kornai: *Economics of Shortage*, North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam, Oxford, New York. 1980. 631 pp.

lines. Socialism is a system which satisfies the old desires of mankind. All of its laws, by definition, exert a favourable influence. Consequently, all the unfavourable, harmful phenomena, which cause human suffering or economic loss, are merely passing inconveniences, resulting from negligence or bad work on the part of individuals. It is also possible that the harmful phenomena are brought about by errors on the part of this or that leader who acquired extraordinary power—a Stalin or a Mao—and since such individuals exert enormous influence, the losses caused can be very grave. This much is certain, however—to follow this thinking—the problems are independent of the fundamental social relationships of the existing system. In socialism all the laws are "good". Problems, if they exist at all, come into being only because individuals did not recognise the "good" laws, implemented them badly, or acted against them.

In the works that resulted from this way of thinking, the duties of the economist, the observation, description, and explanation of reality, the appraisal of the given situation, and the drawing up of practical tasks and programmes appear in conjunction. These spheres of competence are described in the economic literature under different denominations, contrasting the "positive" (descriptive-explanatory) theory with the "normative" theory (evaluating and making recommendations). In the works inspired by the thinking outlined above, the answers to be given to two questions, which ought to be sharply distinct from one other, intertwined: what is it that *exists* and what is it that *should exist?* What is *reality* and what should the *desired* situation be like? The imagined properties of the ideal, perfect society is referred to by these works as "objective laws" while the internal, real contradictions of real society do not even appear in their analysis. The most important requirement of scholarship, the contrasting of statement with observation, experience, and facts, remains unsatisfied.

Similar to works by a number of others, the present book is based upon a way of thinking and approach different from that outlined above. Its starting-point is that we must face reality, whether we like what we have observed or not. The first question a conscientious researcher must pose himself is not whether what he sees is "good" but whether what he has stated is *true* or not. Is the description supplied in accordance with the facts? And if the researcher, following his own conscience, meets this, the only possible scientific criterion, then he has the right to commit to paper what he has stated, whether the truth which thus comes to light is pleasant or unpleasant.

The word law has been abused so frequently (and this has given rise to so many misunderstandings) that the writer is reluctant to use it. Let us use

more modest expressions than that: let us speak of social regularities, tendencies, the inclinations of the system, its behavioural patterns. The basic precept of the book is that the economic system which was typical of the socialist economy prior to decentralizing reforms inevitably creates shortage. This, then, is a regularity which necessarily comes into being under certain social circumstances.

The phenomenon is general. No one states that in this system there is always shortage and of everything. The statement is more qualified than that: namely that none of the important spheres of the economy is free from shortage; it appears in the market for consumer goods and services, in production, in the allocation of labour, in investment, in foreign trade, and in international currencies. The phenomenon is chronic: it manifests itself in every period; it always reappears following the occasional temporary success of the efforts made to defeat it. The system ensures the reproduction of shortage. The phenomenon is of a self-generating character: shortage breeds shortage. The phenomenon is intensive: it prevails in great strength and exerts a strong influence on the behaviour of all members of society. When there is manifested in a system general, chronic, self-generating, intensive shortage—in the sense described and defined here—then this system may be referred to as a *shortage economy*.

The book attempts to present a causal analysis. If something is frequent, permanent, and intensive, it cannot be accounted for by the occasional, accidental errors of individuals. The argument that shortage is created by the errors of calculation in planning, or the selfishness and carelessness of certain factories, or the lack of care on the part of some sellers, does not seem to be convincing. We have to seek causes lying deeper than that.

The analysis presented by this book tries to proceed backwards from the phenomena observable by everyone to the more superficial and then the more general causes of a more fundamental character, delving into deeper and deeper layers of cause and effect. It discusses the extent to which shortage phenomena may be explained by the various frictions in the economy, that is by conflicts and weaknesses in information, decision-making, and decision-implementation. The next layer is the connections between chronic shortage and the different social effect-mechanisms: expansion and quantity drive, investment hunger, hoarding tendency, the almost insatiable demand of the state sector for production inputs and especially investment resources. To go another layer deeper: how can the tendencies above be accounted for by the weak responsiveness of the state firms to prices and profit, the lack of compulsion towards profit, the set of phenomena which is referred to by the book as the soft budget constraint of the enterprises?

This is related to the fact that state-owned companies are much more dependent upon the bureaucracy they are subordinate to than their customers. Their life or death, their contraction or expansion does not depend on their success in competition but on what the authorities exercising paternalist control wish to do with them. This casual analysis could probably be continued and the question as to why may be raised after each answer. However, it appears from the analysis in this work that shortage will be constantly reproduced as long as the vertical dependence of the company remains the dominating relationship in production.

Since my book has been published, it has been the subject of much discussion both in Hungary and abroad. In ten to twenty years' time, following a great deal more discussion and, hopefully, after extensive research based upon as many facts as possible, economists will probably have understood the set of problems related to shortage better than was possible when this book was written. I expect the analyses of the book to be the subject of discussion among my Soviet colleagues as well. However, I would be very happy if, what is more important than this or that economic proposition argued in the book, the philosophy and ethics of science, upon which this work is based, met with as great an understanding as possible. I would be glad to see as wide an agreement as possible that we have to face facts even if they induce negative feelings in us. We do not have the right to avoid delicate truths. We cannot be satisfied with superficial answers but have to try to find the deep roots of problems and maladies. We have to reveal the true regularities of the economic reality around us, the genuine explanation of mass phenomena and of the lasting tendencies.

Even among those who share these views there will probably be come who will put down the book in disappointment for the author presents no guidelines on how to remedy the existing disease. What is the value of a diagnosis without a therapy?

Let us stay with the simile taken from health care. A few years ago I wrote a study on the analogy between the medicine and economics (*Contradictions and Dilemmas*. Budapest, Corvina, 1985, and Cambridge, MIT Press, 1986); not long ago a Russian translation of this was published by the Soviet journal *Eko*. At this point I would like to return to the line of thought outlined in this work. There is no doubt that the most important thing is for the sick man to survive, and, if possible, recover from his disease. But this cannot be achieved by commanding the doctor to prescribe some medicine because the patient *must* recover. "Lung disease," "consumption" (later known as tuberculosis to medicine) tortured people for thousands of years. They implored, at times threatened, first sorcerers and later the culti-

vators of the profession called medicine. All kinds of treatment were administered to the patients: prayer, exorcism, hot and cold baths, a huge diversity of medicinal herbs and chemicals. Finally, and only in 1890, Robert Koch discovered that tuberculosis is caused by a bacillus. When he arrived at this conclusion, he was unable to indicate how to fight the bacillus. More than half a century elapsed before a really effective medicine, streptomycin, was discovered and tuberculosis ceased to be a killer. True, understanding the cause of the disease made it possible to make use of sensible forms of treatment prior to the discovery of a really effective medicine: the patients were carefully nursed, sent to places where the air was reputed to be good, their fever was alleviated, perhaps a part of the lungs was removed. The medical profession respected the Hippocratic oath: at least harm should not be caused to the patient.

And now let us return to our own profession. The complicated regularities of the operation of the socialist system have not yet been revealed. In this respect we are in a much weaker position than the economists in the capitalist countries attempting to understand the operation of their own system. It is almost as if we were just getting down to this enormous task. Some economists are very sure of themselves: they just look around and know already what must be done. The author does not belong to this type. We do not know exactly what causes the malady of our patient, the socialist economy. We are not faced by a single disease but a whole complex of negative symptoms. What is the connection between them? Do they have separate causes or are they the consequences of common causes? Are they properties that are inherent to the system, any kind of socialist system, no matter which particular mechanism they might operate with, or do they follow exclusively from one version of socialism, an overcentralized command economy? Can all the maladies be remedied or, may some be impossible to overcome and only an alleviation of the symptoms be attained? There are a whole host of questions which have not yet been answered convincingly.

The questions above raised in general terms can be made more specific with regard to the subject of the present book, shortage. Although I have been studying this topic for several years, I have to confess that I am unable to provide a definite answer to a number of questions. A few paragraphs above I stated that shortage is a necessary concomittant of a command economy, the old overcentralised mechanism. From this, however, it does not follow automatically that the statement may be simply inverted for normative purposes: it is sufficient to eliminate the command economy and grant greater autonomy to the state-owned firms and this in itself will terminate shortages. It seems to me that this is a necessary but not sufficient condition in itself to

put an end to the shortage economy nature of the system and reverse the present situation where buyers compete for sellers and replace it by a competition between producers and sellers for buyers. It has not been fully clarified yet which are all the sufficient and necessary conditions for eliminating shortage.

Scholarly examination cannot give finite answers to these open questions, because the practical reforms carried out so far have not led to unambiguous results. I can say personally that I am a long-standing, sincere, and enthusiastic advocate of reforms and I would wholeheartedly welcome successes as convincing as possible for them. However, those engaged in a scientific discipline—and this I wish to stress again most emphatically—must take as a starting-point not desires but observed facts. The reform process has a forty-year history in Yugoslavia, twenty in Hungary, and almost a whole decade in China. All three countries represent specific mixtures of amazing results and disastrous failures. It would be dishonest to notice only the results for reform propaganda purposes, or point merely to the failures for those of counter-propaganda. Among other things, from the point of view of the subject of the present book, that is shortage, and the related other serious trouble, inflation, the experience of these three countries does not indicate unequivocally the way out of the problems. It is not the task of this short preface to strike a balance among the reforms carried out so far and clarify why the situation is lopsided and why progress is not more rapid. Here I merely wish to point out that it is understandable that we are not in possession of a plan of action aiming at the elimination of the shortage economy which would be scientifically well-founded, in the liberal sense of the term.

The reform measures carried out in any of the socialist countries so far can be looked upon as experiments, in the scientific sense of the term. One might risk drawing strong conclusions even from a few experiments if the results of the experiments are unequivocal. Unfortunately, the experiments of the reform processes so far were not conclusive; they did not provide enough information for valid scientific inference.

It does *not* follow from all the above that I am suggesting that we should stop and hold all practical steps until economics has explored the problem in a finite and irrefutable manner and placed in our hands a programme of action. Here we must break away from the analogy taken from medical science and emphasize that history will not wait for the men of science to have clarified the problems. There is a division of labour not only within the economy, in production, but also in social action. First there is division of labour between the politician and the economist. The politician, the statesman, who undertakes the responsibility of leading society, works under the compulsion of

having to act. He is aware of his having to take steps even if he does not know exactly what will be the consequences of these steps and what the hidden connections are that move the complicated social medium in which he is taking political action. In most cases, it is internal conviction and beliefs rather than strict and objective scientific analysis which inspire in him the steps to take.

As far as those active in science are concerned, there is a division of labour too; not everyone is ready to undertake the same task. Some feel that they are able to make quick and resolute decisions in practical matters, following the results research revealed so far and—what is actually far more realistic—their own common sense. At the same time, other economists feel the vocation to perform basic research and analyse the deeper problems and do not consider themselves suitable for the role of practical advisers who contribute to the preparation of current decisions.

Full respect is reserved for those among our economist colleagues who concentrate their intellectual power on drawing up operative proposals and practical action programmes capable of being implemented immediately. Their work is necessary; the reform policy requires their participation. They can help in making changes more carefully planned and in making use of international experience more fully and successfully. But while sincerely feeling a justification for this respect, I claim the same for those who have assigned themselves different duties. A Robert Koch was needed, a man ready to spend so much time over his microscope even though he did not heal a single person suffering from tuberculosis in his lifetime. Some perform operations, bravely cutting into the flesh of the patient; others, shrinking from taking a lancet in their hands, try to discover the secrets of the human organism in the laboratory. Perhaps the work performed by the theoreticians engaged in basic research also yields some immediate practical use: if nothing else, their analysis may restrain rash or spectacular but actually useless or even harmful actions, or cool the illusions and exaggerated expectations which may later result in disappointment. Beyond this ungrateful but useful role of helping people to sober up, basic research and theoretical investigations may, sooner or later, indirectly and with great delay, render assistance in the thorough understanding of the situation and of the tasks to be done and, ultimately, of the practical development of society.

Mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance in relation to opinions, philosophies and commitments different from our own are important things which we are in great need of in the world of science. No institution, organization, movement, scientist, or politician can consider itself or himself infallible. This book, together with the recognitions and mistakes contained

in it, would like to help strengthen this spirit and the fruitful evolution of scholarly discussion.

Finally, I wish to end on a personal note. I wrote my first academic paper, my Ph.D. dissertation understanding "The Overcentralisation in Economic Administration" in 1955–1956. Soon after it appeared in book form in Hungarian and in 1959 it was published by Oxford University Press in English. Thirty years have elapsed since my first work was published in a foreign language. Let me now confess that I was frequently saddened by the fact that while my books were translated into several languages in the socialist and in the capitalist countries, not one of them was published in the Soviet Union. True, some articles of mine appeared there sporadically but this—I felt—could not make up for the books in which I elaborated my views and ideas far more completely and more comprehensively. All the greater, therefore, is the gratitude I feel towards those who stood up for the publication of my books. First of all, I have to name the late R. Karagedov, who presented an excellent and concise summary of the ideas of this book and recommended it for publication in the Soviet Union many years ago. But mention should also be made here of the names of the other colleagues who again and again argued for the publication of the book in the Soviet Union; let me mention at least those whose efforts to this effect are known to me: T. I. Zaslavskaya, A. G. Aganbegian, and O. T. Bogomolov.

I am grateful to D. Markov and M. Usievich, the translators of the book, as well as to the editors for their enormous and strenuous work, and to the Nauka publishing house which took on the publication. May I take the opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who promoted the publication of my book in the Soviet Union through their initiatives and participation.

# THE FINEST TIMES OF THE HUNGARIAN CAPITAL

John Lukacs: *Budapest 1900. A Historical Portrait of a City and Its Culture.* New York, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989. 235 pp.

Hungary and especially its capital city are in vogue lately, and reasonably good guidebooks are available on it. But they invariably miss one of the country's greatest assets: its exciting, incredibly eventful (and, Hungarians believe, unfortunate) history, although there lies the key to the present attention focusing on this small Central European country. Despite the fact that the history of Hungary in the last hundred and fifty years was only partly written in Budapest (the major issues were settled in other European capitals), the events at the centre were nevertheless decisive for the whole country, and an awareness of the revolutions, sieges as well as the great social and economic changes in Budapest are certainly useful for anyone who wants to understand Hungary, whether for business or other purposes. Now a book has appeared which tells all essentials about the past of Budapest, placed in context of major national and international events, based on an intimate knowledge of the place, the major sources, the mood of the people, and all that in a marvellous, highly readable prose, richly illustrated, produced not only for the specialist but very much for the educated general reader. A valuable present for all Hungarians who live in English-speaking countries, for their friends and acquaintances, as well as for all visitors and prospective visitors to Hungary.

The author, John Lukacs, born János Lukács, was an ideal person to write such a book. Born in and formed by Budapest, grown into a major historian in the U.S. and being the author of thirteen successful books, he could approach his subject with an understanding which is almost impossible to acquire for a foreigner, yet his forty-two years in all the modern centres of civilization could give him the ability to see Hungarian history from a vantage point available only to few Hungarians. An additional advantage was that Lukacs left Hungary apparently without too deep mental scars, saved from the traumatic experiences of so many exiles, though not without vivid memories and emotional commitment.

The best of Lukacs, as historian of thoughtfully evoked impressions and philosophic depth, confronts the reader already in the first chapter. It describes Budapest making use of the colours of a contemporary painter, the vocabulary of expressive writers and of sounds that reverberate in the mind of this loving son of the Hungarian metropolis. Here, and also in the chapters presenting the physical and the human features of the city, all the important information is provided in vivid paragraphs, often with telling quotations. Even such characteristic but seldom mentioned features are recalled as the odours of the shops, climatic regularities like the sharper contrast of the seasons, and climatic irregularities like the weather on some important occasion, or the peculiarities of a diet which preserved much of the tastes and customs of the countryside. Lukacs is bold enough to recall hidden psychological traits: the Hungarian spirit is an "extraordinary combination, the constant presence of a minor key with the basic key of a major" (p. 24), an important aspect of the relation between the sexes was that "the desire to please had a definite priority over the wish to be loved" (p. 25). The author knows many things about life in Budapest eighty years ago which only our great-grandparents may have known. If it is possible by words to stimulate one's appetite for a town, then it is certainly achieved by the first chapter—but, alas, the world it recalls is hopelessly gone.

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It is common to compare Budapest to Vienna, Lukacs, however likes to emphasize the differences. When Vienna was already neurotic, "Budapest was still full of self-confidence" and optimism (p. 24). "At the very moment when Budapest became the indisputable focus of Hungarian culture, a new generation of Hungarian painters, writers, and composers sought and gained their inspiration from the countryside." The writers Krúdy, Kosztolányi, Ady, and Babits were very different from Musil, Trakl, Hoffmanstahl; Bartók and Kodály had little in common with Schoenberg and Webern. "Only in the architecture of Budapest can we still see a definite Austro-German influence." (p. 28). (This conclusion is in accord with Péter Hanák's findings based on a thorough comparative study of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest in his thoughtful essay *A kert és a műhely* [The Garden and the Workshop] [Budapest, 1988], which, however, used quite different arguments.) What one may add (and certainly Lukacs would not deny it) that the idea of imitating and surpassing Vienna was certainly very much present in Budapest, it was the driving force which contributed to so much that was done. And something else, amply emphasized by Lukacs: there were great economic and political advantages in the association with Austria, guaranteed by the Compromise of 1867.

Undoubtedly, one of the greatest merits of this book lies in the masterly miniature essays written on "The Generation of 1900," the large number of Hungarian cultural luminaries who grew up after 1900 (p. 138). Some of these men, like the Polányi brothers*, Arthur Koestler,** Theodor von Karman, or John von Neumann became famous, but without their Hungarian background much noticed. A few, certainly Bartók and to a smaller degree Kodály, made it into fame, but most of them (great poets and writers like Ady, Krúdy, Babits) remained almost completely unknown outside their native land. It would have been relatively easy to write an encyclopaedia heading on them, summing up their career and achievements, but Lukacs performed the infinitely greater task of conveying their greatness or in the past of the lesser ones their true merits to the uninitiated reader. There is only some explanation offered on the sudden emergence of such an exuberance of talent. The good schools of Hungary, and the hospitable coffee-houses of Budapest certainly contributed to this blossoming, and so did the great prestige of intellectual (including journalistic) achievement, but the real answer is found in the historical setting, in turn-of-the-century Budapest, where traditional, mainly rural, Hungarian values—and genes—coalesced with the vibrant spirit of a young *nouveau riche* metropolis and its heterogeneous population. And Lukacs suggests something else, too: in the first years of the twentieth century, the political and intellectual dominance of Hungarian liberalism gave way to intolerant nationalism on the one hand and to rash radicalism on the other, resulting in "the lamentable devolution of Hungarian politics." Perhaps the rise of Hungarian creativity to very high levels had something do to with the political crisis.

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In "Politics and Powers," together with the previous chapter on society, the author draws a very convincing and, in places unconventional, picture. It is both critical and sympathetic—a rare combination, and more so when applied both to the upper and the lower classes. While not denying the high standing of the great landowner magnates, Lukacs places the gentry, the *petite noblesse terrienne*, in many ways above them: in political activity and presence, in popular esteem (they were regarded as the truest representatives of "Hungarianness") and in setting a (not very commendable) pattern which came to attract many social newcomers. Both the

* *NHQ* 108
** *NHQ* 113

financial aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie (mostly of non-Hungarian, predominantly of Jewish origin) responded to this attraction, making assimilation in Hungary more complete than anywhere in Europe. This was not merely linguistic assimilation, but also cultural in a very wide sense, the sharing of customs and even of values. It went much further towards mutual social acceptance than those rigid writers maintained who spoke about a traditional (almost feudal) and a modern capitalist society having existed side by side in Hungary. Lukacs states—and, in the opinion of this reviewer, rightly—that despite strong class-consciousness observable on every level (then very typical in Europe) there was also much social mobility in Budapest and society on the whole became a truly urban one.

In the last few decades a kind of gentry bashing became dominant in writings dealing with this epoch—largely on account of the thinking, behaviour, and social role of the class. Lukacs's criticism is less vociferous, and is directed mainly at their politics, "the shortsighted exuberance of their nationalism" (p. 186), their reckless rocking of the fragile boat of the 1867 Compromise. They made it almost capsize in 1905, when a narrowly nationalist coalition defeated "one of the greatest political personages of the twentieth century" (p. 121.), István Tisza. Lukacs does not explain sufficiently the roots of this political crisis, the heated debates over the legal aspects of the 1867 arrangement, especially over the common Austro-Hungarian Army, but he wrote a history of Budapest, and not of Hungary, and it is true that the politics of the gentry did not meet with much of a response in the capital. More attention is paid to another issue that had far more bearing on the country than on Budapest: the problem that Hungarians ("Magyars" in Lukacs's terminology) made up less than half of the population of Hungary. Here the condescending, increasingly intolerant attitude of a part of the gentry (and of many freshly assimilated Germans and Jews) had baneful consequences. "It was nationalism, more than socialism, that destroyed the liberalism of the nineteenth century" (p. 131), and this book shows convincingly that the demise of the liberal era was most unfortunate.

One (but only one, not the sole) element of the death of Old Liberal Hungary was "the rift opening between Budapest and the country," breaking "the extraordinary symbiosis of Hungarian Jews and non-Jewish Hungarians in Budapest in 1900" (p. 188–189). The description and explanation of this development is another fine piece of work. Lukacs shows that one of the causes of this rift was the rapidly rising number, wealth, and influence of the sometimes superficially assimilated Jews, and the resultant resentment of the country-based ("agrarian") gentry, and the older urban elements, most of whom had German roots. Despite appearances, their criticism of "corrupt, anti-national, destructive, decadent" Budapest was not simply "reactionary" or aristocratic, but populist and democratic. Another cause was the emergence of a generation of young radical social scientists, philosophers, and writers around Oszkár Jászi's periodical, aptly named *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), the Society of the Social Sciences, and the Galileo Circle. In their reforming or, rather, revolutionary zeal they overstated their case and alienated conservatives and old liberals alike. "Its members, who had, often with reason, criticised and assailed the loud and raucous, unrestrained and unmannerly 'Oriental' rhetoric and behavior of so many people in the Hungarian Parliament, now manifested the same habits during their own meetings dedicated to intellectual freedom and the 'Westernization' of Hungary: screeming abuse, shouting down their few remaining opponents, and taking self-satisfaction and evident pleasure from the acrid violence of their words." (p. 201)

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It is unusual to comment critically (especially from a traditional liberal viewpoint)

on what had been described "the second reform generation" of Hungary, although Gábor Vermes in his momumental biography of István Tisza has already attempted that. Lukacs's position is undoubtedly dictated, at least partly, by the tragic course Hungarian history took "Since Then," described in Chapter 7. It was certainly the old guard and not the radicals who lost the Great War, but the subsequent revolutions were indeed directed by the latter, and their good intentions were marred by shortcomings, errors of judgement, and naïvety. Then the radicals of the Left were ousted, many even from the country, and the old-type liberals and conservatives could not prevent the further growth of radicalism of the Right, coinciding with the rise of Hitler's "national socialism." Lukacs is proud that "the bravest and the most determined opponents of Hitler in Budapest and Hungary were old-fashioned men and women, with old-fashioned convictions of decency and honor, often the very same people whom radicals a generation before had dismissed as 'reactionaries'..." (p. 216). There were other brave opponents, too, but none could prevent the physical destruction of Budapest, and some of its best people at the end of the Second World War and in the years immediately following. Lukacs, as a witness, is a good authority on that, and also, as a keen outside observer, on the eloquent refutation of the charge of Budapest as the "sinful and guilty" (two words for one word: "bűnös" in Hungarian) city, when it "spilled its patriotic gore and glory for the nation and the world to see." (p. 223) He is naturally happy that in the 1960s Budapest's slow rebirth started, and very recently "a kind of historical consciousness has seeped into the minds of the people" (p. 226), cherishing not only new constructions but also the restoration of remnants of the past.

The beautiful illustrations support many of the points raised by the author, but his mastery of the English language is an even more valuable asset. Though Lukacs primarily is a historian of international relations and of America, he is remarkably at home in the Hungarian past, too. Some of his interpretations (mainly the judgement of the "Left," including Jászi and Károlyi) are, of course, open to criticism, but even minor factual mistakes are rare. A few cases of the latter: I think by 1900 sports had become more popular than he imagined (p. 83); István Tisza had an excellent command of English, read, and even contributed to, the English Press (p. 123); the use of Croatian place-names was not forbidden (p. 126); the objection to universal suffrage was less a concern about a larger number of non-Hungarian deputies than the knowledge that the new majority would insist on revising the Compromise of 1867. Serbian, Rumanian, and Slovak deputies had been sitting in all modern Hungarian parliaments since 1848, though not in sufficient numbers (p. 129); the Social Democratic paper *Népszava* had been in existence since the 1880s, in 1905 it became a daily (p. 130); A. Csengery was not a minister of culture and religion, but József Eötvös was (p. 142); and the younger Andrássy was a member of the Liberal Party until November 1905 (p. 199).

Although the book was admittedly written for non-Hungarians, it does have much to say to Hungarian readers as well. In addition to the many unconventional comments, which at least have to be considered by Hungarian historians, too, the book contains many observations which are pertinent, valid, but we have never thought of them. Just one example is Lukacs's comment that the Hungarian character or mental attitude is—like the language—declarative, prefers the monologue, is not ready for compromises, can be won over by rhetorics, despite its strong preference for rationalism as opposed to the abstract. It is to be hoped that John or, rather, János Lukács will find the time not to translate but to rewrite this book in his native Hungarian, a language he can use as brilliantly as English—his friends can testify to that.

GÉZA JESZENSZKY

# CHANCES AND FAILURES

Imre Kertész: *A kudarc* (The Failure). Szépirodalmi, 1988. 391 pp.; Margit Ács: *A gyanútlan utazó* (The Unsuspecting Traveller), *Az esély* (The Chance). Short novels. Magvető, 1988. 341 pp.; István Baka: *A kisfiú és a vámpírok* (The Little Boy and the Vampires). Szépirodalmi, 1988. 180 pp.

