

# NH Q

*The New  
Hungarian  
Quarterly*

Market Economy and Democracy — *Miklós Németh*

Hungary at the Barbican — *Imre Pozsgay*

Hungary and her Allies — *István Ószi*

In Memoriam Sándor Weöres (1913–1989)

Three Views on Central Europe — *Péter Esterházy*,  
— *Ottó Orbán, György Sebestyén*

Gulag the Hungarian Way — *Ferenc Kubinyi*

Historical Monuments of Transylvania  
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# *The New Hungarian Quarterly*

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## MARKET ECONOMY AND DEMOCRACY

by

MIKLÓS NÉMETH

**I**n the crisis of adaptation subsequent to a slump that lasted fifteen years, we are looking for the ways and means that will take us out of the present impasse. It has become clear that what is at the back of difficulties in restructuring the economy is the crisis of the model of extensive growth associated with socialism since 1948/49.

The post-1945 process of trying to catch up with the leaders led to considerable results but was prodigal of the material and human resources of production. It consumed the productive energies of society without providing for their reproduction.

The extensive model thus included distortions from the very start. The need for innovation became evident by the mid-1960s.

The Stalinist features of the political system, however, aborted any change in spite of the fact that the world economic processes of the 1970s particularly highlighted the weak spots of the extensive growth model.

This is where we must start when looking for an answer to the question most frequently asked in our days: How have we got here, where are those responsible for our plight?

Severe and unsparing criticism and self-criticism are indispensable in the current situation. This is the time for a reckoning. But it would be suicidal to decimate our own ranks in a feverish search for truth. For decades we have lived in an utterly divided world. Messages full of confidence issued from the *laager*. Those messages were about catching up and outstripping the leaders, about the irresistible advance of the idea and the system, about our sense of superiority. They contested the viability of any other type of system. This self-confidence chimed in with Lucifer's arrogance:



The merest touch of ground will do for me.  
 A foothold I require, no more, your fee  
 To sow negation and spread anarchy.\*

That was a menacing challenge and the response followed. But it was shrugged off. Even though isolated, enclosed, and unaided, we still thought we would be able to fulfil the promise of ideology. Great efforts by the Hungarian people built up a productive potential, a structure thought to be good, which was a momentous result compared to what we had attained before.

But as soon as we opened a window on the world, we had to recognize—and now that we are opening the door, too, we already feel it right down to our backbone—that the efforts we had made in opposition to, and in isolation from, the world could not save us. What is more, they increased backwardness and weakened adaptability. All this must be carefully considered by whoever passes judgement on the precursors—the living and the dead—and makes demands addressed to those in power. Change is demanded, immediate results, redemption from the serious consequences of the ways of many decades.

*Realistic conditions for a breakthrough*

Let no one imagine that he can redeem the country. Let us put our faith in the people which will find the road to salvation. It is our ministry to give them a chance to do so. Let us create a democracy, let us secure the possibility of choice, and let us not insist that others take to the road of a hypothetical happy future. The greatest damage was done by those who had made themselves believe that they were able to save the people.

It is clear to me that it will not do merely to carry on the programme of stabilization. With our sights trained on stabilization we need a new political strategy in which the main point of economic policy, after establishing a static balance, is to create as soon as possible realistic conditions for a breakthrough, for economic recovery. These must serve an economic policy attacking the roots of inflation, an opening on to the world economy, and export-mindedness. We have to stimulate the spirit of enterprise, and intensify economic activity. We can see clearly that this can bring success only if the government does not want to save anybody against his will, neither those

\* Imre Madách: *The Tragedy of Man* (a new translation by George Szirtes), Corvina, 1989.



engaged in business or husbandry, nor the public. We must not turn a deaf ear to the crescendo of voices raised in protest or disapproval. I don't say we must back down at such times. But we must listen and think over what we have heard.

There are many who say that a fiscal terror is rampant in the economy, and that the public are subjected to it. I don't believe that a fiscal terror could be useful. But I nevertheless put my faith in the integrating role of money, and it is one of my foremost endeavours to ensure that this role prevails.

Then the confusion of roles would cease here too, and the performance of the most diverse economic activities would be judged by objective standards. It would be easier to make a break with anachronistic rituals where ministries and mass organizations pass judgment from a desk on the performance of business. Let the result be shown in profits, pronounced by the market and paid by the customer, the consumer.

This is not the situation yet, the position is still confused. The message is still ambiguous. In most cases the messages of the market must still be decoded, and macro-economic equilibrium can only be secured by interventions. Often those in business do not even see the point of intervention, or if they do, they fail to recognize its justification.

This is not surprising. Nor is the fact that an economy that must in its own domestic market amalgamate the requirements and value standards of two external market systems, which sustain radically differing notions of value and which function according to basically dissimilar principles, cannot operate a model describable in the terms of classical economics.

No doubt the attitude of the state, of the government is there behind impotence and marking time. And this attitude has its source in a contradiction, for which there is no formula as yet.

### *A genuine market is needed*

The contradiction is that, having experienced the ravages of the forced exclusion of commodity and money relations, we changed course to giving them a role, towards creating a market economy. We set the course and took this road, but we have not arrived yet. But most of the methods used are such that they can only be really effective in a well-functioning market economy.

A genuine market has a price-depressing effect, which stops producers from adding all sorts of costs to the price and making a profit as well. Our



market is not yet like that and will probably not be that for some years to come either. That is why businessmen can do as they do and raise prices. At the same time, they must act that way because central credit and interest policies, the price and wage mechanism, and the exchange rate policy presume that real market conditions function here. The central authorities wish to squeeze business, to push it on, and they allow it a free hand, too, but cannot prevent it from passing on the costs of the squeeze.

It seems therefore that the framing of an effective anti-inflationary economic policy and of its instruments demands more responsible cooperation than before from all factors of the process: business, the government, and agencies of interest representation alike. The current situation is, with some exaggeration, a state of every man for himself, where one tries to defend one's own interests at the expense of others, while they all violate their own interests as well as the common good.

What we must head for is a kind of social partnership in which everyone does his own job and, let me add, plays his own part. Employers, employees, government, parties, legislators. Clearly and simply.

#### *Reduction of defence spending*

The government started the year with a substantial reduction of subsidies. It has considerably reduced the subsidies granted to enterprises running at a loss, price supports, grants to mass organizations, and the defence budget too. Speaking of military spending, I wish to declare here and now that the Hungarian People's Republic also contributes to bringing to success the talks on the reduction of conventional armed forces and armaments in Europe.

This has been made possible by processes which led to international détente, in which an outstanding part has been played by the improvement of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, and by the Soviet announcement of a unilateral reduction of armed forces. A significant contribution to the improvement of the international atmosphere has been the successful conclusion of the Vienna follow-up conference of the Helsinki process with the adoption of a programme of importance for the future.

Our step is thus a consequence of international events and it is also intended to promote the continued improvement of the atmosphere. At the same time, it is in accordance with our efforts to reduce budget expenditure. This is also what the Hungarian public wants. This poses other problems as well. Awareness of the circumstances has already provoked criticism. Under-



utilization of the production capacity of the armaments industry upsets the operation of a few enterprises and causes employment problems.

In other words, it is not only the general public that has been asked to make sacrifices. There is a comprehensive reduction of costs and subsidies with a rise in consumer prices as an inevitable and painful consequence with resultant social difficulties.

Current price rises are only apparently the cause of social problems. What is really responsible is the economic and standard-of-living policy of the past twenty years.

*Increasing the income-producing capacity of the economy*

Raising prices has been an inevitable consequence of the inherited situation; at the same time, it obliges the government:

- to create a market economy, to stimulate business, including private and small entrepreneurs;
- to revise the taxation system so as to make it better suited for boosting work performance and to adapt it more plastically also to social differences;
- to formulate an anti-inflationary economic policy which will lessen inflation within a reasonable time; and
- finally, to create stable, predictable conditions for enterprise management.

It is to be hoped that public opinion will understand that the dismantling of the overgrown system of subsidization has had to be started. Failing this the economy would continue on a mistaken course, would suffer heavy losses.

The economic policy objective in this situation is that in the next two to three years but no later than 1992—when debt servicing payments will rise considerably—the income-producing capacity of the economy must be considerably improved. All factors that influence this—the reform of the ownership system, the regulation of competition, import competition, the development of a market economy—must act in this direction.

In case the present unsatisfactory level of income-producing capacity should continue, prices would inevitably rise at a growing rate, and the situation would then take a truly dramatic course. Political and economic interests demand that this be avoided and call for the cooperation of the government, enterprise managers, trade-unions, and all working people. It is the responsibility of the government to promote and encourage the establishment of a market economy, because the organic market-creating forces of the econ-



omy are, understandably, still undeveloped. The responsibility of the managers of enterprises is to evolve a level of management which promptly takes into account the signals of the market and is able to operate optimally the technical and human factors of production. It is necessary to develop public attitudes and mechanisms of production which adequately value qualitative performance and, at the same time, severely penalize negligent work and idleness.

During the transition to the intensive stage a particularly important part is played by certain socio-political factors. These are links which we have to work out without delay, since they may connect us to the modern industrial world.

What are they? First: economic democracy and economic constitutionality must be propped up by political democracy, by a modern constitutional state. Economic constitutionality does not exist in isolation. Second: it is necessary to raise the status of skill and knowledge. This should be based on educational policy concentrating on quality. The conditions of work morale and labour discipline also can be improved only as part of a comprehensive intellectual and moral regeneration. Third: the stimulation of enterprise presumes social support for those who do not make it, i.e. a change in social policy.

It is evident that the previous practice of economic democracy must be altered. On the one hand, we must develop a kind of economic democracy effectively functioning in the sense that all factors of economic life—large and small enterprises, private entrepreneurs, and the state—are offered equal chances, that is sector-neutral terms of competition. This is the basic criterion of economic constitutionality.

On the other hand, we have to change the operating method of enterprises. At present, the situation here is confused and awkward as a consequence of the earlier practice. The essence of this practice was that it hindered the growth of democratic ways in politics and intended to satisfy people with democracy on the job. That is how the various forms of parliamentarism came about in the factories. They proved to be empty forms and could not be given any substance. Parliamentary methods are out of place in the sphere of production. In production, interests are reconciled in performance situations, and parliamentary methods are inapplicable there.

But it would be a fatal mistake to forget about the necessity of incentives for individual performance. International experience shows that world-market competitiveness is an attribute only of an enterprise whose management takes into consideration the interests of the worker, the individual and group psychological characteristics of human productive capacity. This



requires the organization of production systems based on a cooperative style of management.

A decisive step this year towards the establishment of modern constitutionalism underlying economic constitutionality will be the public discussion of the draft constitution. The first draft of the new constitution has been produced. It guarantees civil rights and fundamental freedoms on a constitutional level. It proclaims no abstract idea of socialist society but socialist basic principles. It will not be a collection of declarations, but will consist of enforceable laws. With all this, we shall readjust ourselves to the European main line without copying the constitution of any other country. Modern constitutionalism is a link connecting us to Europe and is in agreement with the endeavours of the Soviet Union as well.

*Changes in educational policy and in socio-political practice*

International experience—ranging from Finland to South Korea—demonstrates that technology-intensive growth everywhere is founded on an educational policy concentrating on quality.

We also must start the transition with a revolution of quality. We must break with an educational policy which has drowned quality in quantitative growth, levelling down instead of selecting, and demanding fanatical faith instead of reasonable doubt. Add the disparagement of culture, its treatment as a non-productive sector, and a lack of respect for the intelligentsia. This led to a neglect of the moral and conduct aspects closely related to culture.

It is obvious that transition can be given an impulse only by a kind of educational policy which is coupled with a cultural policy laying the foundations of the nation's regeneration. In such circumstances, the standard of technical education should be raised by the launching of a programme of moral education which heightens the sense of moral responsibility, strengthens national identity, and tolerates that which is different.

But the underlying ground can be only a society where the self-organizing forces form the family, workshop teams, and other local collectivities into communities relying on firm moral principles.

The third decisive element of the transition is the accomplishment of a change in socio-political practice, beginning with the demand of rigorous performance principles in production. This means, however, not inhuman conditions but strengthening the motivation of working men and women. This requires, on the basis of the ownership reform, a wage policy which



utilizes existing funds derived from labour productivity in an expedient and differentiated manner in the light of differences of performance.

It is not just today that we realized that there are no real owners in our country. We have long been wrestling with the resulting problems, but have found no solution to them so far, although we have attempted to deal with them at several stages of the reform, lately by introducing self-governing types of enterprise management in 1984/85. Today it is an almost generally accepted view that this is not an adequate solution either, a different way must be found. There are numerous reasons for the failures so far experienced, the root reason being certainly that in our approach considerations of practice and rationality have been overshadowed by ideology. An effective solution is only possible if we can change this. The government has firmly resolved to do so, it has started on this way and wants to travel it to the end!

We might ask with good reason: Why is this a social issue? It is because only in this way can we create the financial basis of social policy, only in this way will it be possible to increase the fund to be allocated to social policy objectives.

The other side of the change in social policies, let us say frankly at last, is the programme against poverty, assistance for those who do not make the grade and find themselves in difficulties through no fault of their own. This calls for a boosting of the role of local social policy institutions. Only these are fit—under appropriate public control—to size up the situation of the poor and needy.

The existing system is working disfunctionally: it does not favour the needy and often supports what those in need do not even want.

### *Social responsibility of economic organizations*

Our society and public morale are irritated by powerful contradictions and passions. The contradictions have deep roots and have long been in existence; the passions, discontent, and impatience are of more recent origin. No wonder, since for the past fifteen years the leadership proved most successful in covering up the problems and in sweeping conflicts under the carpet. We have to pay a stiff price for this today and we will in the future, as well. No one else can pay, except us, the people as a whole. But not everyone is able to pay his equal share! The burden must therefore be spread wisely and responsibly, and lightened wherever necessary. And the government's awareness of the problem, its good intentions, and its commitment, are not enough, neither is its money.



The solidarity felt must grow and become active. It is fortunate that several responsible voluntary factors have realized this and have mobilized their organized forces. The authorities think highly of the efforts made by local councils and the churches, and ask for still better cooperation, including fellow feeling by the management and the workforce with fellow workers in financial trouble, but also their more broadly interpreted social responsibility.

I should like to be unambiguous and avoid any misunderstanding. I don't want to persuade managers that the economic organizations should undertake social policy duties which the state had earlier undertaken but cannot afford to shoulder now. But I wish to emphasize that the possibility—and with it the responsibility—of economic organizations in shaping the conditions of society is not marginal! Management opposes the state's leaning too heavily on the economy. And they are right. They are opposed to state paternalism. They have good reason to be. They feel that state intervention is a nuisance, that official prices shackle them. In this the government is with them.

But are the economic organizations with the government in its anti-inflationary policy? The answer to this can definitely be in the affirmative and in the negative at the same time. In the affirmative because the government has undeniably taken up an attitude of model value towards the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce's position with regard to the price rises of early this year. This was a great step toward real social partnership. The next step should be that bargaining and arguing, not only about wages but also about prices, should be conducted between those actually able to shape them. This is why besides answering yes I also have to say no to the question posed earlier. Our experience is that the majority of firms essentially solve their profitability problems, if they can, by raising prices.

### *The new model of socialism*

The question arising after that is whether, making contacts with the modern industrial world, we will not move away from the socialist countries.

Our answer is an unequivocal "no" because, quite to the contrary, the renewal of socialism, the transition to a new model of socialism, brings us closer to the socialist forces intent on renewal. This applies, first of all, to Soviet foreign and home politics, and we wish to maintain this firm unequivocal relationship because it lends not only stability but also weight to our reforms.



The counter-attacks on the part of the supporters of the old model of socialism have intensified in recent times. We respond to them not with polemics but with the consistent implementation of our reforms.

The period of transition will involve wandering in the desert very like that of the Jews when they left Egypt.

It is up to us to pass through more quickly. We shall not travel along untrodden paths: we have to advance along the course of the market economy, modern constitutionalism, democratic political relations, and intellectual-moral regeneration.

All these paths lead us towards an innovative model of socialism. Moving along we have to decide ourselves how to furnish it. But we must make a start. Marking time we shall only be capable of empty chatter.

No one has preceded us, we have neither a Western nor an Eastern model to imitate. Going our particular Hungarian way we shall have to mould the model of Hungarian socialism, and it is up to us to decide what that should be like.

The situation we are in today is a crisis of the model, not a crisis of the system. The system would come to a crisis if we failed to change the model. Both acceleration and deceleration are dangerous on our chosen way. Acceleration may lead to reversal, deceleration to paralysis. Rational risk-taking is needed, and we have to determine the dynamism of the process in accordance with the shaping of conditions.

### *Political democracy*

The economic reform cannot be successful without the liquidation of the post-Stalinist political structure which in the 1970s hindered the economic reforms and even perverted them.

The government is of the view that political democracy is a guarantee of reform. It wishes to create institutional guarantees to prevent the restoration of Stalinism.

The principal features of such political institutions have already been drawn up:

- rich diversity of political organizations giving expression to the pluralism of interests;
- a government responsible to the nation which has a political strategy;
- popular representation manifest in the National Assembly and in the local councils;
- trades unions that truly represent the interests of working people.



I wish to place the government's work on a broad popular basis, on a coalition of forces which support the renewal of socialism. The objectives and programmes of different organizations have a common basis which enables them to support the government's political strategy.

In the current political situation the forces of national unity and polarization are present simultaneously. We live in thrilling times. We are presented with opportunities that may never recur.

The real dividing line at present runs between the forces of unity and polarization. This twofold aspect manifests itself in the discussions within all political organizations. Simultaneously present in most organizations are a sincere search for partners and an often already militant kind of aggressiveness.

Our national venture has a chance of success if current belonging to different political combinations regard one another as partners and work together, and if this turns into the decisive force shaping the political situation.

It is our shared political responsibility to prevent militant aggressiveness from gaining a dominant position in the different political organizations. This would drown the chances of the revival of socialism in a sea of tragic troubles.

In the government's efforts and concrete steps the renewal and democracy of the political system are in harmony with the economic reforms. This co-ordination is a key question of a well-prepared start, and the government does not allow it to be disturbed.

Starting from this requirement, we have decided that the government's work must be better adjusted to this end than before, so we shall continue with rationalizations. Improvements of efficiency will occur at the centre. We shall try to make the work of government more efficient. We have a number of ideas concerning method and style, organizationally and mainly in essence. We have already carried out some of them, which reflect our idea of the work of interest reconciliation.

Our aim is to take prompt and expertly grounded decisions. We shall increase ministerial independence. We shall create the possibility for qualitative work in the official apparatus which shall be demanded from it.

There will be no formal campaign against bureaucracy. This has often happened in the past but always without results. The reduction of bureaucracy is not a matter of campaigns but one of a change of outlook and working style. That is why we first set things right in our own bailiwick. We demand



professional competence, capacity for political action, and willingness to co-operate on the part of heads of state agencies.

We know our efforts will meet with resistance by unscrupulous and incompetent bureaucrats. We shall therefore work in the limelight and request the public to assist us in this respect.

We wish to strengthen democratic publicity. Liberated from the shackles of the earlier rigid control of the press, journalism will also seek and develop a new position.

The government starts from the fact that only an autonomous press can fill a responsible role in society, it will therefore respect the autonomy of the press. It can expect support only from a problem-sensitive press committed to the renewal of socialism. I think it is precisely autonomy that makes it tick, obliging it to publish sound information and authentic news, to present views and differing, as well as opposing, interpretations of facts objectively, without misconstruction, and not to hush up anything. We shall inform the press of our intentions and plans, of the events, and do not expect any newspaper to popularize the government. We ask the press only to be true to facts, to be objective, and to serve what it is supposed to serve: the interests of the nation.

The press is bubbling over with excitement. This is only natural and will certainly abate. The government's ear is not selective. It listens to all journalists as a whole, as well as to public opinion, how to evaluate different views, whom to judge to be a scandal-monger and whom to recognize as a severe but creative critic. We pay heed to criticism based on a complex and profound analysis of processes, containing constructive proposals and that show a sense of responsibility. The government is not interested in covering up mistakes or sins, and that is why it asks the press to uncover them. But this is a domain where journalists must be careful not to denigrate innocent people, or to slander.

I am confident that in the world of the press teams will emerge that are committed to socialist renewal. The press will be guided not by outside political dictates but by ethical principles coming from within and moving it in the direction of fine and true words.

In the 1970s, managers were often asked why they forgot that they were also the number-one political leaders of their enterprises. I put it the other way round. I affirm that it is clearly the managers who must be given credit for the fact that in the last few decades the economy has retained its functioning capacity, and I am convinced that the reform is still in the hands of these managers.



The government can secure the starting conditions, but the development of the income-producing capacity depends on the productive processes.

*An evaluation of 1956*

I think it is clearly in our common interest to rid ourselves of the ballast hindering us from breaking the present deadlock. The question is the evaluation of our socialist past. A subcommittee of the working party appointed by the Central Committee of the HSWP, engaged in evaluating the past forty years so that the Central Committee can discuss things, states in an interim report that what took place in October 1956 was a popular uprising. What we have to learn from our past is that it is a big mistake, which is bound to lead to still bigger ones, if we use one-word judgments about the always extremely complex phenomena or processes of history. Historical events are never of the same kind. That is why the essence of October 1956 can really be expressed only by an aggregate of most inconsistent terms. The evaluation speaks of a popular uprising as well as of a rebellion of anti-socialist intent plunging the nation into a tragedy. Its beginning was certainly different from its end.

There is no doubt that the evaluation of the socialist past, the presentation of the major tendencies, the disclosure of the causes of errors and mistakes, the determination of personal responsibility are in our common interest. This calls for joint efforts, with the intention of healing old wounds and not of inflicting new ones. We must take care not to let the uncovering of mistakes and rehabilitations lead to political campaigns that divide society. We have to proceed in a way which brings honest working people closer together.

It is evident that moving out of the present impasse involves conflicts. We have to accept them. But it may be fateful if the factors of political life, the various political forces want existing tensions not to be relaxed but to be increased. This must be avoided.

In political life processes are advancing which give cause for serious alarm. The question is not whether the HSWP will retain its leading role or not. A shift to political instability—if it occurs—would result in an economic collapse and a national catastrophe. The world of international finance is sensitive to any symptom of political instability. This contingency can be prevented if events continue to flow in the normal channel. This is what must be taken into consideration by everyone who enters the political arena to fight for his faith. Whatever colours he may nail to his mast, everyone must



carry the national colours in his heart. It is not in the interest of the nation if anyone, instead of fighting gallantly, treacherously stabs his opponent in the back.

Such a road may lead towards an undeniable polarization and division of political forces and, ultimately to the incitement of hatred. This cannot serve the interests of any part of society or the nation, but it serves at most the aims of political gamblers, adventurers, and careerists, fanatics of the scramble for political prestige and power.

In this situation, on behalf of the government, I invite all Hungarians, members of the HSWP and those who are not, the young and the old, atheists and religious people, who feel responsible for the fate of the nation, to use all their strength to prevent fanatical passions breaking loose in their environment, to prevent irresponsible rancour and factious wrangles gaining ground. Everyone must understand that the aim now is to take up a new starting position, based on national unity.



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NOW IN A NEW FORMAT

SHOW ME YOUR EYES

*György Konrád*

A DISCUSSION ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN HUNGARY

*Péter Hanák, Gyula Juhász, Viktor Karády, Miklós Szabó, László Varga*

CEAUȘESCU AND THE MINERS

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A TALE ABOUT FIRE AND KNOWLEDGE (short story)

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## HUNGARY AND HER ALLIES

*An interview with István Őszi, a Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs*

*Q: Is membership of an alliance a compulsion or a necessity for Hungarian foreign policy?*

*A:* The search for partners, for allies, is natural in the foreign policy of every country. All the aspirations which Hungarians endorse in general, and which foreign policy aims to put into effect in the world, must be realized in the first place and primarily by Hungary in its own region and with its neighbours—failing this our aspirations would lose credibility. Identical ideological orientation and political aims, a common geographical region, a similar stage of historical and economic development, all make it necessary for Hungary to build up good relations within this region. From the point of view of foreign politics alone it must be emphasized that it is precisely within the framework of an alliance that Hungary implements a foreign policy which is independent and which shows increasingly evident national attributes, but this policy acquires its weight by playing a part in the working out and realization of the general line of the Warsaw Pact; thus our country can play a role greater than its own importance warrants in the shaping of world politics. Therefore, if we take the present-day world political realities as given, the existence of an alliance is also a condition and a potential for Hungarian foreign policy. . .

*Q: . . .but alliances are transformed, broken up and changed in the course of history. Does the alliance give us a concrete opportunity of giving expression to our national interests?*

*A:* If, let me emphasize once again, current power relations are taken as given and underly international stability, the opportunities are even more favourable today. The new way of thinking has progressed farthest in foreign politics, it is here that it has produced the most significant results. In ensuring security, emphasis is shifting from military guarantees to politics, namely as regards the function of armed force the aspects of defence come to prevail.



But as confrontation has moderated, new questions of global interest have arisen, and questions of backwardness and development must be answered. Today it is the positive aspects of being an ally that we primarily recognize, and not the limitations; thus it is evident that every alliance has also a self-limiting nature.

*Q: How do our allies react to the fact that Hungary plays a role greater than its real weight? Do they think that the weakening of the system is at the back of Hungarian aspirations?*

*A:* The question has not been raised in this form, because the general line of foreign policy is followed by a consensus within the Warsaw Pact. Differences do exist elsewhere. Our allies regard Hungarian foreign policy as part of the common aspirations. They accept that Hungary makes use of the specific opportunities she finds given in international relations. But I have to stress that these opportunities offer themselves to us not because we are thought to pursue a particular policy but primarily on the basis of our internal social, political, and economic development. The reason why Rumania was earlier granted most-favoured nation status was that Bucharest in many respects, in formalities but also in a few important matters, stood for an explicitly separate line differing from the concerted notions of the Warsaw Pact, and this was appreciated and recognized by the West at that time.

*Q: Have any attempts been made to cross the Hungarian intentions?*

*A:* No, I cannot say that. These are held to be in harmony with general aspirations, although there are certain questions of detail, not inessential issues but, for example, the question of human rights, in respect of which there are substantial differences in the position taken up by individual socialist countries.

*Q: The alliance today displays more signs of heterogeneity in that the member countries are divided by their attitudes towards perestroika.*

*A:* I have to emphasize that the opening of a new era is an objective opportunity for all European socialist countries. All socialist countries are aware of that, but there is a difference in how they respond to it. Two different groups exist, the reform-oriented countries and those wishing to go along the traditional road. This, however, is a perfunctory generalization, since there are substantial differences even within the countries belonging to the two groups. It is important to emphasize that, of course, every country itself must find the solution most suited to it. But it is also true that the differences, which we have to accept as a minimum, may react upon co-operation and upon the conditions of its continued development. Again it is true that, almost paradoxically, the countries which are proceeding on the



path of reform are grappling with increasingly serious economic and, in a sense, political problems, and these difficulties are causing problems to their populations. Thus the progress of reform in the current stage does not provide arguments for those who want reforms in other countries as well, but rather furnishes evidence of the negative attendant phenomena. Whereas the problems presenting themselves in this period are consequences of an earlier erroneous policy. That is why public opinion does not automatically take a stand for reform. There is no direct way leading to reform, and the reform itself does not cease once it is announced or when certain measures are taken to this end by the countries in question. The transformation involves risks but can be brought to success by a well-considered and consistent policy based upon comprehensive reforms; this is what decides whether the inevitable difficulties will combine to provoke a crisis or whether they remain in a normal channel and will be solved there.