Imre Kertész, now sixty, published his first novel, *Sorstalanság* (Without Fate), in his mid-forties, and a few years later, his novellas. After a break of more than ten years he has now produced a new novel. *Without Fate*, though it had a *succès d'estime* and was reprinted, did not become a bestseller, partly on account of its setting in a concentration camp and the description of the vicissitudes a Jewish boy undergoes. Kertész had greater success with the musical comedies he co-wrote in the 'fifties. Thus, his career of a writer has not been one of real success, indeed may even be looked upon as a failure. His new and second novel, *Kudarc* (The Failure), is about this failure, about the human background to it and the meaning of it. Failure is far from being the common formulation of "Success is the only way out." The hero of the novel accepts failure as his fate, after he worded the direction and purpose of his career which was earlier set arbitrarily by lack of fate.

For the hero of *The Failure* is identical to the one of *Without Fate:* the writer himself or at least his stylized alter ego, who is referred to as "the old man" in the first, introductory part of the book, and in the second part, in the "actual" novel, is called Köves. The relationship between the old man and Köves is by and large the same as that between Imre Kertész and the heroes of his novels: he writes them the same way as the old man writes Köves. To be more precise, for a long time, he wants to write but is unable to. This is what the introductory part of the book (amounting to one-third) is about: a kind of writer's $8\ ^1/_2$, on the labour of the novel, preparations which seem to be barren, invisible progress, which we are reading and which, though not following the recipe of success-books, is actually being written, progressing. The old man is not really what we usually refer to as the old man just as Imre Kertész is not old in "real life" but youthful in spite of his age. Similarly, the ironic pedantry, learning, and euphemisms are not to be taken verbatim but between inverted commas. This old man occasionally ponders ("The old man had acquired such a routine in thinking that he was able to evoke the appearance of thinking even when he was not actually doing so, while perhaps he himself imagined that he was thinking"); occasionally he reads his papers, notes, though he fears doing so and does not expect anything good of it. Finally, these personal writings are also incorporated in the text, recording the old man's barren pondering; through them the pre- and after-life of another novel is revealed, that of the novel which was *Without Fate* in the writer's life.

A strange concoction is brought to life in this way: we are reading of someone who intends to write a book because writing books happens to be his profession ("or—to be more precise—it so happened that this turned out to be his profession, since he had no other profession"), but nothing occurs to him except the *fatal* experience of writing his first novel which keeps returning when leafing through his papers, and all that becomes part of a new novel, its subject-matter. Another novel and a novel not yet completed become the heroes of the novel. "Antinovel," "writer's autobiography" to resort to the clichés that reveal but little, but the distancing, ironical tone gives rise to suspicion and

we have covered only one-third of the novel, who knows what else we are in for. Indeed, suddenly some trifle of an idea comes up, whose significance even the old man is unaware of. The new text starts to be written, the novel within the novel, "The Failure."

This novel is already similar to a real novel although it soon comes to light that certain moments of Köves's "lack of fate" are already familiar from the introductory part. This story of Köves is given a strange abstract setting which is redolent of Kafka. Köves arrives from Budapest by plane to the anonymous foreign city in which he will live his novel life. This city is essentially Budapest too, the Budapest of the 'fifties. At the same time, it is its alter ego, somewhat similarly to the way the metaphor of Prague and other Central European cities was where Josef K. lives in *The Trial*. Köves can arrive from Budapest to Budapest because he is returning here from the 'eighties and he is also returning home from the concentration camp, to a city different from that which he had been dragged of from, as a man different to the one he used to be when he left.

Those chapters give us the story of Köves settling down in the "alien" city, which probably recall Imre Kertész's own years in Budapest. In a manner which reflects the absurdities of the period, the story begins by Köves being kicked out of his job as an editor on the day following his arrival. He lives in a rented room and spends most of his time in a café named the South Seas (the Budapest model of which may be conjectured) until he goes to work in a steel factory. Through the mediation of an acquaintance of his from the café, he is given a job in the press department of a ministry where his task is to write his boss's reports and publications. Soon he is dismissed from here too, and then Köves tries the "only way out," success: he and his friend write a musical comedy. During all this, he has the chance to observe the lives of others which are also moulded in the contemporary patterns: the adolescent son of the landlady determined to win a chess championship commits suicide, an old-fashioned gentleman with a dog who is chairman of the local tenants' committee is deported, the press chief in the ministry, who is the lover and slave of his female boss and, through her husband holding an even higher position, is caught in a double dependence, sublimates his grievance in concocting dilettante pieces which he reads out to his subject, Köves. Berg, the husband of a waitress in the café, is a mysterious figure, perhaps he used to be a "customs officer," which is probably a reference to the state security authorities and later found a way to rationalize his work or he was mad from the very beginning: anyway, he is writing too, about mass murderers being actually saviours, sacrificial victims, who undertake to carry out the command of the age against their own convictions, thus making it possible for the others to avoid participating in what they are part of anyway. This Berg is the most interesting figure in the novel, a frightfully diverse creature impossible to know, probably a monster, the embodiment of the universal lie of the age, who is unable to bear this heavy burden and collapses under it. In his extremities and his role, he recalls Kirillov in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*.

There is an interlude in which Köves himself becomes an active figure of the age on being given the post of guard in a military prison during his military service. The moral dilemmas that result from this come into a strange, grotesque conflict with Berg's devilish ideology. Otherwise, Köves is a passive, contemplative, sceptical, doubtful, drifting creature who is constantly watching himself from the outside. It is a deficiency of the novel that he is presented in this light not only as a device of the author's but also because of the somewhat artificial formulation and tone which tends to abstraction and keeps a certain distance from what is represented. The material of autobiographical origin and its stylization are not organized in a truly sovereign whole. With his alienation, loneliness, his life-style aiming at survi-

val, his stand-offish attitude suppressing his own sentiments, Köves slowly accumulates some moral capital. This generates the revelation that forces him to write a novel. "Suddenly he caught sight of his life from a distance, in the form of a complete, closed story, which shocked him with its alienness. And if it was hope which this sight evoked in him, it could only concern this story, for Köves's only hope might have been that even though he himself was hopeless, his story could still be saved." Measured by the classic human yardstick, his life is a failure, and so is his career of a writer if measured against popular authors of comedies and chess world champions. To live in the world into which he was born is a failure but the recognition and acceptance of this failure furnishes moral strength, the equivalent, as it were, of a riot. Imre Kertész chose a fate based on Camus's myth of Sisyphus. His novel is an interesting and important attempt, though not free from contradictions, at creating from a concrete place and age a moral and existential parable of more general validity on the chances of the man of our age who lacks fate.

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One of the two new short novels of Margit Ács, *The Unsuspecting Traveller*, takes place in another imaginary city also strongly reminiscent of well-known cities, mostly of the one which is most familiar to the Hungarian reader. Anyway, here a much greater emphasis is given to exaggeration and fantasy for this is a city in which the inhabitants have no memory. Margit Ács attempts to depict a city for which it holds true completely what we mostly say only figuratively about our life of today: we lead a hand-to-mouth existence. Nothing is secure, nothing is constant, our fate is arbitrary, we "are lacking fate," relationships change overnight; there are no individuals just roles which can be filled in by anyone. In the city of *The Unsuspecting Traveller*, life starts again every day, everyone has a different career to that they had yesterday; the people exist for each other merely as carriers of roles and the outsider (who has a memory) can only identify them from their external features. There are no examples, no human relationships, no responsibility, no lies, no history. There is nothing other than the fleeting present.

The unsuspecting traveller arrives in the city with a companion who slowly becomes one with the local circumstances. The traveller resists, tries to understand this world and even makes an attempt to change it: he wants to teach a woman, whom he chooses as a lover (though she does not choose him as hers) to remember. All in vain. Moreover, he himself starts to undergo a transformation. He feels, for example, that with this memory and knowledge he could gain power over the city, he could look upon himself as a demigod among mortals. However, knowledge of this kind has no sense. In vain does he possess the advantage and the feeling of security: that is not sufficient for him to really feel that he exists. One of us assumes the other, we exist by the existence of the others. Having lost his friend, companion, the traveller is no longer able to be reflected in him either. "For a long time I wanted to build myself through the others too, saving my existence by transplanting it into their consciousness and memories," writes the lady author in her sleeve notes. She continues: "The experiment to be reflected and realized in others only brought about a series of failures..." So here we are faced with failure again. Ács tries to demonstrate this failure by pushing the medium to the absurd, in which one man cannot be reflected in the other. This medium is the absurd alter ego of our world, the city of the novel. In this city no one knows anything about the others and thus there is nothing to know.

The idea behind this short novel may have come to its writer by way of grief or disappointment or an intense experience of the ephemeral nature of things. But, unfortunately, it does not work. The imaginary city

does not become realistic for one single second. The fantastic and absurd cannot exist without a touch of reality. One of the secrets of Kafka's novels is the overwhelming reality of the nightmares. The city of Margit Ács is mere abstraction, swarming with impossible contradictions. Suffice to mention the most fundamental: if these people do not exist, since we cannot exist without being reflected in others, why do they still exist? Why does such a city still exist? This city should have ceased to exist long ago, it should have perished because it is what it is. However, since it lives in a permanent present tense, in timelessness, it does not decline but remains constantly the same. This is diametrically opposed to the message the writer intends to demonstrate through it. This basic contradiction keeps giving rise to many further simple objections, such as how do cafés, libraries, theatres, factories continue to operate if those running them change overnight and do not remember, among other things, how to operate them?

Much more successful is the other short novel in the volume, *The Chance*. To quote the sleeve notes again, it "consists of a series of events similar to those during which 'my novel' revealed itself in those days—in the 'sixties." It is interesting that while Imre Kertész tried to synthesize in one novel his personal experience of failure in a parable, Margit Ács wrote the absurd version separately from her personal confession.

The central figure of *The Chance* is Olga, a woman getting on for fifty, holding a professional job of respect but who, like the hero of Imre Kertész, cannot be considered successful, who is reflected again and again in other people, now in the present, now in the past, in the short story-units of the novel. Indeed, the reflections go so far that in certain units Olga cannot be clearly seen, at most in an indirect manner: the reflectors are reflected in each other.

Olga's present and past of the 'sixties are revealed in a cinematic montage of brief scenes connected very loosely. Her career starts with her expulsion from the secondary school system of Budapest in 1957, as a result of political "recklessness." Later on, she is admitted to university where she studies to become a chemist. She is a lonely girl full of inhibitions, her parents have left her behind by emigrating, and her grandmother, an old country woman, cannot help the student Olga any more. Olga's basic disposition is obstinacy, stubborn resistance, and haughtiness. Her behaviour is ostentatious, she is hurt in her feelings again and again, her love affairs turn out to be unsuccessful one after the other because she does not know what to do with the boys and they do not know what to do with her. They play with each other for a while and then discover that they have nothing in common. She is lucky to be renting a room from a kind-hearted, intelligent couple who support her and furnish her with sensible advice. She also belongs to a volleyball team but sticks out from the other girls because of her unsociable behaviour. They look upon her as a fool. Everyone does think something of her but Olga herself does not know how to take herself. She tries to adjust to her reflections, the opinions others hold of her. She even exaggerates those features. She is prodded by the desire to act in order to be recognized and the only way to achieve this seems to be to "fade into the woodwork." This she refuses to do.

She grows up, gets a job, gets married, bears a child, the child grows up too, her marriage is wrecked, finds new love and, meeting again and again the twenty-four-year-old ex-girlfriend of her son, she reflects on the chances in her life she passed up. She feels that "nothing was inevitable, everything turned out to be that way only arbitrarily... I admit: perhaps I really did not have a chance of more. But I did have a great number of chances for other lives, and it is so improbable that I chose *this* one." So we have in front of us a woman who, on the threshold of old age, under the effect of a late love spuriously resurrecting the old chances for a second, realizes that the life which is

now irrevocably hers was not chosen by her, but without it she does not exist either, without it she has nothing. Although she does not like this life bludgeoned onto her, she is still compelled to live it till the end, carry it out as "a gradual suicide." Or, as one of her critics wrote, when she no longer has a chance to be something else, she "adopts herself." This is not exactly the case of a *Bildungsroman* in which the classical growing up and maturation of the hero and the realization of the self is presented.

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The young István Baka's new book contains two short novels and a play. The writer, who has won a Graves Prize for his poems* now lends his individual voice to prose. In his *The Little Boy and the Vampires*, he continues what he had already begun in his previous book, *Szekszárdi mise* (Mass in Szekszárd): the mythicization of his hometown, Szekszárd, a typical Hungarian town in a stylization that is at times grotesque, at times ironic, at times parody. Szekszárd has a strong literary presence in modern Hungarian fiction: among others, Mihály Babits and Miklós Mészöly constructed fictions from its elements. In Baka's fiction, too, Szekszárd becomes an imaginary, unrealistic setting—another fantasy town, just like those described in the books by Imre Kertész and Margit Ács. The short novel *The Little Boy and the Vampires* is set after the "holocaust," some time in the twenty-first century when Sárd (i.e. Szekszárd) is no longer part of Hungary but an independent city-state. Hungary does not exist any more. The regions adjacent to Sárd, for example, are ruled by the despot Cyrill I and soldiers from Taiwan, having remained here as the result of an earlier war, are found loafing idly. They have been forced to remain here because all transport ceased to operate not just in a country torn to small pieces but everywhere in the world. If on a rare occasion an old locomotive is successfully filled with wood shavings or peat, it drags itself over from Sárd to the capital city of Cyrill I, Dolma (i.e. Tolna), but it is impossible to get as far as Lake Balaton. It was in the youth of one of the characters, András Bakó, a junior clerk in an archive, that on occasion the trains last covered longer distances; even then journeys of one or two hundred kilometres lasted several days. Today, all this belongs to the past, Sárd lives a reduced life locked up in itself. Everything is contrary to the technological utopias we find in science-fiction novels; in technology, the town has slipped back to medieval circumstances. The administrational circumstances are also medieval, it is not by accident that the Lord Mayor is called Cézár Borgói and his mistress's name is Lukrécia. As Cesare Borgia, he rules the small city-state as a despot, a provincial Hungarian version, which gives rise to hilariously pathetic situations. A similar provincial pettiness imbues the bourgeois plot and riot organized against him. This is interrupted by the outbreak of a mysterious epidemic: all the inhabitants of the town are turned into bloodsucking vampires. Those killed by a vampire themselves have to quench their insatiable thirst for blood by seeking out other victims in turn. This bloodthirst spreads like a contagious epidemic. The nephew of András Bakó, the sick little boy, is strangled by his own mother. Finally, the the town dies out. Cyrill I sends an advance guard to Sárd and then occupies it victoriously. He does not even suspect that thirsty vampires are yearning for his hot running blood in the cemetery.

*The Little Boy and the Vampires* is a vision of catastrophe and a parody of horror stories. It is faultless in its own witty and allusive style although it is a bit too simple. It holds no secrets. Once read, everything has been brought to light, there is nothing left to reflect on. The reader is similar to the child who takes apart a toy to discover its secret. It turns out that it consists of a few components only and has no secret. We can

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calm down since we know that there are no vampires. If the piece is taken apart, the cause of its falling off is clear: the pictures of the deterioration following the holocaust and the legend of the vampires cannot be harmonized, they refuse to form a coherent unity.

The other short novel, *Margit* is also the development of a single idea. The storyteller is a drunken, neurotic, lonely librarian in Szekszárd. His life is a collection of failures. One day, he is visited by Mephisto, a watch-repairer in his civil guise years ago, accompanied by a huge, black dog. He offers the librarian the chance of putting right everything that went wrong in his purposeless life. The librarian is allowed to relive a day in his adolescence which he identifies as the beginning of his failures. So back to youth and Margaret in this grotesque Faust paraphrase. True, the rejuvenation is no less than the chance to relive the minutes of failure in those days—with his looks of today. He does seduce the girl whom he had failed to or had not dared to seduce. But the Szekszárd Faust of today is disappointed in his pimply, inhibited, verse-scribbling adolescent self, and wakes up from his Margaret dream with a literal and metaphorical hangover. All that is left for him is to learn to live with a life whose only chance is failure.

MIKLÓS GYÖRFFY

## FROM OUR NEXT ISSUES

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MIKLÓS JANCSÓ'S MY WAY HOME

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# FREE SPIRITS IN AN UNFREE WORLD

Béla Kondor: *Angyal a város felett* (Angel above the City). Szépirodalmi, 1987, 286 pp.; Géza Szőcs: *az unikornis látogatása* (visit of the unicorn). Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, New York, 1988. 228 pp.; Szabolcs Várady: *Hátha nem úgy van* (Supposing It's Not Like That), Magvető, 1988. 80 pp.; József Viola: *Akárkivel* (With Just Anybody), Szépirodalmi, 1988. 126 pp.

Both the reading public and critics have recently taken the view that the literary scene in Hungary has witnessed a shift in genres, with poetry surrendering its traditional hegemony to fiction. From the generation which emerged in the 1970s, and particularly the Péter's (Péter Hajnóczy, who died young, Péter Nádas, Péter Esterházy and Péter Lengyel), novels and stories have caused the greatest stir. Ironically, this sea-change in new Hungarian writing was in fact brought about by Dezső Tandori, the influence of whose poems has gone far beyond the boundaries of genre. Indeed, it is fairly questionable whether there is any sense or justification or purpose in theorizing over forms. The truth seems rather to lie with Ernő Osváth, the editor of the literary review *Nyugat* which, at the beginning of this century, evolved a literary revolution in Hungary, who once said, "that which is perfect has no measurements."

Contemporary Hungarian fiction has produced some outstanding, though isolated works, not surrounded by a lush vegetation, while contemporary Hungarian poetry continues to be part of a wide and colourful spectrum, with sovereign poetic voices and integrally, with individual styles. This statement can be borne out by the output of a single year, for instance that of 1988.

A posthumous collection of poems by Béla Kondor, *Angel above the City*, came off the press at the end of 1987 and reached the shops in 1988. Béla Kondor*, perhaps the most talented member of his generation, was both successful and prolific in all fine arts. He also produced two collections of poetry which were published during his lifetime: *Boldogságtöredék* (Fragments of Happiness) in 1971 and *Jelet hagyni* (To Leave a Mark) in 1974. Like William Blake, Hans Arp, or even Michelangelo, Kondor was a prominent figure as a poet as well. In the same way as his artistic output cannot be linked directly to any of the main directions in Hungarian painting nor to the international neo-avantgarde, so too his poetry cannot be compartmentalized in any school or style. He himself described his relationship to poetry: "And the poem / is a gap / in my body" *(Consolation)*. In all his work he strained to express the consciousness of his ontological position, in an unpolished, harsh penmanship, sometimes disregarding even the rules of grammar. As a painter, he considered the attainment of professional and technical skills the moral duty of the artist, since, as one critic, Lajos Németh writing about him put it, "the artist always retains something of the professional decency of *homo faber*, the craftsman, of his humbleness before the material, before the act of preparation, before activity." As a painter, Kondor took this as a categorical imperative, and it was in this sense he reiterated time and again: "I hope I'm not modern". But for the poet the categorical imperative was a fear, also rooted in morality, in case the "whistle of accidental liars," or as he put it in another poem, the voice of "poets gibbering like billy-goats, chewing their pencils" should suppress his sense of justice: his gloomy ontological vision, his basic conviction of a demiurge of human history, and

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of the tragedy incorporated with the structure of the world and the sense of Existence.

Thus it followed from a conscious artistic decision that he paid no heed to what is known in Hungarian as 'lyrical competence' and deliberately adopted the semblance of incompetence, a brutally rough formulation. He never intended his poems to be examples in a kind of schoolmasterly poetics, much rather as "demonstrations of apocalyptic dimensions" expressed in "our crippled, rough words" (again, his own words). He poured his own philosophy, almost in a plasmatic state, as he experienced and endured it, into the bombs of his poems, and the "Angel" —the Angel of Kondor's art and the terrible Angel of our century's art, as Rilke put it— is circling, these bombs suspended under his wings, over the "city," the labyrinth which symbolizes the form and the possibilities of modern existence. His poetry expresses the philosophical substratum of his paintings and drawings, not as a philosophical dictionary, but in the ranting and raving outbursts of someone suffering brutally yet with infinite sensitively. It would be difficult to find much more written in Hungarian with a more gloomy, bitter or intolerable account of the real nature of Existence: his work almost pries apart both the traditional and the modern forms of the poem. Janus-faced Existence is the sole subject of the poems something like is the case in Béla Bartók's *Two Portraits*, in which the same motif is compared and contrasted in an "ideal" and in a "grotesque" treatment.

This sombre ontological experience, as a summation of individual life, human history, the experience of the artist abroad in the labyrinths of art and existence, knows of no chance of grace and redemption. The core of its experience obviously lies in those years enveloped in the Walpurgis Night of the 1950s, the darkness of the cold war and the Stalinist dictatorship: yet it bears no signs of those times, as its justice has a wider range and more universal validity than the calendar date of its being cast in the mould of history. It begins with Creation, or if you would please, with the Big Bang, because man messed up the ideal, Platonic possibility of existence practically at the very outset in history. "Breaking free from Paradise, people immediately set down to the sweltering work of organizing a tremendous prison camp, which soon took on dizzying dimensions," he wrote in *Angel, Devil, Poet*, the spine of his poetry, an ontological oratorio. "An activity which they first called pillage and cheating, later (growing in number and gaining in refinement) simply politics, and later still (through advanced self-deception) production." All this was the conception of God in the material. But the guinea pig of and the witness to this combat between the poet, the devil and the angel, in this Faustian situation, Béla Kondor himself, still finds an ultimate moral law and refuge, as a perhaps romantic believer in a kind of art-religion in, practicing art, in creative activity. To leave a mark, this then is the only and ultimate duty of the artist. But mark of what? An answer and indication is offered by the coda-like conclusion of the oratorio referred to the angel: "returned to nothingness, where there is everything."

This closing sentence embodies the fundamental conception behind Kondor's poetry, his art and his outlook on the world. "Everything did exist before it existed," he concludes the poem *Some Houses Wake up*. Such was the importance he attached to this as an ultimate recognition that he included it in *Labyrinth*, one of the etchings in his Dürer cycle, not long before his death. Everything did exist in a proper, ideal way, as an ontological possibility, before it actually existed in a bad, distorted form, as an initially imperfect historical practice, a social and human realization. The ideal Everything existed in that Nothingness where the Angel returns in death, and this Existentialism grafted upon Platonism, or a Platonic aesthetic imbued with ontology (even if being unable to answer the ultimate question that follows from the logic of Heidegger's meta-

physics, namely why the Something is more existing than the Nothing), professes and renders with full conviction the paradox, absurd to everyday mentality, namely that this Nothing is *more* than the Something. Because in this Something, which is called earthly accomplishment, the possibility of realizing something ideal is always lost, while the myth of a Paradise is slumbering in the Nothing.

It has already been asserted that Kondor's poetry knows no hope of redemption and grace. Yet the desire for compassion is not alien to it. A mercilessly sharp diagnostician of ontology, Kondor, in some poems also declared, with a coarseness typical of him, what man, shouldering universal human solidarity, must do under all circumstances, even if he is fully aware that he can never ever pass through the gate back into Paradise in this Creation, that he is damned for ever.

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When László Németh compared Hungarian literature to a shepherd's pipe of five reeds he graphically expressed the affinity among the bodies of Hungarian writing produced under different conditions, those of national minorities and Hungarians forming enclaves, held together by the common language, their mother tongue. To understand the intellectual and historical situation of Hungarian literature, it has to be known that the Hungarian diaspora means that every third person whose native language is Hungarian lives beyond the present borders of Hungary. (This amounts to a minimum of some five million.) Géza Szőcs* is a typical representative of this situation; from the nature of his poetry, he could also be considered the prototype of the neo-avant-garde and even postmodern poet. The structure of his volume, *visit of the unicorn* reflects this; in it poems are ranged alongside excerpts, political documents and memoranda which embody Rumanian chauvinistic instigation, to demonstrate that Szőcs feels all this not to be alien from poetry. What is perhaps even more important, it also demonstrates the fact that the poet, from Transylvania, where he lived as a member of ethnic minority exposed to ceaseless harassment, for his mother tongue and literary activity including police brutalities considers the discrimination as part of his poetic path. The presentation and expression of this determination together with the formulation of the fate of an ethnic group, is the strict duty of the poet, clearly the attitude of an avant-garde poet. So it is not surprising that in this very modern collection of poems, the playfulness of avantgarde wit and daring is exploited for the sake of subject-matters that are bloody in the strictest sense of the word. Géza Szőcs feels it natural to call one of his poems *The Song of the House-searchers*, and to set side by side with the variants of *Flogger Haiku*. But his instinct and intelligence make him fully aware that the treatment of these literally painful subjects is only bearable in the absurd and grotesque. Otherwise. this profoundly true and justified human suffering could easily lead to dilettantism in poetry.

From the 1920s up to the present, avantgarde artistic revolutions have been accompanied by controversy and by discussion why this hell-bent gesture, so desperately unflinching in the arts, is so ready to come to terms with the opposite side in politics. Recognition of this has prompted thus Hans Magnus Enzensberger to assert that the role of neo-avant-garde is to divert and sterilize all kinds of endeavours aimed at political transformation: "The upsetting of poetry should substitute for the revolutionization of the social structure that has not taken place; artistic avant-garde should conceal political regression." *(Gemeinplätze, die neueste Literatur betreffend,* Kursbuch 15, 1968. Aphorien der Avantgarde). The same recognition prompted Krzysztof Penderecki, also in the 1960s, to state that "It was not

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me who turned my back on avant-garde, it was avant-garde which betrayed music."