*Q: Is it possible that the reform-oriented countries will establish closer relations among them?*

A: Yes, this stands to reason, and I think this will be how developments will turn out. The political conditions for this exist in practice. It is obvious that the countries which pursue reform policies will act upon one another more closely and will probably be able to cooperate more elastically and will presumably be more capable of finding, without outside help, the new opportunities for, and appropriate forms of, cooperation on a number of questions. Of course, I have to add that reforms in themselves do not mean that the interests of those countries have from the outset been identical in all questions. So far I can see rather only a political intention to establish closer ties among the reform-oriented countries. This is apparent only at the level of aspiration, not as yet in practice. Thus the benefits which a reform policy must bring to cooperation are still not concrete today. I am convinced, however, that it will lead to a new system of cooperation, serving as a basis for the continuous growth of cooperation and will, at the same time, help and encourage them to establish organic relations with the whole of the world.

*Q: Not only the socialist countries have different views on the reforms, but leading figures within particular countries also do not agree with one another. Do we take this into consideration?*

A: What one or another leader has to say about other countries must obviously be taken into consideration, if only because we do not talk about generalities to each other. It is obvious that a distinction must be made between differences of opinion inside the leadership—which are natural—and faction fighting. In connection with the latter, I can say only that in none of



the socialist countries does such a division exist. Consequently, even if the intention did exist, it would be impossible to implement, say, by trying to turn to different groups for support for Hungarian interests.

*Q: The socialist countries hold rather contradictory views on the changes taking place in Hungary. Can this entail political conflicts?*

*A:* As a matter of course, the changes in Hungary are given more favourable attention in countries where similar experiments are being carried out, while the other socialist countries, I feel, just take notice of them. As to what somebody does or does not criticize, the decisive factor will be what people consider to be desirable for themselves. As regards the possibility of political conflict, I am of the opinion that things do not tend in this direction; more precisely, there is a country where an entirely different interpretation of socialism has long left its mark on our relationship. In my opinion, the root of our conflict with Bucharest is that the two countries interpret socialism in a basically different manner, and Rumanian policies aim to express this. But I should like to emphasize in any event that all socialist countries are interested in seeing that we in Hungary maintain the values and results of socialism, that fundamental stability prevails in the country, that socio-economic changes go on in a well-considered and tolerant manner, and this is true also the other way round.

*Q: What the Hungarian press publishes on socialist countries more and more often leads to protests.*

*A:* It is true that thanks to greater openness in the Hungarian press the image it presents of other countries does not always tally with the way those countries perceive themselves and this produces a reaction. I find this quite natural. I am convinced that everything can be said. But the question is with what ethical or political responsibility and on what professional level. If we satisfy these requirements, I think there will be nothing that we can be blamed for. I also think it natural that representatives of the socialist countries sometimes express their displeasure and resort to the media. One benefit of this is that a kind of dialogue develops which is a necessary condition of any kind of exchange of views.

JÁNOS TISOVSZKY



## CHANCES TO GET OUT OF A BLIND ALLEY

by

TAMÁS KOLOSI

**N**o more than ordinary insight or political courage is needed for the recognition that socialism of the Soviet type has ended up in a blind alley. Evidence for this is not only the monotonous recurrence of political, economic and social crises, the continuously decelerating growth rate in every socialist country and the opening technological scissors vis-à-vis the developed world, but also the gradual erosion of the basic principles of this ideology, which invariably and everywhere accompanies the attempts at a breakthrough named reforms.

At the same time, the logic that one cannot get out of a dead-end by going forward but must turn back to find the turn-offs leading out of the self-created maze, applies not only to road traffic. One cannot simply step back applying the tactic of one step back and two steps forward in order to continue on the course marked out earlier with even greater dash. New courses must be found.

The model of Soviet-type socialism took shape in Soviet Russia in the early thirties. By then it was obvious that Marx's vision of a world revolution had come to nought and the internal power struggles that raged within the leadership of the Bolshevik party, not only in respect of personal power, but also as regards the possible policy lines, had been essentially settled. Detailed research could demonstrate how the Stalinist leadership had expropriated the ideas of the Preobrazhensky-Trotsky faction based on powerfully centralised and militarised accumulation, how it stabilised a temporary emergence situation and began an attempt at modernisation, which wanted to transform the backward Russian economy into a developed industrial-military Great Power. One must not neglect the responsibility of the Western world either, regarding the growth of Stalinism. They helped to create the image of the besieged fortress at the time of the War of Intervention, then of early fascism, as well as at the time of the Cold War. I would also argue



that many Western leaders were well aware of the real nature of Stalin's show trials. They knew the accused persons had never spied for them but they did not do as much as they might have to make this clear to the world.

The essence of this model is a centralised strategy of industrial development, which wanted to catch up with the industrial potential of the most developed capitalist industrial countries in a relatively short time by the expropriation of every possible resource and their centrally determined redistribution. Perhaps János Kornai succeeded most in grasping the economic nature of the model with the concepts of bureaucratic coordination and the economy of shortage.\* At the same time, it is also very important to call attention to the fact that in its objectives this model completely adjusted to the production objectives of industrial capitalism since, in respect of use value stripped from exchange value, it wanted to surpass the natural indices of industrial capitalism.

The monolithic-terroristic political regime evolved by necessity according to the logic of the model, which also relegated to the background values and interests inconvenient from the aspect of fundamental objectives. It is certainly a post-factum justification of this model to say that it was terrible but there was logic in it, and to acknowledge that the model fulfilled the objectives it marked out for itself over a relatively long period, that it led to extraordinarily rapid economic growth, that it reduced the gap between the developed industrial countries and the Soviet Union—measured in natural indices—and led to the development of a military-industrial potential suitable also for Great Power expansion.

A detailed description of this model is not my present objective, thus I cannot discuss the examination of its functioning or the way irrational elements infiltrated the model owing precisely to its logic. The essence of the matter is, as far as I am concerned now, that this model became identified with the idea of existing socialism, and in the international situation following the Second World War it passed the boundaries of the Soviet Union and assumed international dimensions.

It is also the duty of detailed study to demonstrate the differences that had existed in the development standards, cultural traditions and the character of the dominant groups of societies which fell under the rule of this model and the variations, national and local, from the industrially advanced Bohemian and East German areas, which were well on the way to bourgeois civilisation, to the feudal Asian socialisms, and later to some attempts at adapting the model in Africa; from traditionally Western-

\* See János Kornai's preface to the Russian edition of his "The Economy of Shortage," *NHQ* 114.



oriented Hungarian society to Eastern-oriented Bulgaria. The features, which have fused these differing characteristics from the Baltic region to Azerbaijan, and from Macedonia to Slovenia, within the framework of individual political identities are widely known even if not sufficiently discussed in respect of their actual consequences. One usually paid less attention to the role in the development of these variations played in some instances—and here I have in mind first of all the GDR—in the modification of the realisation of socialism by national existence torn apart between the two systems.

Emphasising the general features of the model is justified in spite of this many hued background not only for analytic reasons but also because the logic of the model was not founded on these variations but precisely on their elimination. The issue therefore was not merely the servile imitation of Soviet experience, the monolithic character of the model itself would not have tolerated variety. It can even be said that where they resisted Soviet expansionism but tried to realise the model itself, essentially the same structural features developed. This is clearly shown by Yugoslavia in the late forties and the early fifties, Maoist China or—to a lesser extent—the firmly Stalinist social, economic and political structure of Rumania in the seventies in spite of that country's endeavours to chart an independent foreign policy.

*Why is this a blind alley?*

The realisation—on the basis of the above facts—that existing socialism has got into a blind alley not simply as a result of Stalinism and stressing that the national varieties staying within the logic of the system did not avoid the blind alley is, however, not at all identical with a pardon for Stalin's reign of terror. For underdeveloped countries this kind of socialism seemed for a long time the only successful method of breaking loose no matter what the national characteristics of the various countries were. The inevitability that the logic of the model leads to a blind alley is, however, more clearly shown by the fact that even the endeavours that wanted to rise above Stalinism did not lead to a way out. Krushchev's experiment from the breaking up of the virgin lands through the rejection of the consumer market to the vision of the universal popular state and of a communism which was to commence in twenty years' time, also remained within the logic of the model even though it really meant a radical break with Stalinism. Further research may clear up to what extent 1956 was responsible for the failure of Krushchevism to become a reform process pointing past the earlier-type



socialism, or how far the political reforms announced in the early sixties could have led to a spontaneous process of pluralisation. Its failure, however, was not caused merely by the restoration of Stalinist power, but also, and fundamentally, by its own loss of credit. During the period arching from Brezhnev to Chernenko, a minor Stalinist restoration took place, but that was by no means the fundamental characteristic of the regime.

I can give other examples as well, however, not merely from the Soviet Union. If there was a political leadership that unambiguously and radically broke with Stalinism in East Europe, then it was the Kádár type of leadership, which rose to power in 1956. The fundamental essence of Stalinism was the centralised realization of its kind of socialism through unlimited power. And the fundamental essence of the Kádár kind of leadership was the self-limitation of power. His own life, the chosen morality and fear of a repetition of 1956 together led to the recognition of the need for self-limiting power, to the relative tolerance expressed in the political slogan of *he who is not against us, is with us*, which attempted—successfully over twenty years—to ensure general consensus and consolidated progress by opening or permitting back doors leading through the walls of existing socialism. But that did not help avoid the blind alley either.

Once we concede, on the basis of the foregoing, that it was this kind of socialism itself, and not its forms of realisation, that led to the blind alley, we must ask why did this model prove itself a blind alley?

The fundamental reason was that its logic of operation was not based on self-regulation. In natural history as well as in the history of mankind, those systems have proved themselves viable in the long run, which were self-regulating and, consequently, capable of adjustment. I am convinced that a system that is not self-regulating could not prove to be viable and capable of progress in the longer run even if it were established throughout the world, but in the actual instance—and this emerged historically—when it lives in the environment of a self-regulating system, its necessary incapability of adjustment must result in crisis, in lagging behind even over a historically shorter distance.

It was possible to achieve rapid growth of the central development areas through redistribution based on political objectives, the forced centralisation of resources, compulsory mobilisation of reserves due to the historic backwardness of the Eastern Central and Eastern European regions and bureaucratic coordination of the economic and social system, but in the meantime the system squandered its own material and intellectual resources, held back the development of areas which did not figure amongst the central objectives, indeed, it regressed them, and thus created structural contradic-



tions, which caused embarrassment later even in the central areas. The earlier dash in these areas gradually turned into a pitiful trudge. There are methods available for avoiding these structural contradictions in a self-regulating system, thus the political will interferes in areas, which are not accessible to the self-regulating market but there is nobody to interfere with the areas that are non-profitable for non-self-regulating political redistribution—if the concept of profitability has any meaning at all under the logic of the system.

The incapability of the system of operating and developing did not come to light for a long time because: a) the leading political groups prevented its revelation with every means available, b) major events (wars, the Cold War, political crises) produced crisis situations, which made clear-sightedness difficult, and c) the hope that there was a mode of making the model viable by correcting it and making it rational (de-Stalinisation, using backdoors, etc.) has survived for a long time. The history of these correctional and reform attempts has followed right through the whole of the history of socialism ever since NEP.

At a highly abstract level, two types of correctional attempts can be distinguished: attempts at making things rational from the organization of industry through organizational changes to the scientific-technical revolution and the Gierék-brand reform, which did not want to change the model; and concession experiments from the NEP itself through the 1953 programme of Imre Nagy and the Kosigyn reform to the 1968 Hungarian reform and all attempts at liberalisation and market creation, which wanted to relax the logic of the model in certain particularly critical areas, and thus to make it socially more acceptable. They even permitted the assertion of elements alien to the model. Due to the above logic of things, the attempts at rationalisation could only produce short-term results but at the same time they did not lessen the squandering of resources. Thus they either induced further shortages or resulted in indebtedness abroad. The GDR is an exception to some extent considering that latent resources unavailable to the other countries were available through intra-German trade. Nevertheless, it is worthy of note that the GDR is not capable either, in spite of these resources, to create conditions within the logic of the system that are more advantageous than those prevailing in societies which realised concessional reforms. Contrary to that, the concessional experiments behaved—even if imperfectly—as state intervention does in the self-regulating systems. Once they reached a critical stage they were capable of maintaining viability, and if they did not, they settled back in a short time.



*The Hungarian lesson*

Nevertheless, as long as these concessional reforms—that is the reforms that produced the erosion of existing socialism—reached a critical mass in certain fields, they produced dual social structures, they brought about the symbiosis of a redistributive and a self-regulating society without organically combining them. This had a great variety of forms from the black market and the clan organizations of the southern republics of the Soviet Union through the tearing apart of public life, and private life, of official and the alternative public life, to the duality of the special zones and central territories of China. Only those experiments are genuinely interesting where the second structure is able to assert itself not only in specific—often fringe—fields, but extends to so many areas of social life that it means an actual alternative vis-à-vis the first structure functioning on the basis of the logic of the model. This occurred mainly in the several decades long accumulation course of the Hungarian and Yugoslav reforms. These are showing the limitations of the concessional reforms of this kind with increasing clarity.

That is to say that the concessional reforms are not capable of—and are not aimed at either—structurally changing the system, but loosening its logic they produce another structure in conjunction. The principal lessons of the Hungarian reform process can be summed up as follows:

a) A concessionally liberalised variety of existing socialism developed in every sphere of social, economic and political life, which meant that state power always permitted spontaneous movements contrary to the logic of the system in every area where it considered that the concessions do not endanger the fundamental structures of the system, but the absence of concessions might threaten the consensus in some way. Consequent to this, a multitude of backdoors opened up besides the front gate, and these backdoors ensured the survival of the system. At the same time, the proliferation of the backdoors required special interferences and regulations in every instance in order to find an outlet for the tensions they produced. Thus a latent consensus developed between state power and society, which, on the other hand, went hand in hand with the development of a baffling multitude of special controls and singular interferences as well as with the absence of legal security.

b) A massive second economy developed and organized itself into a system thanks to the gaps created by the back-doors, which was capable of substituting for the shortages which emerged from the socialist economic structure by necessity in the most fundamental fields, and to establish the op-



portunity of realising—by doing additional work—a standard of life for three-quarters of the population which was beyond imagination within the framework of the first economy. In many ways, this second economy was a challenge to the first economy, and in certain areas it contributed to the emergence of market-type attitudes there as well. More precisely, the first economy showed two kinds of reaction. Organizations, which had means of power available, endeavoured to ban every form of the second economy from their own sphere, while the part of the second economy, which had no, or only limited power means available, tried to market their own attitude, which, however, regularly ran counter to the central regulations. The model worked most successfully in fields where not only the division but also the integration of the two kinds of economy became institutionalised in the agricultural cooperatives. The same division is evident in every sphere of social life and this is reflected also in the ideological schizophrenia and the much talked about value crisis.

c) Beside and behind the back of the formalised and institutionalised system of decision taking, there emerged an informal-corporative system of political decisions. The decisions of importance were taken in the negotiation processes of various ad hoc interest groups. This suitably prevented decisions damaging important interests, but could not produce a publicly controlled democratic process. Consequent to all this, the structure of political power was also transformed. Monolithic unity gave way to a strongly articulated political pattern, but this articulation became discernible only in strained situations and only for the narrow circle of those in the know. At the same time, however, the actual articulation of the central will provided elbow room to various enterprises, local interests, professional lobbies and other interest groups to influence decisions which remained strongly centralised.

d) The result was that the breakdown of the social consensus was successfully avoided for a long time, pluralistic patterns developed in fact in society, in the economy and in politics, differentiated ways opened up for people to escape absolute poverty. At the same time, the disintegrated and confused state of society grew. The gap widened in every sphere and tension increased between the structures of existing socialism. The signs of viability—and from many aspects simply the signs of bare existence—concealed the deep lying structural lack of viability and thus the squandering character of the public sphere did not change even when it was shrinking. The necessity for immediately overcoming actual objective or artificially created tensions produced uncontrolled informal power monopolies under the conditions of informal political pluralism. Every move that wanted to treat



actual tensions through some means became anti-reformist and strengthened tendencies of restoration.

Concessional reforms thus resulted in short-term survival and consensus, the importance of which is never underestimated by a generation which, having gone through the hell of the Second World War and the fifties, clearly recognises how significant is a sequence of twenty years of peace in Hungary compared to the span of human life. On the other hand, however, the fundamental controversies of the system cannot be overcome within this framework. On the contrary, controversies emerge even more openly and tensions accumulate. Thirdly, the twenty peace-years also meant that the overwhelming proportion of the population now has something to lose, they have become socialised in a world which is looking for solutions within the existing framework of power and thus shy away from radical changes on the one hand, while on the other hand—consequent to the autonomies, the reborn civil society, that developed even if in some aspects only in a rudimentary form—they do not tolerate any significant restriction of these autonomies and thus prevent also every kind of radical restoration.

What matters, are the chances of progressive development in this situation. Is there still any genuine alternative in the countries of existing socialism, including Hungary, or is their ongoing and progressive backwardness unavoidable, or can rushing hither and thither in a maze ending in blind alleys merely be slowed down? Is the real question perhaps only whether we rush or stagger towards the abyss? Let me first take one by one the circumstances which appear to shut off progressive development.

It may be a commonplace, yet it must not be overlooked that what is fundamental to every social system is the drive for survival. This springs not only from the interests of the powerful and the privileged and their intention. The structures themselves exert their influence in a much broader sense and through the chain of the established interests they objectively bind to themselves other groups which would really like to break out of this structure. Let us mention only two of the countless possible examples. One is the effect of the CMEA mechanism on the market-oriented manager type, and the other is the attitude which, while it generally opposes the whole of existing socialism, in its own field—due to its own well-considered temporary interests—keeps begging for favourable central intervention concerning incomes, and the distribution of public money.

In opposition to a great many, I am convinced that the present international environment also hinders the actual break out. It does so in no fewer than three ways. First of all, most of the socialist countries—unlike Hungary—have not yet exhausted the possibilities of concessional reforms.



This is clearly evident in the case of Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and particularly in the case of China and the South East Asian socialist countries, but it is observable even in the GDR—although they tend to rely on intra-German trade. The principal obstacle to central concessional reforms in Poland is currently the absence of a political consensus but this also suggests that this is the actual stake there at the moment.\* It is more difficult to evaluate the situation in the Soviet Union, which has central importance for the region, but it is a profound misunderstanding of actual processes when some influential people suggest that the Soviet Union has outpaced Hungary as regards perestroika and glasnost. Although the reform taken by the Moscow intelligentsia—precisely because of the stagnation of the past twenty years—has gone further than that taken in Hungary in the sixties, the situation is still far more reminiscent of that time than of what is true of Hungary in the late eighties. The reserves of concessional reforms are enormous in the case of Rumania, Albania and Cuba. They have not even tapped them and right now they still use all the means available for the conservation of the original type of socialism. Yugoslavia is the only country beside Hungary where the reserves of the concessional reform have become exhausted. Besides domestic problems, two factors make an actual strategic change even more difficult. One of these is due to national conflicts and the other to the fact that they have already attempted a change under the slogan of self-management, which—even though it stayed within the logic of socialism—then, and in many respects even now, appeared as its alternative.

The other international factor handicapping progressive development is the division of the world between two opposing military blocks. Although détente improves the situation, it does not do away with it. The Western Powers verbally support the East European reforms and keep a sympathetic eye on Hungary, but restrictions deployed mainly from military considerations (embargo, COCOM list, loan and customs terms) work precisely against reforms and damage Hungary most. It is obvious, that is, that the greater the autarchy of an economy or a society, the less these restrictions can affect them, and the greater the autarchy the less capable they are of reforms. I am convinced that the selective treatment of each country produces considerably smaller favourable consequences for Hungary than the damage suffered by the country owing to the negative effects of the general treatment.

In the third place, the structural change that has taken place in the developed capitalist countries has a negative effect on Hungary's chances for a

\* This article was originally published in Hungarian before the agreement reached at the 1989 Warsaw Round Table. — *The Ed.*



break-through. Earlier on, I emphasised that it was impossible to eliminate the desire to catch up with developed industrial capitalism from the objectives of existing socialism. The problem here is not that the country's rush that seemed to reduce the differences measured in natural indices slowed down when the resources—due to the logic of the system—had been devoured, but also that today those whom we wanted to catch up with are not where we tried to reach them. The so far insufficiently analysed changes which turn the industrial capitalist societies into a kind of post-industrial, services society, have been emerging with increasing vigour since the mid-seventies. Within that, the customary cyclical changes occur not only in the leading industrial sectors but the whole of industry loses importance vis-à-vis services in the broad sense. Socially useful work changes radically with the higher importance given to intellectual activities. Thus labour and capital, and not only the options of existing socialism and capitalism, require reassessment, or they lose their validity. This is clearly evident also in the loss of ground of the Social Democratic and trades union movements, which had been successful for over a hundred years, and in the move from a conventional left of centre position towards neo-conservatism. It should not be forgotten either that these tendencies are still in the development stage in our days. Two countries, Germany and Japan, are still successfully looking after their industrial capitalism, indeed they are becoming more and more the leading industrial powers. The analysts themselves cannot decide either whether the loss of ground in industry by the other countries, first of all by the United States, suggests a lagging behind of these countries or whether, on the contrary, Germany and Japan will be the losers in the long run, being slow in the devolution of industrial capitalism. Nevertheless, these circumstances do not change the fact that from the point of view of a possible Hungarian attempt at a break-through, this change over there is accompanied partly by increasing vagueness of orientation, and partly by the emergence in a new way of the traditional question of whether it is possible to develop with the omission of a certain step. Is it possible to keep up with post-industrial society without going through the stage of industrial capitalism?

The other factor that suggests poor chances for progressive development is the ominous lack of resources Hungary disposes over. Owing to foreign indebtedness, not only the additional sources needed to finance the break-through are unavailable, but the breakthrough would have to take place in such a way that in the meantime domestic consumption would have to stay steadily below the level of domestic production. As far as I know, this has never been successfully done by anybody. The development of industrial



capitalism was based on the additional resources obtained from the colonies, and each further change was supported by additional resources available in the form of loans or aid, possibility of natural resources and by capital accumulation based on low consumption. The former are not available to Hungary and the latter is impossible in the prevailing international environment because of the expected resistance within Hungary.

*The conditions for a breakthrough*

These very harsh conditions could besaid about any kind of actual breakthrough from the start. They suggest that Hungary can only get out of the blind alley if a radical, revolutionary change will destroy the present structure and rearrange the international position of the country, that the barriers of the developed world could only be broken down by breaking away from the other socialist countries and not by staying with them. That alone would make available sources for financing progressive development in the form of politically determined aid.

I am fully aware that such a conclusion could rightly be considered as not merely simple opposition but as express hostility to present arrangements. This, however, must not prevent us from thoroughly considering this logic, partly because it is backed by some very solid arguments, partly because this logic exists even if it is not examined thoroughly in public.

It must also be clearly seen that this course—due to its revolutionary (or counter-revolutionary, if you like)—character involves the greatest sacrifices and would receive almost no international support, indeed, it could produce a source of international conflicts, a serious threat not only to Hungary but to the whole world. Last but not least, it would not receive real support even in Hungary because of the already mentioned fact, that the people have something to lose. The decisive point of view is therefore not the way I or others personally consider such a course morally or ideologically, but the fact that it damages certain fundamental interests which are capable of nipping it in the bud.

The circle is closed. Socialism of the Stalinist-type has proved itself a blind alley, its rationalising and/or concessional reforms do not offer a way out of the blind alley in the long run. There is little hope beyond these for a breakthrough under existing conditions. Changing these conditions is not in anybody's interest.

The only decision that appears to be realistic on this basis is to make preparations for living in the blind alley, thus for steadily and gradually



losing ground, for making that stagnation as bearable as possible. Our scant resources must be spent on the development of the infrastructure, on public health, on not destroying the natural environment for the sake of industry, which is losing ground anyway, for creating a kind of Garden Hungary, by redefining the original term. The prospects may be too cruel. Nevertheless, this alternative cannot be left out of consideration either when the chances of Hungary are considered, all the less so since this is precisely the alternative that has very serious chances in spite of the verbal radicalisation of the political processes of the country in the past six months.

It must be pointed out that the twenty-year period of the concessional reforms did ensure the viability of the system through the opening of backdoors. At the same time, almost unbearable tensions have built up between the backdoors and the front gate. This may force the government to attempt the closing of the backdoors, ensuring better access through a wider front gate. The past year clearly indicated such tendencies. But closing the backdoors before opening the front gate involves tremendous risks. The system might close down the very opportunities that ensure its viability. This may produce tensions, resistance on the part of society and of the economy, which force the opening of the backdoors again and ultimately produce a permanent state of now it's open.

But what happens when the front gate is really opened now and then, but if it is not opened wide, but the gaps are merely widened. In essence, that means that elements that succeeded elsewhere—in Western societies—are fitted into the regulation of society and the economy without forming a system. Many examples can be cited for this, including recent ones and such as are found in the government programme. In these instances, the elements that function properly elsewhere begin to malfunction and they produce nationwide disillusionment—from the political leadership to the whole of the population—which strengthen tendencies of restoring the previous order.

The logical outcome of all of this is that the solution which wants to fit into Hungarian society elements of a different type of social organization, perhaps already tested in the developed world—doing so gradually—cannot lead to results for two reasons. On the one hand, the opportunity of restoring the old order invariably survives and it has extraordinarily negative consequences even if restoration is warded off. But the threat of restoration makes objective discussion of concrete problems impossible, since the actual political line-up is that of opposition between reformers and the conservatives. Thus even objective criticism related to the changes helps conservatism. On the other hand—and this is connected with the other fact—the



changes themselves lose their value since they cannot exert their effect. The not yet reformed elements impair the effect of the changes with monotonous regularity.

The tax reform is a good example for both. It is absolutely clear that a market-oriented economy cannot function without an adequate taxation system. But in the taxation system introduced in Hungary, the objectives of a market-assisting taxation system and those of a fiscal economy policy showing interest only in the balance of the budget, were basically confused. Thus the very strongly progressive income tax with its low threshold combined with minimum allowances has a strongly performance-withholding effect. At the same time, not eliminating ad hoc interventions together with the introduction of the system, and the fact that the introduction of the taxation system was not accompanied by the ending of wage regulations, a wage reform and the convertibility of the forint, failed to reduce the opaqueness of economic processes.

Thus the taxation system—and particularly the general sales tax—does not function as a self-governing mechanism.

Measures awaiting introduction, the drafters of which can justifiedly point out the favourable experience of the western world, are no less problematical. An incomes reform is worthy of its name only if it ends central wage regulations and replaces it by a wage system based on the judgement of the labour market and on agreements between employers and employees. Such a wage system, however, has powerful inflationary effects when there is no limit to the outflow of wages based on the interest of employers in profits.

The situation is similar in respect of some government measures not requiring legislation or a comprehensive reform. It is generally accepted that the budget deficit cannot be eliminated, nor can actual market conditions be established, as long as three kinds of money function in economic regulation. Forcing exporting enterprises to achieve world market prices on the CMEA market while tax skims off the CMEA price difference in imports is neither fair nor feasible in the long run. As long as the forint is not convertible, it is impossible to hope to replace from world market sources the deficiencies of CMEA imports or of shrinking production capacities because of the lack of export subsidies. It is indisputable, therefore, that CMEA export subsidies must be eliminated but, in order to achieve that, a currency reform resulting in the convertibility of the forint is unavoidable.

Contrary to the fears of many, I am thus convinced that the fundamental danger in Hungary is not restoration of the traditional forms of Stalinist society—and therein lies the fundamental difference between Hun-



gary and the socialist countries, which did not experience the concessional reforms of the past twenty years. The possibility exists that, in the wake of disillusionment following radical attempts to effect a breakthrough, a series of dual-structure concessional experiments will become stabilised, leading to a slow and inevitable falling behind, but ensuring survival for a period of time that cannot be predicted.

### *Alternatives*

What options are open in the context of a far from rosy image of the future? In essence, the alternative is only the realization—feeling our way backwards on the course that led into the blind alley—that the mistake occurred when capitalism was rejected rather than corrected. In customary political terminology, when the political leadership opted for Soviet-type socialism, abandoning the people's democracy line.

Naturally, it can be argued whether a) this type of development, i.e. the NEP, followed by Bukharin's policy, had a chance in the Soviet Union, had power relations developed differently within the Bolshevik Party, or 2) whether such a line had a chance in the strategically important Eastern Central European region, under the given international conditions, and against the will of the Soviet leadership.

In any event, it is true that the Prague Spring promised such development, although the Dubcek-led political leadership was not capable of seeing through such a process. When considering the alternatives for the future, we must, however, clearly see how far we have to go back if we want to get out of the blind alley.

### *The possibility of a self-regulating society*

Is it possible to turn back the wheel of history? Is there a potential in present Hungarian society that, in spite of the present structures, makes possible a course leading towards a self-regulating society? In my opinion, the great achievement of the concessional reforms of the past twenty years is precisely that it did create such a potential.

I intimated in this article too, and explained in detail in earlier papers, that a dual structure of society took shape in Hungary. One branch of this is made up of redistribution based on hierarchic subordination and on a—mainly informal—transmission of interests, corporative negotiation pro-



cesses, while the other consists of market relations, rudimentary within the first economy and distorted in the second economy, which to a great extent is independent of government action. Examining the ratio of the two spheres in the whole of social reproduction we must rely on rather complicated and unconfirmed estimates. What can be stated with relative certainty is that the ratio of private business activities in the broad sense exceeds one-third of the whole of social reproduction.

Official statistics put the ratio of the private and second economy at around 10 per cent in the production of national income as well as in the income of individual persons. These data—based on information given—strongly distort downwardly. Time-budget figures, for instance, suggest that the people spend 34 per cent of their working time doing work outside their main place of employment. Even if the income-producing capacity of this 34 per cent is regarded as equal only to that of official employment, the private and second economy must produce at least one third of national income and personal incomes. This makes evident that the Hungarian crisis is by no means as deep as suggested by the figures. What is really in a critical state is the sphere of the economy in direct contact with government redistribution.

It is far more difficult, indeed, because of the intertwinings, it is impossible to separate the hierarchical part of redistribution from the part dominated by the transmission of interests. I shall take it as given for the sake of this argument that the ratio of self-regulated production of the private and second economy has reached the critical total in which, given an economic policy based on it, it is capable of pulling with it the existing market elements of the state and cooperative sphere. Thus I also take it for granted that in the case of an openly undertaken political change there is a possibility for developing self-regulating social reproduction which means

- a) institutionalisation of the pluralistic transmission of interests in the political mechanism,
- b) dominance of market regulation based on ownership interests in the economy,
- c) and legally regulated autonomy of citizens.

A strategy of this kind only has a chance if we succeed in finding a solution for the already indicated factors barring a breakthrough. The open undertaking of the strategy is a *sine qua non* if the restoration mechanisms of the existing structure is to be broken. In this instance too, obviously, preparation must be made for keen political infighting, but only a readiness to engage in this can provide a chance that those whose short-term interests are tied to the existing structure will accept that strategic change does not mean a



certain loss for them. Those that can expect to profit in one way or another from the strategic change must organise themselves as a political force.

It would be a fatal oversimplification, however, to divide people into two classes according to whether they stand to win or lose by this strategic change. These two extremes mean only two minorities, while the overwhelming majority can win as well as lose, more precisely win, thanks to certain aspects, and lose, owing to others. Should a deliberately undertaken change not occur, then this majority will become aware only of the losses—because of the superficial experiences and the implicitly accepted values of socialism—and would become organised on the side of the conservative forces.

Only a self-regulating market economy embedded in the world economy and based on ownership interests can provide a way out of the present situation. Genuine alternative options can only be imagined within the general framework of this, and the choice between these alternatives can only be made on the basis of informed debate conducted under the control of publicity. Overcoming the limiting force of the international system of conditions is also of fundamental importance. This calls for the separation of the military, political and social commitments of Hungary. Concrete safeguards must be established to ensure that the immutability of Hungary's military and political commitment cannot produce destabilisation even if the socio-political line abandons its ties with what used to be called existing socialism.

What is most difficult is to overcome the shortage of resources. This is only possible if the burden of the current indebtedness can be lifted from the economy. That is possible only through compromise with the financial world. Since something like Marshall Aid is unlikely, the concrete form of that compromise can only be the selling of debts as capital. Although this means a kind of sale of the nation's wealth and results in a new kind of dependence, it would also provide a guarantee against the restoration tendencies with the emergence of a new kind of ownership interest.

We must also be aware, though, that this course may, in the short term, go hand in hand with innumerable conflicts and the suffering of a great many. In the worst case, Hungary will have to experience all the difficulties which Western societies suffered in the initial phase of classical capitalism. The alternatives of change, however, indicate that those are the only options. The capitalisation of the Western world began from a substantially lower economic basis than that of societies of Soviet-type socialism. In the early phase of capitalism, the opportunities of political pluralism as well as social autonomies were relevant to a small part of the population.

Using a slightly exaggerated parallel, one might say that the real winners of



Stalinism were the capitalist countries. The Eastern challenge played some role in the creation of the welfare state and in the socialisation of the working class. We have the chance to escape the necessity of going through the historic course of the Western world again and instead of that—in possession of our and their experience—of finding the alternatives that lead out of the blind alley at the expense of the least suffering.

Established civil society, the awareness of small, established private autonomies, and the demand for the legally guaranteed extension of these autonomies, materialised pluralism, may provide a kind of guarantee if the actual reform of the political system can firmly institutionalise these guarantees. In my opinion, the fundamental question of the Hungarian political institutional system is not the choice between the one-party system and the multi-party system. It is far more important to permit the development of pluralistic tendencies that latently exist in the political institutional system, that is the institutionalisation of the freedom of factions, the freedom of platforms if you like, within the Communist Party, the public emergence of the currently informally existing lobbies, proto-corporations and interest alliances; offering constitutional guarantees for civil rights and autonomies, not allowing the Communist Party to exercise government functions.

Only a political system thus reformed is capable of ensuring an economic policy change without the brutality that characterised the early phase of classical capitalism or the initial era of socialism in the Soviet Union. A democratic political system is primarily not a luxury enjoyed by a few intellectuals and neither is it—as the four Asian tigers show—essential to the acceleration of economic progress. It is possible—at least in principle—to establish a modern, industrial-type society without the paraphernalia of modern democracy. This is implied also by ideas current in Hungary, which want to establish a Reagenomix-type economic change, not through the extension of democratic freedoms, but by abolishing even existing freedoms. In the wake of the Gorbachev reforms, such ideas have become less vociferous in Hungarian public life.

It is to be hoped, at the same time, that defensive reflexes, which do not permit the assertion of such ideas, are already established in Hungary. Nevertheless, it must also be said that a modern, post-industrial, services and information society cannot develop without these democratic paraphernalia on the one hand and, on the other, that their absence could also be a mighty obstacle in the way of economic change because, under the given military conditions, such a situation would not be acceptable by the Western financial world. What is most important, however, is that only a democratic polit-



ical system can provide a guarantee that the economic changes would not be realised under the dominance of the fiscal-financial lobby, which is currently powerfully entrenched.

Summing up, therefore: the present Hungarian situation is certainly not without alternatives. Although the two extremes: take-over by a law and order conservative regime—perhaps with military support—or the radicalisation of tensions to the stage of civil war, are equally unlikely, two possible major lines are still taking shape. One is surviving in a blind alley, the other is a strategic change that makes a U-turn in the blind alley and tries to find a way out. The number of variations is significant even within these major alternatives. The first alternative might well be accompanied by the—now it is open, now it is closed—game of opening and closing backdoors to the accompaniment of reform slogans, by slow regression that fits in various elements of western progress into the existing system—and which is beset by constant functional disorders—or by a liberalism, that makes life bearable in the blind alley.

Numerous opportunities of choice are open also in the instance of a change. Questions such as how much the changes will cost, and who will pay for them, are still open. Nobody knows yet to what extent the cruellest form of capital accumulation be avoided or how successfully a European solution could be found thanks to the reform of the political system. Nor is it clear how closely the change would have to follow the course taken by industrial societies or whether it would be possible and desirable to opt for the priorities of the post-industrial, information-services society.

What is essential, however, is to see clearly what alternatives there are, before weighing up the options in informed debates controlled by publicity. One thing is certain. If one keeps one's eyes closed in a blind alley, one will run with one's head into the wall.



GEORGE SZIRTES

IN MEMORIAM SÁNDOR WEÖRES

*d. Jan. 22nd, 1989*

I met him only once. So light and grey,  
His handshake hardly registered. He might  
Have been a speck of household dust,  
His absence the most palpable quality.  
He settled in the chair and made a slight  
Noise, as if he'd caught a crust

Of dry bread in his throat. He signed my book  
In a childish trembling hand. He was depressed.  
His cat had died. He could hardly speak  
But smiled, shyly, vaguely. He had the look  
Of a February morning, waiting, dressed,  
For some final naked event to break,

When he, at last, could be that sublimate  
His body had aspired to, simply vapour  
Burning above a mound of ash.  
But this would be a pyre to celebrate  
His substance—words and pen and ink and paper—  
All the luminous trash

Of magic and art. The conjuror could take  
A parasol and out of it create  
An ecosystem, or beneath  
The parasol, meander in the wake  
Of *realpolitik* and contemplate  
Its dreadful colonnade of teeth.



His invented psyche was both male and female.  
Two breasts had risen somewhere in his breast  
Like towers, so that when he took breath  
Two bodies rose and fell with it. His pale  
Shadow left the boy, the light caressed  
His skin. He couldn't tell life from death.

He never was good company, would disappear  
Without one noticing and be discovered  
Wrapped in a blanket on the tramline  
In the middle of the night. He never was there  
And nowhere else. Everything he suffered  
Glowed in the language, turned to wine,

But such a wine as city children, bred  
In stinking courtyards, would find in the street,  
And when they drank it, they would know  
Their nonsense validated by the dead.  
He was the poet they'd queue up to meet,  
In whose lost shadow they could grow.



## THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE EVIDENCE

SÁNDOR WEÖRES TALKS TO LÁSZLÓ CS. SZABÓ

*Where were you born? In the western part of Hungary?*

There, in Transdanubia. In Szombathely.

*Where did you spend your childhood?*

In a village, called Csöngge, west of Szombathely.

*Did you make up poems as a child?*

In the same way as every child does. Whether or not he is aware of it, every child's speech has some rhythm. It was the same with me. And I remember quite well how this rhythmic prattle grew into versification.

*How old were you then?*

I learnt to write, in capitals, at the age of four. I learnt handwriting later.

*You wrote poems in capitals? Was this the period of transition you were hinting at?*

Yes. The prattle which started in the cradle was gradually transformed into conscious versification at the age of four or five.

*Tell me: do you write nursery rhymes on one level—or on several different ones? I mean: are they simply nursery rhymes, or is there some complex rhythmic experimentation behind them? Could you tell us something about that?*

Edited text of a 1963 interview broadcast by the Hungarian service of the BBC. This version first appeared in *TriQuarterly*, No. 9, Spring 1967.



They are, usually, experiments with rhythms. At the time of writing, I don't even think whether they are going to be nursery rhymes or poems. It is only later that a lot of my poems are classified as 'nursery rhymes'.

*Could you show us an example of these experiments with rhythms—how a rhythmic problem made you write a poem which turned out to be a nursery rhyme?*

For example

*Fut robog a kicsi koci, rajta ül a Haragosi*  
*din don diridongó,*  
 Part of a cart rattles and rolls  
 Its guard is a bard who hums and falls  
 Down don diringo

A little game with short syllables.

*Does it require a particular state of mind—or is it something extraneous that urges you, occasionally, to write nursery rhymes, play little jokes with syllables—instead of writing seriously? Is it the result of a psychological pressure—or of some external circumstance?*

Well, rhythmic experiments, nursery rhymes: they are little exercises. It's not a question of mental attitudes. The painter with his pencil or pastel or whatever he has will sometimes draw little sketches—and sometimes trace large compositions.

*Let us turn to the large compositions. The greater part of your work has a dark and sombre, if not depressing, tone. Are you in a dark and sombre mood when you write these poems?*

In most cases not at all. For the large compositions one needs such inner peace and serenity . . . from which the material of the poem will suddenly emerge, defined in sharp contours. Whether that material is sombre or gay, does not depend on me, on my mood.

*To a certain extent, I have always felt the same. You have the reputation of being a pessimistic poet—but the pessimism I find in your poems has, one might almost say, cosmic, and not social, motives. And that kind of pessimism is a component of all great religions and all great myths—isn't it?*

I think it is.



*In other words, the darker quality one finds in your poems—whether or not intentional—is, in fact, related to same universal pessimism which all mankind shares and has shared whenever contemplating its own predicament throughout the ages?*

When religion, philosophy or poetry faces the ultimate questions, it somehow becomes, in a sense, misty, barren, obscure, dark. It is so difficult to cross the thresholds beyond the limits of everyday, practical life.

*Perhaps you were influenced by those archetypal songs which seem to be full of religious or metaphysical references to man's predicament. It would appear from your poems you were.*

To a very great extent. The connections are quite obvious between my poetry—and folk poetry, myths, primeval and modern religions.

*What was the greatest influence? Babylonian, Indian or Egyptian poetry?*

It would be difficult to say which influences me most. Ancient Chinese poetry, the Tshu-Tse collection or the Te King of Lao-Tse influenced me as well as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita or the Babylonian epic of Gilgames and the tale of Istar's descent to Hell; the Egyptian hymns, the Polynesian Rabie Hainuvelé cycle of myths, Negro Mythology . . . and other things.

*In what language have you read them?*

Some in Hungarian translations. Others from German, French or English sources.

*And who interests you most among modern poets? In European literature. Let us say from the Middle Ages to our time. With whom do you feel a particular affinity?*

From the Middle Ages to our time? . . . Shakespeare, Blake, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Hölderlin . . .

*There does seem to be a strikingly close resemblance between you and Blake. Perhaps he fascinates you because he displayed the same duality which some people find in you. On the one hand, the playful poet whom children understand—on the other, the visionary prophet addressing a disintegrating world.*

Yes, I feel exactly the same mentality in Blake's work as my own.



*You are a prolific translator . . . of Shakespeare, Burns, Blake, Mallarmé. In what languages do you translate directly from the original?*

Without a word-for-word rough translation, I may try, from time to time, some easier German or French poems. To tell you the truth, before I start I always need a rough translation. I have some knowledge of English, French and German, but it's a great help. It seldom happens that I translate something without knowing the original text.

*The reader never can tell . . . Let us see now what did you derive from Eastern philosophy. Does it influence your conception of the Universe?*

Profoundly, no doubt.

*You mentioned Lao-Tse. Did he influence you? Does he attract you? You have translated some of his work.*

If you can call it translation. I worked from rough translations. I do not understand Chinese—especially the old Chinese which Lao-Tse used. In fact I think nobody understands or has ever understood that. Lao-Tse wrote in a highly original and individualistic language of his own which nobody ever spoke.

*What is in his teaching that particularly interested you?*

The Knowledge of the Evidence—the knowledge that one may carry this Evidence, possess it, identify oneself with it.

*What is this Evidence? Could you describe it in a few words?*

Lao-Tse calls it Tao—the Way; and the possibility of identifying ourselves with it; Te—a sort of elemental force.

*Does that mean that we can, to some degree, rid ourselves of our egoism, become part of others—and of the world?*

Perhaps, among other things. Socrates called this evidence Daimonion, —with Kant it became the categorical imperative. In various religions and philosophies, the Evidence is expressed in various terms. One concept of it is



ethical, the other is mystical. Thus the idea itself becomes more and more complex and obscure.

*You think that Lao-Tse expressed it in the clearest, most convincing, or most attractive manner?*

Not necessarily. Lao-Tse was the first one I read, around the age of sixteen. Since the same age, I have studied extensively Hindu religions, in which there are many approaches to and many concepts of the Evidence. The idea of Atman for example, or Om.

*You've written a poem which seems to have been inspired by historical events. Such inspiration is seldom felt in your work, but there is a gigantic poem, The Fall of Mahruh—was it inspired by 20th-century events, our historical predicament—or are the human conditions you were born into completely irrelevant to the poem?*

Undoubtedly. *The Fall of Mahruh*, mirroring the earthquakes that shook our world, echoes historical events,—not necessarily those of the 20th century.

*The great crisis of history. . .*

Yes.

*. . .of centuries past?*

Those as well. But what I have experienced personally is, of course, much more immediate for me than the turmoils of the past.

*I called The Fall of Mahruh a gigantic poem in an aesthetic sense, not only because of its length. There is another poem of yours, The Assumption, dated 1952—like the Fall—which you dedicated to the memory of your mother. What was the inspiration behind that one?*

I wrote the greater part of the poem before my mother's death. But somehow it did not stick together, it lacked cohesion. It was only after her death that I could mould it into shape,—in her memory, as it were. In spite of the fact that more than half of the poem had existed, in a shapeless form, for more than ten years.



*A more recent poem of yours—Salve Regina—seems to be related to The Assumption. Is it just an acoustic illusion—or is there in fact some spiritual affinity between the two poems?*

The two poems are very closely interrelated. The thematic resemblance is, of course, obvious: both are addressed to Mary, mother of Jesus.

*Recently you have been writing a great number of sonnets. Any particular reason for that?*

It's Mallarmé's influence, the influence of his sonnets. With him, the structure of the sonnet remains unchanged, but the content has a great fluidity, much greater than in *vers libre*.

*So it seems to the reader far more complex than the traditional sonnet in which form and content are determined, restricted.*

Quite. The type of sonnet Mallarmé wrote is a fascinating concoction. Its sentences are complicated, as pregnant as Latin, branching off in different directions. Its content, however, becomes, at the same time, more and more elusive and ethereal,—a mixture full of contrast between self-imposed restrictions and total fluidity. The polarities are extreme: this type of sonnet incorporates qualities which seem incompatible. I wanted to explore all the possibilities it offers—hence the sonnets *à la* Mallarmé. They are not sonnets at all in their essence, only in their structure.

*Some people—and I among them—feel they are particularly difficult poems to follow. Do you think the poet should experiment on the one hand with all known, and, on the other, with all as yet unknown forms and possibilities of writing? Even with those which will gain acceptance or approval only in some distant future?*

Yes. I think one should explore everything. Including those things which will never be accepted, not even in the distant future. We can never know, at the start of an experiment, where it will lead. Perhaps, it will be an abortive, still-born enterprise, perhaps it will be a necessary and useful experiment—only we cannot know that, not even after we have completed it. It may take decades or centuries to prove whether it was a useful experiment of a useless one. It may never be proved at all.



*In other words, you accept the risk of failure and it does not worry you that posterity may decide that in some of your poems you were side-tracked up a dead end?*

The possibility that this poem or that one led nowhere does not worry me in the least. I never think about it.

*Permit me to ask a very naive question. Do you understand all your poems?*

No. I don't believe that a poem can be completely understood—digested, as it were, to the last crumbs. If we took the simplest, most primitive poem, for example: "*Kutya, kutya, tarka, / Se füle se farka*" ("Dog, dog, piebald dog, —It has neither ear or tail") and put it under a microscope in order to find out whether or not we understand every bit of it,—we would discover that it is full of imponderables.

*But can a poem pass the test of time if it is not quite understood even by posterity—can it survive if it remains obscure forever? Are there any such masterpieces?*

At any rate, there are a great many lines in Pindar's hymns, in *The Divine Comedy* and in a lot of other works which are very obscure indeed. Of course, in many cases the obscurity is caused simply by linguistic development. The obscurities of the Chinese Shiking or the Hungarian *The Lament of the Virgin*\* are mainly due to change in the language.

*Do you think those who claim to have derived much pleasure from, say, Dante's II Paradiso yet profess themselves unable to appreciate modern poetry, are merely being snobbish—or do they simply delude themselves?*

I can imagine people who profoundly understand and love some poet of the past and are, at the same time, genuinely limited in their appreciation of modern poetry. Or romantic poetry, or 18th-century poetry... One has one's blind spots.

*You have translated some of T. S. Eliot's poems, met him personally, in Rome. Could you tell us what made you interested in his poetry—and which poems of his do you prefer: the earlier or the later?*

\* First extant poem in Hungarian, manuscript discovered at the University Library of Louvain.



He has published extraordinarily few poems. But those published—whether belonging to the earlier or the later period—are, all of them, very mature, highly polished, definitive works. So I could not draw a line, I could not say which is the more valuable, his earlier or his later poetry. Each has something solid, rock-like, almost unavoidably final about it. That suffices for me.

*Something solid, rock-like. . . It almost sounds as if you were talking about Anglo-Saxon poetry. Do you, in fact, feel any affinity between the poetry of Eliot—and, to some extent, that of Auden—on the one hand, and Anglo-Saxon poetry on the other? Is there a connection, a continuity. . . can one establish when the ancient attributes of poetry re-emerged and began to permeate the modern poet's work?*

Oh yes. I think they first became obvious in Hopkins, but one can discover them, in different forms, in the works of Chatterton, for example, or of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Walter Scott. . . In fact, all periods of English poetry can be related to Saxon or Celtic poetry.

*So, in your view, the Celts and the Saxons still survive—at least in English poetry. Have I interpreted your remarks correctly?*

Yes. I would even go so far as to say that the Celts and Anglo-Saxons are very much alive,—whereas among modern English poets only those will survive who have retained their roots in this fecund humus of archetypal material.

*In your more ambitious poems one could always feel—I hope it does not sound too pretentious—a kind of universal presence. At the same time, you do not give the impression of one who seeks to redeem our finite world. I mean: you are acutely conscious of the contrast between your own mortality—and the infinity of the cosmos; without being passed by a sense of mission. You are the most purely poetic Hungarian poet. And to turn to the role of the poet: do you feel he has a priestly vocation, does he fulfil a priestly function, is he chosen, predestined? Or is he like other men?*

I think the poet is like any other man. Of course, everyone has a sense of mission and, in the same way as William Blake, I have it too. In fact, I have attempted to do something in this field as well: in my sketch-book, *The Road to Perfection*, I have tried to communicate my conception of what I called "Evidence" a few minutes ago.



*About this sense of mission: when you want to communicate, to give something to your fellow-men, are you guided by the same considerations as was Stefan George, for example, who regarded the poet as an appointed priest—or by different considerations?*

By different ones, some sort of message. Blake had the same conviction, he himself said.

*I would recall the name of another predecessor: Montaigne. In your poems I somehow sense the same humility towards your fellowmen as Montaigne felt towards the illiterate gardener. Am I right?*

Yes.

*And can I therefore call your poetic credo a profoundly humanistic one?*

Humanism can be defined in many different ways, which has caused many misunderstandings. I would rather avoid this label. It seems to mean everything and means nothing. It causes misunderstanding and confusion.

*What other term would you use instead? Humane, charitable, selfless—how would you define your ars poetica?*

I could hardly express it in a single word. For me, the complete man—and I am not thinking of poets alone—is he who can make full use of his inborn qualities, fulfil his potential. He who, if born with the gift of poetry, will use this gift well; or if he has the making of a good craftsman or sportsman or farmer, will profit by his talent as best he can. He who meets and fulfils his destiny.

*Can I put it this way: that in the final analysis you, called obscure by some and a pessimist by others, have a very humane and heartlifting influence on your readers and those who understand you—because you have retained the child's ability to wonder?*

Perhaps. In any case, it is fundamentally important for all of us to retain childhood, embryonic or even pre-conception quintessence of our being. The term "Evidence" implies solid substance as well.

*A final question which has long since intrigued me. I have come to the conclusion that you, as all true poets, would like to speak to the multitude. Is that so? Do you wish to address yourself to the largest possible audience—or only to the select few.*



For me only one man exists: Jesus. All other men live or neglect to live in that they are one with Jesus—or not. Of course, I am not thinking of the Christian religion as such;—you pour a bit of holy water or what-not on somebody's head and then he is supposed to be one with Jesus. I am not thinking of that. For me PEOPLE—don't exist.

*Who, then, does exist for you?*

Jesus exists and He exists in all who exists in Him, by Him. I write because I want to expose better, approach nearer this identity with Jesus, in myself and in others. I couldn't care less how many read my poems and how many don't. To bring the sensitive reader of good will a step nearer to this sameness, one-ness with Jesus; that is my only aim.

*In other words, what matters is not whether or not your work is published today or tomorrow; what matters is that the poem, written to him who is one with Jesus, should BE.*



SÁNDOR WEÖRES

## POEMS

### ETERNAL MOMENT

What you don't trust to stone  
and decay, shape out of air.  
A moment leaning out of time  
arrives here and there,

guards what time squanders, keeps  
the treasure tight in its grasp—  
eternity itself, held  
between the future and the past.

As a bather's thigh is brushed  
by skimming fish—so  
there are times when God  
is in you, and you know:

half-remembered now  
and later, like a dream.  
And with a taste of eternity  
this side of the tomb.

(1935)

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*



## ON DEATH

Don't mind if you die. It's just your body's shape,  
 intelligence, separate being, which are passing.  
 The rest, the final and the all-embracing  
 structure receives, and will absorb and keep.

All incidents we live through, forms we see,  
 particles, mountain-tops, are broken down,  
 they all are mortal, this condition shown,  
 but as to substance: timeless majesty.

The soul is that way too: condition dies  
 away from it—feeling, intelligence,  
 which help to fish the pieces from the drift

and make it sicken—but, what underlies,  
 all elements that wait in permanence,  
 reach the dear house they never really left.

(1937)

*Translated by Alan Dixon*

## TO DIE

Eyes of mother-of-pearl, smell of quince,  
 voice like a bell and far-off violins  
 and hesitant steps hesitating, thickening,  
 heavy-horned twins of emptiness snickering,  
 sinking, cold brimming, blue wide over all!  
 Wide magnet blue, ploughs flashing on,  
 and burning thorns in naked storm,  
 earth-wrinkles, dropped on pitted soil,  
 shaking the wild sweet nest, the bright  
 dish flying in its steady-spread light.

(1944)

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*



## THE COLONNADE OF TEETH

## 1

The Colonnade of Teeth, where you have entered,  
red marble hall: your mouth,  
white marble columns: your teeth,  
and the scarlet carpet you step on: your tongue.

## 2

You can look out of any window of time  
and catch sight of still another face of God.  
Lean out of the time of sedge and warblers:  
God caresses.  
Lean out of the time of Moses and Elias:  
God haggles.  
Lean out of the time of the Cross:  
God's face is all blood, like Veronica's napkin.  
Lean out of your own time:  
God is old, bent over a book.

## 3

Head downwards, like Peter on his cross,  
man hangs in the blue sky with flaring hair  
and the earth trundles over the soles of his feet.  
The one who sees  
has sleepless eyes he cannot take from man.