Szőcs steers clear of this dilemma and pitfall by using his poetry to fight for inborn and basic human rights, in the same way the encyclopedists of the French Revolution did some two hundred years ago. However, the fact that he takes up what he was born into, the discrimination, his ethnic minority status attracts (in present-day Rumania this seeks extermination) as a poetic material, does not involve some kind of a last century, heroic attitude in his poetry. He expresses in a series of poems what he has fully sensed, how this situation, unworthy of man, spoils the quality of life, and how the responsibility for this lies also with those submitted to this minority position: "you want to spit against the wind? / to do nothing is the clever strategy / at this they'll be astonished and amend their ways / that's it, the way I do it / the way we do it / you shouldn't protest, this is the correct and sure method / and if they kick us into the mouth it's best to thank them / if we do like this, we'll always prosper like Prospero. // And whoever is still different, whoever isn't like us, / is a provocateur or a trouble-making madman / he cannot even be a good Hungarian, /he is surely a gypsy/ and possibly a Jew as well / a Jew, a Rumanian, or a homosexual." *(Compromising 3.)*

But he does not only remain on the plane of politics when he commits "in Orwell's words: a thought-crime" *(Blank)* against authority, but also draws up to metaphysical perspectives of a situation that has been brought about by deliberate policy, in pictures based on exaggeration and caricature, typical of avant-garde poetry, portraying, as it were, the hopelessnes of the hopes of the oppressed people: "They heaped the vertical, horizontal and slanting saps dug below the castle walls with proper-quality maize meal porridge and then, stooping, ran back along the detonating fuse and dropped down on their stomachs. // From the castle they watched the stir and movement anxiously. // In a little while there came the order: FIRE!! // The people set the fuse on fire and have been waiting ever since." *(Hope)*

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In presentation and attitude, the new volume of poems by Szabolcs Várady* *(Supposing It's Not Like That)* is almost diametrically different. It is the pick of what he has written so far. Remaining within the millennia-old, traditional lyrical forms, he expresses himself with a virtuoso ease, with a "doomsday elegance," as one of his critics put it. Following Eliot's poetic counsel and practice, he speaks to his readers in the idiom of daily life, and intends to set down non-stereotype content in stereotypes, as another critic, also a poet, described the goal which determines the linguistic fabric of Várady's poems. Since he is a true poet, this always means something more and something different than a mere manner of parlance. For Várady, the radical exclusion of images and similes from the poem also creates the possibility of being different from the colloquial: the difference between silver grey and grimy grey, or the banally characterless. Várady's elegant silver grey indicates the denomination of facts, without metaphors and mumbled in a wry, almost nasal tone. This elegance has a mysterious alchemy. In all his poems he uses an uninhibited, personal tone, but he never amplifies the hypertrophy of the poetic ego: the amplifier of confessionalism. Furthermore, he is prone to short forms, traditionally suiting the lyrical voice, but these he uses to relate narrative content, quite prosaic stories and events, as for instance the break-up of a love affair, a birthday celebration or moving house. (His poem on this last, *Chairs Above the Danube*, appeared in William Jay Smith's translation in *The New York Times*.** In addition, his poems are heated by an intel-

* *NHQ* 63, 85, 87
** And also in *NHQ* 63 (Editor's note)

lectual eroticism of ironic poetic play with double entendres hidden in semantics. His artistic credo is perhaps best expressed in a phrase occurring in one of his early poems, which he has aimed to realize in his poetry ever since, namely to have us "perceive directly the indirect sense" *(An Outsider, If Such a Thing Existed)*.

This indirect sense is philosophy but as a historic and political force as it prevails in everyday life, as a frightful gravitation which shapes Central European destiny, showing up life's defencelessness, strung on doctrines, as the historic imprint of philosophy, indeed in the manner of coming "out of the mouth of babes" treating the "adult world" with a stubbornness that cannot be snubbed, driving people mad and speaking out everything to the extent of absurdity. It is a deliberate use of understatement, reducing everything in viewing and representing, and stressing these monstrosities precisely by this ironic belittling. These aggressive philosophical theses, vindicating a claim to shape life and history, can be viewed in his poems like frightening waxwork monsters, which could fill a room in Madame Tussaud's. Várady's method—drawing lyrical caricatures of doctrines—could also be a mere poetic play with words laced with Voltairean irony, "against this adverse age," if the philosophical concept of Hegel and Marx's *necessity*, operated according to the recipes described in the poems, were not also serving as a directive for high policies in deeds arranging the practical—historical—destiny of the world, and if it (this concept) were not to transform this philosophy into an ideological and real tiger's cage for the destiny of the superfluous men of Central Europe. Because the quality of the life of the intellectuals—and the peoples—of the region from the Adriatic to the Baltic states is determined by the fact that they are the living illustrations of a doctrine. Here I am thinking not of their inner life, their dreams or the imaginary uprisings of the intellect, but of the centrally controlled scenario of their "external life," flattened into becoming unidimensional. To avoid any misunderstandings, it will do no harm to stress that Várady's writing is not a poetry of conjured up ideas, but the narration of the consequences of these ideas, of their pressure and political and power overpressure. It is a paralyzing poetic rendering of all forms of metaphysical and political philosophies of providence which history has lined up against twentieth-century mankind. Because of this, the Central European superfluous men of today (the "decadent intellectuals", among whom the poet of these poems would in all probability be ranked by any official) differ in a prime contect from Onegin, Beltov or Oblomov, nineteenth-century characters of Pushkin, Lermontov, Herzen, Turgenev and Goncharov. Because Várady's intellectuals would know only too well what to do with their lives were they left to do so by that "big duffer" whom he describes in one of his poems as the leader of the men of the of the power-enforcement machine executing a house search.

Várady's recent poems, from the 1980s, show a marked change in their temperature, even though there has been no change in their manner, tone or uniform. Events in his personal life—private tragedies and illness—have turned his inspiration towards changing an "indirect sense" of a fully different nature and character into a direct one. After the years of reckoning with distorted ideological speculations and doctrines, disguised as an elegant play but in fact a deadly earnest and perfectly successful test flight, the poet has entered the age of confrontation with metaphysical experiences tailor-made for his person and existence—the years of "manoeuvres with life ammunition." He has entered mature manhood, when he learns to his own cost that every man, taken individually has to face the same questions the same *Schicksalsfragen* as any smaller or larger communities of the *zoon politicons* (men as social beings, animals living in society). In this personal danger zone, Várady registers the symptoms of the irreversible processes of his personal life

with the same resigned scepticism which he used in registering the "doctrines of salvation" and their consequences in the beginning of his career. This also explains the ambivalence of the title of his latest volume, *Supposing It's Not Like That*. What appears as philosophical scepsis in his mind appears in his poems as lyrical certainty.

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József Viola conveys this directness in a different manner, within the forms of free verse. The pieces in his latest volume *(With Just Anybody)*, which link up like tessarae in a mosaic, offer a poetic report on the "natural history of a lightning love affair."

Lyrical confessions, gushing out with a volcanic force, crudely direct and shedding all prudence and inhibition enjoy no great esteem nowadays among those in inner Hungarian literary circles. Nonetheless, the authenticity and justification of what is usually called the "poetry of experience" does not depend, and as borne out by millennia of poetry, has never depended on age and time. Mihály Babits once wrote that "the real country of the poet is his own life". If in this real country something happens to him and—due to his poetic character and predestination—he feels unable to speak about this in any way other than the heat of vivisection which was used, for instance, by Catullus when he was writing of his humiliating and uplifting, unworthy and tragic passion for Lesbia (the name of Catullus stands here naturally as a guide mark and not as a measure,) then the geyser of this confessional poetry of experiences can break through the poet's inhibitions in the Budapest of the late twentieth century with the same force as it did in Caesar's Rome.

In Viola's versified novel, as it were, it is a passion, holding out the promise of redemption but finally bringing an almost crushing defeat of deception and betrayal, which gathers, in a poetic sense of course, the very essence: objective lyricism, animal joy and sorrow of white-hot sensuality, using no attributes, similes or metaphors, and the evidence of the fact—comical to an outsider but tragic to the sufferer—that the thunderbolt of such an unexpected passion completely overwhelms one who is choking with the solitude of the last years of the prime of manhood, while it will pass without leaving the slightest trace in the young woman concerned.

There is no need to make a special point that in this poetry, which seems to be the farthest removed from Parnassian lyrics, everything depends on the intonation, or as Mallarmé put it, on the "words." A few lines from one of the most typical poems in the volume can perhaps best demonstrate Viola's intonation, his poetic flavour, and also the situation of the "lightning love" related in the cycle of poems: "I had nothing on // I drew myself up like one before the recruiting commission /But what a recruiting / "Behold the man" // I saw she did not find me disgusting / And I stepped before her once again / to take off first her confidential T-shirt / . . . / and then the last secret piece / the dainty little white panty // She was pretty / sun-tanned and thin / Clinging // We went towards the couch / like the first human couple // Embracing one another." These artfully simple lines present a vulgarly erotic, everyday moment, accompanying it by associations of ideas which open on mythical situations, in which conscious irony and self-irony blend with the unconsciously comic. It is as if all this were registered by an alarmingly sincere and awkward teenager with a streak of Caliban in him. And also with some primeaval credulity, the naivety of early man, which brings about tragi-comedy in the story that emerges from the string of poems. The motto taken from Dostoevsky makes an open confession: "He would not even have dreamt a woman ever telling him: 'I love you'." This is why on that couch he receives, in the treacherous glamour of the heavenly moment, the thunderbolt of an existential and essen-

tial shock, of a senseless hope that seems to come true. What happens, however, is that the girl, unnamed in the poems, walks out on the poet without batting an eye, and he behaves "like some mad seminarist."

Just try to imagine Dido, queen of Carthage, as she devours Aeneas with a cool head, or Gretchen casting off Faust like a squeezed orange. The exchange of traditional sexual roles lends a double paraselene to this ancient story, tragicomical in its banality. It embeds the animal happiness of copulation into the melancholy of thoughts which continue to torment man while making love. The pangs of love of the love-lorn poet, not being loved with love, keeps shifting into a sorrow felt over the consciousness of the puzzle of Existence. The thorny, shaggy poems of the poet, having fallen into the trap of a "lightning love" are unusually original, as they not only exemplify how this lovesickness humanises a Caliban like disposition, but also betray that this human experience, expressed with the sincerity of rude, animal reflexes, while gaining in spiritually, has long since not been about love alone.

MÁTYÁS DOMOKOS

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# THE NEKCSEI BIBLE

## Helikon Kiadó, Budapest–Library of Congress, Washington, 1988. 236 pp. 108 folio

The late Dezső Dercsényi, one of the great of Hungarian art historians, wrote an essay "The Treasure of Louis the Great" in 1940 for this journal's forerunner, *The Hungarian Quarterly*. The works he described, among which were some masterpieces of codex illumination, led Meta Harrsen, a leading scholar in America, to the view that an outstanding two-volume Bible of unknown origin in the Library of Congress in Washington could have come from Hungary. Through the coats of arms in the photographs supplied by Harrsen, Dercsényi was even able to identify the patron who had commissioned the Bible: the study he published on it initiated the research into this masterpiece in Hungary. Meta Harrsen's book, *The Nekcsei-Lipócz Bible. A Fourteenth Century Manuscript from Hungary in the Library of Congress*. Ms. Pre-Accession 1. Washington, 1949, accomplished the same for international scholars.

Close cooperation, similar to that which made the original, important finding possible, produced also the volume which is to be described here, a fact, which is implied by the two publishers whose imprint it has been produced under. The photography was done in Washington, the printing in Hungary, and the authors contributing the studies for this volume are Hungarians. The binding of the Bible was done in modern times, possibly in the last century, and turned out to be rather stiff; the volumes could not be opened for optimum photography and thus a special process had to made use of. With the aid of a computer program by Globus Druckerei of Vienna, copies of the original slides were made which diminish the effect of the curvature of the pages of the original. Since the designers of the book have done their best to place these distortions to the spine, most readers will not notice the correction needed. Modern technology has acquitted itself well,

the work obviously has made the book more expensive.

All of this indicates that the publishers have aimed to produce an extremely accurate facsimile. Let it be said immediately that this they have achieved most splendidly. The result is surely the equal of the good average of current European and American facsimile editions.

Indeed, this American–Hungarian co-operation was logical, since the work is now in the United States and the pages presented had to be photographed there. One of the treasures of the great Washington library, it is not normally available to the public. Old manuscripts are so sensitive to climatic and light effects that they can only be removed from climatized containers in exceptional instances. Editions such as this try to bridge the conflict between increased interest and careful preservation. Since an English version has also been produced to help cover the cost of the photography (distributed by the Library of Congress), not just American scholars who have seen the Bible with their own eyes but a larger American public will be able to judge for themselves the success of this facsimile edition.

Although it is one of America's treasures now, the codex is part of the art and cultural history of Europe and particularly of Hungary and Italy. The man who commissioned it, Demeter Nekcsei (Demetrius de Nekcse), was the Treasurer or, as he was called at the time, *tavernicorum regis magister* of King Charles Robert I (1301–1342) of the Neapolitan branch of the Angevin dynasty; the inscription of his seal is seen on the title-page. He was one of the highest dignitaries of the land and justly enjoyed the esteem of his King: his office made him solely responsible for the series of money reforms between 1323 and 1338, which played no mean part in the economic recovery and the general increase in prosperity. Lipócz, the other place-name figuring in the title of Meta Harrsen's 1949 book, was the centre of the former estates of the family. Since the King also granted the family permission in 1312 to build a fortress on the estate they later acquired, at Nekcse (now Nešice, Yugoslavia), they began to use this name more and more often in conjunction with their Christian name. In keeping with the customs of the nobles of the age, Demeter Nekcsei considered it important to donate part of his wealth for pious purposes; the Bible in question was most likely one of his donations of that nature.

We have a *terminus ad quem* for the donation in that the date of his death was 1338. We have almost no information on the later fate of the Bible apart from an inscription, dated 1545, which mentions that it was in the possession of a person called Zuleman who called himself an "Orator" of the Hungarian King, Ferdinand Habsburg, and gave details of the miseries he suffered in Turkish captivity. At the time, envoys sent to the Turkish sultan, or serving there for some time, were called orators; since this name is not known to be one of them, Zuleman therefore could at most have been one of their servants. Most likely, he was one of the higher ranking servants to have such a splendid, illuminated manuscript in his possession. The text indicating his ownership is unfinished and thus provides no information on the means by which he came to acquire the Bible. It is possible that the Bible left the country as part of the booty of the Turks; it is also possible that Zuleman—or the orator he served—received it from King Ferdinand. The latter is known to be in the habit of giving codices, originally part of the library of King Matthias Corvinus, to people in payment for services; Nekcsei's Bible was certainly fine enough to come into the collection of a king, whether the king happened to be Ferdinand during the time of intensive Turkish pressure or one of his predecessors.

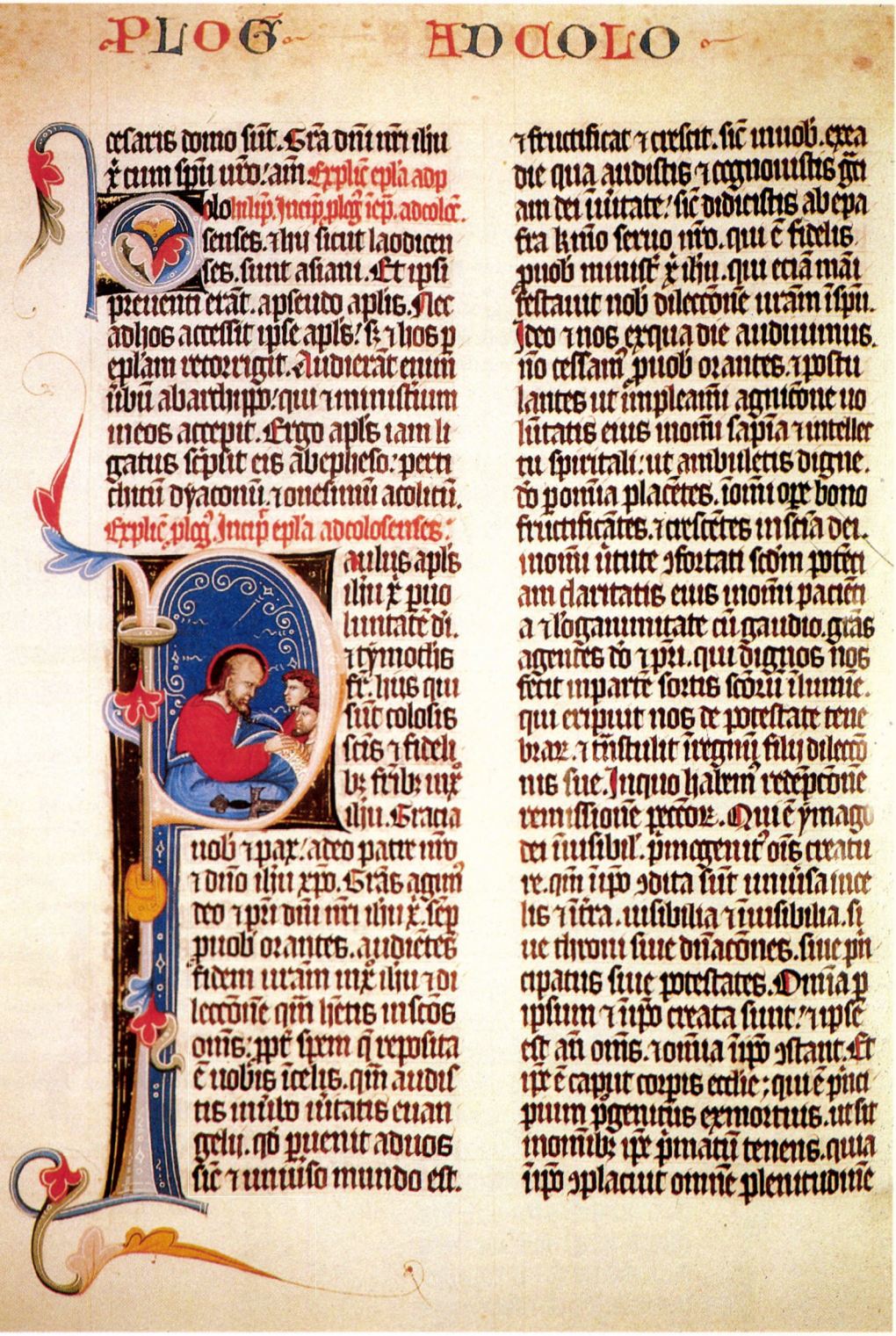
There is no information available on its later owners either, only of the 1873 auction, when the American collection acquired the Bible from the library of Henry Perkins of Hanworth Park (England, near Feltham). The present selection presents 108 pages

with figural ornamentation. This limitation is to be regretted, since the disciplined lines of beautifully formed letters provide a splendid sight even on pages not embellished with miniatures. However, this was the only way to keep the size and cost of the volume within reasonable limits. The work, originally a single volume, but now bound into two volumes, contains a total of 746 pages of parchment, generally sized 454 × 317 mm. The miniatures are masterpieces of the first part of the fourteenth century, the best era of the Bolognese school; their value is enhanced by the amazingly good state they have been preserved in, since the proportion of wear and tear is small. The identity of the illuminator, his nationality and other works produced by him is now the subject of heated discussion.

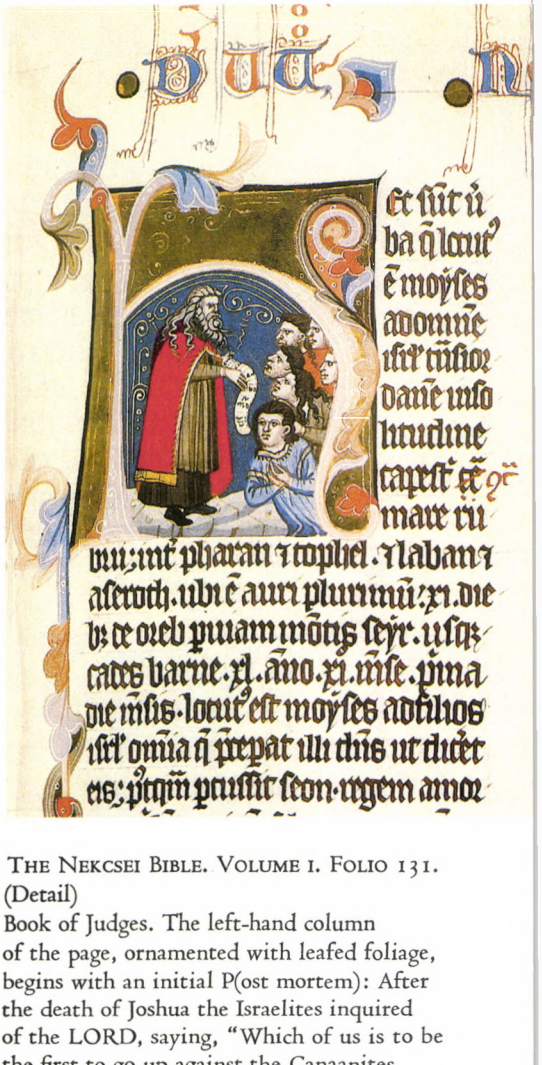
The pages embellished with miniatures are reproduced in the same size as the original which increases the feeling that one is holding a medieval book in his hands. A short description by Ferenc Levárdy faces the facsimile pages—slightly longer descriptions are given to the more complicated illustrations—concerning mainly the symbolic and iconographic features. The rest of the supporting text written by contemporary authors is in a separate booklet: the thinking behind this is the likelihood that the thoughts set down there would be of interest for only a relatively small proportion of the readers. The essays (by Dezső Dercsényi, Tünde Wehli, and Ferenc Levárdy), partly complementing and partly contradicting one another, provide very important information on the history of this codex, the person of its donor, medieval Bible illustration, and on distinguishing the works of artists, who painted the various pictures; considering the complexity of the subject and the precariousness of the available evidence, it will obviously take a long time before the differing points of view will be reconciled. Confrontation with previous views is undoubtedly useful, although it involves unavoidable reiterations. Some of these thoughts were included in the publisher's preface and in the book itself. Most likely, the much shorter introduction written in emphatically courteous terms by Dana J. Pratt, Publishing Director of the Library of Congress, would have sufficed.

Summing up: the work known until now only by a few specialists, one of the finest of medieval Hungarian codices will now, thanks to this enterprise, reach the book-shelves of many thousands of people who, in browsing through this volume, will enjoy the illusion that they are dealing with the original itself. The Bible of the Treasurer has returned to Hungary even if the original remains in Washington.

JÁNOS VÉGH



THE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME II. FOLIO 337. Leafed foliage is linked to the initial C of the introduction. In the initial of the Epistle to the Colossians, St Paul is shown in a prison, writing a letter with his sword laid beside him. The figure of the Apostle is essentially reduced in size, although the accompanying figures still appear to be small.



THE NEKCSEI BIBLE.
VOLUME I. FOLIO 116. (Detail)
The way in which the title of the folio appears —DeUTerONOmIum—indicates that the text of Deuteronomy ends on this page. The letters PRO(logue) mark the beginning of the prologue to the Book of Joshua which contains a somewhat mitilated text of the prologue by St Jerome.

THE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME I. FOLIO 131. (Detail)
Book of Judges. The left-hand column of the page, ornamented with leafed foliage, begins with an initial P(ost mortem): After the death of Joshua the Israelites inquired of the LORD, saying, "Which of us is to be the first to go up against the Canaanites to attack them?" The initial of the book recalling the fight of the people of Israel for a homeland of their own provided the miniature painter with an excellent opportunity to add variety to the armed multitude of Jewish fighters listening to the word of God by equipping them with shields bearing coats of arms.

THE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME I. FOLIO 5. (Det
Book of Genesis. The iconography of a wh
series of miniatures emerged at the
of the 13th century, although it is rare for a se
as such to app

HE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME I. FOLIO 273. (Detail)
ok of Esdras.
ng Josiah is seen
the company of three old Jews.

HE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME I. FOLIO 117. (Detail)
ok of Joshua. Joshua, clad in armor and wearing
elmet, is taking the field in the hope of reaching
e Promised Land.

THE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME I.
FOLIO 282. (Detail)
According to the letters at the top, the Book of Thobias begins here. The blue background of the initial is almost completely covered by the finely draped curtain that represents a wall. In front of it there is a bed with red pillows where old Tobit lies, covered with a striped blanket. In the border of the folio, there is also a bird flying out of the letter T.

THE NEKCSEI BIBLE. VOLUME II. FOLIO 316. (Detail)
The initial P(aulus) of St Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians is filled by a picture of the apostle. He has his sword laid on his shoulder.

*Reproductions by Károly Szelényi*

# ARTS

## JENŐ BARCSAY: A LIFE IN PAINTING

Jenő Barcsay, one of the great figures of modern Hungarian art, died in the spring of 1988 in his eighty-eighth year. He was thus the same age as this our—occasionally horrifying—century. The fact that he was born in 1900 has a symbolic value. Through almost ninety years he necessarily witnessed and lived through major historical events. Ninety years of history in Central Eastern Europe, where Barcsay lived, was too eventful; all the diseases and evils of the century were condensed here. Barcsay was a distant descendant of a Transylvanian prince: after 1919, he had to leave his native soil which had become part of Rumania. He became a painter in the much reduced Hungary.

Apart from attaining a ripe age, few other artists have achieved a similarly organic and harmonic *œuvre*. He had contributed to exhibitions from the age of twenty-one and continued to work for the sixty and more years left to him; all along, he was a dominant figure in Hungarian art. Even among his last paintings are some masterpieces. The ending to such a fine *œuvre*, however painful, is a biological necessity and the question "what could have been if..." does not propose itself. Yet we have a feeling that his death is more than the falling of the curtain on an exemplary body of work; in some way, it also falls on a great period in Hungarian art which lasted from post-impressionism, through the avant-garde, to the emergence of the neo-avant-garde and post-modernism. Although this three quarters of a century have produced painters of greater stature than Barcsay, he was one of the pillars of modern Hungarian art and his painting was always one of its crucial influences. He became almost as much an institution in Hungarian culture as the classic masters did in their own lifetime. For scores of years he was a much-respected teacher, regarded by many Hungarian painters as their mentor; his famous books on drawing, *Anatomy for the Artist*, *Form and Space*, and the volume on drapes, well-received in German, French, and English-speaking countries as well, are much more than successful works. In the past, similar pedagogical success was only attained over several generations or by academies.

Jenő Barcsay lived all his long life as a painter and reacted to everything as a painter. This does not mean that he did not concern himself with society, or with the fate of Europe and his cherished fellow-Hungarians, or that he was not affected by the constant presence of social tensions. However, all his human experience, his frequent hardships were transposed into line and colour. His themes were never directly related to social questions; his chief works, the figurative mosaics are also themeless. In them, behind the lines of the female figures can be sensed a dramatic tension.

He started painting in the 1920s; his native landscape, the Mezőség in Transyl-

vania, was central to his art for many years. The intertwined hills and slim fields evoke a plastic experience; this returned to him in Szentendre, a small town 20 km from Budapest, whose undulating country reminded him of his native soil and whose rich forms invited an artistic treatment.

At art school his master had been Gyula Rudnay, who accepted the tradition of Mihály Munkácsy and Goya. The colours of Barcsay's early works, black-white contrast, Indian red, brown and grey hint at the palette of his master and this influence can be felt also in Barcsay's choice of themes; he painted figures on the margin of society, and his copper-plates suggest the influence of Rembrandt. Thus at the beginning of the 1920s, the course he chose seemed conservative, in that romantic realism already seemed anachronistic. His visits to Paris helped him break away from this.

His first journey was in 1926, three years later he spent a longer time in Paris, where he discovered for himself not the avant-garde or surrealism but the classics, then Cézanne and Matisse. A journey in Italy also had a crucial impact: here he came under the influence of Giotto and the severity of composition, monumentality, and compact forms of the quattrocento—an influence that reverberates later in his mosaics.

These journeys abroad helped him to realize that the essence of painting was not "painting, representing something" but creating a new visual-plastic world and solving the problems of form. He endeavoured to make the most of this realization in the pictures he painted in the late 1920s. He stuck to figurativity, to representation of nature, but paid increased attention to the picture's own laws, to an emphasis on constructive force. He tried to combine what he had experienced with what he had learned from Rudnay and from the "lowland school," so important in Hungarian painting, and especially with the work of István Nagy. And to all this he added the inimitably pure line and form that is so typical of him. Works such as "Working Girl" of 1929 signal that he had found himself: the realistic and constructivist intentions are combined in a fortunate manner. In the early 1930s, Barcsay was already himself and over the next fifty years he did not yield an inch of this "Barcsayness."

As I have said, since 1929 Barcsay had been working in Szentendre as a leading light among the artists working there. It was not just mere chance that Szentendre was the place where the new trends reviving Hungarian painting began to unfold in the 1930s. The little town, the surrounding landscape, and its social milieu are conducive to art. The landscape is of rare beauty but its dimensions are human. The Danube, Szentendre Island, the hills of Mediterranean flavour behind the town, the Italianesque townscape, with its unharmed Baroque features: all these make Szentendre a happy combination of village, small town and holiday resort. It is a homogeneous world of human dimensions suitable for, and even demanding, an exterior and interior artistic response. The town as a foreshaped environment is a major element in Barcsay's painting, a pre-formed reality. Since the 1930s, the essential element in his creative method was the projecting of the preformed, determined in space into the place. This metamorphosis is more difficult when the artist paints the natural landscape because then the first requirement is to order the scattered motifs of the landscape aesthetically. In the case of the closed world of Szentendre, this order is already present as a result of the selective and shaping activity of man and history: the motifs have already been determined and shaped. The town, the houses, the walls, and the church silhouettes do not present themselves as crude motifs but, ennobled as forms, they allow the abstracting of formulas of form, their further logical development, and thus an analysis of aesthetical, formal questions. It is no accident that L'Estaque and Horta del Ebro played such an important part in the development of

cubism. The spatial construction of Mediterranean small towns, the geometrical division of space arranged from their cubiform houses pre-formed the pictures but also offered opportunities to a painter. In Szentendre, things were a bit different: Barcsay did not discover cubism and his constructive intentions differed from those of dogmatic constructivism. The characteristic feature of Szentendre with its rich Baroque material and the decorativity of its provincial gables and portals is a special coexistence of geometrical spatiality and multi-plane decorativity: this was what became a major component in Barcsay's style.

There have been some changes and modifications of style in his long career but they are insignificant compared to the essential unity of his art. His *œuvre* can be regarded as commuting between a thorough observation of reality and a sovereign transcription and abstraction. He observed what he saw, no naturalist could know landscape and object better than Barcsay. He never denied the priority of the seen: "Painting should be preceded by thorough contemplation, the painter should become familiar with what he sees, and let men, houses, streets, mountains, hills, nature, and life, come near to him... I have never started from some objectless-abstract of surface but from nature, and from there I sometimes arrived at abstract condensing." He did not content himself with the experience given by the surface; even in his non-figurative works one senses the original experience of nature. His pictures have a constructive spirit but he never accepted dogmatic constructivism: he could not accept the reductive efforts of non-figurative art because his experiences linked him to the seen, to the concrete, with a thousand threads. He was a Hungarian artist, an Antean figure. Was he unable to soar? He did not want to. He wished to remain on this soil inhabited by the Hungarian people and to become its objective poet.

Since the end of the 1930s he had turned more to monumental tasks. He designed brilliant murals although he was unable to execute them for many years. In the 1960s several earlier and new compositions—mostly mosaics—were executed; they have shaped modern Hungarian monumental art.

The style of these monumental works does not differ from his panel pictures; both are characterized by constructivity, the respect of pure formulas and decorativity. He did not utilize allegoric, symbolic elements, he trusted the natural wealth of meaning that plastic form evolves by itself.

As I have observed, one of the characteristics of Barcsay's art was his objectivity. He was almost as objective as a scholar. He never did say anything about space, or the space of objects, the relationship of figures, or the constructive linear system of landscapes which could not be proven through scientific means. We should not forget that his earlier-mentioned anatomy studies, drapes and severely constructed studio-drawings are among the best things in his *œuvre*. A careful scrutiny of them reveals the lyricism and painterly inventiveness that exist even in his anatomic structures.

The other decisive component of his art was a respect for moderation. This linked him to the truest traditions of Hungarian culture, for the respect for measure, for moderation is one of the main virtues of Hungarian classicism and Art Nouveau, one which helped them to find a healthy harmony between the universal and the provincial. Barcsay's monumental murals respect measure, as do his other works smaller in size but monumental in spirit.

Proportion, interior rhythm were always important in Barcsay's art: the principle of the golden section is often used. This is true also of the non-figurative works he painted in the last period of his life. Reduced almost to the extreme point with mathematical purity, they still remained within the sensory-concrete sphere. The secret of his art was the balancing of the abstract and the concrete.

LAJOS NÉMETH

# ECLECTIC CONSISTENCY

## *Margit Balla, Tibor Helényi*

Both Margit Balla and Tibor Helényi belong to the generation that was born right after the war, studied in the School of Applied Art, and graduated as designers.[1] They have continued to work in graphics. After some fifteen years, they have now presented the first exhibition of their collected works. There was much to choose from.

Growing up amid the struggle between socialist realism and the avantgarde, both Balla and Helényi chose a third course, a kind of new figurativity. They were at one time, with two others involved in a neo-manierist group. Apart from this, I would rather insist on their differences.

Margit Balla is a romantic, and romantics travel to distant regions, to the remote past, to history and eclectically, to artistic styles of the past. As a graphic artist, her starting point is manierism, primarily Arcimboldo, but Bosch, the renaissance, even classicism and the *biedermeier* also figure. Art Nouveau nowadays and the Far East also find their way onto her pages. Related to all the above, a fantastic realism is also one of her prototypes: she is a painter who has not forgotten Ernst Fuchs. I would also call Balla a symbolist.

She is, thus, ecletic, without any prefixed programme. She is an intellectual artist; her knowledge of the history of art and her erudition are conspicuous. As well as evincing reverence for the art of seven centuries, Balla's pictures are also parodies of style.

Some of her paintings and all her drawings are crowded with figures, primarily people, animals, plants, coloured by eroticism, and sharp social criticism. Her basic motives are amplified with elements of architecture and wood-carving. She ranges alien elements one beside another and in the abundance of a thousand variants though she does not assemble them in the same way as the classics. Her innovation is that she ultimately traces everything back to real figures, forms and motifs.

The exhibition of her collected works is in four parts: single drawing, reproduced graphic works, paintings and a few sculptures. She likes the traditional copper-plate technique: beside single-tone copper-plates, she prints pieces in several colours, from several plates. Her single drawings *(Handzeichnung)* convey a different message. Pen-and-ink drawings are more matter-of fact; if coloured, they are more attractive and her pencil-drawings are more lyrical. They are coloured in their colourlessness. However, neither coloured engravings nor coloured pen-and-ink drawings appease her hunger for colour. Her attitude in painting is as firm as in her drawings or copper-plates. Her message is the same in the different idioms and she remains true to her traditionalist style.

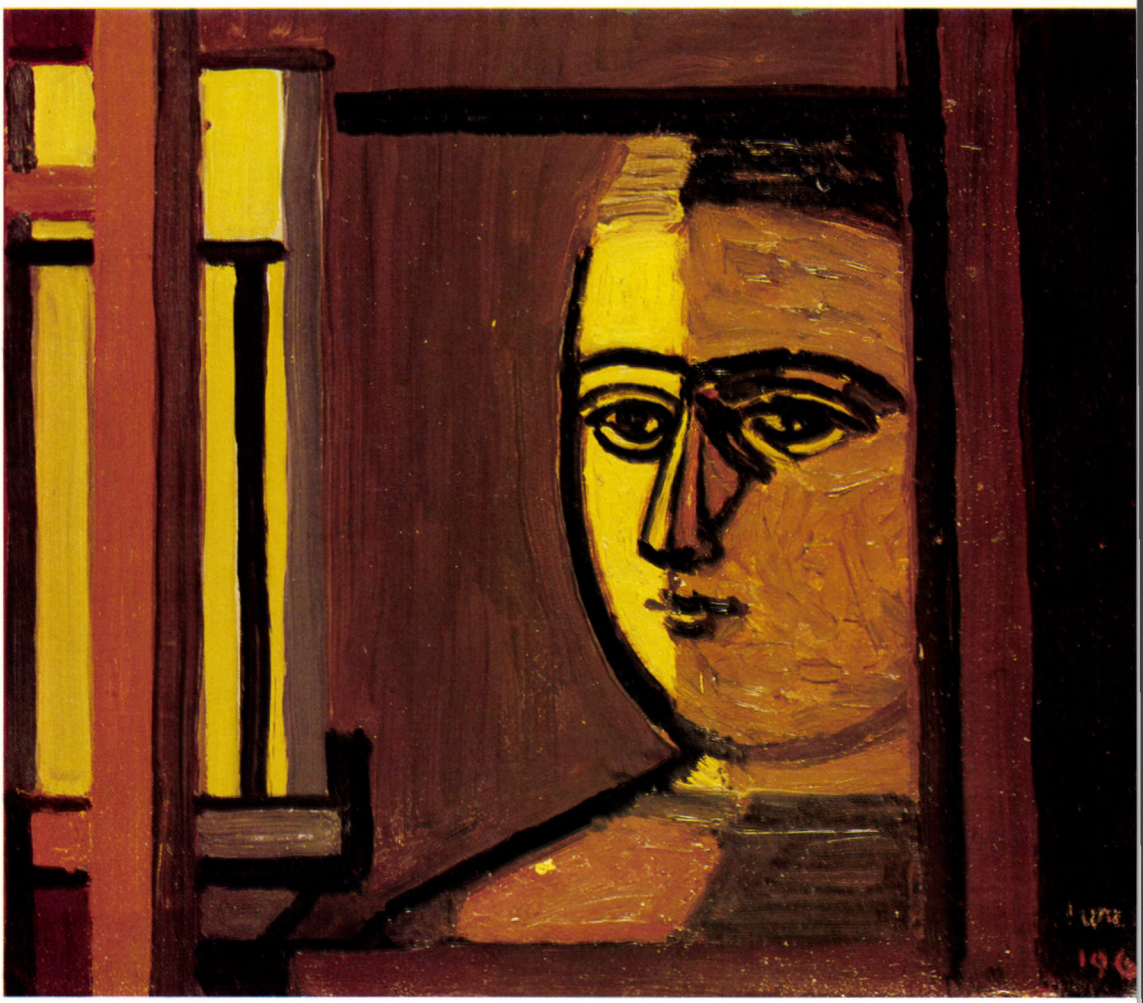
Her first oil paintings are panels in the tradition of the 15–17th century Flemish-Dutch schools; they are drawing-like, full of architectonic elements and extraordinary figures, with landscape backgrounds and all painted in the studio. *(It is Snowing in Hampton Court,* 1981[2]*)*. The equally fantastic but more lively miniatures reach back to the Italian Quattrocento (*Courtiers,* 1982, *The romance of the sleep-walker I–III,* 1983). Later pictures are of complicated, emotive scenes with the recurring themes of scarecrow and rootlike figures of boards (*Hungarian Plain,* 1986; *Unknown Soldier,* 1988). Among this work, *Terminal* (1983) is an outstanding piece, a tribute to surrealism and of supreme plasticity.

[1] *NHQ* 55

[2] *NHQ* 84

Alfréd Schiller

JENŐ BARCSAY: GIRL, 1928. OIL ON CANVAS, 97×70 CM
*Hungarian National Gallery*



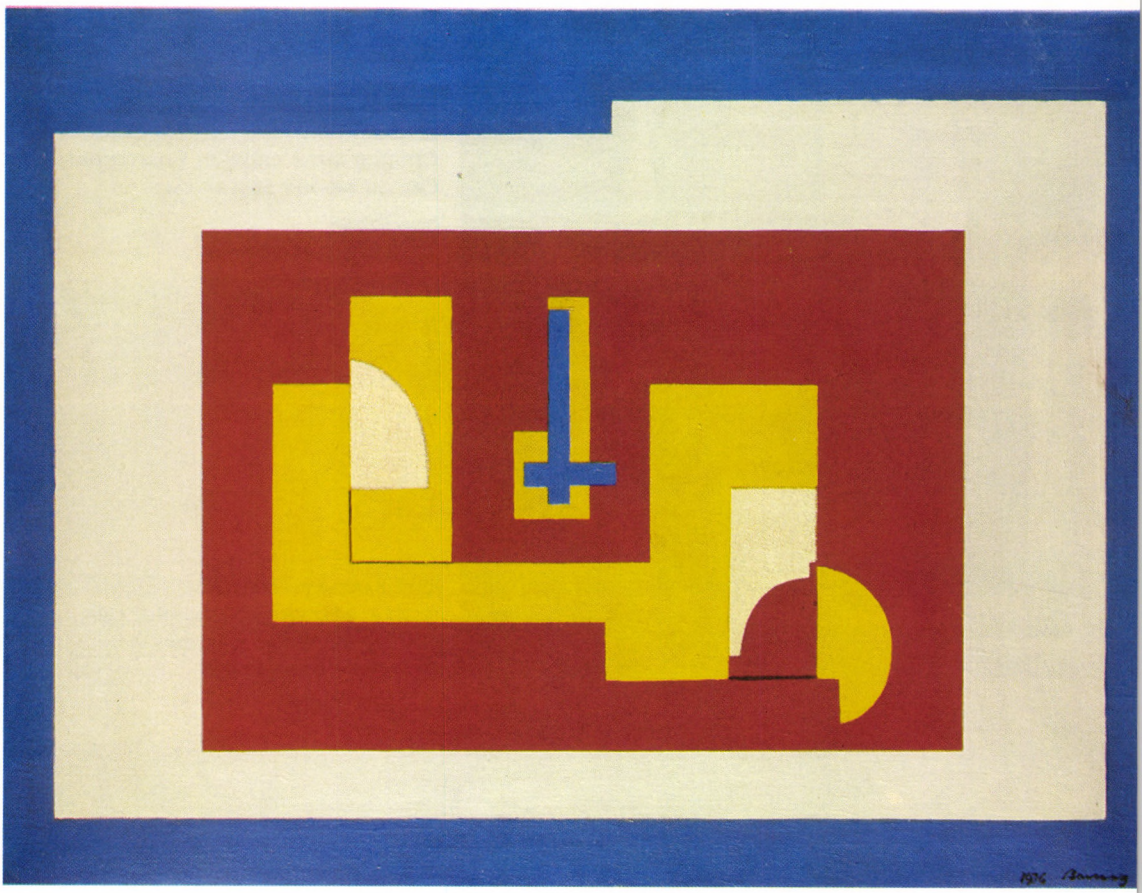
JENŐ BARCSAY: PORTRAIT WITH A FRAME, 1961. OIL ON WOOD, 20×24 CM
*Barcsay Memorial Museum, Szentendre*

JENŐ BARCSAY: DESIGN FOR THE SZENTENDRE MOSAIC, 1970. OIL ON WOOD
*Private Collection*

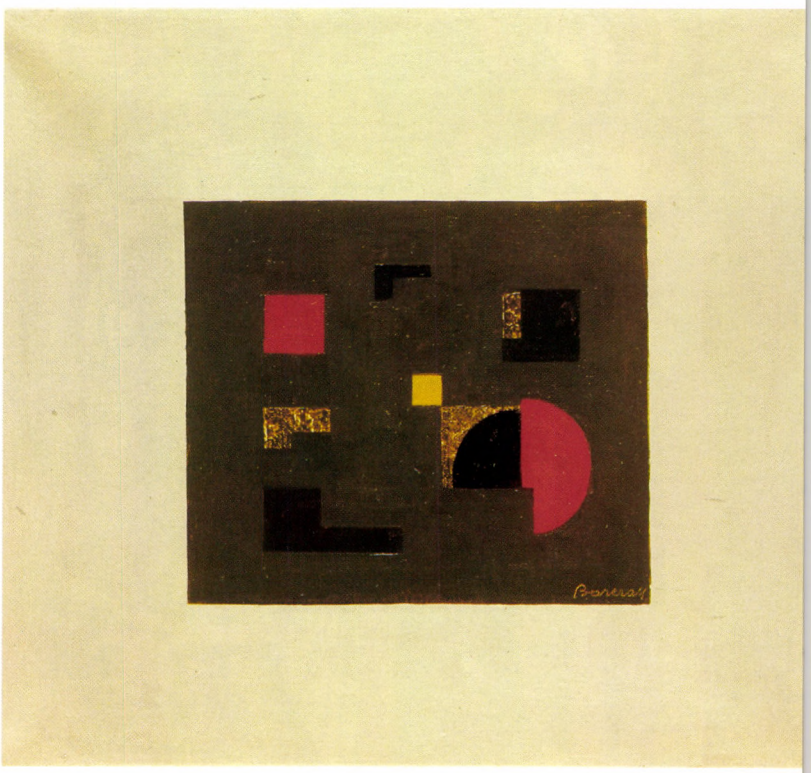
Jenő Barcsay:
Church with cross in Szentendre, 1962.
Oil on wood, 25×25 cm
*Private Collection*

*Alfred Schiller*

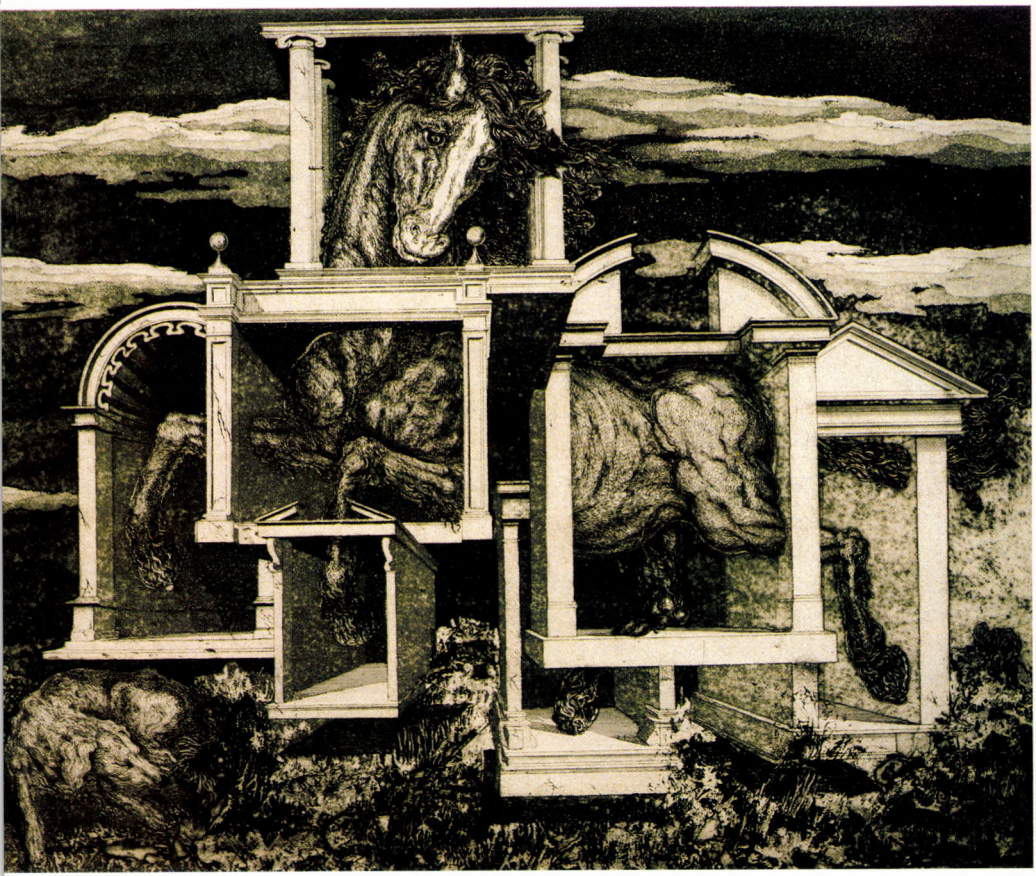
Jenő Barcsay: Mosaic
with a golden background, 1963.
Oil on wood, 30×35 cm
*Barcsay Memorial Museum, Szentendre*



JENŐ BARCSAY:
SOUVENIR OF SZENTENDRE,
III, 1976. OIL ON CANVAS,
30×25 CM
*Private Collection*



JENŐ BARCSAY:
FUN IN A GREEN FIELD, 1976.
OIL ON CANVAS, 20×20 CM
*Private Collection*

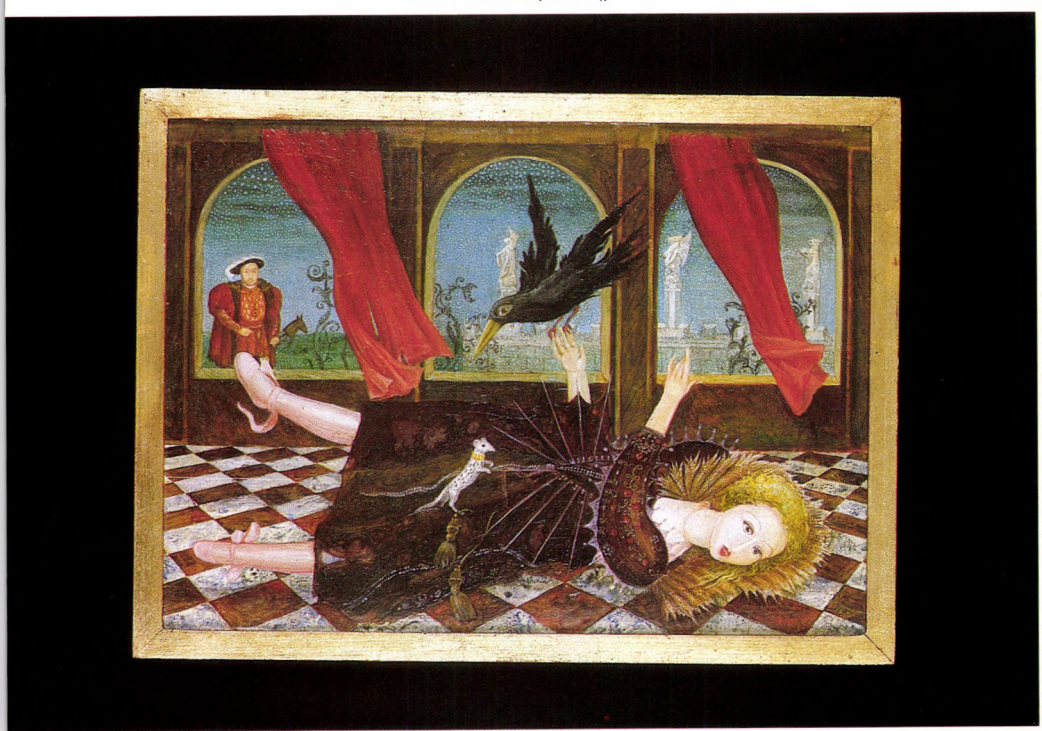


MARGIT BALLA: MUSEUM, 1975. COPPER ETCHING, 390×430 CM

*Hungarian National Gallery*

MARGIT BALLA: SNOW IN HAMPTON COURT, 1981. OIL ON WOOD, 25,7×35 CM

*Galerie in Flottenbeck, Hamburg*



*Imre Juhász*

MARGIT BALLA: SOUVENIR OF ASSISI, 1986.
PENCIL, 307×610 CM
*Collection György Kézdi*