## 4

No sugar left for the child:  
he stuffs himself with hen-droppings and finds what's sweet.  
Every clod: lightless star!  
Every worm: wingless cherub!



## 5

If you make hell, plunge to the bottom:  
heaven's in sight there. Everything circles round.

## 6

Man lays down easy roads.  
The wild beast stamps a forest track.  
And look at the tree: depth and height raying from it to every  
compass-point;  
itself a road, to everywhere!

## 7

Once you emerge from the glitter of the last two columns  
the cupola your hair skims is then infinity,  
and a swirl of rose-leaves throws you down,  
and all that lies below, your bridal bed: the whole world—  
Here you can declare:  
“My God, I don’t believe in you!”  
And the storm of rose-leaves will smile:  
“But I believe in you: are you satisfied?”

(1946)

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*

from the *Fifth Symphony*

## THE SCARLET PALL

Your first dream—the dream just cradle-born—  
two rosy children in naked interlace  
eating each other, biting into soft fat flesh.

Second dream: the black sacrifice to your mother.  
Lifting the stone lid, and silence out of the dark.



Third dream now: in shadows of furniture, in a corner  
 friends hanging head downwards in the air like  
 blinded lamps . . . who knows if they're alive . . .

Oh how endlessly  
 dream ripples out, washes in sullen folds,  
 clashing thread on scarlet ground: dream-star-army!  
 figures of lightning on the blood-red pall!

Remember yet:  
 the spearlike bud bursts from man's groin,  
 woman's groin unfolds its flower to meet it,  
 and as a bow touches a fine quivering string  
 the bud gushes into the offered cirque of petals.

Remember yet:  
 you roam over dead plateaux and rock-wrinkles,  
 you come upon someone buried to the chin in stone,  
 and both the roamer and the buried one are you yourself!  
 You stumble clumsily over the protruding head,  
 but the other head suffers the kick of your boots.

All your dream,  
 all mine too:  
 our child-dreams drink pearls at the same spring.

A heaven of lace on the rust-crust ed outposts,  
 images on the scarlet pall! Branch-writhing dream!

Dance, dance,  
 swing through the distance:  
 what an initiation  
 your childhood night was!  
 and the cyclops-eye of the world sat on your skull,  
 its thousand faces flaked to the bone on your cot,  
 remember yet—

Across time and space  
 creep, creep to me:  
 our savage factious hearts have common root in the earth.  
 Common, what lies in wait for us.



Think: you are walking in smoke. Your eyes are bandaged.  
Heat of torches hits you; you are led by the hand.

And soon perhaps, without fear,  
you will sacrifice yourself:  
the arch of your eye-covering tugs the flame inwards!  
No hiding then from your blood-coloured pall!

(1946-51)

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*

### DICE GAME

to be lost then found again  
my whole life has been that way  
it was good to sit beside the sea  
to let the waves wash over me

my whole life has been that way  
to be lost then found again  
to let the waves wash over me  
it was good to sit beside the sea

to let the waves wash over me  
it was good to sit beside the sea  
to be lost then found again  
my whole life has been that way

it was good to sit beside the sea  
to let the waves wash over me  
my whole life has been that way  
to be lost then found again

(1980)

*Translated by William Jay Smith*



## SONG: BOUNDLESS SPACE

When I was no one yet,  
light, clear light,  
in the winding brooks  
I often slept.

As I almost became someone,  
a great force rolled me,  
stone, rough stone,  
ice-veined, down the slope.

And, finally, I have brightened  
to live, flame, naked flame,  
in rounded, boundless space,  
showing our real country.

(1980)

*Translated by William Jay Smith*

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## FAILURE

*An excerpt from the novel*

by

IMRE KERTÉSZ

One morning—actually one late morning—Köves left home whistling—for no particular reason, since it was a dull day with a cold wind blowing down the street, though visibly it was no more than the dust floating about from the nearby constructions that added to the roadblocks, scaffoldings, and debris, all mingled with acrid smells as though autumn was approaching, as indeed it was quite likely to, projecting to Köves's mind dream-like pictures of crackling logs in fireplaces and yellow, burnt ochre or russet real autumns that had once, or perhaps, never been, creating in him a sudden desire for a light, soft and withal warm coat into whose turned-up collar and lapels to nestle his chin—so, whistling he made his way to his place of work, the Ministry of Production. He would not be actually on time—no question of that—yesterday he and Sziklai had been trying to hammer out the recalcitrant dénouement of a comedy they had planned to co-author and Köves, to get some fresh air, had crossed the town sunk in the stillness of night broken now and then by sudden whirring, screeching, murmuring or moaning sounds, as if of the audible shreds of restless dreams shared by those sleeping behind the darkened windows: in a word, he had not got to bed before the small hours and simply overslept. But owing to the intimate relation he had with the press or public relations chief, Köves considered himself, with some right, to be a man in a privileged position, whose head wasn't going to be struck off at once for certain liberties he took, provided of course he didn't overdo them. For although Köves understood next to nothing of poetry, never having read or written poems, apart from a critical year of his long-lost boyhood, it appeared that the press chief trusted his judgement nevertheless, because after the first case he had made almost a point of reading him his new poems, and the day before he had even read him a story of his that the press chief characterized as "more of a ballad in prose." No question, Köves's judgement

\* Imre Kertész: *A kudarc* (The Failure). Szépirodalmi, 1988. 393 pp. See Miklós Györfy's review article in *NHQ* 114.



would usually sound favourable: as far as he could make out, his boss's poems were lyrical pieces about whose content he usually had scarcely a clue, they being either too short so that they ended before he could focus his attention, or too long so that before he could form a judgement the chief's lilting recital and the tinkling rhymes had put him to sleep, a pleasant doze—so with clean conscience he was able to praise their mysterious quality, their melancholy mood, their eerie atmosphere, and so on and so forth. Even so, Köves could not help being struck by the regular, one could say obsessive, recurrence of certain key images, such as a flower, usually "a deep red" with a "fleshy bloom," drinking up "thirstily" the quivering rain or dew drops, as well as a fountain whose jets "spurt" high into the air, now irresistibly now iridescently and goodness knows in what other ways but invariably at the end of a poem full of rain, dew, spray, spume—all manner of liquid stuff. Undeniably, listening to and discussing (more aptly, praising) the poems meant some extra work for Köves—the press chief would ask him to his office for "a little discussion," usually after hours when neither the secretary nor the senior press officer would be in the way and the interruption of no unexpected business was to be anticipated—on the other hand, the press chief's confidence, whether justified or unjustified, but a confidence that seemed absolute, put courage into Köves and therefore he placed his painstaking voluntary drafts on his boss's desk, even though the future fate of his homework remained hidden to him; perhaps, Köves reflected with a superior lightness of heart, the novices that came after him would profit from them as he had learnt from the senior press officer.

He was all the more surprised when, entering the office that morning, he found the press chief, the secretary and the senior press officer, all three of them together in the room. They stood there in a group as though they had nothing better to do than, for instance, wait for his arrival—moreover, when instead of the expected acknowledgement of his cheerful good morning there followed a few seconds of silence, to be shattered in the end by the press chief's question addressed to Köves:

"What time is it?"

Köves told him the time approximately but not without a sense of foreboding, at which the press chief, wearing, as usual, a white flower in the buttonhole of his jacket, fired him this question:

"Now what time do you think office hours begin?" And Köves indicated a point of time a good hour and a half earlier—what else could he have done?

"Where have you been till now?" came the press chief's next question. Not infrequently it had happened in the past that Köves would set out in the morning to visit some steel works but in reality he simply pinched time



for sleeping, loafing or, possibly, for some other private ends, but till now nobody had ever held it against him, least of all the press chief. He answered that he had had to go, more exactly, was to have gone, first thing in the morning to a steel plant to see about some exceedingly urgent production matter but certain reasons, and very cogent ones at that, actually his health—he had waken up in the morning feeling nausea with his head swimming and might well have had a temperature to boot—had prevented him from doing so.

"Are you feeling better now?" the press chief asked, and Köves, after some hesitation, found that even though far from completely well, anyway he was better now compared to what he had been.

"In that case—" the press chief now brought forward his hand, till now behind his back, clutching a sheaf of papers: Köves, unless mistaken, recognized with a shock pieces he had written, all those assignments he had been writing and giving his boss—"in that case try and rewrite this mess into usable communication!" With that he hurled the whole sheaf onto Köves's desk (he had one here in the Ministry), but either he misjudged the momentum or perhaps deliberately let go of the bundle too soon, the loose leaves flew in all directions, circling and floating about in the room, so that Köves had to go chasing after them, as it were, and pick them up one by one.

Meanwhile, the press chief was off to see the current chairperson of the Supervisory Committee for a *very* important conference, as he described it to the secretary in passing. The senior press officer also told her that he was due to go to a railway engine plant about some urgent matter. Köves, now seated at his desk, staring at the stack of papers piled up on it in disorder, suddenly became aware of a definite, exciting sensation reaching him from the back of his head—more like a breath of air than touch—warm, rousing, sweet-smelling, like the presentiment of the proximity of a female body. Köves hesitated only for a second—it wasn't hesitation really but a cautious, as yet doubtful, recognition—then raised his arm and without looking behind him, but with unerring precision, took captive a small soft hand, which amidst solitary chuckles sounding strange even to his own ears (he was, it appeared, a little worse off after all for the boss's unaccountable behaviour) he started to kiss, or rather pounce on and tear into, like a beast would treat its prey that it had chanced upon. And while a lithe arm entwined his neck from behind and a warm live pliant weight melted on the nape of his neck, Köves seemed to sense through his hair how the sounds were being formed in a female chest, rising ever higher with tickling tremors:

"My poor dear," he heard the secretary say or rather whisper in a sensuous, throaty voice.

Köves had to spend a long time before, in the afternoon, he could, at last



take the arm of the creature, hitherto hiding behind a reticent devotion to her work, whom he had sometimes compared in his thoughts to a nimble, neat little squirrel and who had now grown out of this unpretentious metaphor so much that he spent the day wondering at his own blindness; besides that he hardly remembered anything else about the day—except perhaps its dragging length during which they avoided rather than sought each other's look like those who had agreed about the one essential point and thought that the only important thing would be to protect each other and assuage their excruciating impatience in the forlorn hours ahead until their own had come, since they had scarcely ever been left alone, and if they ever had been, they could never feel they had been by themselves. So that by the time he put his arm through hers—it happened in a side street which they had turned into after leaving the Ministry and where they had hurried along on the pavement as strangers yards apart till the woman looked around, slowed down at last allowing Köves to catch up—their pent-up feelings had cooled and become numbed much like a limb gone dead.

"I've got my room not far from here," Köves said, sounding almost grim.

"Then I suggest we go to my place, I've got a flat," the secretary said in the same voice as Köves had so many times heard her say things concerning office matters over the phone.

But when they closed the door behind them they had just enough time to slip out of their clothes but none to make the bed; they slumped onto the multicoloured worn carpet, arms thrashing, bodies rolling over, panting, moaning, like two people who had been waiting for centuries, no, for thousands of years, for this moment, waiting and enduring, trampled down, clandestinely harbouring the hope, no matter how fond, even under the blows to their bodies and souls, that once—if only once—pleasure would make all their agony and anguish forgotten, or that once their pain would dissolve into pleasure, making them moan just as loudly as their pain had made them moan, having learnt all their lives nothing but to moan and groan.

Thus, as for the day and, later, the night that overtook them, much as Köves might remember the words, moods, touches, the various postures, he was much less able to recall the sequence and connections.

"What actually happened between you?" she asked but Köves had no recollection whether it was at the office, in the street, or in bed—for eventually they did make the bed and threw themselves into it as though into a moat or a padded dungeon, feeling in complete safety from the world outside and still able to get their own back on the world for the wrongs they had received from it with their wriggling bodies intertwined.

"Did he take you into his confidence? Did he let you into his secrets?"



"What secrets?" Köves demanded.

"That's his way," she said. "First he unburdens his feelings to you and then he kills you."

"He only read me one story of his," Köves protested.

"What was it about?"

"Rubbish. Can't even say," said Köves shrugging.

"Please try," the girl entreated him, and Köves made an effort but it was no easy thing of course, since he hadn't listened hard enough at the time and therefore he was unable to remember the story; what he was able to depict most vividly, however, to the girl's great amusement, in which, though, Köves seemed to detect (unless he was mistaken) an air of impatience, almost dismissal, was his consternation when in the afternoon of the previous day the press chief had asked him to his office where instead of the usual sheet of paper folded in four he had produced a sheaf of papers from his desk drawer. "I've written a story," he announced with a modest albeit somewhat provocative smile. "Ah, a story," Köves rejoiced but in fact he was alarmed. "Perhaps I should rather call it a ballad in prose," the boss corrected himself, his face looking somewhat reflective. Then Köves told the girl how the press chief put on his rarely worn glasses, adjusted his shirt cuffs, which had ridden up, it seemed, with an energetic jerk of his outstretched arms, straightened the sheaf of papers, cast another searching look at Köves, cleared his throat and began at last to read in an oily, sentimental voice, while he, Köves, who had acquired sufficient expertise how to assume the role of an attentive listener, positioned himself so that he could rest an elbow on the arm of the chair and bring his palm under his chin and before his mouth—to be better able to camouflage his yawns—and was mostly engaged in sizing up the quantity of the sheets in the press chief's hands, thinking with anguish all the while of the promise he had made to Sziklai to meet him earlier that day in the South Seas espresso bar. In this way, he irretrievably missed the title as he did the opening lines as well, and all he did remember was the nebulousness of the time of the story, the utter absurdity of the scene and the language, sham period of some sort, tortuous, or worse—downright incorrect, Köves thought. Briefly, it was about the press chief, no, it wasn't him, but the first person singular of the story—Köves tried to recall—a wanderer of some kind, who wanders in a desert, then all of a sudden stumbles on a tower (why a tower the secretary shouldn't ask him because it never transpired, said Köves) and he spies a woman in the tower (in fact, it was probably her song that enticed him there, it occurred to Köves), a lady, who descends to meet him and leads him into the garden, whose existence, needless to say, we have never been told before. Here, said Köves, follows



a full, better still, fulsome, description of the garden, the lawn, the mirrors of ponds, the fragrant, fleshy purple blooms thirstily drinking up the quivering dewdrops, and there is a fountain too, boldly spurting its jets skywards. Now then, he continued, while the lady leads him along the paths, the press chief, that is, the wanderer, who Köves could only picture as the short, neatly dressed press chief, now rigged out in an outlandish costume amidst the garden scenery, notices that the woman wears heavy shackles on her feet and on her wrists. He remarks upon them and promises to free her of them but, strangely, all she says laconically is this: "I love being shackled." Then they sit themselves down somewhere at the foot of some tropical shrub, whose high-sounding polysyllabic name Köves regrettably was unable to recall for the moment, perhaps it was magnolia but it could have been eucalyptus—the moon rises and in her pale light the press chief perceives that the woman's shoulders and breasts—somehow or other she has disrobed in the meantime—are disfigured by scars and welts, the marks of a whip. "Do you like the whip?" he asks her but she remains silent and merely looks at him enigmatically with her deep and dark eyes 'like the water of a well at night', Köves quoted verbatim. The press chief has a foreboding but by now he has developed a feeling of compassion, to use a mild and far from precise term, which suppresses his more sober considerations—so he starts kissing the scars of the woman, who rises to her feet and taking the wanderer's hand in her enigmatic way leads him back to the foot of the tower and there on the moonlit lawn succumbs to her passion. Here certain details follow—Köves made them out as if the press chief or wanderer was disappointed in his expectations of fulfilment, as if the woman's devotion was wanting in ardour. Before very long though, sombre light is shed on both this and his misgivings. For a tremendous shout is heard at this point and a burly, dark man appears in the entrance to the tower, brandishing a cat-o'-nine tails: he is the lord and master of the castle and its lady, and is likely to have seen all the goings-on from above, standing in one of the embrasures of the tower. There follow now cameos of treason, savagery, fornication, Köves warned the girl with exaggerated concern, meant as a joke of course. The lord of the house sets his 'retainers and bloodhounds' on the press chief. The woman implores him for mercy, first for both of them, then as the man raises the whip, only for herself, forgetting the man; and the lord lifts her and hugs her. The press chief, who has been grappling with the hounds and retainers all this while now catches a glance from the woman and reads in it compassion and something else besides: "stolen pleasure." Then his strength leaves him and surrenders him to the 'retainers and hounds'. Perhaps he dies—at least those two believe so. He can see and hear, however. He sees the wom-



an's smile, the movements of her hands as she caresses the man's arms, the muscles of his chest, even the whip; and he hears her voice extolling his virility and sees the man looking at the press chief's dead body and at his living lady with grim delight. And the woman, worked on, returns his gaze. The dark couple slump on the ground and try to love each other on the lawn glistening in the silvery moonlight next to the corpse of the press chief. But the man strives in vain and the woman tries all the tricks and secrets of love-making she has just learnt from the press chief. In the end, they scramble to their feet, crestfallen, shoulders stooping, with tears gleaming in their eyes. 'Still unable. . . ?' she asks softly. 'Still unable', he says with head bowed. He is about to lay his hand on the whip again in his desperation and anguish but the woman knocks it out of his hand. She takes off the shackles and cuffs and chains the man. Moreover, she threads a thin chain through his nostrils, lips and ears. He endures it all submissively, like one who has taken a beating. Then, holding his chains, she leads him into the house, up the tower, and the supposedly dead press chief can hear the clatter of the irons from above, from the casement to which she has fastened the lord of the castle.

Köves, who had been talking more and more haltingly for some time, fell silent and he may even have dozed off for a moment because he was startled by the girl's voice:

"So. . . ?" And Köves said that the story had virtually ended there. The man chained, the woman climbs the tower again and the press chief can hear her singing once more: there, that woman never sleeps, he thinks with alarm as he hurries off—for in the interval he has managed to pull himself together and escaped, eluding the vigilance of the retainers and the hounds, and he is roaming once again, nursing 'his lacerated wounds', out in the dismal desert—yet free at last.

"Free!" The secretary's sudden exclamation, sounding a bit too shrill, made Köves come to and almost frightened him.

"The miserable. . . !" she added bitterly. Köves, whose reason having once more begun to fail him—his spent body and benumbed senses demanded a rest, a deep, unconscious sleep as if stoned out of his mind—didn't know for the moment whether it was night falling or day breaking through the window, asked with tongue too lazy to roll in his mouth:

"What? Who?"

"You really don't know anything?" the secretary asked, and it seemed to her that Köves really knew nothing, nothing whatsoever.

"The current chairperson of the Supervisory Committee! . . . The slut! . . ." Her voice was shrill, a siren in the night. Köves felt the girl's face



wet and warm on his fingertips—it seemed she had buried her forehead and tearful eyes in his palm for a second but almost immediately withdrew them violently as though she wanted to hurl her excruciating agony away from her, and shook her head a few times, her flying hair, silken and perfumed, brushing against Köves's shoulder.

"How long have you been with us?" she said still choking as one fighting back her tears—"And you come and go as if you never belonged to us, as a complete stranger. That's what the boss said this morning and that's what I'm saying too."

"I can't do anything about it," Köves muttered. And, as one whose tongue is loosened by approaching sleep or some other befuddlement, he added with a light-hearted, almost casual determination: "I couldn't care less about you all."

"I believe you. There's nothing interesting about us," he heard the girl say in a muted, bitter voice, and although she was lying—in fact, had been lying for some time—beside him speechless and stiff, Köves didn't fall asleep, even though he hadn't come round completely; instead, he shifted his position, moved by some unconscious impulse and reached out until he got his palm over the female skin, at first resistant but gradually yielding and becoming more and more accommodating, and it seemed as if the warmth of the caressing fingertips was able to unfreeze the words in her throat, and she began to speak quietly:

"The current chairperson of the Supervisory Committee... You would be led to believe, wouldn't you, that it was some temporary honour that lasted just as long as someone else took over? You would think the word 'current' implied that, wouldn't you?"

"I would," Köves agreed and even nodded, presumably in vain, because it was too dark for the girl to register his compliance.

"Not in the least," she exclaimed in bitter and triumphant refutation. "Not at all! She is forever the current chairperson of the Committee, it's always her turn by accident, it has to be her, always her and no one else. It's been so for a long time now and will be for many years to come!... Whoever would dare contradict her husband?"

"And who's that?" asked Köves, more to fill the abrupt silence that called for his voice, a sign of his presence, than out of curiosity.

"The Minister's secretary," the girl answered quickly with the same bitterness as before but now her voice sounded almost vindictive with the joy of being in the know.

"Is there a Minister?" Köves said in wonderment but the girl seemed to have taken his remark with real resentment now.



"You can't ask that seriously," she said. "His picture is hung on the wall of every room, including ours, right above your head at that." Köves, who hadn't failed to notice those photographs, of course, even if, on the other hand, and perhaps just because, he had seen too much of them, he was only able to recall the face vaguely, as one remembers faces that come before one fleetingly in certain places at certain times but remind one only of those places and times rather than of the faces themselves: Köves thought the girl had misunderstood his question, but that what doubt he had really wanted to express in the first place he had perhaps forgotten; so to save face, he said only this:

"That's no proof of his existence."

"Oh, oh," the girl pooh-poohed, "so you're a doubter, are you? You want evidence because you feel like a fool if you're not suspicious and perhaps you're even proud of your mistrustfulness even while you haven't the slightest notion of what's going on, no idea whatever of anything!"

After this Köves fell silent, like someone put in his place, and listened to the girl's free-flowing voice, a glib lecture much like the swish and patter of lukewarm rain, at once refreshing and enfeebling.

The Minister does exist, and is very much a reality, and how! And still more real is his power—power at all as such. A string running in all directions and enmeshing everything and pulling everyone with it. There may be some people outside its reach, perhaps even invisible to some of them—Köves is one of these few, for example, he hasn't even an inkling of its existence. And not because he is a softy, far from it; she, the secretary, has been keeping an eye on him and was satisfied that he was anything but a simpleton. But then what could Köves mean? The secretary wondered and is wondering to this day, she admitted. Of course, it's a big question whether anyone can live like that, like an outsider, at least for any duration of time. One thing is certain: Köves is not likely to amount to much in the future but perhaps he will retain his independence—and here, after some fumbling in the dark the secretary pressed a finger on Köves's mouth as though she inferred from his breathing that he was going to flare up as a result of her caustic remarks. For, the girl went on, there is something appealing about that independence, no question about it—could anyone need better proof than the fact that Köves is now lying in her bed? No one could, could they? Köves probably hasn't the vaguest idea of how vulnerable, exposed and defenceless he is. That morning, when he had that 'humiliation', which had been in the pipeline anyway with everybody guessing and expecting so, except of course Köves, well, what happened that morning was no more than what was bound to happen, she, the secretary, still felt real pain, yes, bodily



pain in the strict sense of the word, and felt sick, but, strangely, it was this nausea that had told her what she really thought of him.

"What?" Köves asked sharply, challengingly as one who protests in advance, not in the first place at the girl's conception of him but at the very idea of her thinking about him; and after a pause the girl replied, as if she wanted to make sure that Köves's hostile voice died away even in the farthest corner of the room.

"I meant to say you're innocent," she said.

"What?!" retorted Köves immediately. "Do you think that anyone not guilty is necessarily innocent?"

"Oh no," the girl answered. "Since the way you live is a big enough crime, your innocence is that of a child: ignorance." Köves remained silent this time as if he was looking for counterarguments but the time he took called into question any refutation he might produce. For Köves didn't seem to be aware—she went on—that his position, she cast about for the right expression to make Köves realize his plight, was the shakiest, the most insecure, he being the most readily expendable in the whole office. The press chief—she took count—is indispensable, right? not just because he was the boss but because he wrote the Minister's speeches—she wouldn't be surprised if Köves didn't know about that either. There!—she triumphed—of course he did not know. Perhaps he'd never heard the Minister speak nor that he ever made speeches. Now the Minister's speeches would actually have to be written by his secretary but the Minister chose to have been them written by the press chief, in fact, the press department was maintained for that purpose, implicitly if not explicitly; naturally, the department had its own job to do as well, but that was taken care of by the senior press officer. In short, that person was indispensable, for he, Köves, admittedly did very little to render him expendable. And as far as she was concerned, well, there was always a need for a secretary in every department, though that made only the job indispensable not the person, and she had little doubt that "there would be some who'd gladly get rid of her"—don't let's inquire into the reasons for the present—if, well, if it was not the case that she wrote those speeches for the Minister. She well knew that Köves made a disbelieving face in the dark but she assured him that it didn't take much skill as the Minister's speeches were all made to the same old pattern—though of course one ought to know that pattern rather well and not just anybody was capable of even that—it was something like filling in the blanks of a printed form. Now, of course, with that the speech wasn't finished yet: the secretary did only the "basic" draft, that is, she collected, systematized and roughed out the material, which she then forwarded to the press chief, who made his



comments, on the basis of which she reworked the draft and handed it again to the press chief, who made, this time personally, the changes he still found necessary to make and then sent it on to the Minister's secretary. He likewise studied the whole stuff, made his own comments, returned it to the press chief, the press chief gave it back to the secretary, who forwarded it to the Minister, who made his own comments in turn, sent it back to the secretary, the secretary to the press chief, the press chief to her, from whom it started to go its way up again, maybe stopping for shorter or longer periods of time, vacillating between secretary and press chief like a quivering compass needle before it finally reached the Minister once again—and it was possible that it would set out again on its way back down, then up again. . . . The girl gave a hoarse chuckle at this point as if she'd never before dared to see the whole process in this light as she did in the dark right now: as a ludicrous and pointless climbing up and down on the ladder of officialdom, which she would soon perceive again in the light of an indisputably serious procedure, since that was how she had and wanted to see it, exactly as she would put on her dress, a different look, and the secretary's invulnerable armour upon rising from the bed tumbled by love-making—and her naked body touched Köves's as though that fundamental recognition had awakened in her a sensuous desire, which she had to suppress with a quickening breath. In a word—she resumed a little later—the three of them were entirely able to cope with the work at the office and Köves had been taken on solely to win the favour of somebody or other in a hurry, if she remembered well, it might have been the fire brigade.

"Yes, the fire brigade," Köves confirmed.

"And still, you haven't done anything to consolidate your position," the girl reproached him.

"What should I have done?" inquired Köves as one who had at last an interest awakening in his own matters, if only too late, thus not so much with an eagerness for activity as with the listless curiosity of resigned remorse.

"It's going about with your eyes open and getting your bearings among the strings of power," she tried to enlighten him.