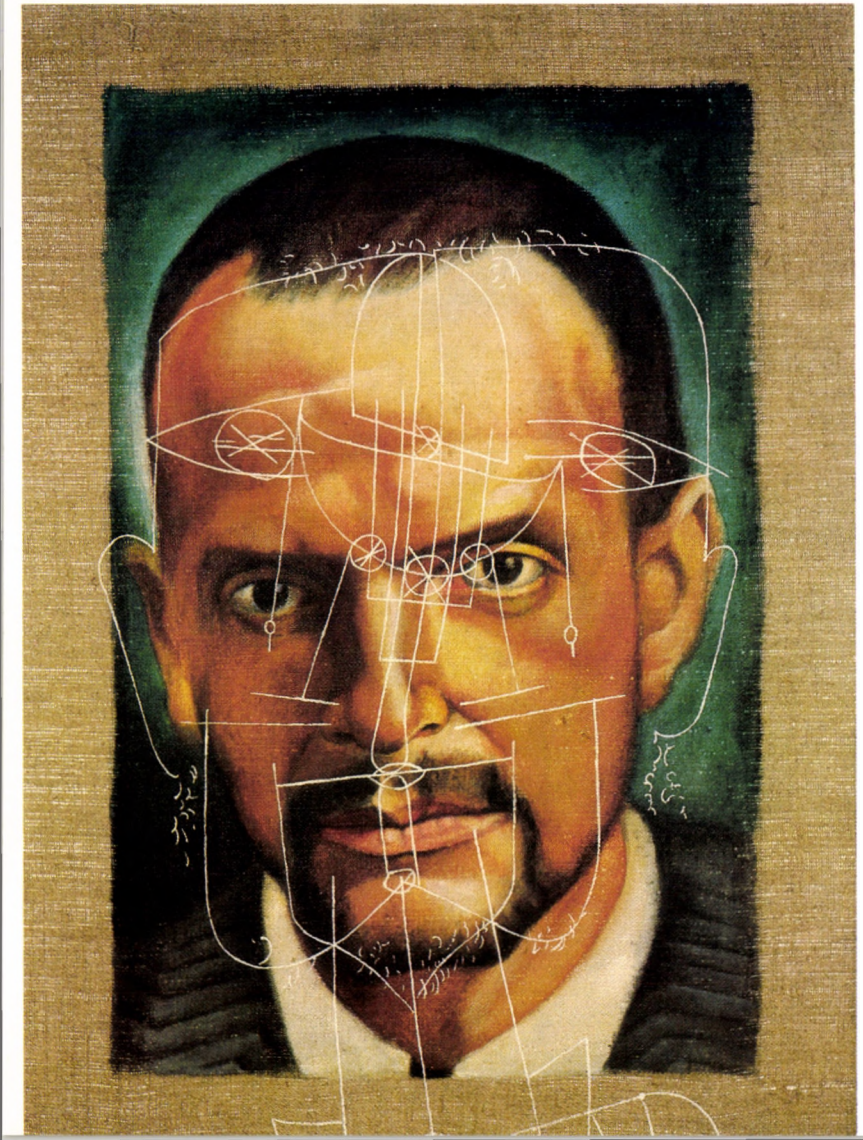
*Imre Jubász*

MARGIT BALLA: THE GOOD POLICEMAN, 1988.
OIL ON WOOD, 40×50,5 CM

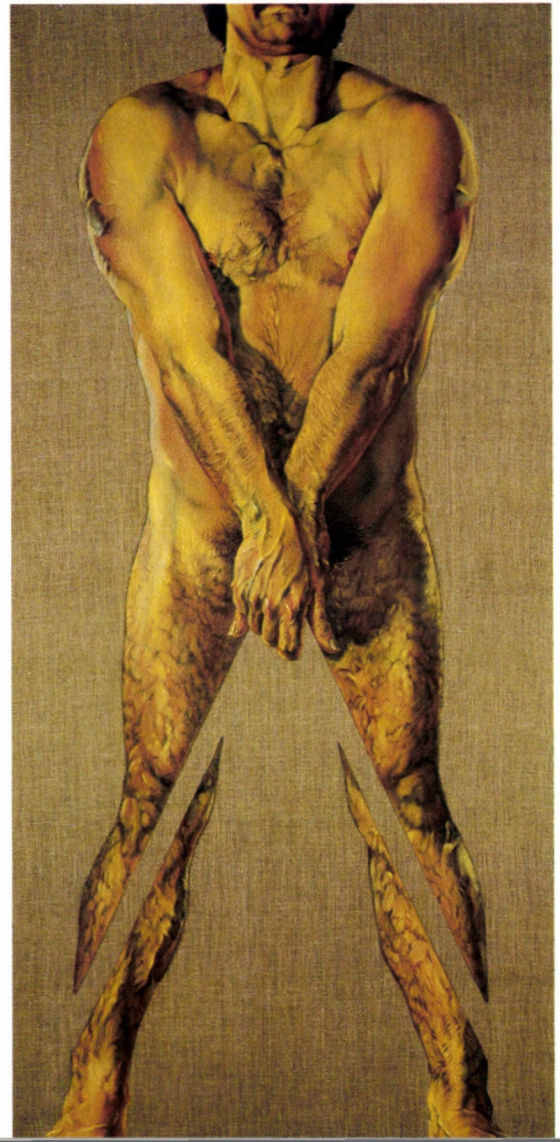
TIBOR HELÉNYI: RACE: TANDEM—HÓD—KITSCH—ARBORETUM, BIGG—ABSTRACT—LEVIATHAN, 1985. OIL ON CANVAS, 140×360 CM

*Imre Jubász*

TIBOR HELÉNYI: NUDE ASCENDING STAIRS. (IN MEMORIAM MUYBRIDGE AND DUCHAMP), 1987–88. OIL ON CANVAS, 280×255 CM (EACH 160×75 CM)



Tibor Helényi:
Paul Klee, 1976.
Acrylic, canvas,
50×35 cm



Tibor Helényi:
In search of the centre II,
1981–82. oil on canvas,
150×80 cm

The settings of her recent works have shifted to the tenement-houses of the sixth district of Budapest, transposed into architecture which has never existed. Historical drama has been replaced by contemporary scenery, the Renaissance with early German impressionism. The previously empty spaces are replaced by a dense, nebulous atmosphere, indeed by a characteristic sfumato. On these panels with reduced colours there is only one exception, which is a first step towards colorism. The early element from her earlier work, the transcendent, has probably increased: (*Premises of a Shop in the Józsefváros*, 1986), (*Mari Fürst in the Outside Corridor with Lidi*, 1987). I see in the new works, the influence of the German Nazarenes of the early 19th century. (*Our Daily Bread*, 1987; *The Rest is Silence*, 1988). The absolutely professional Balla may have turned her attention to the manner of the amateur, naive painters (*The Good Policeman*, 1988; *Uncle Joe*, 1988).

This all-round artist has also produced objects in the past: *objets trouvés*, glass stems, chess-pieces, feathers, pearls, chains. *The Hungarian Plain* (1986), a sculpture, is the transposition of her drawing and painting into three dimensions. Her other sculpture at the exhibition, *Bird in the Sixth District* (1987) is identical with the painting mentioned above but the sculptural element in it, the dove and the carved furniture-ruin console, are integral parts of the picture. I am sure that Margit Balla will organize a small-sculpture exhibition at some stage.

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Tibor Helényi's exhibition, which reviews twelve years, can be divided into three periods, all of which are determined primarily by figurativity. His basic quality is masterful draughtsmanship, severe composition and construction and a superior knowledge of material. He can be recognized by his elliptical method for he believes that the raw, unprimed canvas, so close to the natural plant, should be shown, not hidden.

Titles are almost as important for him as painting itself: his earlier titles were frequently geometric formulas even though his works had nothing to do with geometrical abstraction. Naming series is also highly important: *Barbarian Geometry*, *Body Copy* and *Hung Pictures*.

In his graphics he has evolved an unusual, difficult and painstaking method for his posters and cover pages. He starts by painting a picture on traditional canvas with the utmost accuracy, than has a coloured slide made of the complete picture: the poster is a reproduction of this, or rather, a self-reproduction. Something like this happened to the *trouvaille* of the cover-page and poster for the Paul Klee Exhibition in Budapest; here Helényi painted a conservative portrait in brown of Klee and then placed on it a line drawing of Klee in a white negative. The frame was the canvas that had been left bare.

As I have said, the chief quality of Helényi is brilliant drawing, his linear and valeur-perspectives, his knowledge of anatomy, the play of sophisticated foreshortenings. Thus he evokes the manierism which appeared on the boundary of Renaissance and Baroque. The theme of *Barbarian Geometry*[3] is battle, struggle and combat: the protagonists are armoured knights and cuirassed chargers. Years before the European trend in new-manierism he oriented himself in this direction.

In the second Helényi series, anatomy also plays a decisive part. The title of the series is *Body Copy*. In these works he evokes the academic style of Munich in the 19th century. These paintings have the iconography of the human body, in the form of the male nude. Everything is static, figures are in frontal position. Helényi's body copy is dualistic, it communicates the surface, the appearance of the human figure and at the same time reveals the canon of the human body's structure and geometrical rules. Straight lines are indicated through omis-

[3] *NHQ* 74

sion, a stripe of the canvas being left bare. These hiatuses divide the figure in several directions, composing an organic part with it. These gaps or patches or stripes of raw canvas hold equal rank with the painted parts, just like the negative form in sculpture or the pause in music.

However, we should be wary of regarding the *Body Copy* pieces as diagrams for manuals. Here too, as in the paintings of *Barbarian Geometry*, Helényi permitted himself errors in the canon. This inveterate sceptic battles with academism even in his academic works. This is irony, including self-irony with regard to himself and his own art. Incidentally, in 1982, I asked the painter where the many complex movements have disappeared from the *Body-copy* pictures, for dynamics had been a second self to him earlier. It required self-control, he said, "I can hardly wait to return to action again but just now I absolutely needed this link in statics."

What he said came about. The static period has ended, everything moves again in the new Helényi paintings as in *Barbarian Geometry*. Drawing and form have withdrawn. Always colourful, Helényi is now a real colorist: he paints with broad strokes and gestures, the paint is laid on thickly; this relief-effect is increased by uneven, rustic, rugged synthetic grounding. His colours are pure, ranged one beside another without mixing, and brush-strokes progress like the muscle fibres running in parallel in the muscle system. At other times, they are feather-structured or cross-striped, or circular like other muscles. In some pictures, he selects warm, in others cold, colour combinations. In an expressive luxuriance, the status of composition and construction has been preserved though latent; they are not pushed into the foreground as in the more restrained pictures of his earlier period. But expressionism or not, spontaneity, although alive, remains a minor factor in his art. Helényi has remained a *poeta doctus*.

He continues to practise his elliptic method. In one monumental mural one or several panels are on canvas stretchers in the normal way—often hung obliquely or at some angle —below them is the freely, loosely hanging canvas in which the figure, the motif or the scene continue. Sometimes the continuity is interrupted because the ending comes after the missing part. Although free-canvas painting was not invented by Helényi, he was the first to combine it with the traditional wooden frame within a single picture. The hung pictures seem to be nostalgic for remote or non-existing worlds. Of his pictural themes, he says: "I have been watching adventure films open-mouthed since I was five, and I have been drawing the same since childhood." He has now enlarged his repertory with the use of Freudian symbols and hidden suggestions.

JÁNOS FRANK

## THREE POST-MODERN ARTISTS

### *Gábor Dienes, József Szentgyörgyi, Győző Somogyi*

Art has radically changed in Hungary in the past twenty years. The change began with the rapid progress of me much-delayed neo-avantgarde and, when that was still going on, other schools began to develop. In the first half of the eighties an excited group many considered as quarrelsome, seemed to be in the process of being the bearers of the renewal; it soon turned out, however, that the group was only one part of a widespread change. The experience common to this generation was, of course, accumulating as

they matured as artists and prepared to shape their message; they felt that the image of the future, that had been sketched out for them during their childhood and adolescence was merely Utopian and the loss of value struck them dumb.

The art of that generation has just come to maturity and their exhibitions occur in quick succession. Three of them, Gábor Dienes, József Szentgyörgyi and Győző Somogyi held exhibitions late in 1988.

Gábor Dienes was born in 1948 and studied at the Academy of Fine Arts under Aurél Bernáth and Szilárd Iván. He graduated in 1973 and since then has been a teacher at the Academy. His pictorial world developed early: his works have nothing to do with the modern styles although they could not have taken shape without their influence. Perhaps the most influential was the surrealism of Max Ernst, but Lajos Szalay and contemporary art, in which the theatre, the play has an increasing role, may have equally influenced him. Several factors indicate this: he places his figures in his multi-figure compositions as if they were on stage. Their clothes impress as costumes; in reality, the body and the clothes could not belong to one another, thus the scenes in question are staged. This is particularly indicated by the peculiar, beaked masks worn by his almost mass-less, flattening, stick-limbed figures. All this recalls mannerism which is where his art becomes contemporary for many consider our age as mannerist. There is something else that also recalls mannerism: the anthropomorphic role of his peculiar dogs. One critic of his suggests that these skin and bone, quaking animals are degenerate Italian greyhounds or chihuahuas; whatever they are, their pictorial role is prominent. In *Play with Space*, it seems as if the dogs might appear in space before a background of plants—this is indicated by the colours, the shaping of the dogs' bodies, the placement of their legs—yet both the plastically formed body and the heads reaching into space somehow merge with the plane. This special play also appears in *Worn Furs* (1981): four not-so-young ladies sit around the table and everything is laid out in the plane: or again in *Nude* (1979) where a nude female form is sitting on a chair, with her right leg under her, and with an easel in the background, but her breasts look as if they were stuck onto the figure, her great belly folds and sprawls out in the plane. While the title of *On the Water Side* (1980) indicates a scene, there is nothing in the picture that refers to it. What the picture shows is four female figures in the plane of the picture, three wearing beaked masks, indeed, one wearing a mask with two long beaks.

Again many of Dienes's works present a picture within the picture, an appropriate way of querying the relation of painting and reality. What becomes evident is that Dienes does not wish to give a description of his age but still cannot avoid doing so. The figures placed on the stage are incapable of action, they merely exist, hiding their emotions and thoughts behind their masks.

Dienes's card portraits, *Dictator* (1982), *The Blue Robed* (1983), *Jolly Joker I* (1986) and *Jolly Joker II* (1987) have steadily issued from his studio since 1982. In these, he repeats the picture within the picture approach and divides the ground that has been put on a ground into two. The bust of the person presented appears in the top half, while the solution differs in the bottom half: he repeats the top figure in the two Jolly Joker pictures with a smear big enough to receive it and uses spots of colour in the other two. An inscription intimates his thoughts on the second Jolly Joker: "Beware of the Jolly Joker for he may really cheat you."

In a world of doubts and mistrust, Gábor Dienes has also found his own version of the Saviour. But this fundamentally differs from the customary. In his *Between Earth and Cross* (1982), the Redeemer stands in an unusual, inward-looking, waiting pose.

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József Szentgyörgyi's painting shows spiritual kinship with Dienes but the style is different. He was born at Balatonarács in 1940 and graduated with Dienes from the Academy in 1968. At that time, Endre Domanovszky was the Rector of the Academy, and his strongly expressive manner of painting had a considerable influence on the students. Szentgyörgyi was unable to divest himself from this for a long time. This is plainly evident in his early pictures. In time, however, other influences were added, primarily Ignác Kokas's compositions constructed with splashes and roughened surfaces, and the rich world of Béla Kondor's paintings. Szentgyörgyi's art began to mature slowly until he found himself by the second half of the seventies. His pictorial world is not achieved through an intellectual approach but through the projection of inner drives. The trials of his youth, bitter experiences, made the dread of humiliation almost a unique theme. He found a characteristic expression for this in *Iconpainter* (178), where painter and work melt into one.

Szentgyörgyi repeatedly uses the—sometimes arbitrarily modified—motif of the crucifixion to express or to counterpoint his theme. The strange collection of motifs in *Scene* (1982) is an example. Three figures are seen in front of the cross, painted black on a red ground. Christ is shown, however, as a dummy held together by bandages and the streak of blood on his neck is also a rope to make his death even more certain. On his left is John the Baptist, but the female figure—against the traditional iconography—is not standing on the other side of Christ but is bending in front of him to catch a glass that is about to fall. The three figures are not connected with one another: the Crucified has no influence on the future of the others.

The painful theme of humiliation returns in a large composition *There is no Balance* (1986). In the plane of a picture divided into two blue, black and red are on the left, while hues of yellow, from deep ochre to lighter tones, unfold on the right. Around the middle of the canvas, a bent figure with a tormented face stoops, his large head of black hair resembling a crown of thorns. *Untitled No II* (1987) has the same theme. The plane of the picture starts with a black streak from the top, it changes to red in the lower half and in the middle the reds scorch through the black. This is the background to the bloody-headed figure hung upside-down on the left side, the figures of a man and a naked women in the middle and the stooped figure recurring from the previous picture is on the right, but with a shapeless black blotch where his head should be.

A clear interpretation of the pictures is impossible since the figures are slightly obscure, taking shape amongst the colours. Seeing the compositions, one has a feeling that they are unfinished. What the viewer is faced with is the *non-finito* a reference to either the overwhelming power of time or to some historic catastrophe, but always the struggle of the differing colours of reality. Furthermore, Szentgyörgyi frames almost all of his works, so that the picture in the picture is evident in his works. A visionary mode of seeing, an intention of suggestion rather than of explication vision all represent a psychical state of hopelessness and fear.

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Győző Somogyi was born in Budapest in 1942. Failing the entrance exam to the Academy, he worked at a printers' for two years eventually graduating in theology. From 1986, he was a curate in various parishes. This brought him into contact with Miklós Erdélyi's studio where several artists worked. Learning screen-printing was his decisive experience. His first important sheet, the Archpriest Avvakum, was made in 1973. The person he presented is a fanatic, born saint and devil. He is possessed by a sense of morality, yet he is cruel because he puts the idea above all else. Somogyi broke into Hungarian art with this sheet. Since

then, he has been presenting everyday life and Hungarian history in his drawings. He emphasises the importance of details in a photographic manner. He debunks certain figures he chooses, the heroes of 1848–49, joining the process which began in the late sixties in Hungarian literature, film and art.

In his early period, what he drew mainly were historical scenes, types and figures. He also produced scenes of the life of workers on the urban fringe. His drawings do not present theses, nor are they illustrations: the viewer is confronted with the harshness of representation, with the fact of reality.

Somogyi has been painting from the second half of the seventies. Although his subjects did not change, his presentation and his mode of vision did. Unlike his drawings, where positioning in space and meaning are closely connected, in his paintings Somogyi mostly stays with—or rather returns to—the perspective of the Renaissance. The alienating effect is subdued by the colours from the forms of the drawings. The colours are loud, exaggerated, alongside one another they clash. They are arbitrary, even though Somogyi uses them consistently. Thus the face and feet of Christ crucified become blood-red, the face of John the Baptist, presented as a simple villager, the face of the Blessed Virgin *Queen of Peace*, (1979): *Madonna of Nagybaracska* (1984). His landscapes are both fabulous and fantastic: blue hills on one side, green hills on the other, light-blue skies with red clouds. This same exaggeration of colours is also typical of his Greek landscapes and Biblical pictures (*Jesus Calms the Sea* 1984: *Jesus is Tempted by the Devil*, 1979).

The art of Győző Somogyi is hard to place in contemporary Hungarian styles. Strange and of a sociological interest, what he is doing is new in Hungarian art.

SÁNDOR LÁNCZ

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# IMRE KOCSIS'S UNSENTIMENTAL PAINTING

According to the opinion of several art critics, the rediscovery of time in art is one of the major achievements of the 20th century. Some contemporary art in which the representation of virtual (optical) movement, that is movement in real space has become an integral part, seems to support this statement: so too does an exhibition of Imre Kocsis.

His collected works were shown in the Gallery of Szentendre in 1988. Careful workmanship, precision and technical brilliance have been the features of the work of Kocsis right from the start. After a short exploratory period of expressionistic painting and drawing, he came forward with his hyperrealistic and ironical *Antichamber* (1972), followed by several works imitating elements of photography (*Rehabilitation*, 1974–76, *Shopwindow*, 1976–77). Through them he attacked the conventionalism and conditioning of our customary view of things: through the presentation of people and things seen with photographic precision, through an objectified rendering of their smallest details he contested the image which technical means offer of the world around is. His method is a pseudo-perspective, false frontality smuggled into the picture with nothing behind the plane of the scene, the shadows born in the cuttings and apertures continue in it. Thus, he seems to render his theme realistically; in actual fact, he shapes a pictorial structure which synthetizes a logical pictorial contradiction. Kocsis likes ambiguity, he likes to leave things open, he likes the interplay of contradictions and finds newer variations in expressing this basic problem.

A recent version of this pseudo-perspective is the series *The Key to Beautiful Weather*. This is the point where time enters since the series is a favourite mode of expression in contemporary art, employed since the second half of the 1970s by Kocsis. It is not only the artist who apprehends time: the spectator's sensitivity to it also plays a part. The first piece in the series, a sunlit landscape seen through a keyhole with a key placed above it, was painted in 1978; this was followed by others with two keys laid crosswise above the landscape seen through a keyhole, then with a butterfly above the landscape and so forth. Within a single pictorial structure he seized several levels of reality, and the whole series together introduced the dimension of time.

In connection with the work produced in the graphic artists' colony in Makó, a change showed itself in the early 1980s in the art of Kocsis. As he said, the idea had come from a "cognitive somersault": while a drawing is produced by rubbing the pencil against the paper he reversed the process and rubbed the paper against the pencil. This gave birth to the series *Scribble* (1982) which also has several levels, as does the next, entitled *God Help Me!* (1983), or the pictures of the reaper-series, *Storm Reaper, Reaper I. A., I. B., Rainbow-reaper*, (all 1985). These works condense in themselves the process of production because the artist's hand and active gesture provide the key to understanding how they are made. At the same time, they are simultaneously representations of reality and a fiction because the photograph renders the existant while the signs create an artificial world.

Recently, Kocsis has turned again to nature with a series *Japanese Garden* (1986). The Japanese garden creates a piece of nature by borrowing its environment It hides exotic plants among native vegetation. These works, on silk, with screen print and acryl paint refer to the indissoluble ties between man and nature. These pictures are monochromous, Kocsis has switched over to basic and black and white, with the intention of simplifying the world to good and bad, and black and white, carefully avoiding any sentimentalism.

S. L.

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# HUNGER FOR COLOUR

## *László Fehér's exhibition in the Műcsarnok*

In the early 1970s, hyperrealism in painting developed in Hungarian art in the wake of the works of László Lakner[1], László Méhes[2] and András Baranyay[3]; it may not have been a broad trend but it was of high quality. László Fehér whose career started a few years later became part of the trend in the mid-1970s.

The works he produced in 1974–75 are typical documents of the age. These overwhelmingly monochromous grey-white paintings, whose colourlessness emphasizes the photographic effect, are imbued by the passion with which the socio-photographs of the past used to reveal reality, show up poverty. His pictures of socialist brigades of 1975 were produced in the plain style of the photos on the honour tableaux of yore. The subway and underground pictures *Underground* (1976) are characterized more by dispassionate documentarism than by a critical mode of vision. In them, he painted the metaphysics of everyday contingencies. His works presenting abandoned Jewish ceme-

[1] *NHQ* 90.
[2] *NHQ* 107, 93.
[3] *NHQ* 84.

teries are also hyperrealistic. The last pieces in this tyle are *LT diptych* (1980) and *Workday* (1980). Their dispassionate representation makes them all the more critical of society.

In the beginning of the 1980s, Fehér changed his style: his strictly matter-of-fact mode of expression became more subjective and intimate; the series *Feast* emphasized the importance of rites and ritual objects. By then, he had abandoned the monochrome of his hyperrealistic period though he still worked with relatively few colours, brilliant whites and blues. The hardness of the outlines softened, looser contours, painterliness and a breath of decorativity replaced strict drawing.

In an interview, Fehér explained his change of style: "The turn or, more accurately, the step forward happened after a visit to Switzerland in 1981. There I saw original works by Kokoschka and Chagall. After this journey, I painted my "matzos" pictures, *Eight Days* and *Diaspora...*"

In 1983, he exhibited in the Műcsarnok pictures painted between 1976 and 1983. This show demonstrated how he had arrived from early, photo-realistic social-critical paintings to works representing the rituals of private life with a looser touch. Naturally, the advance and spread of "new painting" also contributed to his new mode of expression.

In his 1988 exhibition at the Műcsarnok, he showed works evoking memories in the special new painting style. The themes were mostly childhood memories and the experiences of a visit to Rome in 1986. The features of these paintings are large sizes, emphatic, although not explicitly gesture-like brushwork, vivid red-white, blueish-purple-yellow, blackish-green-white and yellow colour contrasts and the figures in transparent white outline placed before them.

If we look at his use of colours, after the light pictures, mostly interiors made between 1981 and 83, the works of 1984 were mostly in a red-and-green colour scheme: dark-green dominated the works of 1985, and in 1987 the prevailing colour was greenish-black and purplish-green with white or yellow as contrasts.

The painter's mode of expression has changed in the course of these years but his world of experience and motifs can be often related back to his earlier, photo-realistic style. In one piece in his series of childhood memories, *Memories of Dég*, the figures as tokens of memory in *Without Title 1985*—three women and a baby, produced in thin white outline—have stepped into the work to evoke the artist's childhood from old amateur photography. The atmosphere of this suggestive picture is naturally created by the strong colour effects, the deep green of the landscape and its counterpoint, the white antique column and the silhouette figures.

On *In the Province* (1984) the landscape seems only a vivid patch of colour represented from above. This red plane is divided by emphatic red channels running to the sky, to the horizon; the only element is the hill in black, the foreground where a painter can be seen working, himself a black patch. The theme is almost commonplace but the dynamism of the modelling, the contrast of reds, whites and black-browns lend the work especially strong picturesqueness.

In *Columns* (1986), the lonely female figure in white grips the spectator's imagination. The picture's structure is very simple: over half of the stage-like composition consists of the red foreground closed by a greenish-black background hinting at trees and bushes with some blue that shines through and indicates the sky. The picture space is indicated by a foreshortened row of white columns, the female figure in white holding a branch is standing beside the first column. The young woman does not seem to be of flesh and blood but rather a vision of memory from an old photograph. This visionary representation emphasizes the importance of the phantoms and memories of the past in our lives and suggests the passing of time, the finiteness of human existence.

In *Rome* (1986), Fehér utilized large, heavy patches of paint. Because of the components the composition is almost geometrical; only the glittering trickle of the water from the fountain lessens the severity in this work which represents a stocky building and a fountain. But the artist never insists on the building components for their own sake, every motif has its reason and purpose.

*Ferenc Liszt at the Fountain of the Villa d'Este* (1986) was also inspired by Italy. This painting with its greenish and whitish colour-scheme does not exert its effect through architectural elements, even though the terraced walls of the fountains and the antique column could be emphatic. However, the character of the composition is determined by the water falling in torrents from the terraces in whitish-silvery foam and glittering spray. Liszt's frock-coated, white-contoured, translucent figure is hardly more than a phantom. With this theme, the painting could be commonplace since it is built up of well-known motifs from cultural history. Yet the story is not its determinant feature: the emphatic colours, the melancholy greens, the whites traced with strong brush-strokes, symbolizing the water and creating an almost impressionistic, suggestive sphere, are its decisive marks.

*Domus Aurea* (1987) was influenced by the Italian experience and by a programme for a thematic exhibition. This work is directly related to post-modern and new-painting. The Domus Aurea documents Nero's megalomania, monumental even in its ruin but senseless. The architectural components are not greatly detailed in a work painted in brown, ochre, white and some red and Nero's head floating above the ruins lends it an especially subjective and mythical mood.

The motifs of childhood memories provide the continuity in Fehér's art. The frail and frightened child-figure in his newest pictures wondering at the world is the artist's alter ego. The *Stone Frog* (1986) is one of the best pieces among his purple-toned works. Only the upper edge of a fountain appears in yellow out of the greenish, purplish and blackish basic colours. On the edge sits the white monster, the stone frog, the only spot of light in the picture, and spouts water into the basin. It is dusk, almost dark, and in this mysterious blackish-purple dream world the silhouette of a boy, the artist himself, watches the stone frog. Human imagination colours objects, renders them friendly or frightening.

LAJOS LÓSKA

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# THE LOGIC OF FORM

## *János Megyik in the Budapest* Műcsarnok

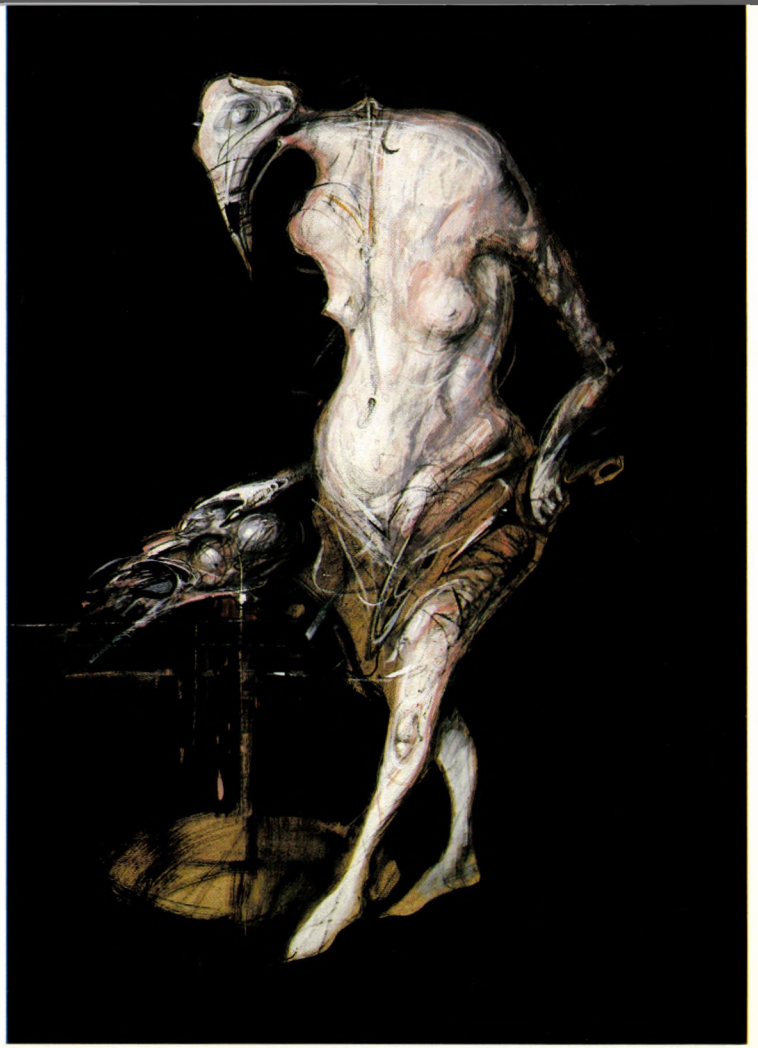
Up to the present time, János Megyik has been best known as a painter. As a student, he was painting expressively on canvas. Later on, his interest centred more and more exclusively an geometrical systems and their visualisation, in space and in the idea of space. This is why he worked out experimentally his own holographic operation.

In his first independent exhibition in Hungary (he has been living in Vienna for 30 years), space-bars are adjusted from thin battens, regular-irregular space-systems: what covers the unbraken surface of bodies and objects is peeled off. His interest is focused on what is beyond, in the assumed depth of the outer form. The structure comes in sight, that inner supporting system which is postulated by thinking; *this* is the work. *This* is order: this lean, ascetic net of unvarnished wooden battens which is both an

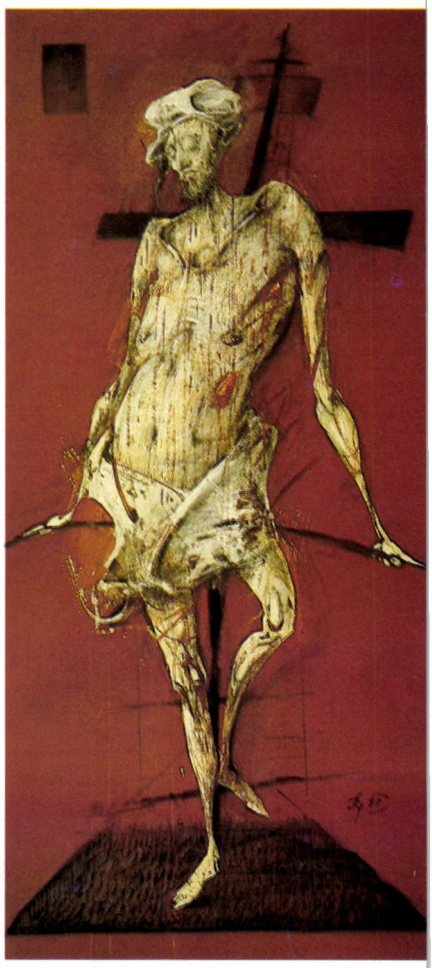
dit Dienes

GÁBOR DIENES: JOLLY JOKER I, 1986. PAPER, MIXED TECHNICQUE, 80×60 CM

*Private property*



GÁBOR DIENES: JUDITH III, 1988. WOOD FIBRE, MIXED TECHNICQUE, 100×70 CM



Judit Dienes

Gábor Dienes: Between sky and earth, 1987.
Wood. Mixed technic, 113×62 cm
*Private collection*

Gábor Dienes: The walk.
fibre, board, 1988. Mixed technicque, 100×160 cm
*Private collection*

László Szilhvyi

Győző Somogyi:
Mediterranean
landscape, 1985.
Tempera on canvas,
50×70 cm
*Private collection*

ŕőző Somogyi:
ent György Hill II.
85. Tempera on
nvas, 70×120 cm
*ate collection*

Győző Somogyi:
The Queen of peace,
1979. Wood fibre,
egg tempera,
75×180 cm
*Herman Ottó Museum, Miskolc*

József Szentgyörgyi: The last movement, 1988. Oil, pastel, canvas, 40×50 cm

Gyula Tabin

József Szentgyörgyi: Lament, 1978. Oil on canvas, 100×120 cm

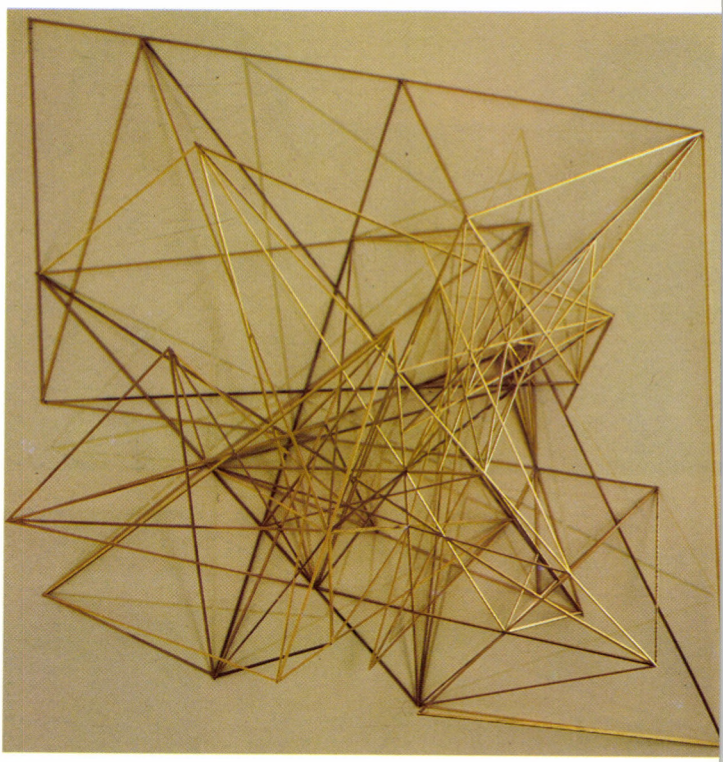
Mihály Kátai: Prehistoric period, 1988.
Enamel, 80 × 200 cm

Mihály Kátai: Antiquity, detail

Miklós Sulyok

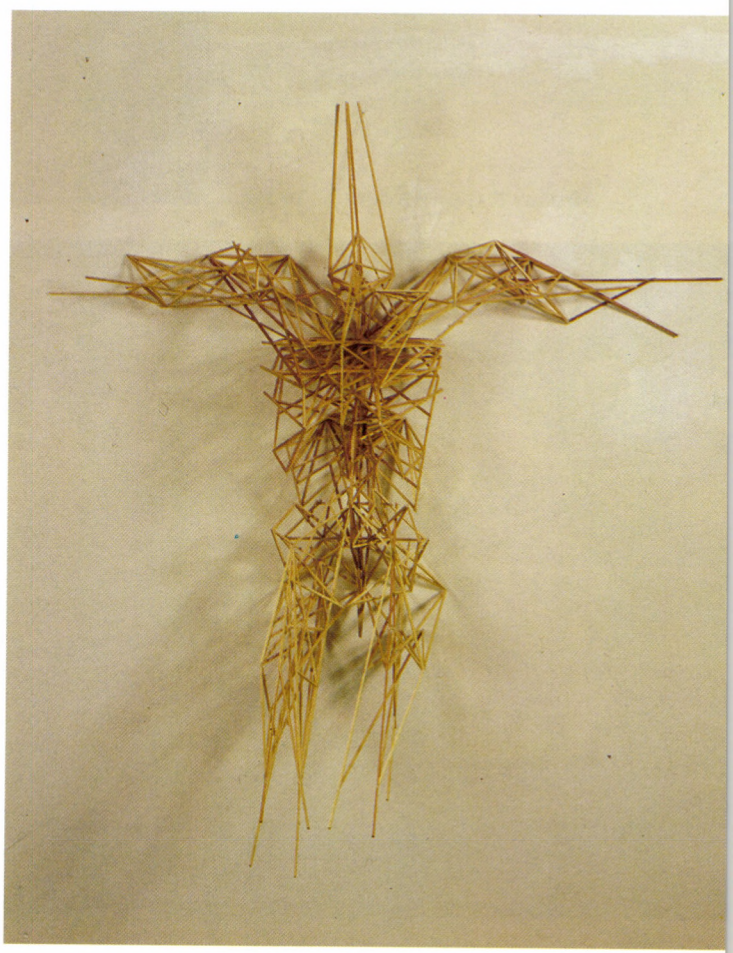
Mihály Kátai:
Oriental medicine, detail

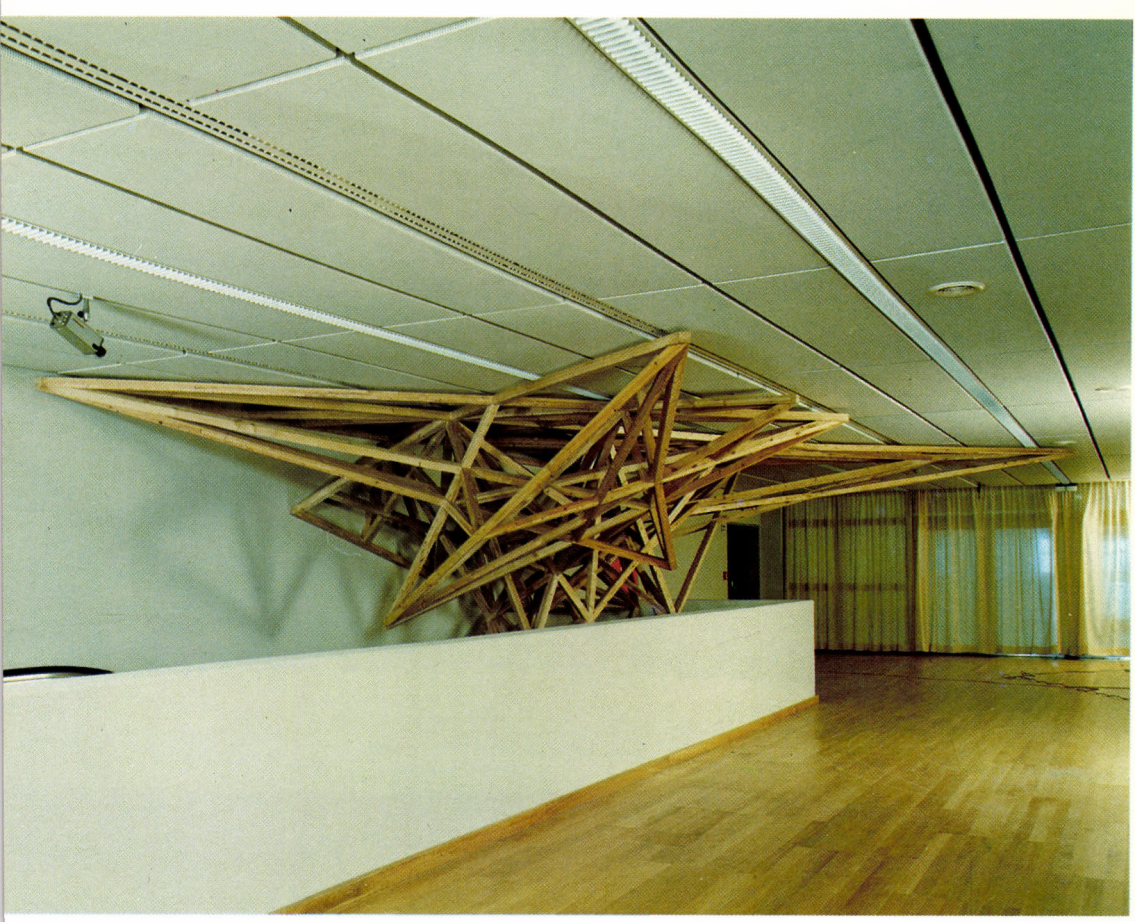
Károly Szilthyi



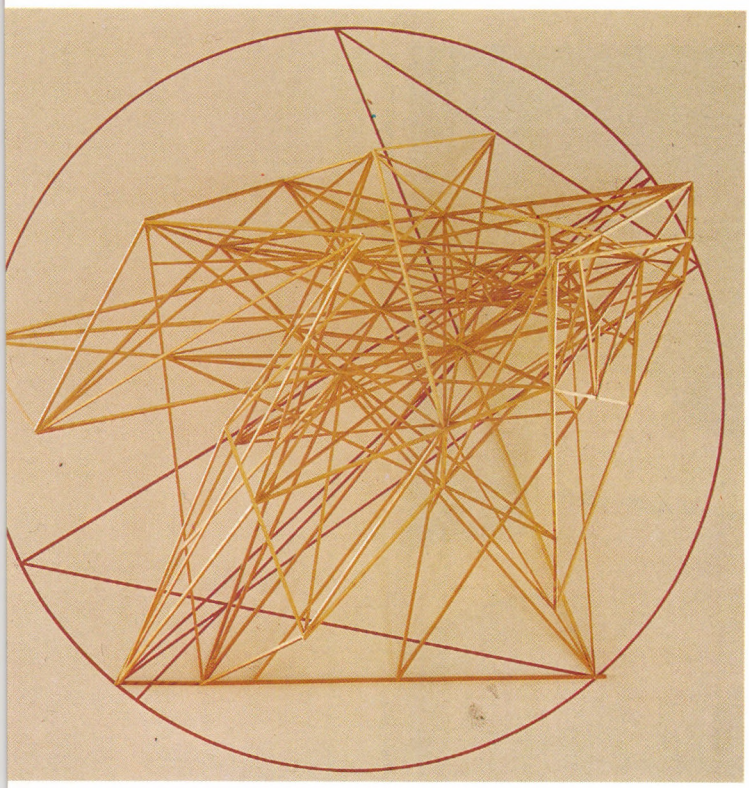
ANDRÁS MEGYIK: CRUCIFIX, 1985.

ANDRÁS MEGYIK: NO TITLE, 1983.





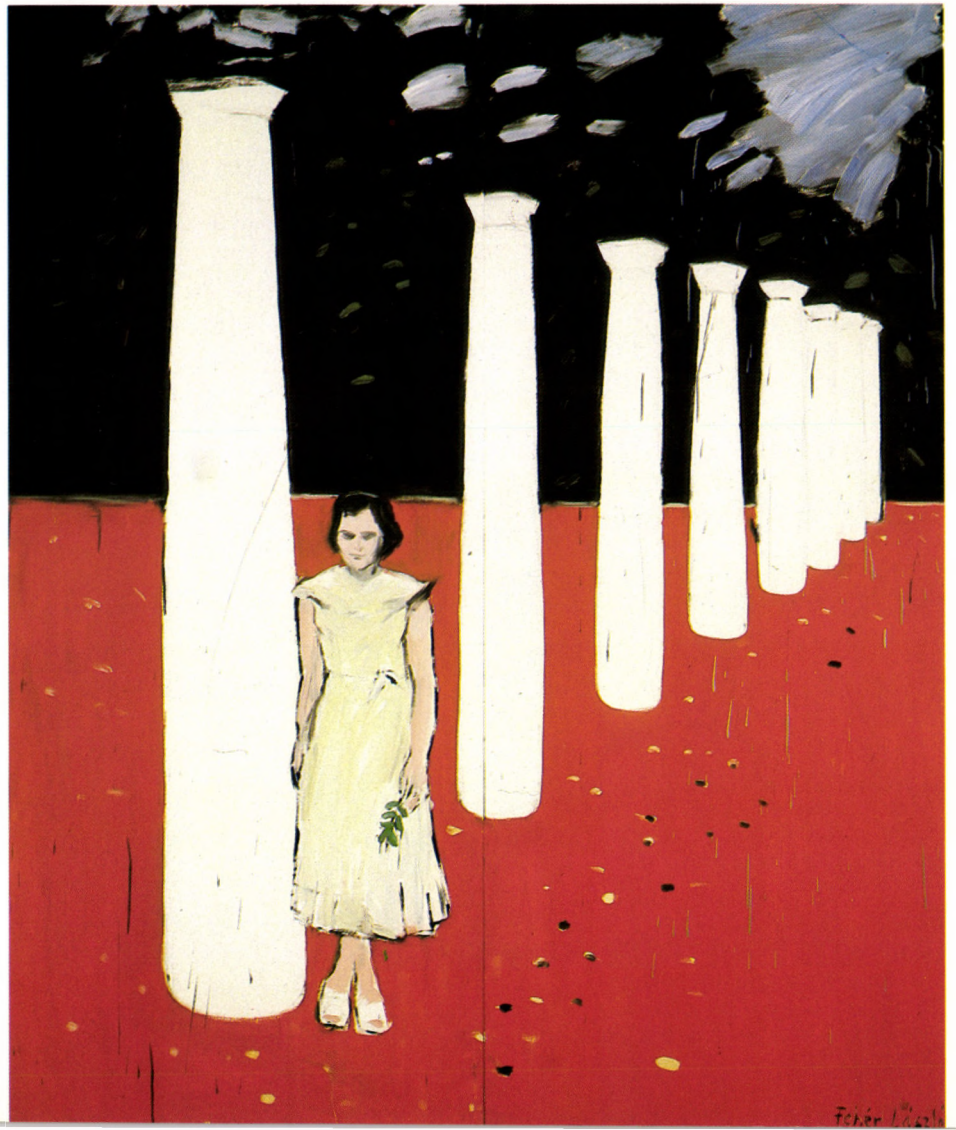
András Megyik:
Hommage a Pascal, 1981



András Megyik: Hommage
a Cézanne— Cathedral, 1987
*Károly Szelényi*

*István Tóth*

LÁSZLÓ FEHÉR: STONE FROG.
OIL ON CANVAS, 1986. 200×200 CM



László Fehér: The green stairs, 1987.
Oil, wood fibre, 200×180 cm

*Miklós Sulyok*

László Fehér: Balcony, 1988. Oil, wood fibre. 250×200 cm

IMRE KOCSIS: FATA MORGANA I, 1985. PHOTO AND INK. 90×130 CM

IMRE KOCSIS: GRAFITTI II, FILM, PENCIL, SKETCHING BOARD. 35×50 CM

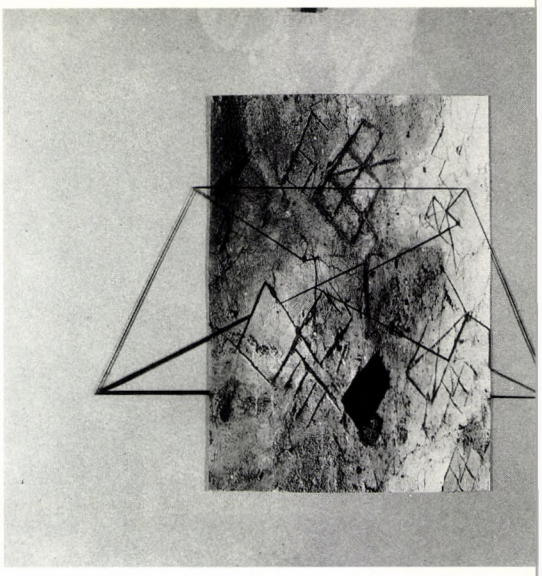
Reproductions by József Rosta

Zsigmond Károlyi: Fence, 1988


András Lengyel: Pyramide of Books, 1987—1988

Aljona Frankl: Weekday, 1986

Péter Forgács: Master m. f., 1987, a series 1–12



Károly Schmal: Landscape II, 1988

Lenke Szilágyi: No title, 1988

*Reproduced by József*

open indentation and a luxuriantly Baroque special formation.

By raising the structure to a spectacle, Megyik has linked himself with a meditative process that has been going on for centuries; he formulates in it the principle which is possible and valid in our days.

Leonardo da Vinci wrote at the end of the fifteenth century: "Painting includes the surface, colour, and form of all works of nature, and philosophy penetrates into the interior of those bodies and beholds their own powers in them, but it does not come to that complete truth to which the painter comes to, who finds the foremost truth of the body in himself: because the eye makes less mistakes."

He devoted thousands of pages to the science of painting which is nobler, more perfect, and more sublime than any of the other sciences and which, according to him, is the crown and summation of human cognition. For Leonardo, all secrets, all riddles come to light in that which is visible.

In the contrast of philosophy and painting, a dilemma appeared in European culture which is still unresolved; this is the dilemma which contrasts spectacle with structure.

According to Cézanne whom, four centuries after Leonardo, we take as the ancestor of modern painting, everything we can see disperses and slips away.

The first truth of the body is not the first truth anymore nor even a truth any longer, but Cézanne lived in wonderment of the countryside. Although he is sure that he has to feel a more solid shell in nature than that which can be seen on the surface of bodies, he clings very much to colours, to the atmosphere, and to pictorial details, turning spectacle into solid structure.

János Megyik does not build up a living structure in such a way that its structural being refers to higher organized constructions, but he presents the structure itself, a pure geometry. It is the form of the surface which is invisible but it flows around its own skeleton, around lines of force, made visible—especially in his 1985 works, *Crucifix* and *Thorax*.

We see different geometrical forms, in two works skeletons of human bodies. These are abstract constructions of small sticks, transparently pure structures. Each of the works is a three-dimensional system of cross hatching, which moves the geometrical figure into space, growing into structure, from the sketch towards the onlooker. This is a projective, projected geometry which swallows more and more points from space and extends its order for ever new segments of space. The well-designed system has a method of intuitive composition: the structure turns into spectacle at the point where its creator stops its further expansion.

Now I would strongly advise against trying to find a link between Megyik's works and any kind of constructivism. Although geometric design has been a question of painting and painting technic as well as a sharply ideological question, a confession of reason and order, with Megyik geometry is not reduced to a trend or emblem. Geometry is here a way of thinking, a possibility of contemplation. It symbolises, suggests a sharply and clearly considered and experienced idea of order, which is not visible but is imaginable. According to Paul Klee, art does not reproduce the visible but rather exposes things to view. This is the path on which Megyik is making his way. He found a new chance to preserve faith: his thin lath-structures which give access to seeing into their hardly recognisable system, stand halfway between us and a more abstract invisible quality behind them. The order and structural quality reproduced can at most be an image of this, in the same way the cobweb-like geometry of the drawings exhibited are realized in space-structure, which are, compared to them' rougher and more sparse.