"Is that it?" muttered Köves as one dejected by this proposed mission, even in retrospect, even without having tried to live up to it. "And what should I have gained?" he inquired all the same. For example, she answered, he might have seen the point of the boss's story. He would have learnt, what everybody knew, that there was a power struggle going on between the press chief and the Minister's secretary and also who the instrument of this rivalry was. She would like to know if Köves was aware of that at least—of



course he wasn't. Well, the Supervisory Committee's respectable current chairperson and at the same time the whorish wife of the Minister's secretary, yes, it was through her that they had each other by the short hairs, it was literally through her body that they clashed. Of course, at least apparently, the secretary's position was incomparably more favourable, both as the woman's husband and as the Minister's secretary, who could simply wipe out or crush the press chief—on the other hand, and all three of them were aware of this, he could not just because he was in a position to do so. She, the secretary, suspected the face Köves was making in the dark now: an ignorant face because he was unable to make head or tail of all this, his mind working differently—that was no disparagement on her part, on the contrary, she appreciated, and in a way had a great respect for, the way his mind worked—but then again, power was just like that, it worked like that: if power was impossible to exercise, it ceased to be power. Oh, what did Köves know about it—nothing, less than nothing. One day, for example, the press chief had received a cruel break-up letter, which trampled into the dust all the feeling they'd shared. He had no idea what had happened and wandered about in the office pale as a ghost, unable to conceal his agony and his face twitching now and then with suffering and humiliation. He tried to phone her (or have someone phone her) but never found her in, or was told she was out when she wasn't; she didn't go into the Ministry perhaps for days, until, say, a week later, came a call or a letter in which she let him know that every word of her previous letter had been dictated by her husband, the secretary, who had found out about them from a telltale piece of paper or a piece of information that had reached his ear—and she had written what he had had dictated to her only under duress, exclusively to avert a momentary disaster but every word she'd written had given her torments of hell. Very well, but in the meantime the press chief had been put to the rack too: although it wasn't the first time, oh no, nor was it the second—still he'd believed the letter, fantasizing that he'd been betrayed, deserted, conspired against and that the secretary's retaliatory wrath might strike now any moment; he visualized them being together in the conjugal bed trying to squeeze out fresh stimuli for their spent ardour as though from his existence and maybe had been vilifying his name at the climax of their pleasure; what's more—even though he could not have seriously believed it, despite the precedents galore—he had even imagined that they would murder him, yes, he had even played with that idea and embellished in glaring colours the scene when the secretary returned from him with blood-stained hands and made a clean breast to his wife, who only said: "Thank you." Yes, that was the kind of stuff his imagination indulged in, so it hurt



to see how he'd been torturing himself. How helpless he sometimes seemed, you didn't know what to do, how to comfort him, how to help him on his feet again, whereas it was nothing more than the comedy of power. That was how it worked and looked like when it was exercised, those were its laws, and she, the secretary, was very keen to know whether the press chief loved the Minister's secretary's wife, as he perhaps believed himself, or—as she'd been led to believe by much brain-racking and the ruminations of many a sleepless night—rather the prey that the woman represented. For what would she be worth if he didn't have to steal her from the Minister's secretary, and conversely, what would his wife be worth to the Minister's secretary but for the continual suspicions, for the instances of catching her in the act, for his being able to order the woman like a whining dog to his feet every now and then, and but for his being able to give the press chief a kick on every such occasion? And as for the woman, what would all this mean to her unless she felt that she held two men in her power so that the three of them had got themselves entangled so much they hardly knew which of them was up and which down, which of them controlled whom and why they did it and whether they were doing it only because they'd once begun it and could no longer have done anything else? . . .

So that was the way it was, and anyone ignorant of it, anyone falling for the appearances, well, they were sure to pay a high price . . . like Köves fared with that short story . . .

"You will have said something about it," the girl asked or rather stated.

"Certainly," Köves answered, since that was what the press chief had expected of him, that's why he had read him the story.

"And what did you say?" the girl insisted on knowing. Köves, who didn't seem to recollect much, replied that he'd said practically nothing except meaningless phrases, conventional compliments, something to the effect that it was interesting, original and the like.

"Nothing else?" The girl sounded skeptical.

"Yes,"—Köves's memory seemed to be improving—"I told him I thought the story was symbolic yet authentic with his personal experience coming across."

"There, you see," the girl's voice was all triumph, mild and reassuring, "He could well have believed that you had seen through his secret and now he'd lain himself open and put himself totally at your mercy"—the girl spoke in an almost mollicoddling voice and her hand, finding Köves's face in the dark, caressed it like a little boy's. "There, there, your ignorance," she said with gentle reproval.



"Yes," said Köves, "it seems that I'm much less interested in him than you are"—and now the hand stopped and withdrew from his face as though with that remark Köves had pulled out of their mutual anxieties, their mutual subjection, and struck out on his own, thus offending the girl.

"How much you know about him!" he went on nevertheless and his voice betrayed more admiration than surprise—"You seem to know him as one can only know one's torturer," he added.

"My torturer...? What an idea! How dare you say such a thing?" she asked indignant, almost offended as one can only be offended at the truth.

"And so what if it were so?" she said later with a casual, almost contemptuous confidentiality into which the hours of their intimacy seemed to have precipitated her: "Should I perhaps resign myself to it? Accept being trampled down and crushed?"

But all this probably happened in the morning when the light of day appeared to restore order, which was to separate them and dispose them to their respective places far apart, and suddenly they were sizing each other up as strangers, almost as enemies, as those liquidating a foredoomed joint undertaking by the sobering light of day—a near enough description of how Köves felt, still stupefied with sudden waking and hurried dressing while the girl, freshly scented and impeccably dressed, stood before him cool and dazzling like a drawn sword (the image just occurred to Köves), and urged him to hurry up and leave for fear they might arrive in the Ministry at the same time.

"You are awfully ambitious," Köves said or rather complained as he was trying to find a final misplaced article of clothing—perhaps his necktie, perhaps his jacket—"You are consumed by ambition. What do you want after all?" he asked, moved less by curiosity than by a desire to fill the awkward time before getting completely dressed.

But the girl mistook his intention because she answered him, overemotionally, impulsively, confidingly and contemptuously, just as before:

"I want him," she said. "I want him back", and suddenly turned her back on Köves, who saw her shoulders quiver and immediately after heard her burst into a sob which she suppressed just as quickly. But as soon as he tried to come nearer, she cried: "Don't you dare touch me!" and added with sudden anger: "Get going!" At which Köves felt he didn't deserve it, since he hadn't hurt her, and if he had, he hadn't meant to. "Don't you think I'll walk arm in arm with you to the Ministry, where there's a dismissal notice waiting for you."

"Dismissal notice?" Köves said with astonishment, though it wasn't the information itself but its unexpectedness: the setting, the time and the oc-



casion that surprised him. "How do you know that?" he asked a little later, and he hadn't the slightest intention of leaving.

"I typed it yesterday morning," the girl said, turning now to Köves, her voice softening, with an almost embarrassed expression of sympathy on her face.

Köves soon found himself in a strange staircase and then in the street, where for a few moments he was unable to make up his mind which way to go.

*Translated by László T. András*



GYÖRGY PETRI

POEMS

'THIS LIFE OF OURS BLED DRY'

This ludicrous life of ours  
bled dry  
this life verging on shame  
*De profundis* from the depths of a puddle  
friendship turning into its opposite  
betrayal given a shamelessly instant gloss  
the no man's land between disbelief and reason  
the nights between a full and an empty bottle  
if there is no way to shorten all this  
if the hand is too scared to speed an exit  
if the stomach is turned by the smell of gas  
if affected desire for the bathtub of antiquity  
unprincipled hope  
cunningly false promises  
the nearness the memory of a familiar body  
or perhaps sheer curiosity  
which is merely the ingrained craving  
of the mind for facts  
corrupts despair again and again  
if our all-too-human belonging  
to sleep to waking to the beating of the heart  
if the patience of the everyday  
weakens the tragic resolve  
which allowed to mature would no longer have truck  
with the feelings of the average man  
who is but the sum of apologetics and anger



a mixture of forward lurching and recoil  
 if the heating up of the moment  
 when tomorrow and the next week turn to ash  
 cannot happen  
 if over this world of what the eye takes in  
 the judgement of fire does not flare with a white flame  
 then the fight  
 then not even an inch  
 then backing step by step  
 no slither of self-deception  
 never the blur  
 between silence  
 and silent acknowledgement  
 between helplessness and resignation  
 then our silence  
 is eyes not turned away  
 then our presence  
  
 and let them decide  
 what they can do to us.

*Translated by Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri*

## THE UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE ISSUES A STATEMENT

Four special government commissions and  
 five professors of dialectics  
 are studying the mysterious  
 innate potency of prices.  
 According to the official view, prices  
 by nature can 'never get enough of it'  
 —the very sight of throngs of housewives,  
 just a whiff of them in packed line-ups  
 and like crazed Casanovas they get a hard on;  
 no tut-tutting makes them bow their heads  
 (pleading only arouses them the more).  
 Wages always toe the line, though; they  
 don't grow, but do at least exist.



So far, the mysterious working commissions  
 in one hundred and nine working dinners,  
 three hundred and thirty-seven working lunches,  
 two hundred and forty working coffee-breaks  
 (gobbling up all *that* was quite a job of work!)  
 conferred in thirty special rooms  
 for a total of twenty million zlotys  
 not counting per diem allowances.

But impatient housewives, those  
 crowds of old bags, grandmothers mostly  
 complain all the time of varicose veins  
 and can't see beyond shopping-bag politics.  
 Howling "meat-meat-meat!" they  
 stir their husbands up as well,  
 crutch-brandishing grandpas.  
 Then babies start squalling.

One simply cannot work  
 in such an uproar! For the last time,  
 housewives, we appeal to your basic  
 commonsense—Shut up! That goes for  
 husbands and babies, too. Or else!  
 We cannot be responsible  
 for the measures you may regret  
 you drove us to take.  
 We hold the key to the situation  
 and won't shrink from using it  
 to lock up, if necessity  
 dictates, the people.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*



## POSTCARD

The initiative  
 rests with the wall. Only  
 on the rebound does our turn come.  
 And if ball goes right through wall?  
 Bad enough just thinking about it.  
 We're sticking out the winter here.  
 Lower East Europe's request-stop.  
 Postal address—Vienna.

All the best to you, Thomas,  
 (no tom-fool doubting, now!)  
 Spouse sends greetings, too,

Gyuri

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## ONION SPEAKING

Just skin through and through, even  
 when I'm sliced crosswise, diced cubewise.  
 Make mincemeat of me! It's still the Nothing  
 you're cutting which I can't contain. Not  
 a thing within; I'm simply all skin.  
 Skin's skin, even skin of skin's skin,  
 even. . . Out of skin, let's stop.  
 Thick-skinned bragging's not for me. Besides,  
 it can't mean anything to you. I hear eggs  
 being cracked. . . Sacrilegious electric light  
 pierces egg's night. So your rooster—  
 abolishing hand doesn't waver,  
 beating the Seed with a fork?  
 —Enough! The fat is on the fire.  
 Executioner, do your duty—into the fat with me,  
 Symbol Gobbler! Cook me glassy  
 according to taste.



Egg, old friend, have no regrets,  
 passing away in such an age: when man  
 to Nature's voice no more inclines,  
 mute already are Brook and Grove, and into that  
 quintessentially unclean quadruped's fat  
 are cast Ultimate Things  
 —our species.  
 Better for us (no use assailing stopped ears)  
 with faltering hearts, to be as one  
 in the omelette's great martyrdom.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## IN MEMORIAM PÉTER HAJNÓCZY

### 1

My simple, singular, old friend is gone:  
 not to be seen on this restless earth again.  
 For earth is jealous and will not submit  
 to sending back one so much part of it.

### 2

Forgive me for having troubled you.  
 (As if anyone'd care  
 a jot for such scruples over there. . .)  
 But of those left here so few

phoning me up would find me  
 so irritable-anxious for their hello:  
 I'll never meet such another silken buffalo;  
 though invariably my life is intertwined



with fluffly news, flimsy messages,  
 loggorrhoeic specimens, supernumeraries,  
 several 'imposing cut-outs', several one-day lays,

and my projects, my pretexts.  
 Well, rest in peace there: time goes on its way.  
 That's quite enough rhyming on pain now for one text.

## 3

I have more and more cravings,  
 and fewer and fewer days  
 to tell off to the last one.  
 By 2030 (a generous estimate)  
 we shall—with our wives and our enemies,  
 those who keep eyes on us and those who pant with us—  
 all of us, all together, all enrich the soil,  
 the weird deposit bulldozers scoop up out of it.  
 A child, jubilant, knocks  
 soil riddled with fine roots out of your eye-socket:  
 'Dad, can I take this home? Was it a man or a lady?'

## 4

As regards public-sector cadavers, this year's  
 crop of corpses has been truly meagre.  
 The Lionel Longones and Frank Fuckknowswhos  
 claim one another, each the other's "Own Dead".  
 Old gourmet of destruction, what a wry face you'd pull  
 to go through the same self-serchoice menu  
 for maybe the tenth time.  
 The populace has been dying  
 at the usual rate. Those who work, they in the end find bliss.  
 The latest thing is private mausolea. I find them less and less funny.  
 You gone, I have taken to browsing  
 through the deaths column more attentively  
 and reading the marble ID's they usually have  
 set up on the resting estates.



The servile soil produces its yews and cypresses,  
 bells ring, summoning us to follow someone,  
 on either side of the road there are fat snails  
 dragging their backs. The priest is about to utter  
 inanities, the two fat altar boys  
 fidget like bacon-rind sizzling in the pan.  
 God gives the sun no cloudy lining,  
 unmoved he hearkens to his feeble servant,  
 he beholds the pinky whiteness of women  
 swaddled in layers of black sweat down to their knickers,  
 listens to hoarse male singing, sees experts exchanging looks  
 as they pat into shape the earth-cake decked with flowers. He's trying  
 to understand something of us. We, dispersing later,  
 buy savoury nibbles and the Evening News, our ladies'  
 fine moustaches get sticky with liqueur,  
 in the tram the widow wobbles, all puffed up—  
 a busy, white-cuffed paw (her consoler) groping toward her.  
 We stop off at the (Imitation) Marble Bride and have a few more.  
 It is all properly done.  
 I can't tell you much else, Péter. Nothing remarkable  
 —especially seen from there: through your specks of dust...

*Translated by Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri*



## IN THE WINTER OF THE EIGHTIES

Forty-nine  
 years old come this current  
 mini-epoch's end. I've no idea  
 what style of bikini or psychic ornamentation  
 will be in fashion then.  
 It'll be ages  
 since I was young.  
 By then a moth-eaten old man  
 making what kind of deals?  
 What language will  
 his newspaper be in?  
 Will he sleep beside the same woman  
 beside whom he awoke today?

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## EXTANT POEM BY VITURBIUS ACER

What lies in store for me, for thee?  
 Do not ask or speak.  
 In the shade of the fir-shrubs that reappear  
 scruffily year by year in their wooden tubs,  
 let us drink up our beer.

Oh knock it back, Leuconoe,  
 no blank gaping into froth that's ebbed.

*Scire nefas*—see,  
 above the caisson of the underground  
 the grey cement-mixers hum again

—recalling to mind those times—

By the time your blond hair  
 is dirty with old age,  
 the streets will have changed. There'll be  
 a modern frame for the boring, repellent picture.



By spring the new war-highway will be ready.  
 Now like a clattering chariot, January  
 (whereat, punitive hoar-frost on the trees)  
 draws near the grovelling provinces.

Now all those who once wanted a future  
 jerk themselves off into thin air . . .

Let us withdraw here under the awnings  
 for another beer!

For hark! the rain thuds down.

*Translated by Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri*

## LOVERS

On the split-open honey-  
 ooze plum, a bee is dying.  
 Together  
 seething, rotting  
 goldened, blackened  
 in the abandoned garden.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## ELEGY

A longer people-free autumn would suit me,  
 meditating here as the year rusts away;  
 on my walks, collecting the walnuts others  
 have dropped beside the path, plus the meagre  
 crop from my 'own' hazel bushes.  
 But it's not to be. The city limits'  
 familiar wretchedness closes in  
 with a bailiff's stoney-faced solemnity.  
 While taking inventory of autumn's properties



polite persistence turns to surprise  
 at the positively profuse profusion  
 lady bountiful has indulged herself in . . .  
 I too, briefly, was here. In summer's  
 sky-depth galleries, demolition charges go off  
 with audible rumblings, collapsing  
 the star-mines of August.  
 Walnuts rattle on the roof, roll down into  
 eaves-troughs. Frost, sleet, snow—  
 here's an exquisite brain rotting for  
 as long as the house is ours (or until the  
 cistern's cleaned, if it crosses someone's mind).  
 You'll be feeling moody in the train  
 (so will the wife). Wending our way once again

and back again. I'm fascinated by  
 these multi-instrumental means,  
 such a cortège of clay-cold ends  
 —bathing suit, Wittgenstein, Spanish dictionary,  
 almond oil—all these preparations, for what?  
 (these only the things I left upstairs).  
 There's enough here. I might stay—might go,  
 pumping each other's hand, idiot guest  
 and over-solicitous host, standing  
 in the hallway: "Well then, then we'll" . . .  
 "Next year then, if we're still here."  
 Time we weren't.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## ELECTRA

They imagine it's political deviousness  
 bothers me, that it's what befell Mykene.  
 Cute sensitive Chrysothemis my kid sister  
 is worried I'm getting too worked up over  
 moral issues; she fancies father's absurd  
 death is something I'll never get over.



The hell with him, blundering old sperm-spurter,  
 child-murderer! The steps down to the bath  
 were too soapy, the axblade too sharp.  
 But to have Aegistheus rule, that barber's  
 apprentice face of his swagger around our wretched city,  
 and our own mother like some double-chinned old whore  
 flirt with him, simpering—while everyone pretends  
 not to notice, even not to know! Pure gold  
 like a lie above us the refulgent  
 Sun—counterfeit coin of the gods!  
 So that's why! That's it! Choking on disgust  
 I eat and sleep revenge.  
 And this disgust is stronger than any god.  
 Already I can see Mykene overgrown  
 with the mildew of madness and decay.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

#### EASTERN WHOREOPEAN INTELLECTUAL

Sometime  
 somewhere  
 he wanted something  
 or would have  
 but they barked at him  
 or didn't even have to  
 yet supposedly looked  
 at him severely enough  
 which is how he became what  
 subconsciously he always wanted to be  
 shat-in  
 soup

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*



## GOODBYE

In attitudes more and more modest and aloof  
 you seek me out in dreams.  
 The last time, in ankle-length blue  
 polka-dot skirt, you were standing before  
 the window of the second-hand bookstore  
     in Népszínház street.  
 "Poor Anton Webern," you whispered.  
 "By a drunken American non-com.  
*Maustot* . . . What does it mean, 'mouse dead'?"  
 you whispered—then, "Don't look at  
     all these people.  
 I'm not alive either; so I'll go now,"  
     you whispered, Sara.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## GRACE

He with whom fate so graciously  
 toys, lightened and serenely  
   empty, is set  
 teetering by death on a fingertip,  
     eggshell on a water-jet.

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

## K.S.

That woman died  
 fourteen years ago  
 that young woman  
 who crosses our room at night  
 casually tidying here and there  
 roaming in and out  
 picking up pocketing this or that  
 things I can't find by morning



or she stands against the wall  
 though she's dead  
 staring horrified  
 as if before a firing squad  
 begins to undress  
 taking off what she  
 had on when alive  
 panties stockings  
 and I'm begging her not to  
 it's inconceivable here now

she throws something over  
 the blue-lace protective brassiere  
 backing away flinching sideways  
 as if afraid I'll strike her  
 that 'camelhair' jacket  
 clutched around her  
 shivering  
 "Why don't you have the heat on?" she asks  
 "Why are you still alive?"

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*

# I

God has just this one  
 rotten grape  
 which the old gentleman  
 reserves for himself  
 in the frosty garden

*Translated by Kenneth McRobbie*



## THREE VIEWS ON CENTRAL EUROPE

PÉTER ESTERHÁZY

### CENTRAL EUROPE AS WOUND, OBSCURITY, MISTAKE, CHANCE, AND HOPELESSNESS

**I**wonder if countries exist that are different from ours: the one we are from, the ones all of us present here are from, have one basic concept, one basic experience, one catchword in common: untruth.

We all live in countries of the untruth, in operetta countries. Untruths there are so total, so intense that they are almost beautiful. This beauty has been described with painful gratification by the East European grotesque. And this grotesque has now come to pass.

We are now fed up, fed up with this "see-saw of appearance and reality," this shining and foul hide-and-seek in which we were, and still are, the guinea-pigs. We are fed up, and that's the end of the grotesque.

The biggest of the untruths says that we exist. That these countries exist. That there is a *we*.

Well, there is no such thing. We have been dismantled (shredded, shattered, smashed). Mind you, if there is only the *I*, there is trouble. If you are alone, you are defenceless more than anyone.

A noted expert on Central Europe, maybe Kundera or Konrád, maybe both, has said that Central Europe is a dream. The idea is not only beautiful and witty, it is constructive too. In any case, it is dear to me.

At last there is something that depends on us, on our imagination, on our talents. We may as well dream of freedom planted here. And then, *then*—and this is the point I am trying to make—we might even regain the *we* that we have lost. We, Central Europeans could be the first to attempt to say, and perhaps it will be easier for others to say after us: we Hungarians, we Slovenes, we Serbs and so on.

And here it is especially easy for me to say that *we*, we the writers, the collective *we* of the fraternity: this is my sentimentalism, the sentimentalism of an artisan.

Our countries are (a)changing. We were convinced, at least I was, that this manner of telling untruths that I had come to know would never ever,

Acceptance address given when awarded the Vilenica 88 prize in Ljubljana, Slovenia, Yugoslavia.



to the end of the world, change, that this consolidated push and pull—rotten to the core, but we have seen worse than that—would always be there. Lo and behold: it has come to change, as can be seen from Moscow to this place. As the new joke goes: though this be method, yet there is madness in it. What it means, how genuine it is and where it leads is another thing that I will not touch on now.

An excited situation such as this is not propitious for literature. In times like this, thinking must be quick and practical. This is the time, I believe, for the political best-sellers. Which, for that matter, is a genre of great importance in the life of a country—it clarifies, liberates, unveils, and battles. Literature is a freedom fight too, though not quite like that: it's slower, more namby-pamby, more of a gawker, more ridiculous.

Some of us here were present at a literary buzz-about held in Lisbon earlier this year, and can recall how Joseph Brodsky, with (deep Russian) incomprehension and perhaps irritation, reacted to the idea of Central European identity. He did not wind his way into my heart for that. On coming home, however, I read one of his essays, and from then on he could go and say any asininity about Central Europe: that essay is brilliant. I'm going to quote him now:

"Language and, presumably, literature are things that are more ancient and inevitable, more durable than any form of social organization. The revulsion, irony, or indifference often expressed by literature towards the state is essentially a reaction of the permanent—better yet, the infinite—against the temporary, against the finite. To say the least, as long as the state permits itself to interfere with the affairs of literature, literature has the right to interfere with the affairs of the state. A political system, a form of social organization, as any system in general, is by definition a form of the past tense that aspires to impose itself upon the present (and often on the future as well); and a man whose profession is language is the last one who can afford to forget this. The real danger for a writer is not so much the possibility (and often the certainty) of persecution on the part of the state, as it is the possibility of finding oneself mesmerized by the state's features, which, whether monstrous or undergoing changes for the better, are always temporary." \*

Let us not forget that. We ought to dream up a Central Europe, dream up our country—and at the same time break away from them and act ridiculous, be an eccentric, a good-for-nothing and useless and insignificant and small, in other words, not forgetful of the fact that we have a calling for the Whole, an invitation for the Whole.

\* Nobel prize acceptance address. December 8, 1987.



OTTÓ ORBÁN

A MESSAGE ON THE RUINS

A world that is quickly changing? A society that is quickly changing?  
Naturally.  
Let us get hold of somewhere a map of the world of 1939, not to speak of one of the world of 1910. Where is the Austro-Hungarian Empire? Where is the British Empire? Where is Hitler's Thousand-Year Reich?

In our unbalanced world only one thing seems to be stable, the utopia the previous century made of our century: thus in our time, civilized man progresses over onwards his goal, the fair future. After a major war, man takes stock and his optimism immediately returns. Today we know more than we did yesterday, tomorrow we will know more than we do today. There is no modern form of which there is not a more modern. There is no tall building which is without a taller. Yesterday surrealism and ocean liners, today op-art and air-traffic control. Today the Empire State Building, tomorrow the World Trade Center. The day after tomorrow? The day after tomorrow, we will look back on this whole modern circus from the vantage-point of post-modernism. Those poor dupes! Our poor old idiot parents!

Meanwhile, the new empires are doing well, thank you very much. There are, of course, some problems but, all in all, the situation can be called balanced and the progress is striking even in respect to them. Yesterday it was the black smoke of the crematoria which rose to the sky, today only an orange-coloured powder rains down from above. You don't stand out in it—that is the secret. Thus only the leaves wither on the branch.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not want to issue some kind of Rousseau-like order to about face. I do have a sense of humour which prevents me

An address given at the 52nd Congress of International P. E. N., in Seoul, South Korea, August 1988.



from appearing before you as a prophet of ecology and from thundering to you that the oceans are being polluted, the earth is suffocating in litter and that Alzheimer's disease is caused by over-exposure to action films.

I want to speak of something else, of another way of measuring time. I am a Hungarian writer who lives in Hungary. This country, in western terms, is located in Eastern Europe; in our definition, it is to be found in the eastern part of Central Europe. Please do not think that the latter term is only a quasi-scholarly piece of hair-splitting. Nor even that the question is only related to the political situation of today. Nor even that it is a question that concerns only a small nation speaking a strange language—a kind of Hungarian complex to be treated by a good psychoanalyst. I am not only speaking of the Hungarian sense of time, but of that of the Austrians, the Czechs, the Poles, the South Slavs and Rumanians too. If we think of Kafka simply as a German writer and cannot see his similarity with Jaroslav Hašek, a Czech writer also born in Prague, and if we cannot understand that Kafka's Josef K. and Hašek's good soldier Švejk are both wandering in the same incomprehensible labyrinth, one in a nightmarish dizziness, the other in a ridiculous simple-mindedness, then we are deficient both in our knowledge of literature—and of the world we live in. Our eyes cannot see. We cannot sense the thick vegetation out of which sprang such plants as Musil, Freud, and Schoenberg, to simply mention only names known all over the world. We cannot see in front of our noses, although we almost bang our noses against this rickety haunted castle, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which is about to rot away and explode at the same time, ready for its due extinction, which failed to seize the chance of becoming the unitary state for Central Europe. All we can see is a heap of letters and we can really regret not having taken part in a conference not long ago, where recognized experts argued as to whether there is a Central Europe and a Central European spirit. Whether there existed the weave of mad conflicts which, apart from giving our century many splendid individuals, also gave us two world wars.

"Ferryland" said the great Hungarian poet of the early twentieth century, Endre Ady, of his country, constantly crossing between East and West. I would call Central Europe a delta, like the mouth of an enormous South American river, both river in sea and sea in river: nowhere can a firm line be drawn, everything is a total temporariness, an improvisation of the tidal bore, secret underwater currents, and foaming maelstroms.

This maelstrom is my native land. My sense of time also comes from there. A world that is quickly changing? A society that is quickly changing? That is understanding it.

What have I not seen here over fifty years? A feudal kingdom without a



king? Liberalism within feudalism? An open fascist dictatorship? War communism in peace time? Stalinist bureaucracy? Reform socialism? Acceptance? Rebellion? War? Communal execution? Communal helpfulness? Mausoleum for murderers? For victims? Blood in all quantities? Happiness? Meanness? Heroism? The triumph of more than one spirit of the age?

Just imagine that we want to do some repair work on a bicycle and we spin a wheel to see if it is balanced. Viewed from the side, the spokes of a fast turning wheel make a solid shining wheel of metal. So many and so fast are the changes around us that they create a sense of security. They constitute something more constant, which we might call the spirit of the people, the character of the nation, the unity of traditions, of culture or what we will: it is all the same because this is all of these and none of these. Even in its non-physical existence, it is a heavy and slothful creature, hardly moving as much as a hand span in a century; it counterbalances the events, it is the conservatism of protein-synthesis, the force that preserves its own kind.