Amid the vibration of electronic visions in the unprecedented spectacle, Megyik's structures stand firmly in space being based on the sole certainty: on thinking.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

# THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE—IN ENAMEL COMPOSITIONS

## *Mihály Kátai's fired enamels*

Mihály Kátai, a prominent figure in Hungarian enamel painting was born in 1935, studied at the College of Applied Arts, was director for more than ten years of the Kecskemét Enamel Artists colony, has now taken on a major enterprise when designing enamel compositions, 80 by 200 centimetres large, to be placed on all the eight floors of the new Kecskemét hospital and which present the history of medicine. The time sequence runs from prehistoric, archaic, Eastern medicine, Greek and Scythian, the transition between Greek and medieval, transition to Renaissance and the border between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age. However, the main line of thought is the representation of medical science in the different ages. This is not to say he has prepared a mechanical inventory: rather, he gives us a cultural history which depicts the history of medicine symbolically. His iconography pertains more to the rules of heraldry and, since the genre is enamel, it is naturally related to jewellery (old pendants). The composition has plastic qualities as well, since the surfaces are more or less relief-like, which is new and daring in enamel painting. The old Northern Hungarian painted wood reliefs may be regarded as their formal predecessors; however, technically enamel can be treated better and more in keeping with the qualities of the material, in the copper plate forms are burned in smaller units. Thus, the way is clear for the montage method, where there is a danger of eclecticism in treating this very complex and complicated theme, if the cultural historical quotations had not been identified and transcribed into a unified style of composition. The background (negative surface) of each composition is made from a beautiful, reddish, stained, African wood, *okume*. The encompassing form is geometrical, above which three semicircular arches are placed, thus crowning the frame and by making use of archaeological symbols (stars, configurations, planets), outlining the given period based on the great Sun Cycle.

### *Prehistoric period (Mythical golden age)—Twins*

Kátai has tried to conform to the accepted, though not always correct, scholarly view of the world when pictorially representing the various periods. However, wittily he has left open some pictorial sidetracks towards different thoughts and associations since the artist's task is not the scholar's. Medical textbooks have a preference for illustrations known from art history, not paying much attention to the views of specialized scholarship. Some representations of human beings refer to the Lascaux Caves, for example, in which women wear high-heeled shoes, tight skirts, and furcaps. Kátai includes numerous such curiosities in other compositions too, thus showing and uniting the highlights of our acquired universal human knowledge into a consistent intellectual system. Since, according to European scholarship, the birth of myth took place in this period, Kátai has placed the biblical Adam and Eve in the centre. A stream of horned shamans and shamans in feather head-dress carrying Eastern skulls are on both of their sides. Mythical prehistoric man plays the only part here and the early hominoids do not appear (Neanderthal, Javanese, etc.): common human types of our days appear in costumes. The method is not unprecedented: for example, in the very successful film, *Jesus Christ Super Star*, actors in period costume appear amid twentieth-century tanks and airplanes.

*Antiquity—Taurus*

The tale of the fight between the Taurus and the Lion (Earth and Sun) appears first in Mesopotamian culture. Etana, the Sumerian king, flies to the sky on an eagle to fetch some herbs that have the power to help in childbearing. On the other side of the composition, which evokes a Sumerian seal, a strikingly similar motif appears and this takes us into the Carpathian Basin. In the so-called 'Abduction into the Sky' scene of the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum, the same scene is depicted. However, here, the female figure emphasizing sexuality holds a plant-like bundle in her hands. By analogy, it could be reasoned that one flies to the sky to look for healing herbs, whereas the other finds it. Of course, this immediately leads to another question whether what we see is really healing herbs in the Treasure of Nagyszentmiklós. It may well be. (It should be mentioned here that Hungary is still regarded as the country of healing herbs in the Far East.) On one side of the axis, dividing the composition into two parts, stand the Mesopotamian motifs, on the other an attractive collage of local motifs. In the Mesopotamian section, for example, above the shaman wearing a bull-mask, a contemporary representation of the Madonna appears in a disc, evidently referring to Maria cult, in the other section between the horns of a grey bull, also in a disc, a thatched house refers to historial Hungary. In the same plane we meet two heroes out of the legend of the Hungarians' origins—Hunor and Magor—as babies. Both sides are primarily concerned with fertility and child-birth: on one side pregnant women, on the other the result, new life, outline the determining forms.

*Eastern medicine*

This piece cannot be matched chronologically with the rest, nor does it follow any time sequence within itself. The first of third of the picture is the Kundalini Yoga illustrating the system of the seven chakra and the method of healing with it, strictly following the Sanskrit colour, form, and number-symbols. The picture shows migration in two directions. From right to left, it is as if we are viewing a peasant lad from a folk-tale who sets off to wander in a particular direction. This figure is followed in the picture in three phases, and arrives to a white-winged snake-lad, who hands him the desired healing herb. The white-winged snake is a positive figure in our legends and it is not without cause that it became the symbol and sign of medicines. The chakras are carried through as heraldic motifs in each of the trees of life depicted. One or two chakra motifs can be seen in each of the trees, from sexual chakra to the sacred chakra. On the topmost central tree total interfusion, the chakra of the head appears; there the spirit and body unites in eternity according to ancient Indian myth.

*Greek-Scythian medicine—Aries*

These figures evoke the colours and forms of Greek sculpture, and naturally opalescent white prevails here. The painted Greek marble sculptures were its prefigurations, which were decorated with red, green, and greenish-blue paints. Since then, these colours have faded, Kátai has spared the colours. Here he does not imitate the natural colours of the body, as he does for Prehistoric Times, where the forms were transcribed with a surrealistic quality to them. The architectonic elements, buildings in blue, ornaments, or the more abstract figures have been depicted in red. There are numerous quotations here as well, such as *Achilles Healing Patroklos*, which have been transferred from the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional. The composition of the whole picture is abstract, assembled from geometrical elements (circles, semi-triangles). The starting series is in the left corner of the composition with the Fates.

Homer's heroes, although they were fully aware of their fate, fought against it; they healed each other, thus symbolizing a medical vocation, a fight for healing and for this transitional life. This plate also contradicts the automatic assumption that Greek art and science was superior to the Scythian, and wittily and sensibly states their homogeneity, their convergency, uniformity, and equality. Another remarkable thing is that medicine has used the medical tools portrayed with minimal changes up to our present time.

This large work which required so much preliminary study and research, beyond its iconographic system, has provided an opportunity for many exciting technical applications of enamel painting. Today, enamel is mostly regarded as a two-dimensional art. The pendants, brooches, and small heraldic figures in vogue among the nobility in the Middle Ages and in the seventeenth century, were often reliefs. A head on them was not more than three to four millimetres large. This miniature size required very careful craftsmanship. Kátai's work is also refined, masterly, delicately shaped, and coloured: it can be appreciated only when looked at closely. Some enamel elements are the equal of jewellery in their quality. If the purpose is to create a three-dimensional effect, enamel painting cannot be too richly coloured because reflecting light would not permit a point of view from which the whole composition could be watched without disruption. This is why he had to take white light into consideration ahead of time, so that the rhythm of glistening and dark surfaces would create a positive effect. Since a wooden background always looks dark, enamel fluoresces on it, due to the constant changing of natural and artificial light. With proper lighting, this "mobile" will always show itself, so to speak; it enlightens its own meaning, according to the changing angle of the viewer. Thus a moving, positive world is created in front of a constant, universal, and eternal negative world. All this symbolizes the ancient, cosmic art and conception that so consciously exploit the possibilities of light and dark; according to which we live in a positive universe, which changes at every moment, which always returns to its origin, where if something occurs once, it will occur again, and what exists now, will disappear. Constant change and constant return. (Bronze reliefs from the age of the Great Migrations show these same formal characteristics.) This is a kind of organic logic of creating pictures, which is faithfully guarded and mirrored in the inflectional Hungarian language.

László Menyhárt

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# STAGED AND RESTAGED PHOTOGRAPH

## *The 6th Esztergom Biennale*

The talented photographers who began their careers at the end of the sixties—György Lőrinczy, who died recently in New York, Csaba Koncz, who went astray in Holland in the mid-seventies, Zoltán Nagy, a photographer who lives in Rome and Gyula Tahin, who lives and works in Hungary—wanted to revitalise the art. Compositions without subjects, micro-photographs, associative series of pictures aspired to give photography the kind of autonomy that the contemporary abstract painters were giving to painting; they were replying to the social realism of the fifties in a manner that excluded political substance and literariness.

The next generation, that of the mid-

seventies, cannot be limited to one or two names. Many came out of many different origins with very different ideas on style. László Beke described them in an essay: "It is irony, in fact, that works in the background of the trend we can for the moment consider the most contemporary, the most typical of the seventies: this concerns the group of the makers of set, staged photos." An intense interest in what was going on internationally and a dialogue with the very active avant-garde art of the era is what characterizes this generation. On some occasions, the work of these photographers was assigned to art rather than to photography.

The third new wave emerged in the early eighties. They had interest in the photograph as art or as medium. The camera was almost part of their clothing, just like their faded jeans or badges. The same nonchalance is typical of their use of the camera. The staged sequences and the black passe-partouts emphasising a documentary truthfulness disappeared. They used adhesive tape to mount their pictures for exhibition, drew what they wanted on them with fluorescent pens, used xerography. This they did easily, effortlessly.

If the efforts of the first generations could be brought into parallel with the fine arts, and those of the second generation can be defined through their apartness, then this last group can be regarded as a part of a special subculture, are with a rich inner world and which has no need to be built in.

The viewpoints of this generation also evolved in the early eighties. The venues for the exhibitions became the Club of Young Artists in Budapest, which laid on one important exhibition after another and yet the impression one had was that the pictures only provided a background, a setting for the weekly parade of the leading lights of the subculture: there was also the short-lived Toldi Cinema Gallery, and lately the Liget (Park) Gallery. In the country, Baja, Esztergom, Szombathely were also important centres. *Fényképészeti Lapok*, their 'trade' journal published in three copies, was also a product of the early eighties.

The Esztergom Photo Biennale was established in 1978. The first biennale lasted three days. This was the period that the organizers, the STB Group (stb. means 'etc.' in Hungarian), that is Gyula Sipeki, Péter Tamási and András Balla were able to hire the room, the rondella of the Romanesque royal palace. The enthusiastic organizers, who—true to their name—exhibited cheerful pictures, did their best to call together those of their generation interested in creative photography.

This ambition of theirs was completely achieved in the next biennale in 1980. The noted representatives of the second innovative wave were present almost to a man, along with those who were just trying their wings. The organizers paid homage to André Kertész (who had once worked in Esztergom), with an intimate exhibition of some of early works of his that they had dug up. The opening was notable for two events. A symposium attended by András Baranyai, Ákos Birkás, Tibor Hajas and Gyula Pauer, and a powerfully gripping, broken off performance by Tibor Hajas, which was the last in his life (he died in an accident a month later).

Subsequent Esztergom biennales did not want to identify with the ideas of the new wave of the eighties: they were carefully staged, sober exhibitions demonstrating with considerable delay the liveliness that was a feature of photography in these years.

A substantial change took place in 1988. The biennale was reorganized and the Esztergom group decided to appoint commissioners to visit workshops, set the theme of the exhibition and select the pictures to be shown. In 1988, this task was undertaken by András Baranyai, graphic artist (winner of the grand prize of the 1980 Biennale) and István Hajdú, the art critic. The theme of the exhibition they organized—which later went on to Budapest—was *The Staged and Restaged photograph*.

The Sixth Esztergom Biennale undertook to analyse the art of the present situation,

the moment after the post-modern, and how photographers related to this. Decisive, powerful pictures were exhibited that called equally on our consciousness and intuition. They play on a broad scale of emotions symbolically showing many kinds of motifs, objects, fragments of our environment. Péter Gémes, the painter, stages dream pictures with antique figures. The mythology of Arcadia unfolds from his pictures. István B. Gellér, graphic artist, builds and reconstructs a never-existing world with photographs. Lenke Szilágyi is the most 'photographic' of Hungarian photographers. Her detailed observations, microrealism turn magic through her photographs.

Despite the pressure that the arts are under, there is still hope, thanks to such determined endeavours as the Esztergom Biennale, that the values contained in a period of creative photography can be expressed.

ANDRÁS BÁN

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# THEATRE AND FILM

## TRANSYLVANIA, FOR INSTANCE

Géza Páskándi: *Éljen a színház!* (Long Live the Theatre!); István Csurka: *Megmaradni* (Survival); János Székely: *Caligula helytartója* (Caligula's Proconsul)

What has been happening to Hungarians living outside the country's borders has lain dormant in the society's consciousness for some twenty years. In recent years, particularly the situation of the Hungarian minority in Rumania has become increasingly dramatic. The more than two million Hungarians living in Transylvania are the largest ethnic or national minority in Europe. That they were gradually being deprived of their rights as members of a national minority and as citizens of their country was a secret rigorously protected by censorship as recently as a year ago. Now the situation has changed. The announcement of the Rumanian policy of village destruction called 'systematization', which threatens to annihilate the traditional cultures not only of the Hungarians and other ethnic minorities in Transylvania but also of the Rumanian people themselves, has led to considerable protest from everywhere in the world. Prior to that, official Hungary lifted its compulsory secrecy on the matter.

The theatre, through its means of transposition, has raised its voice before against the oppression of men's spirit, the falsification of history, the violation of freedom and the raising of crimes amounting to genocide to the level of state policy. Historical plays involving allegory, parable or metaphor, including András Sütő's *Advent on the Hargita* and *Dream Commando* have been reviewed in these pages.*

Thus the new plays being presented and older ones being revived are being viewed in a new context. The plays reviewed below differ in content and genre. What they have in common could be expressed in the motto Páskándi, one of the authors here reviewed, has taken for his *Long Live the Theatre!* "National hatred is a peculiar thing altogether. It is strongest and most vehement on the lowest grades of culture. But there is a level where it disappears completely and man stands practically above nations, and feels the fortune or misfortune of his neighbouring people as if it had fallen to him..."

The Móricz Zsigmond Theatre of Nyíregyháza presented Géza Páskándi's comedy *Long Live the Theatre* whose original title had been "The five hundred grave-diggers or the benefit performance." The author is a prolific dramatist but has also acquired a reputation as poet, publicist and essay-writer. For our topic, the fact of his Transylvanian origin is not unimportant. His first dramatic works, including *The Guest* (Vendégség)** still considered his best, were written amid the particular political conditions of his native land

* *NHQ* 102/109.
** *NHQ* 106.

and out of his close knowledge of them. *The Guest* spoke of the intelligentsia at the mercy of power as early as the end of the 1960s. The work, set in a historical perspective, is concerned with the *trahison des clercs* and dealt with the conflict in which unconditional service to power and denunciation offered a writer the opportunity of working slightly above the level of mere survival. Páskándi himself chose a different course and some fifteen years ago moved to Hungary.

*Long Live the Theatre!* was written in 1986–87. Its author calls it a black comedy, a "mournful farce". The scene is "somewhere in Europe although we cannot reveal exactly where" as the author's note puts it sarcastically. The action is set in the director's office of a Hungarian-language theatre in a country where Hungarians are an ethnic minority. Indeed, to eliminate all possible doubt, the company is called the South-Eastern Theatre without any further distinguishing mark, if we do not consider the permanent threat it lives under as such. The theatre is always exposed to the arrogance of the authorities. The functionary representing the local authority is called Comrade Cucu and his picture is on the wall of the office. His invisible presence is made tangible in the first quarter of an hour when we learn of a new instruction laid down by him: the poster for the theatre's next production may not contain the names of the actors.

This beginning to a play that borders on the absurd is not that absurd. If history books can be rewritten with false data, if the identity of a people linked to a geographical region can be deleted with one stroke of the pen, why not an "impersonal theatre?" If institutions, streets, and towns do not use their names, why should people use them? Why should it not be sufficient if Hamlet, the forthcoming production, will be presented by "the company of the South Eastern Theatre" when the curtain rises? Neither names nor posters are needed; indeed, the reviews have also been written in advance by the reliable critics of reliable papers.

Páskándi tries to find the extreme limits possible for compromise for survival, trying to discover how far one can go without complicity in crime. In the beginning, the members of the company react differently to this new challenge. The kowtowing dictatorial manageress and the compliant chief director try to make the company accept this new compromise, for the sake of performing Hamlet. In any case, the première does not promise to run smoothly, for the young director has engaged a large group of extras for the scene in the cemetery (hence the original titles's reference to five hundred grave-diggers), and his intentions with this unusual concept are not known. The performance gets under way and the actors coming off-stage from time to time pop into the office with news on the mood of the house. Thus a parallel drama is being played out and its stake is no less than the company's own conscience. A new crisis occurs when the manageress (who plays Gertrude), informs her colleagues that they must demand spontaneously to merge with the company that represents the country's majority ethnic group, thus giving up even their formal independence. The young actor playing Hamlet is also a poet; he revolts by improvising a poem on the tyranny that mutilate the soul and kills the body and inserts lines calling for resistance into the "To be or not to be" soliloquy. This creates a further delicate situation: who heard the intrusion, who does not want to admit to hearing it, and has Comrade Cucu in the audience noticed that the soliloquy was not quite Shakespeare's?

From here on, two stories run in parallel, one the Hamlet on the stage invisible to us, the other the company's struggle for self-defence behind the wings in the manager's office. It emerges that the director and the young actor had given an interview for a Western radio station on the situation at home and that the new pressure could be the consequence of this. After vehement discussion, all sign the declaration of self-elimination, and the chief director hands it to Com-

rade Cucu in the box while Hamlet is still being performed on stage. However, when he escorts him to his car after the performance, on a sudden impulse he steals the envelope from the pocket of the functionary. This unexpected gesture of solidarity unites the company, they celebrate the deed that has overcome their paralysis together. On the stage, the king marches between the threatening row of five hundred grave diggers and, almost at the same time, the menacing rumble of a demonstrating crowd can be heard from the street.

Páskándi's play is interesting though not flawless. The mixture of the real and the absurd does not always come off. The comedy-like frivolity of the tone often diminishes the drama in the situation. Some of the characters are too close to caricature, in others the psychological authenticity of details is doubtful. The conflict is acted out too openly, as predetermined as a French society farce. We do not feel the seriousness of what is at stake, that it is a life or death struggle. Again the play occasionally seems over-written and its verbosity plays down the cruel pressure of the situation, making its message didactic.

All the same, Péter Léner's direction corrects many mistakes. In the Nyíregyháza production, the play was shorter, tenser and more dramatic. In the first half, the director allows the mood of comedy to prevail. But in the second half, when the audience is beginning to believe that this drama of national fate is being treated a little too lightly, the tragic elements are inserted one after another until, by the close, the play reaches the pathos of heroic epic. A successful device makes the rear wall of the manager's office transparent at two points of the action so that the play-within-the-play, Hamlet, can be seen. At the end the characters in Shakespeare's play acknowledge the applause of the imaginary audience beyond the back of the stage. Then they hold hands, come forward and now, as the characters in Páskándi's play, they bow to us, the real audience who represent the larger community outside the theatre.

István Csurka's play *Survival*, unlike Páskándi's, does not turn to us with a glance of ironical suggestion but with the earnestness of outspokenness. In this work, presented for the first time by the Castle Theatre of Gyula in the summer of 1988, the most conspicuous feature is the changing of the times: the fact that today one can protest against what could not be even mentioned earlier. The hitherto taboo theme breaks through the barriers with unusual force and assaults the spectator with all the crudity of facts used for polemical purposes.

The story is allegedly true and even if not, we willingly believe that it may happen in a hundred different versions. The setting is an unnamed small Transylvanian town in Rumania. The majority of the population is Hungarian and the coercive attempts made to assimilate them ethnically and culturally, along with unbearable conditions of life, have accelerated the process of trying to move to Hungary. For the Harisnyás family, the bleak question of whether to go or stay has to be faced. The younger members have already decided to go but Márton Harisnyás, the aging head of the family and director of the local museum, who obstinately clings to old values, believes that dispersal and flight cannot be countenanced—one must stay and protect culture, faith, the ancient right to home and native soil. In a heated moment, he even tears up the resettlement documents for members of his family which he originally wanted to hand over to Balázsfy, an old friend of his young days arriving from Budapest. Through this confrontation between Harisnyás and Balázsfy—the intellectual deeply attached to Transylvania and the "cosmopolitan"—Csurka distinguishes two mentalities and represents their difference as irreconcilable in the beginning. But merciless reality intervenes in the dispute between the two former friends. The family of the museum director and his immediate circle of friends are increasingly the target of harassment by the authorities, who rely on an extensive network of informers and the secret police. Their

intention of moving to Hungary is in itself a reason for persecuting them. Harisnyás and a friend, a surgeon whose profession has ensured him certain privileges so far, must flee. The news is brought to them by the surgeon's mistress, a decent young Rumanian nurse who, through so doing, puts herself in mortal danger. Harisnyás does not get the opportunity to flee for he is the victim of a poison plot. His family and friends begin private investigations (dangerous for themselves) to clear up a murder camouflaged as a heart attack; his widow, however, protests against accepting the truth because any protest would mean the destruction of her husband's entire lifework. At his burial, family acquaintances and the friend from Budapest cling to each other in silent solidarity and defy the impersonal power that moves above them menacingly in the guise of giant bulldozers.

Csurka's play, burning with passion and indignation, defies aesthetic criteria or structure, and bears no resemblance to the author's best earlier plays in any way.* They treat their subjects with a certain aloofness, an ironical superiority and a sarcastic elegance. This time, the stage provides the opportunity for sentences to be thrown in our face with the crude sincerity that would fit into political essays or into polemical articles; in the mouth of Csurka's characters, their effect has a multiple resonance. It is conceivable that some people may still feel irritated to hear sentences that touch on current official policy or on 1956, their message, however, diminishes when examined in the context of the actual play which has its own laws. *Survival* is much more an indictment expressed on the stage, a manifesto set in dialogues, a dramatized pamphlet arousing national conscience, than a play in the classical or even modern sense of the word. If it has any effect, this should be sought first and foremost in the public release of the word from behind the barriers.

Since the beginning of the 1988/89 season, the play has been performed in the National Theatre under the direction of Ferenc Sík. The set represents a huge waggon, which evokes in audiences the memory of the different deportations, and political persecutions of our century. When the play begins, the door of this waggon opens, ripping the placard TRANSYLVANIA fastened to it; the interior becomes the setting for all the subsequent action. Apartment, place of work, surgical ward replace each other as the metaphors of this waggon-existence; sometimes the characters can approach it only by creeping and crawling, they may even have to creep under it, among the rails. The set, as a metaphor for a space where life is lived, fulfils its function; the play, as the reproduction of reality through dramaturgic means, fulfils its function much less. But it is good that it has been produced and can be seen; indeed, it may well become an authentic document for our momentary moods.

János Székely's *Caligula's Proconsul*, starts farther back in time, its message is more general and metaphorical. This may be the reason why it arrives at artistically satisfying and historically valid truths. If its theme were merely that a man who represents power listens to another, a subject, understands and accepts the latter's viewpoint, indeed is inclined to change his own, this in itself would be a lesson to us. But this is only one, however essential, moment in a masterpiece: a moral parable which is a perfect logical construction and, at the same time, a timely political parable, without needing the support of theses, hidden allusions or direct updating.

Székely's crystal-clear play relies on a fiction that has never been historically proved, namely that man is *a priori* a moral being. To test this, the author has recourse to classical times. Publius Petronius, a Roman patrician, Caligula's proconsul in Syria, is instructed to have the emperor's statue put up in the temple in Jerusalem. Nothing seems easier: Petronius has the power, the legions at his disposal, resistance is obviously hopeless and after all, what is a statue? But

* *NHQ* 75, 78, 96, 110.

Petronius acts irregularly right at the beginning; instead of carrying out the order without thought, employing his power, he tries to make accepted the logic of this situation to those for whom—which he as yet does not know—it is obviously unacceptable: the subjects compelled into obedience. When the first attempt at persuasion does not succeed, he commits the mistake of breaking the classic rules of power by himself trying to understand the logic of the position of the oppressed. From then on, nothing can stop his progress toward tragedy because, in a position of power, he acts as a moral being. The only possible logical conclusion is that if an order is immoral, it is impossible to remain faithful to both one's oath of allegiance and one's conscience. Integrity can be preserved only if we listen to the voice of the latter.

The moral content of question and solution is clear, and although history tells us that moralizing does not help us much against a power alienated from the community, here Székely has found a way to show up a wholly political theme as a purely moral parable, without taking it away from its social and historical context. A mere formality, the placing of the emperor's statue, presents the nature of Caligula's power and this trivial yet symbolic situation is well suited for the purpose of a parable.

The question is whether, seen from below, from the viewpoint of the people, their willingness to site a statue in their temple can decide a people's fate. Is it worth taking the risk of sacrifying everything—even life—because of a piece of marble? Should one resist a symbol? Surely it is more reasonable and more tactical to formally carry out an order emanating from this power which is enforcing recognition of itself through a formal gesture, especially here, on the periphery of the empire, where this semblance of obedience may help to avert an order much more serious than the putting up of a statue.

The answer the play gives is convincing precisely from the position of those beneath, which is an exceptional virtue. It is not more reasonable and not more tactical, indeed it is outright impossible. There is a point where the "impossible" of the oppressed must turn against the "must" of the oppressor. Beyond this point, it is the integrity of a people's soul which is at stake. The siting of the statue would certainly be a formal gesture but one through which they would acknowledge the authority of a foreign power in a sphere where only the community's self-created laws are valid. They would recognize the right of power to invade something which is essentially free and independent: the autonomy of a people determined by its destiny, history, language and culture. For this reason, no compromise is possible, for this reason the Jewish subjects cannot "cleverly" make use of the proconsul's humanist power, for this reason they cling to their "no" to the bitter end, accepting even certain suicide. Petronius also realizes this in the end when, faced with executing the order or resigning, he chooses the third course of passivity, inaction.