As a citizen of a country whose industry has many problems, I can say that of all industry, the least efficient branch is history. Tons of blood are wasted in return for a ridiculously small gain in infrastructure; consequently, the smallest change is deadly important for us, since the price we have to pay for it is shocking.

Is it a catch that comes from relativity?

In fact it is more its life-buoy.

Having learnt this lesson, the writer cannot believe any more that he must dissolve himself completely in an ideology. Nor that, after so many failures of our community-spirited century, the future lies in unlimited selfishness. Suspiciously and in a state of shock, the writer may trust only in himself, in his instinctive ability to show the two-fold passing of time.

In other words, in his own craft.

In even a short sentence which can cast a long shadow when it is well written.

István Örkény (1912-1979), a brilliant Hungarian novelist and playwright, invented at the end of the fifties, when he was black-listed from publication, the one-minute short story, one that combines the humoresque with prose poetry and philosophical essay. Presumably—to use his own wincing style—he invented this story under the influence of Nescafé, since he spent the fifties working as a chemist. The most memorable of these one-minute stories is *Budapest*, which is a piece one page in length on how his beloved city is destroyed and deserted after a nuclear bomb is dropped on it, on how life there is paralysed and on the disappearance of all voices save that of mice. Mice, as well as surviving the catastrophe, also multiply beyond all



imagination to cover the entire city in their enormous velvet stream. When all is death, silence and mice, a message appears on a pile of stones opposite the Opera: "Mice extermination—bring your own bacon for the traps. Mrs Varsányi."

This is a philosophy condensed into a joke, whose seriousness is guaranteed by the deep knowledge of the place and its people that radiates from the joke.

We can make a good guess as to who Mrs Varsányi is. Literally she is called in Hungarian Mrs Dr Varsányi. It's a long-standing tradition in Hungary that a married woman is known by her husband's name and title with the addition of a simple suffix to this. By which the woman loses both her surname and given name. Women have been fighting against this crude machismo for a long time, by, for instance, distinguishing their own doctorate by placing the title *after* their married name. In so doing, the wicked humour of my native city refers to these emancipated women as "a doctor from before and behind." Mrs Dr Varsányi is not such. She is merely a doctor "from before," the wife of a doctor—physician or lawyer—a gentlewoman, a lady. Since she feels fit to mention this fact even after the world has been destroyed, she is obviously a goose. She is the sort of woman who complained in the thirties about her problems with a stupid domestic servant. However, she is also a woman who, in 1945, if her home had not come down around her ears, crawls, covered in soot and brick dust, out of the air-raid shelter to start creating a new world with all the imperturbability of a cat.

In which era, after which war, from which cellar should such a woman not crawl out?

The circumstances may change but the essence scarcely does.

As writers, all we can do is to sit here amid the latest ruins of the always unmet promises of endless times: we wait for a message on a pile of rubble:

"Millennium creation—bring your own ideology for tailoring.

Dr Mankind."

And if it is not he who bears the message, we may think, shiftily, it will be his wife.

*Translated by Peter Doberty*



## FIVE THESES ON THE DIALECTIC OF A PROXIMITY

by

GYÖRGY SEBESTYÉN

Since the Age of the Enlightenment a number of intellectuals of Austria and Hungary have made efforts to interpret the proximity of the two countries in a sober way. They remained isolated and their considerations were not able to shape the *Zeitgeist*. Their position was similar to that of a violinist who sounds strings strung across a board without any resounding body. The playing of the fiddler remains without an echo. Ingrained prejudices in which earlier experiences lived in a rudimentary form, genuine or assumed political interests with their mythopoetic power, traditions of the social structure, and the imago of their own identity proved to be all-powerful. The time for sober considerations appears to have arrived, and the historic moment should be seized.

It is obvious that three great myths and the feelings associated with them had to collapse in order to create room for an approach relying on facts, which to a growing degree might secure an echo, i.e. an effect:

- first the myth of the House of Austria, the vision and then also the real order of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, collapsed;
- the myth of the nation-state followed with—at its peak—an authoritarian and finally national socialist formulation, which collapsed in 1945;\*
- the myth of Stalinism, in all its versions, is collapsing.

It is, of course, tragic that in this part of Europe three convulsions of this magnitude were necessary in order to make disappear a world of ideas made up of pseudo-illusions and white lies, but mourning the innocent murdered does not relieve us of the duty to use this haze-free day to take a closer look at things and this cleaner air to inhale deeply.

\* The present authoritarian nationalism in Rumania is an anachronism, perhaps it is a consequence of the late union of Moldavia and Wallachia, the difficulties of the young state, and the problem of the ethnic foreign body, Transylvania, in the sense of a natural balance.



Of course, the attempt to go to the bottom of things can only be jointly undertaken this year.

The following five theses to the dialectic of proximity wish to contribute to this process of thinking.

*First:* The proximity between Austria and Hungary is an elementary link for both. It has shaped history and has contributed—precisely owing to the difference between the two elements—to the strengthening of their own identity.

The line where the two meet is not any old kind of border, but one of the few essential lines of demarcation in Europe. The Asiatic nomads never managed to settle in the cultural region which forms a manifold differentiated unity from the Eastern Alps of Lower Austria to the Mediterranean Alps of France; nor did the Austrians of the Alps and of the Danube valley ever settle in the plains of the Carpathian arch—except for small groups, of course.

It is part of the nature of such elementary divisions that the always different is sensed and grasped not only as a threat, but also as an object of permanent enchantment, and that a peculiar and intellectually fruitful symbiosis occurs through ongoing intermingling. The fairyland of the Hungarians beyond the *Óperenciás tenger*—this mythical sea on the other side of the Enns River—and the magic empire of Attila lay east of Pöchlarn for the Nibelungs. There are innumerable examples.

If the north to south dividing line created a close contact between the two different elements, the west to east contact of the Danube produced a different but not less intensive mingling. Here the towns and fortresses of the Roman *limes* and also the missionary stations of the bishopric of Passau created the spiritual foundations; simultaneously, Byzantine, Armenian, Arab, and—much more so—South Slav influences were attracted.

Thus a single system of coordinates arose which was open to all sides but was nevertheless recognizable as a unity, and it is not necessary to be a Hegelian in order to see in the peaceful invasion of Vienna by shopping-mad Hungarians and the equally peaceful siege of Sopron by shopping-mad Austrians as an avatar in which the spirit of our region—not to say the world spirit of our times—becomes manifest.

*Second:* The elemental contact allows two different substances to touch. In their historic existence, in their tradition, and in the consciousness of their identity they are so alien to each other that they put up with their neighbourhood, and are even able to cultivate it, without having to fear the loss of their own essence. This is how the difference does not become an obstacle but, on the contrary, a force which furthers coming together.



Contrary examples throw light on the fertilizing influence of such a fundamental difference. Curiously enough, genetic similarities, linguistic analogies, etc., do not act in the case of the Dutch and the Germans, the Croats and the Serbs, Walloons and French, Ukrainians and the Russians, peculiarly, as links alone. Where one's own identity appears to be at risk, powers of separation have an effect.

The difference which manifests itself between Austrians and Hungarians can, of course, not really be recognized through the clichés which have come into being since the late eighteenth century, nor through the poetic simplifications which are reflected in Mihály Szabolcska's poem "In a Salzburg Winecellar," or in Lajos Prohászka's book "The Wanderer and the Fugitive." Szabolcska contrasts the impetuosity of the love-drunk Hungarians and the quiet phlegm of the Austrians, while Prohászka claims to discover the fugitive type in Hungarians, and wanderers in Austrians—but also in Germans—who know where they are going.

On the other hand, it would be foolish to wish to deny the more or less common characteristics of a people or of a smaller ethnic group. In the coming about of such a character—in addition to the innumerable smaller influences—four decisive influences make themselves felt:

- the landscape as an economic factor, as something that offers protection or threatens, and also as a physical component of the attitude to life;

- history as a sequence of in themselves contradictory sociological formations, as that which leads to language and culture, as the consciousness of community, as an aid to finding one's way (imago of identity), and always the field of force of existing political life;

- the consciousness of one's own identity, not only as a unifying tie, but much more as a vision of one's own existence, which imposes a clear image on personal impulses, so that especially in moments of challenge this image influences the power of decision-making or takes it over entirely;

- and finally, the genetic substance, which was absolutized in the racism of the National Socialists in a murderous way, but which—as a contradictory element which is very difficult to research—can, of course, not be entirely disregarded.

To these four forces is to be added the substance-shaping period which especially deeply impresses the spirit of a people and which consequently also essentially formed the image of one's own identity. Looking at it from the present, this period was for Austria the Baroque and the Biedermeier, and for Hungary the Age of Reform and the 1848–1849 Revolution.

If we now look at the Austrians and the Hungarians from the aspects of the landscape, history, and the imago of their own identity, as well as their



genetic substance, the differences are so clear that their enumeration becomes superfluous; it suffices to hint at some of them. On one side there are the Alps and the Danube valley, on the other the Great Plain; on one the commitment to the Holy Roman Empire, and on the other the often endangered independent national state; on one the general emergence from Germanity up to the coming about of an own national consciousness in the immediate past, and on the other ethnic isolation and the dramatic consciousness of being completely on one's own; on one an ethnic melting pot on which the Germans and on the other an ethnic meltic pot on which the Hungarians have imposed themselves. There are a great number of further particularities shaping the two nations: the intellectual consequences of the difference in the timing of urbanization, the differences in the nature of serfdom and in respect of the status of the nobility, the different interactions between the structure of the language and the way of thinking, etc.

However, the two essences which could not be more different merged in an attitude to life which has gradually come about but in the last hundred and fifty years. It finds expression in an inclination to scepticism and irony, a rejection of the promises of salvation of abstract notions, a mixture of sophistry, melancholy, and humour. There can be no doubt of the existence of this type of Central European.\* We meet it day after day, and the sad experiences to which they owe their nature is, unfortunately, well-known to us.

*Third:* The elemental tie between the two different peoples, like everything else that is alive and kicking, has a characteristic inner rhythm. This is systole and diastole, that is expansion and condensation. In addition, the proximity itself has its own dynamics: the phases of attraction are necessarily followed by phases of repulsion. The periods of balance are short unless they are extended—as in a well-managed friendship or marriage—by a careful control of consciousness.

In order to discover this rhythm, political history must not necessarily be forgotten but nevertheless kept in the background as something temporary or hypothetical as a consequence of concrete causalities. In this respect the mathematical theory of games or the structural analyses of probability theory are more useful than history.

The dialectic of neighbourhood consists, in the political sphere, not only of the natural rivalry of states, controlled by the political powers that be, which naturally want to extend their influence at the expense of the neigh-

\* See also works by Moritz Csáky and Peter Kampits, Vienna; Péter Hanák, Budapest; and André Reszler, Geneva.



bour. Matthias Corvinus occupied Vienna given half a chance, and Ferdinand I, the future Holy Roman Emperor, by claiming the Hungarian Crown, made the country one of the Habsburg dominions. In this rivalry a balance in which conflicts abounded persisted until 1526, and from then on Austria was successful in her expansion until 1867; the picture shows Hungary between 1867 and 1918 in the condition of a contradictory renaissance; in the interwar period both countries lived on the edge of the abyss. Only around 1948 did a temporary radical separation take place which we now overcome bit by bit.

Simultaneously—penetrating political history—the forces of the intellect and of the economy have made themselves noticeable, which often produced their own circuit. The golden quadrangle of the universities of Prague, Vienna, Cracow and Nagyszombat is only one example for such influences. Hungarian cattle on the hoof driven West—to mention a further example—was an important item in Austrian and German trade even during the dark centuries of the Turkish wars. Irrespective of such cases, neighbourhood frequently leads to a fruitful dilemma, and the attempts at solving these dilemmas always lead to the already mentioned rhythm. The following pattern can be discerned: A. Rapprochement, of course for the sake of one's own benefit. B. The desired proximity is achieved, the drawbacks occur. C. Removal for one's own benefit. D. Situation of conflict which again goes over into phase A.

It would appear that such events always occur in the arena of desires for power, while the antagonistic connection between expansion and condensation adds to the process of the rhythm: the bigger the expansion is, the stronger the inner dilution becomes; the stronger the pressure, the more condensed the consistency of the oppressed becomes. In time the latter develops such an explosive force that it can endanger the stronger party which has expanded widely and has become diluted.

Such a model theory, which must, of course, be discussed first, may contribute to the removal, at least in part, of a ballast of emotions that have become anachronistic (such as: self-pity, hate and contempt, exaggerated pride). It would certainly pay to examine the conflicts between Austrians and Hungarians, for instance in the period between the Thököly and Rákóczi wars and the revolution of 1848, or in the period between 1849 and 1918, from this aspect.

*Fourth:* As soon as we succeed in grasping the dialectic of neighbourhood between Austrians and Hungarians as a model of the meeting of two different elements, the games of our imagination can be recognized as images of delusion, and overcome.



The view of the world of any individual derives from a large number of different spiritual and intellectual sources. The sequences of pictures, trains of thought and sentiments which flow from them become united into a field of forces of imagination which changes all the time. In the case of groups, this is added to by the influence of the collective: in a community, one feels different—especially in tunes of shared common danger or shared euphoria—from those outside the group. There is good reason why the German word *schwärmen* and the Hungarian *rajongás* respectively both derive from *Schwarm* and *raj*, that is enthusiasm is the child of the swarm. Tradition, experience, vital self-interest, political propaganda, etc., shape the view of the world just as do creed as a need for the metaphysical, utopian dimension, or the collective unconscious and genetic disposition. The play of imagination is in itself a welcome characteristic of the *homo ludens*; freedom as a *desideratum* and *fascinosum* are anchored in it.

But what happens when in this play, for intelligible reasons, very characteristic elements become fixed which hinder the further course of the game, i.e. the gaining of the energy of the imagination from new experience? The game grinds to a halt and the perception of reality becomes obstructed by a ritualized sequence of images which have become anachronistic.

The thousand-year-old neighbourhood between Austrians and Hungarians has caused the coming about of the just as old, as impressive in its variety, game of the imagination which obviously took on a solid shape at the time of romanticism—which was at the same time also the period of industrialization, of etatistic new legislation—as a pseudo-mythological system which had an obligatory effect on everybody. In this, earlier perceptions, motives of the collective subconscious with cultic imaginations of self-love, ossified discoveries with generalizations and prejudices which are necessary for the formation of groups are mingled with elements of a political propaganda which had been necessary earlier. The latter are both threatening and fascinating. The feeling of being threatened corresponds not only to objective causes but also to the fear of losing one's own identity through magic. In the case of Austrians and Hungarians this interaction is even intensified by the momentary domination of the Austrians and by the heat of constant contact.

Yet our consciousness is in a position to see through the games of the imagination, to eliminate the anachronistic to a certain extent, and thereby create room for new perceptions, and also for new games of the imagination. However, this means also the correction of the image of one's own identity.

As long as Austrians do not grasp that the sum of every Hungarian political action from the sixteenth to the twentieth century was the intention to ensure existence as a state and the ethnic specificity of the Hungarian



nation, they will not understand the essence of all the rebellions, peace treaties, alliances with or against the Habsburgs, Hungary's role in the Compromise of 1867, or in the autumn of 1918, and will not be able to cast a necessary cold eye at it. This means that the games of the imagination remain overburdened by images which have become anachronistic. This obscures visions. As long as Hungarians do not understand that their country—as other countries on the continent which have fallen on bad days and had their power considerably curbed—was only one of many lands within the more comprehensive idea in the Holy Roman Empire and/or the House of Austria, and suffers—and more rarely profiteers—of comprehensive perceptions, or erroneous decisions, they will not have understood Austria. Here too pictures which have become anachronistic remain part of the game, and here too the view is distorted by ritualized imaginings.

The necessary correction will, of course, also be always hindered by the image of one's own identity, inasmuch as some Austrians are still inclined to define their essence vis-à-vis Hungary in terms of the idea of the Holy Roman Empire, the Comprehensive-Imperial, the Occidental, etc., while some Hungarians still have an Asiatic streak in their emotional make-up, and—in order to define themselves—stick to an image which had been created by a nomadic way of life, which is ready to fight and adds a love for freedom to the notion of the Occidental. This means that occasionally we fool ourselves and consequently each other. This effect is strengthened by the clichés of travel agents' prose. In the meantime, essential motifs are disregarded, as, for instance, the archaic force of folk culture in the Austrian Alps or the subtleness of the Hungarian Pannonian vision. Consequently, such motifs are rarely recognized by the neighbour.

It would only be too easy to draw from all this the conclusion that both small Danube riparian republics should free themselves of these elements in the games of imagination which have become anachronistic in this era of high industrialization, urbanization, information, etc., if there did not exist two questions which are in the way of solution of this task:

1. Can myths and rites of ethnic groups be radically changed in accordance with the wishful thinking of an age of enlightenment? Are these not surprisingly persevering and largely resistant to the influence of the critical intellect?

2. Can an objective approach exclude the problem of morality? How does sobriety respond to what Hungarians call *virtus*?

The two questions are connected at the point at which they are not tangential on the superficial layer of political propaganda, but on the moral cause, i.e. the sense of justice. However, this corresponds to a desire for



equilibrium and this becomes a force of nature—perhaps even a law of creation. In this sense, every relationship contains a sort of moral scenario. The sons of light have to be victorious over the sons of darkness, David against Goliath, the Austrians against the multitude of Turks, the Hungarians against the multitude of Austrians (and Turks).

As far as the prospects of correction are concerned, we can consider it as gaining new ground for new games of the imagination—what has become mythical will continue to exercise an influence deep down for a long time. The demand for morality is—in the flickering light of the flames of our cruel century—easier to satisfy. In view of the many unselfish supporters and heroes of Hitler and of Stalin there is nothing left for us than to draw a moral conclusion: to subordinate the quality of *virtus* to the higher demands of Kant's categorical imperative, and consequently to eliminate all our heroes who fail before this postulate from the game, as historic chessmen. This means a twilight of the gods for all those extremists whose conviction it was that the end sanctioned even the most savage means. As the survivors of the mass murders of the century we have—as an instrument for purification—the judgement that *virtus* may be a high virtue but humanism is even higher.

This involves bidding farewell to the repertory of national romanticism. Whoever does not undertake this, is destroyed in the hypertrophy of anachronistic imaginations: his perception of reality fails, his imagination remains closed to the new games of the imagination.

*Fifth:* The present epoch of a balance between Austria and Hungary can be extended through a sharper perception of reality and through the expansion of consciousness, and can become a lasting and effective force of post-industrial communication. The condition for such an evolution is that the élites grasp the essence of a system which is adequate to the present and the near future in coexistence, and that they possess sufficient strength and courage to rejuvenate their states and to adjust the mental disposition of the peoples to the requirements.

This means first of all an end to the monarchic structures, which have been reformed by the republics but have been maintained at some essential points. These structures have their roots in the idea of enlightened absolutism, even if they replace the person of the monarch by a group, which gains power in Austria according to the rules of parliamentary democracy and in Hungary in accordance with the idea of the communist state, but which interprets itself here and there as a centre of the practice of a power which wants to make people happy. However, now—three generations after the fall of the monarchies—the monarchic structures are collapsing under the pressure of economic as well as intellectual forces. This welcome and necessary



metamorphosis, which is called *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, leads to democracy. We are experiencing both in Austria and in Hungary, of course in different conditions, the general transformation of the party state into a free society, while the existing apparatuses of power try here and there, on the one hand, to hang on to power, but on the other, to adjust themselves to the requirements of post-industrial society, requirements which we can simply sum up as the need for democracy. To speak figuratively, they wish to change horses at full gallop without falling out of the saddle. It has to be seen whether this artistic feat will succeed, but in any event we are faced—to use a Marxist metaphor—with a new understructure, which itself creates a new superstructure irrespective of personal consequences.

As long as the old monarchistically structured superstructure remains in power in the form of the party state which has become anachronistic, those who govern are unable to perceive the reality in complete clarity. In their way of thinking and in their view of the world fragments of myths will live on which became ritualized centuries ago and have become anachronistic. This means that both here and there the necessary democracy is the condition for a sober look at history and of the essence of neighbourhood and for the contemporary further development of the system of communication.

However, at this point the problem metamorphoses into a question of creed and thereby penetrates the quicksands of subjectivity. I believe that both countries will overcome their monarchistic structures and will become democratic in accordance with the intellectual and economic requirements of our times. In these democracies of a new type the individuals will be sufficiently free to formulate for themselves, on the basis of their own experience, an image of the world and of course our neighbourhood, in an independent way which will be largely unburdened by ancient prejudices. In this case the consciousness of a common history will give rise to a nostalgia which is neither sorrowful nor transfigures things, which will not shift suddenly to animosity through the glorification of past *virtus*, but will be the well-filled data bank of a code which allows one to get one's bearings in the present; and the fragments of our ritualized myths would not have any more powerful influence than the distant rumbling of an earthquake which stopped long ago and which once determined the tectonic shocks of a land on which we now move with sure steps. In the workaday world neighbourhood was always something that could be physically experienced. I am convinced that, in the future, this simple sensuality and sensuousness may well lend everyday contacts between Austrians and Hungarians the good and live power of soberly weighing up empathy.



# TRANSYLVANIA

## HISTORICAL MONUMENTS IN TRANSYLVANIA

An exhibition in the Budapest headquarters of the National Monument Inspectorate presented for the first time documentary material. The purpose of the exhibition was to convey an idea of the monuments of every part in Transylvania and to describe the architectural physiognomy of the Hungarians, Rumanians, South Slavs, and Germans living in the region. Historical development and a common geographical environment have led to many identical elements of form and content which were clearly adapted to contemporary European developments and to the colourful environment of Transylvania. The photographs, drawings, and paintings exhibited include Székely and Saxon fortified churches, townscapes, Rumanian wooden churches, Renaissance castles and traditional peasant homes. The material in particular hints at the architectural wealth of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In Transylvania the Turkish wars did not cause as much devastation as in the Hungarian Plain; the region was spared the suffering caused by 150 years of Turkish occupation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This explains why so many monuments survived—at least until the 1960s.

Protecting monuments in Hungary has been intensive since the end of the last century. In 1872 the government set up a provisional commission to prepare for the

care of historical buildings; after the Act of Monument Protection was passed in 1881, they set up a national committee. Its task was to register, preserve and eventually reconstruct all monuments in the territory of historical Hungary and to supervise related work. The Ministry of Religion and Education provided adequate funds for the most important work. Owing to regular and consistent documentation, we have a rich and valuable collection which has been preserved to this day.

The complete reconstruction of the fortified castle of army commander and regent János Hunyadi started in 1880 at Vajdahunyad. The architects on the committee, Imre Steindl, Antal Khuen and later István Möller, concerned themselves with the preservation of the only late-Gothic fortified castle in Hungary which had survived intact, despite a fire. The collection contains the surveyor's drawings, the reconstruction plans and the water-colour copies of the murals of the Mátyás loggia.

The thirteenth-century Romanesque Lutheran church of Harina from the early group of clan monasteries and the Calvinist church of Ákos were also saved in those years. The reconstruction of the latter, started in 1896, was carried out to the plans of Frigyes Schulek.

The reconstruction of the mostly intact Romanesque cathedral of Gyulafehérvár



started in 1902, accompanied by archaeological excavations and the scholarly description of its medieval and Renaissance sepulchral monuments. This important work, directed by István Möller, was interrupted in 1916 due to the First World War.

The exploration and reconstruction of the first Dominican, then Franciscan convent of Kolozsvár was carried on during the same years. This Gothic cloister built by the mendicant orders in the fifteenth century was the best preserved building of its kind in Hungary. The drawing made of its refectory is the major document of field surveys. Its reconstruction was completed in 1908.

Work on saving the Romanesque Greek Orthodox church in Zeykfalva with its fifteenth to sixteenth century frescoes also started in 1902, together with the reconstruction of the fifteenth-century Gothic church of Dés, under the direction of the architect Ernő Foerk.

The next building taken under protection was the Magna Curia, the fortified castle of the Bethlen family at the foot of the ruins of Déva castle.

Along with the reconstruction of larger units, castles and fortresses, the committee took more and more small village churches under its protection. In this way they could save many fine small medieval churches from ruin and demolition; these included the sixteenth-century church of Székelyderzs, the fourteenth-century church of Gurászada and the thirteenth-century church of Óraljaboldogfalva, all three of different denominations.

They also moved to save the Greek Orthodox church of Fogaras established in 1694 by a prince of Wallachia, and his wife; it had a wealth of frescoes in the Byzantine style.

A few years later the Calvinist church of Farkas utca in Kolozsvár (established by King Matthias Hunyadi for the Minorite friars in 1486) was reconstructed. The Lutheran church of Beszterce was a fine

specimen of Gothic art, whose front had been transformed in Renaissance style in the sixteenth century by an Italian master.

The Transylvanian Renaissance style was primarily influenced by Northern Italy, as is demonstrated by the great number of fortified castles. The exhibition shows the survival of Transylvanian Renaissance motifs, especially in the church furnishings of Kalotaszeg, Szatmár and, Székelyland, in the motifs of the painted wooden ceilings, pews, and pulpits.

Among the fortified castles, the one at Alvine built by Friar György Martinuzzi in the sixteenth century and that of Marosvécs are the most important. The Wesselényi castle of Aranyosmeggyes, built in the fifteenth to sixteenth century, was also nominated for reconstruction but the work was carried out only in 1940, after the Vienna Award returned the region to Hungarian administration.

As the work progressed the committee realized how many objects deserved protection and needed urgent reconstruction: the Lutheran church of Nagyszeben, the castle church of Marosvásárhely, the medieval churches and their furnishings in the villages of Kalotaszeg and the winged altars and medieval murals in the churches of Székelyland. One of the great merits of this committee was that it had copies made of these original frescoes by art teachers to scales of 1 : 4 and 1 : 5. These aquarelles can be seen in the exhibition. The tracing of the fresco representing the legend of King Saint Ladislav is especially valuable: the church of Maksa which once contained it has been since demolished. The students of the builders' trade school made regular field surveys and drawings under the direction of their teachers and the members of other establishments added photographs to the collection.

In the above-mentioned period of the Hungarian administration of Transylvania from 1940 to 1944, the most important work was carried out in Kolozsvár. The house



where King Matthias had been born was restored (after the plans of Károly Kós).

Naturally Hungary had no say in matters of Rumanian monument protection, neither after the First nor the Second World War. In Rumania research was concerned chiefly with the relics of folk architecture: as a result several village museums, open-air museums, were established. However, since the 1960s fewer and fewer professionals, archaeologists, art historians, and architects have been trained, and in 1977 the central

and regional organisations of monuments protection were dissolved. The care of monuments and the preservation of natural cultural heritage lies now within the competence of the county councils, who have neither material resources nor the expert staff. The communities of some settlements and a few isolated professionals are trying to do something to save monuments that are alarmingly going to rack and ruin.

KATALIN G. GYÖRFFY

## JOURNEY TO RUMANIA

On his return from a journey to Rumania, the poet and translator Gábor Csordás, editor-in-chief of the literary review *Jelenkor*, gave an interview on his visit. The news of the Budapest demonstration of June 27, 1988 reached him when he was there. First I asked him:

*What was the reaction there to the demonstration?*

Over here in Hungary I was warned not to go: I might get into trouble, I might be lynched. Nothing like that happened. An interesting experience I had was that all the Rumanians I met, ordinary people or intellectuals, knew that this demonstration had been against Rumanian policy towards the minorities and not against the Rumanian people. That same evening people knew all about it from the Rumanian and Hungarian newscasts of Budapest and Radio Free Europe.

*How are people in Rumania today living through Ceausescu's policy?*

It is evident that a Hungarian of Rumania and a Rumanian live through it differently. Both sides have begun to do some meditating in the past two years. For it was not yesterday that this situation arose but much earlier, and Hungarians and Rumanians alike misunderstood it in their own fashion. The Hungarians thought a long

time that the gist of this policy was simply traditional Rumanian nationalism, which had also earlier been part of Rumanian policy. This is why they did not seek to make contact with the Rumanians. Now they begin to realize that Hungarians and Rumanians are afflicted by this oppression in the same way. Moreover, Ceausescu, playing on Rumanian national feelings, has long been able to deceive the Rumanian intelligentsia. In the past couple of years, the masses have come to realize that what is happening there is also violating Rumanian national self-respect and national pride. The essence of the recently created situation is therefore not Rumanian nationalism but a policy which is cynically exploiting that nationalism.

The inflaming of passions, though it is less and less effective, is unfortunately aided by the mass media. By early summer, for example, the stock of potatoes in Rumania had been sold out, whereupon a television team went into 85 per cent Hungarian-inhabited Hargita county and talked with the manager of a state farm, a Székely who spoke Rumanian badly. Of course, the report suggested that in Hargita county, which provides 80 per cent of Rumania's potatoes, the supply has been sabotaged by the Hungarians.



A recently painted fresco on the walls of the Rumanian Orthodox cathedral in Marosvásárhely shows Hungarian soldiers in hussar pelisses flogging a haloed Rumanian saint, bound hand and foot: the scene is witnessed by sobbing women and girls in Rumanian national costume. Or Rumanian peasants hand over ransom money to a Hungarian in hussar uniform for their release from prison. The inscription under the fresco says that these events have been depicted after old Rumanian chronicles.

*What was your experience of shortages?*

In Rumania the nominal meat ration is 74 kilograms per annum. What, for example, a citizen in Marosvásárhely obtained of this up to mid-July was all in all a tin of Hungarian meat past the term of consumption, which was his ration for the First of May. Milk rationing has ceased, only pregnant women receive milk, but no woman gets it after giving birth to her child. I have talked with doctors: the most essential medicines are out of stock, antibiotics are not to be had, insulin and smallpox vaccine are scarce, surgical silk and anesthetics are not available. As a consequence of all this, there is a new outbreak of the traditional endemic diseases that had been suppressed after the war, such as tuberculosis or the deficiency disease called pellagra; for want of antibiotics venereal diseases and a cholera epidemic have broken out in the Danube delta...

*How far did you feel Bucharest differed from what you saw in Transylvania?*

Actually it confirmed the latter. At the Marosvásárhely airport we were lined up three times, our bags were X-rayed, everyone was subjected to a body search. The first question I asked my writer friend from Bucharest was, of course, about the reaction to the Budapest demonstration of June 27. I was very glad that he confirmed my information that it had not been considered by them as an anti-Rumanian act. Among Rumanian writers there is a rather serious split between the nationalists and the Europeans.

The balance of forces favours the former, but the world knows the European trend better, and they do represent Rumanian culture authentically. Two months ago the officially non-existent censorship rejected a new volume by a world-famous Rumanian author.

My friend showed me the sights of Bucharest, the presidential palace under construction, the field of ruins around it and the new avenue. Erected along it are rows of monumental buildings, Stalinist neo-baroque, standing empty now, because party functionaries will occupy them—but only after the *Conducător* has moved into his palace. This is built, outfitted with complete furnishings, and presented to the *Conducător* when the last bit of gilding is finished, and it will all be pulled down if it is not to his liking. One wing of the palace has already been pulled down three times for such reasons.

*Who are those working on the construction?*

All of them are in army uniform: persons sentenced to forced labour, people convicted of violations of work-place rules: in addition, enterprises all over the country are obliged to send workers there. Tombstone carvers have for years been complaining that white marble is nowhere to be found: in other words, the palace will be covered with it, and every county is obliged to deliver a fixed quantity of marble, irrespective of whether or not it has a marble quarry in its area.

*The Moscow party conference was held during your stay over there. What repercussion did it produce in Rumania?*

*Perestroika* is not even hinted at in the Rumanian press. A news item of five lines covered the opening and then the conclusion of the Moscow party conference. At the same time, everybody knows all about the changes taking place in Moscow and is in sympathy with them.

So that we should not see only destruction but should see something nice, our Rumanian friend took us to the Hărăstrău park, where thousands of people were sunbathing on the grass. There is no traffic, this is a place



to have a rest. "The Rumanian people are on holiday," our friend remarked bitterly. Here is a village museum which attracts many visitors these days. Parents take their children there, just to let them see what the villages were like in reality. In the environs of Bucharest systematization has in fact been carried out. Villages which had supplied the Bucharest market with food, and in which Bucharest writers and artists had had their weekend homes have been razed to the ground—without any compensation.

This bulldozer policy is now disturbing world public opinion, although it has for decades been going on in Rumania. Numberless small Hungarian villages have been put out of existence, their inhabitants have been dispersed under the pretext of the construction of industrial plants or barrages. Now Bözödfalu is in danger because of a barrage to be built at Küsmöd.

*A tour of Transylvania or Rumania brings a deep sense of sorrow. How did you endure the experience?*

I have seen all this for ten years now. Of course, the situation is going from bad to worse. We now talk about it in public. This time, I have been astonished to experience the change of mood of Rumanians, their sympathy for us—and not to have seen any Hungarian car on the way. . . . Why? People are afraid to set out—without cause, I think. True, at the frontier you must wait and you may be sent back, as we were now (we were not allowed to bring in used children's wear with us, but when we left it behind in a frontier village, we were admitted to Rumania. Now the import of children's wear is forbidden by the continually changing cus-

toms regulations.) But this happened also ten years ago. A compensation for such minor inconveniences is the fact that we are waited for.

It is very good that we are helping the Transylvanian refugees, but two million and more Hungarians have remained in their native land, and we must primarily help all those who have stayed there. We must go there and console them. Books are difficult to take out, because all Hungarian printed matter has been confiscated for some years now, but meetings, information and solicitude can help them tide over these hard times. Hungarian Television has an incredible effect in places where it can be received. It simply gives sustenance and hope to people, as does the new Kossuth Radio station.

*What reception was given to Sándor Csöbri's ideas conveyed on the wireless two weeks ago?*

The Hungarian writers listened very desperately. They took offence at his accusation that the Hungarian intelligentsia of Transylvania had left the people in the lurch. This is not true, even though there are some who went too far in their compromises. The other and more dangerous appeal calls upon the Transylvanian Hungarians to grasp the initiative. Such an embittered relationship makes it the duty of the majority ethnic group to achieve democracy for them. Then, in a democracy established by the majority, it will be possible to fight for the rights of the minority. In a democratic nation Rumanian-Hungarian conflicts, even if they are not solved by themselves, will at least be likely to be reconciled time and again.

ORSOLYA GÁLLOS



# THE HIDDEN PAST

FERENC KUBINYI

## RECSK — GULAG THE HUNGARIAN WAY

The first Five Year Plan drafted by the Hungarian Communist Party was more than economic in character: it covered the transformation of the entire life of the country on the Soviet pattern. The leaders who had recently returned from Moscow were eager and impatient. Their high-handed bullying, antagonising everyone in politics, the administration, education and the churches, was partly motivated by their greed for power. In their plans a major role was assigned to the political police, the ÁVO, later rebaptised ÁVH (i.e., State Security Department and State Security Authority, resp.)

In 1949 they set about boosting the numbers of the organization, and extending its powers and sphere of authority to all walks of life. Reliable elements loyal to the regime were selected and their training begun. An officer corps was created. By 1950 the organization was ready to carry out one of the plans: the takeover of the courts, the department of public prosecutions and the penal institutions, just one example: Péter Jankó and Béla Jónás, two of the notorious judges of the frame-up trials were both on the payroll of the ÁVH. Having grown in weight, the organization had become a state within the state, more than that, a party within the Party. Its metastases shot through the entire body politic. The strengthening of this power centre had come about partly as a consequence of international causes. Ferenc

Glatz has published the findings of a Soviet historian and department head of the Moscow Economic Institute of the Socialist World System called Dashichov (*Historia*, No. 4, 1988): "Everywhere in Eastern Europe popular front movements emerged in which dozens of different parties cooperated. A genuine political pluralism took shape in those days. However, Stalin in 1948 forced the Soviet model on the East European nations with the help of the local communists. . ."

But to return to the duties the Hungarian militant repressive organizations had to cope with during the time in question. By the late 40s the ÁVH's job had become to help carry out the Party's gigantomaniac plans, primarily in the service of rearmament. Since the organization dealt with people only, its duties were in keeping with this nature. It linked the necessary with the useful. The slogan of the ÁVH now invested with unlimited powers ran: "It's not even your skin you have to account for." A careful examination of labour force and wage requirements of the Five Year Plan makes it clear that none of these would have been possible to meet but for the introduction of slave labour.

\*

The Recsk documents are still, in 1989, treated as classified material. I have pieced



together my information from the evanescent and volatile oral and written reminiscences of events of thirty-nine years ago.

The organizing work of the Recsk camp began in the early spring of 1950. The order establishing it is unknown. And the person who signed it is similarly shrouded in mystery. Some would say it is an exaggeration to speak of extermination camps in Hungary, suggesting that detention camps is the right expression to use. Unfortunately, that is not so. The Recsk prisoners were truly meant for death. The changes that took place in the world and the country inhibited total realisation.

An apparently trifling administrative affair might serve as evidence. Tivadar Pártay, an ex-prisoner, says: "The fact that we were originally written off is shown by the following case. After my release I applied for a new driver's licence at the Central Police Office in Budapest, to replace the one confiscated by the ÁVH. They could not find my record in the files. The next day, when a second attempt failed to locate it and it became known that I'd been at Recsk, a kind and very polite officer dug up my record and said to me: 'Why didn't you say right at the start you'd been at Recsk? Your records had been placed with those of the deceased.'"

Precisely where was this camp? According to the official view—nowhere. An ex-prisoner, Zoltán Sztáray, writes: "The ÁVO dragged away a friend of mine one night in September 1948. They took him to Andrassy út 60. (the headquarters). They recorded his particulars and then made him stand against the wall. At midday a lieutenant told him that he had been arrested for spying and conspiracy. Several days passed before he learnt what the charge was based on. He had allegedly handed over documents to his uncle who had left the country illegally and whom he had not seen for months. He was interrogated, beaten up, interrogated again. Then, in January 1949, his captors had grown tired of the meaningless exercise and he was taken under detention orders first to the camp at Kis-

tarcsa, then in October 1950 to the camp at Recsk. They took away his wife's home and together with their children, she was sent to internal exile in the Hortobágy puszta. My friend was released from Recsk in September 1953. Before his release he was made to sign a statement to the effect that should he ever disclose the site and circumstances of his detention he would be liable to imprisonment for violating the official secrets act.

Twenty-five years have passed. My friend, reaching his sixtieth year, applied for retirement. In his application he included a claim for damages and asked for the five years he had spent behind barbed wire to be counted in his years of service. He was called on to produce an official certificate showing the duration of his detention. Naturally, he had no such document. Weeks later he was informed that he had indicated a camp as the place of his detention which, according to reliable sources, "had never existed."

Let us therefore try to define precisely the topographical coordinates of the camp that 'never existed,' all the more so as only five years ago a historian collecting memoirs of the Recsk labour camp received a jolt. One fine day two impeccably dressed plainclothes state security officers called on him. They warned him emphatically, in the presence of his superior, against concerning himself with the events of the Recsk camp.

The camp was situated on the northern slopes of the North Hungarian Mátra hills. Its location can be defined if lines are drawn on the map between Kékestető hill and the village of Sirok and between Parád-fürdő and Kisnána. These lines intersect at the site of the non-existent camp.

How did this camp come into existence? What idea gave rise to the unknown order for its establishment five years after the liberation of Dachau? I shall try to piece together a picture of Recsk from the reminiscences of some of the ex-inmates. They include Sándor Bándi, a clerk, Gyula Michnay, formerly a trainee army officer, Kálmán Kéri,



formerly a colonel on the Hungarian General Staff, Tivadar Pártay, ex-member of Parliament for the Smallholders Party, and founding chairman of the recently re-formed party, Zoltán Sztáray, public servant, and the poet, György Faludy, now living in Canada.

*The captives and their captors*

Uniformed ÁVH men guarded and ran the camp. One of the commandants was called József Csete. Also part of the picture gallery is a photo showing the camp's grey eminence. His name is Colonel Rudolf Garasin. He was a private soldier in the Great War taken prisoner on the Russian Front. As early as 1918 he commanded a regiment of the Red Cavalry in the Civil War. By 1940 he had graduated in engineering and industrial organization. He was a department head in the Soviet Ministry of Light Industry. In 1945 he entered Budapest as a major of the Soviet army. His brief biography is silent on the branch of service; it is rumoured, however, that he was an NKVD officer. His expertise in organization was put to use in running Soviet forced labour camps. Returning to Hungary, after a brief spell in journalism, he was appointed editor-in-chief of the Budapest daily published by the Soviet Red Army in Hungarian language, *Új Szó*. Before long his professional knowledge was again made use of. He was promoted to the rank of colonel and put in command of prison guards. The Hungarian Dictionary of Biography (Akadémiai Publishing House, Supplementary volume, p. 232) discreetly passes over this distinction and is satisfied with mentioning his title as senior department head in the Ministry of Justice. After the ÁVH took over the guarding and supervision of penal institutions, it also took over Garasin. The Dictionary registers him tactfully as senior department head of the Interior. The colonel supervised what was then known as KÖMI (General Utility Public Works) which was the body responsible for the

organization and direction of slave labour. Production norms were set so high that it was next to impossible to fulfil them considering the thin, low-calory fare. Performance below 100 per cent entailed the cutting by half of the miserable rations. If prisoners fell short of the production target repeatedly they were beaten. Forms of punishment included running the gauntlet and putting in irons.

In 1957, Rudolf Garasin was appointed colonel of the Frontier Guards. His services were highly appreciated by the Workers' and Peasants' Revolutionary Government. He was appointed Ambassador to Mongolia. In 1969, the velvet cushion decorated with the Order of the Red Banner of Labour and the Order of Lenin was carried by goose-stepping soldiers to his grave where he was buried with military pomp.

Approximately 350 ÁVH men armed with submachine guns guarded between 1200–1300 prisoners at Recsk. The guards can be divided into three groups: the "greens" (so named after their green collar-patch) standing by the machine guns in the watch-towers on the periphery of the camp. The greens did service mainly as frontier guards. Inside the camp soldiers with blue collar-patches were members of the guard and the leaders of the work brigades. A third group belonged to the commandant's staff.

*Zoltán Sztáray:* The inner, blue ÁVH was made up of selected NCOs (corporals, sergeants, and the rest), with few exceptions it was they who made life hell for the inmates. Their background was that of agricultural labourers or the urban proletariat. You could easily place them by their speech mannerisms, the dialect words they used. Most of them came from the lands east of the River Tisza. Those with a working-class background were from the slums of Budapest. These guards had not a clue whom they were guarding. They looked upon the inmates as dangerous fascist evildoers, the enemies of the people, of the Party or the Soviet Union, and that is



how they treated them. They were not interested in why we were there. The ÁVH men had to be addressed as Inspector. We could not know their real names, so we referred to them by some of their conspicuous physical traits. The most cruel of them deserved these nicknames. There was a competition among the guards as to which of them could strike down a prisoner with a single blow. There were four special detectives on the staff. It was they who meted out punishment. They must have held a confidential post; even the uniformed personnel were afraid of them. The camp commandant and his deputy rarely put in an appearance, apart from special occasions or the reading of announcements.

*Tivadar Pártay:* One should mention the loyal henchmen of the ÁVH guards, the informers and the kapos. There were more of them than necessary at Recsk. Most of them were dishonourably discharged from the ÁVH, or the forces, or expelled from the Communist Party. But there were some aristocrats among them as well.

#### *The camp of agonies*

*Sándor Bándi:* The majority of the inmates were transferred to Recsk from the Kistarcsa internment camp. First our civilian clothes were taken away and we were issued with cast-off khaki uniforms. Civilian underclothes were exchanged for soiled and tattered underpants and shirts. Then the trucks drove up and we were taken to the Gödöllő railway station. There we entrained in goods waggons. We arrived at Recsk in the early morning. ÁVH guards with submachine guns waited for us there. From the railway station a five-kilometre long uphill road led to the camp. We were driven along it at the double. Any one who could not run and collapsed was promptly killed. The completely exhausted old men, who stretched out in the mud, were thrown onto a cart. It was raining, the cold autumn rain of the hills. Between two grim

ridges and surrounded by barbed wire fences, we tried to dry ourselves by the smoking open fires.

*Tivadar Pártay:* Until the barracks were built we spent the nights in an old estate sheep-fold. Previously we had carted out the caked sheep droppings that were a good half a meter deep. We slept on some spare straw thrown on the ground. We fell tall trees in the woods, split them up and used the boards to build the barracks. The two-decker bunk beds were made of wet hornbeam branches. All this took three weeks. It rained all the time and the cold Mátra winds blew through the threadbare greatcoats. Wet, bespattered with mud up to the neck, with limbs numb with the cold and drenched to the skin, this fatigued band of inmates dragged themselves along. The continual swearing, bawling and the beatings made the work unbearable.

*Kálmán Kéri:* Anyone too weak to work with the intensity required by the guards and the kapos was at once accused of sabotage. Now if guilty of sabotage, then he naturally deserved to be punished. What was the punishment? It must be recorded so that it should service till the end of time. They had four narrow pits dug out. They stood the men in them, one by one. In rain or snow. There they had to stand without food or drink. The rain beat down on them from above, below the rain water and their own urine collected and rose up to their knees. That was the guardroom in Hungary, in Central Europe, at the time of the building of socialism. Standing on watch over the pit was a guard who ordered the prisoner out every hour. When the wretched man managed to clamber out using his ten nails, the guard beat him up and sent him back into the pit with a kick.

*Zoltán Sztáray:* Besides the infernal harassment, the poor provisions and the inhuman treatment, the greatest danger were the informers. There were plenty of them to be had for double rations or a few cigarettes. Those denounced were punished by being bound hand and foot for seventy or eighty



hours. Not without interruption, of course, because no one could be exempted from work during the day. At night he went into the prison barrack where he lay bound hand and foot on the bare ground till first light. Being bound in this way left many a prisoner permanently crippled. How was this binding performed? The culprit sat down on the ground and his wrists were tied to his ankles. Extending the elbows and pulling them down over the knees they stuck a broomstick through the crook of the arms and the legs. Then they kicked the helpless victim on one side, so that the weight of the body was supported by one end of the stick. The thin cord looping the wrists and the ankles was pulled taut to bursting point and it prevented the circulation of blood. In a matter of minutes the hands went dumb and swelled to twice their size by morning. On the third or fourth day the miserable offender was hardly able to use his crippled hands. But work he must.

Few men had the use of their hands restored after being bound hand and foot for eight or ten days. The spine forced into an arch was the source of insufferable pain. The most horrible example is furnished by Dani Kiss, a young student. He was denounced for something he had not done. There was no defence. He got sixty hours of being bound hand and foot. The prison barracks were crammed to capacity, so he was tied up next to the iron stove going full blast at the end of the corridor. Dani Kiss's hand had gone dumb and he could not feel anything. Soon the smell of burnt flesh was in the air. Dani called to the guard nicknamed Wipla (after the white metal teeth in his mouth) but he threatened to take him out and break his ribs if he did not shut up. Two of his fingers and part of his palm had to be amputated. He was crippled.

The pick-axes and stone-crushers gave many of the prisoners bad blisters. Within a few days their palms were full of suppurating sores and even if they healed after long suffering, usually they lost the use of one or two

fingers. This is what happened to Imre Vas and Dr György Ternovszky.

It occurred that young prisoners were placed facing their elderly fellows and ordered to strike them. The young refused to do so, at which the guards beat them all up indiscriminately.

*Tivadar Pártay:* Who were the inmates of this camp 'that never was'? There were about 60-70 dubious characters. The Social Democrats numbered about 250. A good many of them had become members of the new Hungarian Working People's Party after the merger of the Communists and Social Democrats but it did not help them much. There were some former members of parliament belonging to some of the other parties as well. For example, János Kolbert from the Barankovics party. (This Christian Democratic Party, which formed part of the opposition, took its name from its leader, István Barankovics. The Democratic People's Party was dissolved in 1949. Barankovics went into exile in the United States to escape arrest.) János Visnyei was a Social Democrat Member of Parliament. The Independent Smallholders' Party was represented by János Rác, Sándor Lipcsey and myself. There were two ex-members of Ferenc Szálasi's fascist Arrow-Cross Party: Dr Hugo Keck and István Bodnár.

Then there were the kulaks. (The communist term taken from the Russians, for peasants farming over 10 hectares who were considered potential enemies of the new regime.) After the establishment of collective farms they were accused of causing damage and brought to the camp as common criminals. They came mostly from the environs of Szeged, Hódmezővásárhely, Kőszeg or from Somogy and Borsod counties. Their number can be put at about 100-150. There were quite a few students, from the universities and young peasants. Many former army officers, some who had served under Horthy, others in the post-war Democratic Army, some in both. Colonel Kálmán Kéri, formerly of the General Staff, Colonels László Varró and Zoltán Pálffy-Muhoray, Majors



Zoltán Endrődi and Loránd Somóczy from the army. Then Lieutenant-Colonels István Módly from the old, and József Solymosi from the new police force. There were officers of the gendarmerie and, as I have mentioned, some ex-officers of the new ÁVH. Also imprisoned at Recsk were the Counts József Somssich, Péter Zichy, Gyula Ambrózy, Dr János Hoyos who, being a doctor, selflessly helped his fellow inmates, and Marquis Alfréd Pallavicini. They were locked up with the old monarchists. Their number can be put at 120-150.

It was typical of the self-styled progressive dictatorship that five years after Buchenwald and Dachau we could meet many of the Jews who had been in Hitler's camps at Recsk again. Once again they were condemned to forced labour. A group of Jews accused of Zionist conspiracy were also imprisoned there. They knew the ropes all right! They were experienced and toughened up. None of them committed suicide, though this mode of escape was frequent at Recsk.

*"Work is a matter of honour and glory"*

All Hungary sported this slogan in the 50s. Let's look at the Recsk version.

*Zoltán Szűráy:* The surroundings of Recsk are beautiful. This antechamber of hell was set amidst pristine forests, century-old trees and beauteous shrubs. Csákánykő, rising above the camp, was selected as the site of a quarry. This peak was originally covered by woods but the army of slave workers fell the trees and brought down the timber on their shoulders at an incredible speed. Next we carted away several thousand cubic metres of soil on carriers of our own making. Quarrying was started on the denuded rock using the most primitive methods. In groups of a hundred each we hammered away at the rock and split the stones. Some of us pounded away the rock face with 8-10 kilo sledgehammers, others used lighter tools to break the bigger ones into pieces of standard size

for road making. The work went on from dawn to dusk. Those using the smaller hammers sat close together and so had no protection at all against the flying, whizzing sharp-edged flints. Their faces and hands were covered in oozing blood. Our clothes—if the *minium* marked issue gear can be so called—were rags. Returning to camp in the evening, these stone-crushing brigades, their members tired, tattered, blood-stained, looked as if they'd come back from a most horrible battle. The mine cart pushers also arrived at the camp reeling and tottering. If they collapsed of exhaustion, the kapos had them tied to the side of the carts. They were dragged along in that position till the end of the workday. This was no better than an updated method of tying the victim to a horse's tail! It also happened that a prisoner, who had his eye put out by a splinter, had to be brought down supported by his mates. A librarian called Béla (or István?) Takács had one of his eyes dangling on some whitish thread before his face. He was blinded in one eye by a flint.

*Kálmán Kéri:* Time could not be wasted merely coming back from the quarry. Each prisoner had to carry a stone down the hill. Outside the inner gate the guards sized up the pieces. If they found a particular piece of stone to be not big enough, they would make the utterly fatigued prisoner throw it down, and he had to start back up the hill to fetch a bigger one. He came back running with the replacement so as to be back before the return of all the brigades, that is, before the gates were locked. Woe betide him if he was late! If he was, he must have stayed away on purpose. No excuse or explanation was accepted. In such cases he could not avoid being beaten, bound hand and foot for 60-70 hours, or thrown into the hole in the ground.

*Sándor Bándi:* We slept on two-decker bunks in the overcrowded barracks. In the evenings the guards would pick out one or two of us for a routine beating. There was no way of knowing whose turn it would be. So we all waited, exhausted physically as well



as mentally. Then the door opened and the guard shouted a name. The rest of us? Well, we started to place our drenched boots and clothes around the brick fireplace. This method of drying was quite ineffective as our things never dried by morning.

As to medical care, there was almost none. In the beginning Dr Hoyos attempted to treat us and when he was detailed to work in the quarry the Recsk district doctor paid us occasional visits but understandably he was afraid to do anything for the prisoners. Later an ÁVH barber, transferred to Recsk from a prison, became the commander of the sick-room. Anyone who even the ÁVH thought was too weak, sick or old, was detailed to straighten nails on half-rations. The prisoners called these pariahs the metal army: silver hairs, feet of lead, golden veins (Hungarian for piles) and iron wills.

*Zoltán Sztáray:* By 1952 the strength of the disabled brigade had risen to 160–180. They shambled along using sticks and tree branches for crutches. They had become useless even for peeling potatoes. They led a miserable existence in a detached barrack infested by millions of fleas. They would sometimes appear at the door of the other barracks and workshops, begging remnants of food or some small crust.

The two meter tall Major Ferenc Korniss went down from a hundred to forty kilogrammes. Captain Domokos Kálnoky, a strapping man, the most dashing officer of the Miskolc artillery regiment, was hardly able to walk. Hunger became more and more unbearable. Some ate live snails and lizzards in the woods; others cooked the lucerne of the horses. They stuffed berries and bran into their mouths and some even gobbled up the slops meant to fatten the pigs of the guards.

At first there were no buckets in the barracks. Those unable to hold their water urinated into their mess-tins. A prisoner was lucky if he could empty it before breakfast. Very well, but sometimes one just had to use the latrine. That was real hell for the prisoner. Pound as hard as he might on the

door it was a long time before the guard on duty was willing to let him out. Then he had to crawl in the mud there and back as a punishment! The guard would have his fun with the poor man for as long as half an hour.

Those who managed to stay alive give the lie to the biochemists. According to scientists the heavy physical labour we were made to do on a daily ration of 900–1000 calories ought to have killed all of us.

What was most unbearable at Recsk? Was it the inhuman slave labour, the constant beatings and rough treatment or the deliberate starvation diet that beggars all description? At Recsk we were not hungry, which is still an endurable state, but our utterly exploited cells clamoured for food twenty-four hours a day. We were not simply reduced to living skeletons, wasted to skin and bone, we were attacked by diseases due to protein and vitamin deficiency. Our bodies were full of boils and running sores, our gums were inflamed and we lost all our teeth. That is how we somehow managed for all those years ... a miracle that we did.

Many did not survive. They died of exhaustion, disease, torture or were shot. The dead bodies were removed in secret. They were never handed over to their kin, the authorities even neglected to notify them. There was no burial ground within the camp's perimeter. It has proved impossible to obtain a death certificate for many of the victims to this day. For, so the authorities concerned said as recently as five years ago, this camp never existed in Hungary. The ÁVH looked on the prisoners as expendable. Had Stalin lived another few years, or Rákosi had stayed on, there would have been few survivors indeed.