It follows from the play's logic that inaction in reality means decision. Székely represents inactive heroism in all its tragic relativity. The character of Petronius is brilliantly conceived, from haughty superiority to the unaffected honesty of a man recognizing the truth of others. This transformation is not without its grotesque moments. In his religious dispute with Petronius, Barakias, the High Priest does not use only rational arguments but also some trickery. He realizes that this is the only way to ensure that the proconsul, after recognizing that he cannot obey the imperial order nor does he wish to oppose it, should not resign and give way to a successor who will certainly not consider the rabbi as a partner. Sometimes he drives Petronius to the wall with his arguments; at the same time, the proconsul is being gradually squeezed by Rome, a pressure much more dangerous for him. If we did not see it, we might even smile at the man who finds himself pushed into a spot by his own, weakening arguments. But the man who finds himself in this grotesque position is some-

body who has entered a dispute even though he had the right and (in the name of power) the means to make use of weapons which are much more effective arguments. But this ridiculous individual has admitted the inhumanity of the ethics of power and has made his decision in the name of human integrity.

Székely adds one more twist. It emerges that Petronius's "inactive power", his heroic effort to remain decent, costs the lives of two innocent people. He himself has had his adjutants, Lucius and Probus, executed for alleged treachery; thus, he himself has been stained and becomes a Caligula in the struggle against tyrannic power. In dirty times, it is difficult to remain clean even with the best of intentions; on the other hand, it offers an opportunity to Petronius whom we have morally excused not to excuse himself, and to declare that excuses are necessary only where, in truth, there are none. In this context the news of the emperor's death (here the play remains true to historical fact) is probably not intended to diminish the pathos of the proconsul's action by showing his passive resistance as unneccessary; on the contrary, it indirectly underlines the fact that honesty is worth while for the the sake of conscience, regardless whether it was "objectively" necessary or not. This moral imperative may be the play's most important conclusion, and although Székely ends the story at this point, historical experience helps the spectator to carry it further in thought. In this case, we may fear that somebody could call Petronius to account for his inactivity, nor can it be excluded that the new emperor may also send his statue to Syria.

*Caligula's Proconsul* touches many questions of the historical (and hence topical) dilemmas of societies, peoples and nations with a dramatic vividness. He exposes the historical indefensibility of the syllogism ordered by power whose first premise for subjugated peoples is that "Rome is a given fact," and whose second is that imperial efforts at unification appeal both to exterior forces and to a voluntary commitment of citizens that derives from their inner faith. In this context, the Caligula statue is more than a statue, and the temple where it has to be placed is more than the house of the God of Israel who will not tolerate graven images. Both become symbols: the temple of the spiritual home of a people—any people—the last refuge of their historical identity, and the statue of the cult of the current emperor which must be stopped at a point—at the extreme point of the subjects' patience. This point coincides with Petronius's realization of his own defencelessness within the power hierarchy and he discovers the power of inactivity which "remains in its own sphere" and does not monopolize the citizen's whole life. This East-Central-European utopia is ultimately the message of a play that János Székely wrote while living in Marosvásárhely in 1972.

It was first staged by the Castle Theatre of Gyula in 1987 in an unforgettable production directed by the late György Harag, a Transylvanian who was an outstanding figure in the Hungarian theatre. Two theatres have revived Székely's play almost simultaneously. The production by the Szigligeti Theatre of Szolnok was directed by János Taub, also born in Transylvania but now living in Israel. (He has directed several plays in the recent past in Hungary.) His Petronius enters the pavilion where the negotiations take place in a light tropical suit, holding out the golden bust in his fist, almost as a battering-ram. In this production, a light-minded cosmopolitan meets the anointed representative of a millenary tradition. The high priest is in authentic costume, moves and speaks with slow, ritual dignity, his whole attitude reflects an inner faith that is poised against the proconsul's lax, unprincipled goodwill. The scene in which the confused Petronius looks into the trepanated empty skull of he golden-foiled papier-maché statue is suggestive. After this the head of Caligula remains under the chair till the end of the play.

László Marton, who directed the production in the Pesti Theatre, concentrated on the text. The menacing block of the covered statue takes up almost the whole height of the stage. The giant silhouette towering over the characters throughout the play indicates that you cannot hide from power. In this production, the leaders of the Jewish people are clad in the black suits and hats of modern Orthodox Jews and this affects their behaviour. They resist the order, not armed with the unshatterable knowledge of dignity and vocation rooted in their ancient religion; they negotiate as politicians, defend themselves or attack, and refer to ideology if necessary. Their attitude condenses the historical experience of many centuries. This presentation may narrow the possible range of interpretation but the play's conceptual strength is enough to include in their destiny the fate of all peoples living today in the shadow of menace.

TAMÁS KOLTAI

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# CINEMA AS HISTORY

## Miklós Jancsó: *L'aube* (The Dawn); Péter Bokor: *Isten akaratából* (By the Grace of God)

The problem with having once produced a major work is that you are expected to top it again and again. Had this French-Israeli film not been directed by Miklós Jancsó from a loose adaptation of a novel by the Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel, it would have received more attention and appreciation in the West Berlin Festival and in the press. Indeed, the two big names cast a long shadow over their film—it is theirs, despite the fact that Jancsó as script-writer interpreted and utilized Wiesel's novel freely. This freedom involves the plotting of the story while Wiesel's world of thought sometimes can and sometimes cannot be grasped by Jancsó's approach. This seems to have become more classical and, rather than the surrealistic symbol, has come nearer to realistic representation. As Lukács has it, they were transcended while preserved.

The film was originally planned as a triple coproduction, but the Hungarian party withdrew after protests from an Egyptian writer. Jancsó, as he puts it, was much too stubborn to listen to discouragement. Not only because in the book, Wiesel does not even touch on the Jewish-Arab conflict and he is not insensitive to the grave problems of the Palestinian people but because the frame of the story, the Jewish-British conflict in the months prior to the founding of the state of Israel, is the frame for a complex of problems which are universal, hence also Hungarian or, if you wish, Arab or Palestinian. Jancsó worked the experiences of the post-war generation of the people's colleges including his own, represented in *The Confrontation* into Wiesel's story which is set in another part of the world under different historical conditions.

It is entirely another matter that the story becomes hermetic and in a sense misleading for those who would like to learn something of the history of Israel. It makes no reference to the Jewish-Arab conflict lurking in the background nor does it suggest the conflict between the Israeli right and left, which certainly does not make the armed group ironically adopting the name of terrorists given to them by the British the most significant factor in founding the Jewish State. In this respect those reading György G. Kardos's excellent novel, *Avraham Bogatir hét napja* (The Seven Days of Avraham Bogatir), are

better informed. However, a film is not a history text-book and if it is used as such, only the scarcity of information is to be faulted.

What then is the film about? Its theme is the conflict of ideas and ethics, the drama experienced by every soldier and especially those who believe when they must kill for their country, people or liberation in some war. The film raises the problem in a very sharp form through Elisha who, after being the only one of his family to survive Auschwitz, arrived from France and joined in the armed struggle against the British. Elisha derives his conviction that the goal is holy and the struggle justified from the sorrows, sufferings and humiliations he has had to experience and from several thousand years of Jewish history. When the British begin to take hostages to stifle resistance, take his friends and comrades-in-arms, and announce his execution, the organisation responds by capturing a British officer in order to execute him. Elisha is chosen to carry out the death sentence.

But now he starts to revolt: his whole being protests against the duty. Is it permitted to kill for a good cause a hostage who, although in military uniform, has been taken accidentally and is perhaps not even hostile? An unarmed man? Can Jews use the same means and methods that have been used against them for thousands of years and from which their fathers have abstained in horror? (Some people reject this now as being a difference from "normal" people, saying that this is what has caused the tragedy of the Jews, they reject it through the claim of becoming a "normal" people.) What has more weight, the divine command "Thou shalt not kill" or the secular aim of creating a homeland for a tormented people? Has death an arithmetic which legitimizes on the grounds that it may eventually prevent more murders? Or must one need the biblical lesson that he who kills makes himself god, which is the biggest sin of all? Elisha's tormented night is passed in the struggle to find a solution to these insoluble questions. When, at dawn, he finally executes the hostage, not by shifting responsibility onto superior authority but after sovereign moral considerations, the act makes him a lifelong moral and human wreck. The film's answer is finally that of the young György Lukács: if God has placed sin between myself and his aims, who am I to refuse it?

Hostage-taking has, of course, been routine in wars up to our days. We sympathize with the idea that this barbarous solution should disappear from the history of mankind once for all. But is this possible without the disappearance of wars? History does not encourage too much optimism. Acts that are cruel and wrongful always elicit similar responses; the question is whether this vicious circle can be broken. The film neither condemns nor absolves its hero, but it does feel a compassion for him; it accuses and condemns a world which confronts people with such choices.

Jancsó relives the problems of Elisha, the Jews and the future state with rare human and artistic empathy. The populism of his early Hungarian-made films has found its way into a different tradition. This gives real value to the film. Although, however, authenticating the story, it limits perhaps its universality: that this is not only a religious but a universal moral problem.

Their common humanism brings Wiesel's and Jancsó's world view close to each other; yet a whole world separates Jancsó's militantly agnostic and rational humanism from Wiesel's religious humanism, nourished by ancient traditions, and of mystical inspiration. Their meeting-point is certainly an interesting case of the dialogue between the two ideologies; it is also evidence for a humanism existing above ideologies where we can and must meet if we wish to be worthy of the name of man.

But this does not change the fact that Jancsó's moral view is a criticism of Wiesel's and *vice versa*.

Jancsó studies historical mechanisms.

Wiesel human faith and ethics. Despite many fine details and a directival virtuosity, the synthesis—the role of human faith and ethics within historical mechanisms—has been realized only in part because the specificity is overstressed and opens only a small door towards universality. The Jewish drama, whose specific and traditionally accentuated character we do not deny, remains too much a Jewish drama (which does not mean that it is less tragic), it does not become the drama of the human being Elisha.

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Every individual is a specific and incalculable mixture of ethics, history, psychology, learned and intended traits. This is what came to mind while watching Péter Bokor's film report on Otto von Habsburg, once crown Prince to Austro-Hungary, son of the Emperor Charles I, Charles IV as King of Hungary. I have had the opportunity to shake hands with a president of the republic but I have never met a king or prince. Now he sits opposite me on the screen and Péter Bokor represents me quite well, mostly asking what I would also ask. So that I play with the idea that I am sitting and talking with this likeable, clever and highly-educated crown prince in a Budapest coffee-house. It would be irritating if I had to address him as Your Royal Highness, but I feel that Dr Otto von Habsburg, European intellectual, member of the European Parliament, and a resolute supporter of Pan-European unity would probably dispense with such formalities.

We would certainly disagree in many respects, but there are basic values and historical experiences which are common to us and which bridge the descendant of the Habsburg dynasty and the Hungarian public of today. His Europeanness and his commitment to Hungary (which is not in the least diminished by the same feeling of commitment to Austria and to West Germany whose citizenship he has held for the last twenty-five years), his antifascism suggest to me that a useful and humanitarian attitude towards serving the community can have any origin. Those who see the film, will hardly become monarchists and Otto von Habsburg himself was able to shelve his own legitimism when he applied for the post of chancellor and prime minister in Austria with the aim of shooting at the Nazis if nobody else would do so, and for the sake of the future, prevent the Anschluss going through without resistance. He emphasized that this was that he felt to be his mission and that he recognized the republican constitution. Otto von Habsburg who speaks in polished Hungarian, wanted to bring about a Danube confederation during the war and even spoke to Roosevelt on this theme.

Péter Bokor, who has made many excellent historical documentaries, presents a crown-prince who has become a democratic European citizen with wide intellectual horizons. The film shows the man behind the prince and the film makes liberal use of contemporary newsreel to complement his reminiscences.

ERVIN GYERTYÁN

# MUSICAL LIFE

## A NEW HUNGARIAN OPERA

*János Vajda: Mario and the Magician*

Why should it be surprising if a relatively young composer undertakes to write an opera? It is surprising, however, that his work, which was commissioned by Hungarian Television, was readily staged by the Hungarian State Opera House as well. What's more, both productions received their first performance within two days of each other. And what is downright exceptional is the wide and lasting popularity such as this work is enjoying. In part the popularity is due to allusions to works from the first half of this century and even earlier, melodies and harmonies, disguised quotations from Puccini, Richard Strauss, and Alban Berg. But under the engaging surface lies a thoroughly thought-out philosophy which, for its part, guarantees the opera its lasting value. This is the first significant post-modern work in Hungary, along with this style's positive and negative qualities, both with its enjoyable and questionable traits.

János Vajda (39) had earlier written several works for the stage: one opera for television *(Barabbas)** and four pieces commissioned by Iván Markó's Győr Ballet, before starting on the musical setting of the dramatic version of Thomas Mann's novella *Mario and the Magician*. In writing the libretto, Gábor Bokkon had made a note of those parts of the dialogue which would most pointedly transmit the message of the novella. The original's structure, which relates an ever more foreboding atmosphere to the "liberating end" (Thomas Mann), i.e. the sound of the shots that destroy the magician, remains effective in the opera as well, and is even more condensed in the musical work's more concise manner. In Mann's work, Cipolla has already performed numerous acts of magic before engaging in a dialogue with Mario. The opera, however, is divided into a total of five episodes only. Two of these (a mathematical production and the finding of a hidden hat-pin) test the conjuror's competence in mass hypnosis and his intuition. The great dance scene, where the insubordinate Roman Gentleman is willed to dance, is a clash between Cipolla and a group as well as between the magician and an individual. Only the dialogues with the Youth in a Woollen Shirt and Mrs Angiolieri, mostly in the form of soliloquies by Cipolla, present personal conflicts. Action is merely a means to show Cipolla's abilities from as many angles as possible. Such a listing of events works well in a novella but is not dramatic, and when Vajda transposes the structure to the stage he does so by accepting the pitfalls. Not until Mario enters the action is there a true antagonist, only Cipolla acts as a key figure. Every detail points forward to the final showdown.

But where, in this story of an approaching tragedy, do the post-modern musical citations

* *NHQ* 92

fit in? And especially: Why are they needed? Was it just the time of the action which led the composer to evoke the musical styles of the same period? Decidedly not, the choice of the musical idiom cannot be explained by such a superficial connection. The observation that the musical language becomes ever more clarified as the action progresses is more to the point, from the forceful fanfare of the introductory chorus to the pure harmony of the Mario dialogue. A symbolic explanation lends itself here: it is in the guise of purity that the magician traps his prey, the common chords stripped of their original sense are given a Mephistophelian significance. The waltz and fox-trot in the opera support this interpretation, and so does the striking vulgarity of the dances commanded by Cipolla.

Should we leave it at that? Should we say that Vajda considers the citation of musical styles an expression of the devil? That he prefers the eclectic and expressionist style, in the Hungarian and European tradition of earlier decades? That would not be true. It is easily discernible in listening to the opera that the composer applied care and devotion to his impressionistic, or even veristic, beats. He actually prefers this latter style, without, however, taking sides with Cipolla.

Supporting this interpretation is also the composer's confession when he talked about his troubles in writing the opera: "I began writing *Mario* in 1979. I finished about half of the opera—and it was awful. Then I began afresh, and the result was just as awful. I left untouched the first two minutes of the chorus from the earlier composition, but when I got to the voice solo it was awful again. It was just that sung text which characterized most of the operas of the past thirty years that I am familiar with, and which I had used in *Barabbas* myself. At first, this seemed to be an existing language. Only later, gradually, did I realize that this was no text at all, it was without meaning, and no one would understand it. Even prose would work better than this. When someone was singing alone, I sensed right after the first heptachord that this was unreal."

Why then the countless citations? Let me set out from the Mario dialogue, or better, the music accompanying the pantomime that precedes the kiss which embodies the final victory and fall. The scene is irresistibly effective, the beat pairs, the four and eight-beat units, propel ever faster toward the climax. We know what will happen and feel the approach of the unavoidable. We guess, almost hear in advance, the outcome of the harmonies and our expectations are immediately satisfied. A little surprise, an unforeseen dissonance, might disturb the smooth progress of the piece but the essential course is predictable. The secret of this music lies in the fact that it can be experienced directly. We must not forget that tonality became a fantastically refined tool by the beginning of this century. Millions of listeners had become saturated by a given phrase, coupled with its function and meaning. With this in mind it becomes evident that Vajda does not present a medley of Puccini, Richard Strauss, Alban Berg, and Debussy, but rather re-evokes tonal, predictable, and plainly effective music. It does not matter that he does not achieve this through some innovation, but in returning to older and well-proven tools. Neither does Vajda himself consider this turning to the past to be an attainment: "I increasingly believe that modernness no longer depends on tonality. Tonality is a question of quality, and in attendant arts, also in literature, already familiar elements or patterns are gaining actuality again, and certain sounds, certain styles, receive a new significance when placed within a new context." The fact is that, in discussing either dramatic structure or style, we reach the same conclusion. The opera forcefully moves forward to the last scene. The final moments provide the absolute climax, both dramatically and musically, fading out everything that went on before. Cipolla, who has been presented in detail in the previous scenes, now stands face to face with Mario to the

accompaniment of viscerally effective music. The ever broadening, dramatic crescendo explodes in two pistol shots—and still the drama is not over. Vajda trumps the catharsis in Mann's work with still another stroke, and with this he changes the whole meaning of the opera. What happens is that the foxtrot which Cipolla had provoked is heard again, and the entranced victims do not stop dancing—yet Cipolla already lies dead. Though destroyed, authority continues to live on: a final message which weighs heavily on the minds of an already gloomy audience.

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Hungarian Television has concluded its sixteenth season of the series *Zenés Tv Színház* ("Musical Television Theatre)" which offers several opera classics each year and is commissioning new operas from contemporary Hungarian composers. Concurrently, Hungarian Television's special patronage has also created a tradition of television opera. A highlight of the series was *Mario* under the direction of Árpád Jutocsa Hegyi. Cipolla was sung by László Polgár, who has made his reputation in several opera houses abroad. Polgár did not approach his role from the perspective of the agonizing magician, but rather, it seems, from the music itself. His figure is flexible and elegant, only rarely revealing a sign of stress. Polgár's is a professional magician familiar with the rules of stagecraft, his voice is fatherly and friendly, his demeanour makes his humiliating conduct almost acceptable to his audience. It is his excessive self-confidence, his conviction that his talent secures him the licence to do anything he wants to, his *hubris*, that causes his downfall.

In the first performance at the Opera House, performed together with Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* under the baton of the British-born, US resident conductor Nicholas McGegan, András Békés's direction perfectly reflected the composer's ideas. With spacious sets by László Székely and Marianne Wieber's costumes, combining the styles of street-clothes of recent decades, the atmosphere was very natural, allowing the characters to adapt easily, without special efforts on the part of the director. Békés's masterstroke was the opera's conclusion. When the magician died, the foxtrot sounded anew, but the dancing figures froze. In the back the lights grew stronger and stronger, illuminated on the audience. Then slowly, the safety curtain was lowered and everything was bathed in bleak darkness. The music throbbed on incessantly. After a stunned silence, the audience finally erupted in applause: Cipolla appeared in the small door of the safety curtain, in the circle of a blinding spotlight.

Vajda's message is that the magician dies, but everything continues as before. Békés adds to this that it is you who do this; you who have come to amuse yourselves tonight, you shall dance tomorrow and always at the command of a magician, and when the music ends you applaud. The implication is that we, who think we are only an audience, are actually participants. The magic takes effect not just before us, but with our help and compliance. If we do not resist convention we shall one day witness our humanitarian ideals being dragged through the mud.

János Tóth's Cipolla is a single spasm of emotion whose psychic nature determines him, just as he puts others into a trance. He focuses on action and motion, but his vocal scale deftly spans a wide range: from Vajda's unaccented parlando to a pathetic, sentimental or even ironic tone. The conductor Géza Török commands the performance with a sure hand and a sensitivity for the details of the score. He leads the accompaniment rather daringly and the orchestra clearly enjoys following his baton. The necessity for such a monumental body of strings is, however, questionable. *Mario* demands about the same volume of instruments as Weber's *Freischütz*, only the percussion is augmented. With doubled woodwinds accompanied by such a large number of strings the orchestra's inner proportions are set off-

balance, and the intelligibility of the sung text suffers damage.

János Vajda has written a work for the stage. It has a well-balanced dramatic structure, innovative turns, and eclectic ideas which are nevertheless easy to follow. His idea was to have his characters face the audience at all times, carefully articulating what and how they spoke. *Mario*'s first performance was a notable event which raised the expectation that a Hungarian composer has found a language he is comfortable with and with which he will have more to say to opera audiences in the future. This expectation is supported by the composer's own words: "I cannot, I do not wish to speak in a voice which I do not consider comprehensible and real. Right now there is only one course for me: I must try not to shy away from my thoughts, I must have the courage to write down what I consider good."

PÉTER HALÁSZ

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# VAJDA'S MARIO AND THE MAGICIAN: THE SCORE

Coming to an opera just by means of the score, one feels oneself as befogged and hesitant as anyone trying to describe a painting on the basis of an engraved reproduction: the design is clear, but one can only struggle to imagine the colours, the volumes, and the drama they evoke. Perhaps most crucially, in the case of an opera, dramatic timing is something that can really be tested only in the theatre. Nevertheless, it seems certain that János Vajda's *Mario and the Magician* (*Mario és a varázsló*, published by Editio Musica Budapest) is a rather remarkable work: exact in its detail, potent in atmosphere, and cunning in its deployment of musical images for the fascination, obsession and erotic lure that Thomas Mann evokes in his short story of 1929. An English observer might possibly think of another Mann opera, Britten's *Death in Venice*, but the nearer parallels are Hungarian (though again this may be only an outsider's view), and link the work with another troublingly colourful stage picture of hypnotic authority: Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin*.

Gábor Bokkon's libretto is an effective filleting of the story that manages to keep Mann's words for most of the dialogue. The first loss, of course, is of the narrator, and hence of the first third of the text. However, music can establish an aura of foreboding very much more economically than can literature, and this Vajda does with his quick, stopped rushes of colour, his sustained, summoning diatonic discords and his curious fanfares for flutes, celesta, harp and vibraphone (this entrancing music will return). The curtain rises to show the low theatre where the promised magic show is to take place, and where the chorus of spectators is arriving. In a brief, scene-setting addition to the original story, three of the principals—Sofronia (the narrator's landlady in the Mann), her husband Angiolieri (baritone) and the Roman Gentleman (bass)—discuss what is to happen, and, after the arrival of the Prince and his family, the choral excitement mounts to a climax.

The arrival of the conjuror Cipolla, as in the story, with the sounding of a gong (Vajda specifies a tam-tam), and a quick gesture thrusts down to a low A held by cellos and basses (comparison with the unmoving minor third at the entry of Bartók's *Mandarin* becomes unavoidable). The Youth in a Wollen Shirt (tenor) dispels the sense of mystery and expectancy with his "Good evening!" that falls through a fifth

from E to A, and the ensuing dialogue introduces Cipolla (baritone) and the modal patterns of his speech, whose entangling power is heightened by the reiterative, insinuating and mounting ideas in the accompaniment. Vajda's music provides an appropriate analogue of Cipolla's psychological mastery: there are two magicians at work, one operating through words on the stage audience of singers, the other through music on the real audience in the theatre (it is at this point that waltz rhythm begins to appear—again there are parallels with the Bartók—as a vehicle of sinister seduction). By means of ostinatos, the music rises to a fevered excitement, followed by a return of the twinkling music for flutes and tuned percussion, and a bar of silence: it is presumably at this point that the Youth is obliged, by the force of Cipolla's will and Vajda's music, to stick out his tongue.

Cipolla then gives his introductory spiel, as in the story, and goes on to his trick with numbers: here Bokkon and Vajda extrapolate from Mann, in emphasising the Fascist overtones (their Cipolla has performed not only for Mussolini's brother but for the Duce himself) and spelling out the numbers, which in their version begin as significant dates from the fascist calendar (1883, the year of Mussolini's birth, etc.): rather as in the auction scene from *The Rake's Progress*, the numbers are called out by the chorus and welcomed in by the leader of the proceedings within a context of mounting enthusiasm, the second interruption by the youth being omitted.

Then the opera moves immediately forward to the trick in which Cipolla locates a jewelled pin hidden by the audience: his searching is pictured in an orchestral crescendo in two phases. Having returned the pin to Sofronia, Cipolla goes through his stumbling guesses to reveal her connection with Eleonora Duse: here the tempo is generally slow, though moving towards decisiveness. Sofronia excitedly acknowledges that Cipolla has guessed correctly, and the flute-percussion music of his enchantment returns again. She gets up to follow him as if in a trance, and is then returned to her husband. The opera thus puts together two episodes, the guessing and the mesmeric abduction, which in the story are separated by an interval in the show: wisely, Vajda follows the example of Strauss in *Salome* and *Elektra* (two other operas of highly charged atmosphere and single fatal action) in having his work proceed without interruption.

Now, before Cipolla has announced it, a waltz begins, and the magician joins in to invite everyone to dance: several do, as the waltz continues and Cipolla contentedly looks on. The Roman Gentleman, however, refuses to dance, and challenges Cipolla to force him. At first he seems to be holding out, turning the 3/4 rhythm out of its lilt into a more upright stance, but then he is swept into the waltz with the rest before Cipolla, in his triumph, screws up the tempo and switches them to a 4/4 metre. There is then a sudden pause, and the low A of the magician's entry returns: he has noticed Mario, and the opera moves into its long, inexorable finale. Mario, a young waiter, at first speaks in answer to Cipolla's questions, remaining outside the music which is the conjuror's medium of entrapment. But the orchestra becomes at once more agitated and more beguiling in its passages of sensual adagio, and Mario eventually is drawn in, singing as a low tenor his enraptured recognition of Cipolla as his beloved Silvestra. Cipolla then obliges the young man to kiss him on the mouth (not on the cheek, as in Mann), to an appassionato outburst from the orchestra, who take over the opera for its final moments. Mario comes to his senses and rushes frantically away, then turns to fire a spistol twoce at Cipolla. To mysterious horn music, repeated from the very opening of the work, the magician dies. But the dance goes on.

PAUL GRIFFITHS

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