*Kálmán Kéri:* We knew virtually nothing about events outside. The cleaners of the guards' latrines learnt about the dictator's death from shreds of the party daily *Szabad Nép*, which they managed to wash. Many of us began then memorise the names of their fellow prisoners in the hope that if they sur-



vived Recsk they would be able to tell about the extermination camp in the foothills of the Mátra hills.

*Escape attempts from the ante-chamber of hell*

*Tivadar Pártay:* Naturally, the prisoners constantly thought about freedom, about escape. The first attempt occurred at a time when the tall barbed wire fence surrounding the camp had not yet been completed. András (or István?) Dobos, a Captain in the former gendarmerie, successfully escaped. He was never found. Then the ÁVH arrested his elderly parents. When he learnt about it, Dobos gave himself up. The kapos were lined up in two rows and each given a stick. Running the gauntlet started. Dobos, pushed between the lines, got a horrible beating from the eager to please kapos. At the end of it he looked something awful. His head was swollen as big as a keg. And his eyes and lips simply disappeared. A young student, who had hid under a pile of dry twigs one evening after returning to camp, was similarly beaten out of shape. The youth was beaten up by the guards themselves with great expertise and afterwards pushed into the hole. When he emerged two weeks later his shape did not resemble a human being.

The only successful escape attempt was brought off by Gyula Michnay and his seven associates. It happened on a Sunday, the 20th of May 1951.

*Gyula Michnay:* We were able to escape because one of us put on an ÁVH uniform we had made of this thing and another. Next this fellow, holding a perfect wooden replica of a submachine gun escorted the rest of us through the wire fence as though he were taking us out to work. It was broad daylight and within sight of the watch towers manned by the sentries with their machine guns. After the escape stunt was discovered all the country's police forces were alerted. About

thirty thousand security police, soldiers and policemen started a search for us. Unfortunately, I alone managed to make it across the Austrian border. Over there no one would believe that such camps existed in Hungary, nor that I could have succeeded in escaping against all those odds. They suspected that I had been sent across as an intelligence agent.

The escape was followed by terrible reprisals at Recsk.

*György Faludy:* ... One day, as we were returning to camp, on the opposite hillside, in front of H.Q. we caught sight of the silhouettes of seven men chained together. They were the escapees. A few minutes later a corporal nicknamed Mongol came into our barracks and demanded that volunteers present themselves to help beat the apprehended fugitives to death. No one came forward. At that Mongol stepped next to Captain László Skultéti, a tall, fair-haired man, with a hooked nose and gestures resembling a Roman centurion. When Skultéti declared that he would rather be beaten to death than take part in a thing like that, Mongol kicked him in the groin so bad that he collapsed. While he went on looking for a new victim, another of the guards called in to say they had got enough volunteers. About fifteen of them filed past the barracks, most of them *nachalniks*. So it's you, sneered the sub-lieutenant and spat out at their feet. But those fifteen were not to be disturbed or embarrassed. Abetting each other, shaking their fists and snickering they went climbing the muddy hillside where we could still glimpse the seven fugitives under an oak tree against the sunset. They waited there, chained, heads bowed and motionless. After about an hour the henchmen returned. Around midnight we saw from our windows the Black Maria drive up in the glare of the spotlights. Supporting each other and swaying on their feeble feet they clambered into the vehicle; but all seven of them were still there.



*Epilogue*

Time went by and in October 1953 the camp that never was was liquidated by the Imre Nagy government. Decades have passed since. The ex-inmates of Recsk meet from time to time, as they did in the autumn of 1988. They recognise each other with great difficulty but they continue to arrive for these reunions from all parts of the world. They embrace, tell their stories, sometimes they even laugh, but they do not forget.

As I started on this story, the documentary about the Recsk camp by Géza Bereményi and Livia Gyarmati was first shown at the Hungarian Film Survey in Budapest...

Times have changed. As I am writing these lines I can hear Kálmán Kulcsár, Minister of Justice, make a promise that the rehabilitation of the prisoners of the Recsk camp will begin soon.

József Lengyel, the Hungarian writer who was a Gulag inmate in Siberia and was often called the small angry old man, wrote this: "Only the open revelation of the events can create a situation in which everything can be frankly told without any danger. Only when we get to this point will they cease to be a tormenting present, only in this way can they become history, a past with lessons to teach."

ILDIKÓ SÓLYOM

INTERNAL EXILE

*The crimes of the Rákosi age smell to high heaven. There are documents aplenty to show that many were persecuted who were not guilty of anything prohibited by the law of the time. What is less well known is what happened to the families of the executed and imprisoned.*

*Megtörténhetett (It could happen)\* by Ildikó Sólyom—which also contains the prison memories of her mother—was published after long delays.*

*Ildikó Sólyom's father, László Sólyom, resigned his commission in 1941 for political reasons, although he was a member of the General Staff. He took part in the Hungarian resistance towards the end of the war. After the war, in 1945, he was first Chief of Police in Budapest, he taught in the Staff College, and finally he headed the General Staff of the Hungarian People's Army. He was arrested in May 1950*

*That same August he was condemned as the*

*chief accused in the Officers' Trial. Fourteen death sentences were passed, seven defendants were executed, and seven—including Sólyom's father-in-law, Colonel (ret.) János Papp—had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment. The lives of their families were not easy either.*

We were compulsorily relocated at a place of internal exile on June 19th, with a red piece of paper. Coloured pieces of paper were in use at the time: blue, yellow and red.

They were delivered by policemen the night before, and the call was for dawn next day. The colours determined how much you could take with you. Those with blue paper could even take furniture, yellow meant perhaps two hundred kilogrammes—and red only beds and hand luggage. We, of course, travelled smart, carrying the fewest bundles. Our team was made up of three members:



my grandmother, enjoying no pension, but two grandchildren instead, with my younger brother still a babe in arms. The others in the house in Buda where we lived watched frightened and furtively from the windows and balconies how we climbed onto the truck. No one dared to come close or to say good-bye. Everybody was afraid that they, too, might be offered such a country trip. The truck stopped at a few streets nearby, taking new passengers. No empty space at all, those who had arranged our journey saw to it that capacities were fully exploited.

We travelled at night, by train, and unbelievably slowly. We often stopped in the stifling heat. The doors were locked. There was no way of getting out, or of going into neighbouring carriages. Opening windows was prohibited. Where there was a curtain, even it was drawn—I suppose so that we should not find out in some way where we were going. The journey seemed to be terribly long. We were on our way for two days, but mostly waiting at sidings. They did not change the time-table for our sake: we could only move at night and if the tracks happened to be free. The long journey gave rise to unbelievable imaginings. The well-informed whispered about the possibility of Siberian regions. From time to time, while the train was at a halt, policemen passed up fresh water in a bucket or can. There were a great many of us in the carriage, but everyone had a seat. We soon were out of water: everybody drank eagerly. Our grandmother did not let us drink of the common water. She gave us gulps of tea from a flask with a clasp, dividing it up carefully. She had made the tea the night before. The trip turned out to be long; some did not reach the end of the journey, or rather changed trains for an even more unknown, a heavenly, destination.

Next to the carriage door sat an undistinctive, grey, elderly birdlike couple. Perhaps they did not say a single word the whole time. They were not as interesting as the grey-haired lady who by the end of the journey was called Sári by everybody. She carried

a portable porcelain bidet under her arm, and maintained her queenlike bearing, in a black crêpe frock, talking all the time. Speaking in an Austrian accent she said that she never went anywhere without her bidet, not even for a summer holiday. No one had the heart to enlighten the old lady that this was not really a recreational trip—although nobody knew anything for certain.

Everybody listened to Sári, and attention shifted to the little old man only when excited stirs, murmurs and later noises asking for help could be heard from the end of the carriage. We sat in front, so we did not really see what happened, and could only understand from the more and more distinct noise what had happened: "horrible...", "the poor man, he got sick..." "help!" "...Doctor!", "is there a doctor in the carriage?" There was none on our train. The train continued complacently. When the policeman travelling at the end of the corridor turned up, he could only establish that he was unable to help. The old woman cried, the old man continued to sit complacently: nothing mattered to him any more. Somebody pulled that hat from the top of his head to cover his face—as if this gesture could undo what had happened, and could turn events for the better. The old man continued to wobble on the bench, the old woman held him straight with her body to stop him slipping under the seat. Nobody did anything, everybody waited numb and paralysed for some outside help.

The policeman advised in a slight Transdanubian brogue: the person could not be removed: he had to account for everybody. When we arrived at the designated place, it will be possible to take measures. Until then everybody should stay seated. No gathering was permitted.

After deliberations lasting several hours, two brave men took the old man under his arms and carried him through the carriage. His head tilted forward, he lost his hat, quite near to us. And although my grandmother forbade me to look, I stared rigidly:



I simply could not look in any other direction. I picked up the lost hat so that I should also make myself useful in some way. I carried it towards them readily, the hat was worn, black, a little drenched, smelling like an old dog.

The old man continued the journey on the seat of the toilet. So that could not be used until the end of the trip. The policeman was compelled to share the other one at the far end of the corridor with us. It had been reserved for him.

Finally the train made up of many carriages stopped, some way from the station building. No sign was visible and it was only in the village that we found out where we were. We could get off. Many people and policemen stood on the platform and between the rails. There was shouting. The people were being driven along: they were hired up in threes. Our number was exactly right. We made up a row. My grandmother was so tired that she could no longer carry Laci. She put him down on his own legs.

There was shouting everywhere: indignation, curses, there were people who spat out towards those who stood in the rows. We were told later that this spitting had been the part of the programme in order to make our arrival more memorable. But it was either not possible to do such things at a word of command, or the saliva of those ordered to show up had run dry. Few spat. The people of Tiszapolgár rather watched alarmed wondering where all these people would be housed. We were mostly billeted on kulaks, but since there were more of us than the number of peasants who could be termed kulaks, some of the other peasants got their punishment. It was undoubtedly a punishment in those days made interesting by the compulsory delivery of produce to billet a family of three or four where there was little space. So it was obvious that the shed, the stable or byre, from which the previous tenant had already been compulsorily delivered, became the domicile of the relocated. Often there was merely a roof, and there was much

let to remind one of the previous hoofed inhabitant.

At a roll call where everybody's name was read, including those of the babes in arms, we were told who went where, to which house. And then we were emphatically instructed: gatherings were prohibited, the village inns were out of bounds, hostile broadcasts must not be listened to, or rumours spread, and we must not go beyond the limits of the village fields. No need to worry, supervision would ensure that all the rules were kept.

We dispersed. We went to a stable. There was plenty of space, at least for the few things which we had brought along: one bed and the mattresses.

Of course, the division into classes soon took place. Some were sent to outlying homesteads, and sourly took notice that they would be a long way from Tiszapolgár's lively centre. On the other hand, there was something to eat there. We found ourselves in the village. True, in a stable, but near the centre: there was water on tap at a pump, a church, a police station, an inn, but nothing to eat. The basis was that everybody was afraid of everybody, and feeling this fear the large majority hastened to the police to denounce each other to preempt one's neighbour's denunciation. There was plenty of work for informers: listening to broadcasts where there was electricity and a radio, writing to American relatives, or such bold deeds as leaving the area of Tiszapolgár without permission, possibly to escape to Budapest for a visit, that is if one had enough money for the fare. Amongst us were aristocrats, middle-class people, businessmen and a tiny number of dependents of Communists.

The last group included us, or perhaps us in the first place. This was the very bottom of heap. We were the poorest, without a penny, all our relatives in jail, or to be precise, at the time we did not know where they were.

Some were pensioners without a pension. These barely survived. Some possessed valu-



ables, an opportunity for some dealing. Many were employed building a pig fattening shed. They at least earned some money. My old grandmother, who all her life had only done housework, remained without money and help. Some of her friends, widows and pensioners themselves, on occasion sent flour, sometimes salt and sugar. She fed us out of almost nothing.

We were the most despised, and also the most suspect. Few talked to us: some officers, who by some miracle had escaped jail, or the relocated relatives of those in jail, made up the company of my grandmother. Bread was rationed, but you had to queue up for half a day. In my childhood I had my fill for a lifetime of queuing up among slatternly adults, being shoved about, smelling the emanation of parts of their bodies which were at the height of my nose.

Some soon enough found ways to ease their lives. For money the householders were willing to make room in the house itself for the intruders, but there were even some who paid rent and moved into the best room in the peasant house. Even in these difficult times it was possible to get food for money.

Take the Ropemakers. They had owned a rope-making workshop in the 13th district of Budapest before they were nationalised and relocated. They were at the peak. A very smart wife with many bracelets and a charming seventeen year old daughter belonged to the fat, bold, always drunk Uncle Rope-maker. The girl had a fiancé in Budapest who owned a car. Private cars, I imagine, were rare, even in Budapest, at that time. But Tiszapolgár was shaken to its foundations by the weekly appearance of the young man. To our amazement, heavenly food and fruit unknown to us emerged week after week from the boot of the red car as well as cases of beer, which the father-in-law conscientiously consumed until the next visit. Consequently, he took little knowledge of the surrounding world. His wife played bridge with an engineer and his wife, who had also by then paid some money and moved into the big

room of their house. They frenetically listened to and spread news which never came true, giving exact dates to the events to be expected which would bring liberation to the relocated.

Our life was eventless. We lived in the discarded byre, and waited for news that some fine day my mother might suddenly show up. My grandmother had brought my grandfather's shoes and clothes to Tiszapolgár, so that, if he should turn up, he should have something to wear. "That dear, unfortunate man... he was taken away in spring clothes..." My Grandmother took the clothes out of the wardrobe every week, brushed and aired them. Everything became mouldy in the wardrobe; green moss grew on the shoes like hairs. As time passed, Grandmother took out the clothes of the wardrobe less and less frequently, and one day she decided to sell Grandfather's boots.

We went over in the afternoons to Uncle Pista Schweitzer\* and his family, who lived not far from us. Their baby was born there, in the village. Uncle Pista had been Daddy's teacher at the Ludovika Academy,\*\* and was the same age as my grandfather.

The baby cried much being always hungry, and there was hardly anything to feed him on. We went over and rocked him: for that time at least he stopped crying. My grandmother, whenever she received a parcel, took over a little sugar and flour, so that at least the baby should get some nourishment.

Another pastime I liked was to visit Uncle Zsiga.

Uncle Zsiga Széchenyi\*\*\* "Zsiga"—as everybody called him (old, young, native and relocated) I imagined to be one hundred years old. I worked out at the time he died that perhaps he had not even been sixty then.

\* Colonel General István Schweitzer.

\*\* The College which trained professional officers for the Hungarian Army.

\*\*\* Count Zsigmond Széchenyi, the author of numerous books about his adventures as a big game hunter.



He gathered the children around him sitting in the flap of his tropical tent. The Great White Chief—his grey beard indicated his great age—told stories about safari and Paris adventures, whatever happened to come to his mind. He did not really choose which of his memories were right for the 5–8–10 year old, who listened to him with their mouths wide open. Then he went into his magic tent, in which there was a stove, a rubber tub, and even a snow-white polar bear skin in front of the camping bed—and took out cookies and lollies, sometimes even out of various bags. Aunt Emmy brought them from Budapest on Sundays.

Aunt Emmy was a very beautiful, tall, blonde lady. She came by train every weekend, and brought all the sweets, which Uncle Zsiga then distributed among the children on Monday. The cakes, the chocolates were probably brought by the famous and beautiful operetta primadonna on Uncle Zsiga's express orders, and she may have suspected from the quantity that they would not be consumed by him alone.

I found out later that she was Emmy Buttykay, the actress, and that she later died in London.

Made dizzy by all the stories and the chocolate I ran home to the other end of the village, and reported at length what I had heard. Although I did not understand all the details of the Paris adventures, my Grandmother put them together even out of the fragments—and she was not at all pleased about the brothel stories, so much that she declared that Zsiga appeared to be senile, and did not know what he was talking about, and that she would not let me to go to him any longer. This was how I was forbidden to call on a Széchenyi who, according to my Grandmother, was not fitting company for me. Nevertheless, furtively of course, I sometimes ran over to him. I was not really able to appreciate his personal magic, but I was overwhelmed by the white polar bear in front of his bed, just as the Tiszapolgár policeman was.

The inspections promised at the railway station were indeed carried out, although interestingly the relocated always knew a day before that there would be an unexpected raid next night. It seems that despite all the precautions even the most anxiously guarded secrets of the police were leaked. On such occasions the Ropemaker, the Hat Merchant and the Engineer suspended the evening game of bridge, and they did not listen to the whistling and noise which jamming produced on the Radio Free Europe frequency. Everybody waited for the night raid. There were some who in their eagerness even wanted to do favours to the night visitors—there was no harm in being on good terms with the authorities. Fearful authority usually consisted of several peasant lads, mostly locals, who were related by marriage at least to everybody, and thus the relocated in the last resort lived with their relatives. The lads went about in pairs. They went everywhere, one house after the other: and so they also got to Zsiga. Zsiga was independent, in his own house. He kept on saying: "This lot cannot get the better of me, I was used to worse circumstances and climates. Here there are not even mosquitoes or other bugs." He had erected his tropical tent in the courtyard, and had brought along all the furnishings. He was the only one who bathed in a tub in all that time, and we envied him terribly because of this. Getting out of his bed, there was a white bear under his heels—and that truly impressed me.

The young policeman had never seen such a tent before. When he entered and turned on his torch he noticed the head of the bear which showed his teeth, and his eyes too shone in the light. The policeman threw his torch away, and backed out of the tent. According to the people in the house, he forgot all the respect due his superiors and reverted to being a lad from the homesteads saying out loud which of his bosses should raid this damn lot, who frighten the daylight out of people.

Of course, he was a laughing stock for days.



Life was pretty interesting anyway. At the pump one could always hear of some new event. For instance, that Baroness Paula fell asleep in the church during evening prayers, she was locked in and when she awoke in the dark church, she did not know where she was. She began to scream and started running around, knocking against the pews. The walls resounded with her screams. The policeman on duty at the station opposite stood frightened in front of the church door: he did not dare to break the lock, he was afraid there was a ghost inside. Poor Paula was let out by the sexton early in the morning. She must have been very sleepy going to the piggery that day, where she carried mortar. Those who were able to do heavy manual work were employed there, mainly the younger men, and the only woman: Paula. The piggery paid good wages, and Paula certainly needed the money: she looked after seven children, two to twelve years of age. Paula had been a nun, but when the cloister was disbanded, she stopped that. Many of her numerous family had tried to leave the country illegally, some were caught at the border and jailed—but all left behind some uncared for children, whom Baroness Paula took in care. Finally they were all relocated together. Paula put on skiing trousers, and men's boots. She wore them all the time, and went to build the pig-fattening shed. She was the only one who never complained. She never talked to anybody. She looked after her many children, and then ran to the church. She usually sat there whenever she was not pushing the wheelbarrow.

Then there were the Becsáks: an iron-worker from Csepel and his wife with five children. After Liberation they had no home, and they were allocated and had requisitioned half of the villa of the family of a count. The villa was too splendid. It had not been damaged at all and somebody had noticed it. The count, the countess and the two children got their notice, but in order that the whole house could be vacated it was obviously necessary to relocate the proletarian from Cse-

pel as well. Thus the working class was also represented at Tiszapolgár. The two families and the children, who did not even talk to each other at home in the villa, and who were relocated together and because of each other, all eleven lived together in a shed, as a big family and in mutual love, which was not very frequent among the relocated. Most quarrelled most of the time. The two men worked at the piggery, and their wives looked after the many children—they were constantly doing the washing. At their place a small foamy brook kept on running out from under the fence. The washing was always heaped high in the tubs.

In the autumn the sister of my girlfriend died. This was the first death I experienced, not counting the man on the train, but I had not known him. I believe that it was when Éva's sister died that I understood something of what it means if somebody leaves, he or she takes away everything, and there is a hole left, an emptiness, and nobody can ever again fill it, not even if we never again mention it.

Éva lived with her family in the world of homesteads, which is as inaccessible in the mud as when it's dry, when the sand of the plain is carried by the wind in waves like the sea. Éva's sixteen year old sister suddenly fell ill. Her father borrowed a bicycle and rode through the sea of dust to Polgár for a doctor. The doctor only went out after being implored for a long time, in a cart. He gave her some medicine, but diagnosed appendicitis, and said he was unable to organise an ambulance. She must somehow be taken to Nánás or Nyíregyháza to the hospital. Uncle Vermes again rode the bicycle to the police asking them to call the ambulance, or to permit him to take his daughter to the hospital by train. It was late at night. The man on duty said that he could not take a decision in the absence of his superior officer and that he should return next morning. Daddy Vermes rode his bicycle home. By then Eszter was already in agony and running a high temperature. The people who owned the



homestead managed to get a midwife from somewhere, the only help available nearby. The woman did what she could. Ice was brought from the cellar and used in a compress. Early in the morning Eszter died. She died less than thirty kilometres from a hospital where her life could have been saved.

At week-ends things livened up. Many visitors arrived, who were brave enough and also had the money. They usually came in the morning and left in the evening. There was no room for the visitors to sleep. In the sheds but even in the pigsties there was no unused accommodation.

We were amongst the few who were never visited. The friends of my Grandmother were mostly widows and pensioners and they could not afford such trips. They rather sent ten or twenty forints by mail—and usually under a false name. Not because they did not want to be thanked, but because they were afraid, lest anyone found out that they kept in touch.

Nobody ever showed up amongst my father's or my mother's friends, neither in person, nor by letter. None of them ever sent anything, not even under a false name. They were either in jail, or they were afraid.

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Since May 1950 we knew nothing of my father and grandfather, or of my mother since August, when we left Mátészalka. My grandmother thought that they were very likely in jail. The relatives of many were in jail. These included war criminals, Arrow Cross Party members, who had tried to leave the country illegally, black marketeers, and we were the Communist family members, all bundled together and recorded officially under the collective name "relocated fascists"!

My Grandmother, who had once been a famous Transylvanian Calvinist beauty, felt that all happened to her because of her Communist son-in-law. She had never engaged in politics, and often repeated that although she had been a democrat all her life, I believe

also because of her religion, she had really never approved of her son-in-law's Communism and had not been enthusiastic either about being related to Sólyom. She several times mentioned this to me too, and this was the start of our conflict. I was enraged that somebody should not approve of what my fabulous father had done and should not be highly pleased to be related to him. I knew at once that Daddy must have been right, and that if it was really on account of him that we were there where we were, and we starved for him, then this was how things should be, because Daddy was the best, the justest man in the world, and then I would not even complain about anything. I could not understand then that this was a bit more complicated and much more difficult to explain. The more my poor Grandmother complained about relocation, about fate, about the curse, I willy-nilly moved to the opposite pole, that things were not all that bad or intolerable, if we had to put up with them because of Daddy and for Daddy's sake.

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I never liked to go to school as much as I did then. The reason may well have been that we were seldom examined on our homework. We knew much more than our classmates of Tiszapolgár. We had been to better schools, and thus we only wrote papers which got top marks. The teachers did not seem to take notice of us, they did not talk to us—at least not outside the classroom, probably they were also afraid. The teacher of Russian, a confirmed slim bachelor, was the only one who sometimes invited some of us to his home. He gave us afternoon tea: I think practising Russian may have only been a pretext: he saw that we were always hungry. In his place we gobbled up the longed for bread and dripping with paprika on it. It was the unachievable desire of my childhood that I should once have so much bread and dripping put before me that I should be unable to eat it all, it should be left on the dish, and



it would be good even to look at it. We had little bread, which was rationed, and no pork dripping at all. It was only later that we got hold of a jarful. My Grandmother exchanged my Grandfather's boots for a small jar of pork dripping, but we ate little of it. Grandmother kept it for even hungrier days. I do not know what future the poor woman feared, because a more difficult time than we had lived through was difficult to imagine.

We did not touch the pork dripping for some time. Then a holiday came, perhaps a birthday, and we asked for fried bread. Then my Grandmother opened the jar—and the dripping in it was as if poppy seed had been thrown over it, it teemed with thousands of ants. When she dipped a spoon deeper, it turned out that the jar was full of live and drowned ants from top to bottom.

In all that time, I seldom saw my grandmother cry—now she cried without stopping in impotent anger. She poured the fat together with the ants into a big borrowed cooking pot, brought it to the boil and then filtered it through a sieve, but somehow I had no desire for it any longer.

We ate an unending chain of vegetable soup and pearl barley soup and sometimes, but seldom, got a little milk. The milk had to be taken to the dairy by the owners of the cows and a little only was left sometimes, very likely diluted with water. If we got hold of such a treasure, it was first of all Laci who was given it, since he was so small and had been very sick not so long ago. For a long time he had been in the Hospital for Officers in Királyhágó utca. Mummy too moved in with him and was with him all the time while he was getting the many transfusions. Daddy and I visited them every evening: Daddy stood pale at the foot of the bed and talked in a low voice and at length with the doctors. They told him that he was poisoned, perhaps by red lead, housepainting had taken place in Eszter utca, and the window rails were painted with red paint. Laci may have tasted it. This could easily be imagined. Laci was curious first of all of the taste of every-

thing: he tried cigarette ends too in the ashtray, shocking everybody. He maintained this habit in Tiszapolgár as well. There we shared a courtyard with another Budapest family, my girlfriend Zsuzsa, her mother, grandmother and young sister. With the barely two year old Luca, Laci sat in the courtyard full of chicken droppings and quietly tasted everything, from pebbles to whatever they laid their hands on. Aunt Rózsi, Zsuzsa's mother, and Grandmother lived in permanent fear that they may get some terrible infection, but at least they were out in the sun and fresh air. Zsuzsa and me looked after them. What we did was sit near the shed and read. We read everything which we found in the house, or at neighbours or acquaintances, without selection or supervision, but our reading also included books brought by weekend visitors: "My Dear, a little refreshing lemonade, a light entertaining writing, this is what you need most now." And we begged from whoever My Dear was, Cronin, Márai, Brontë, Tolstoy, Dickens and we read and read. The two small, very blond, blue-eyed pink-complexioned small children sat nearly for hours on the bare soil where there were only patches of grass. They were hardly able to talk, and had nothing to communicate to each other; they never cried, they chewed peacefully and deep in thought some thing of uncertain origin. They were so much like each other as if they had been brother and sister. Is it possible that a similar fate creates similar external marks? It certainly does not make us the same inside, I already clearly felt that then.

It became so cold in January in Tiszapolgár, as I had not remembered from Budapest. The window froze over and could not be thawed. In vain did Grandmother stoke the small iron stove with corncobs, it was as if we had no fire at all. She put all the rags that could be found on Laci, saying: he is the smallest, and he will freeze to death without even noticing it. Laci was unable to move because of the many rags, and only stood near the stove nodding peacefully. He did



not talk and did not cry. The two of them, with Luca, just scratched the floor of dried mud and cow pats.

"My dear little one, Granny has told you a hundred times not to pick up the earth, it is unhealthy. And I cannot keep repairing it, because if it is broken up somewhere, the whole thing comes up unstoppably, and then I cannot clean, everything will be full of rubble"—my Grandmother complained.

Every morning Aunt Rózsi brought Luca over to our place. In theirs, mice abounded because of the cold, they were hungry and gathered in the loft. Aunt Rózsi was afraid that either her daughter would bite a mouse or a mouse might chew her. In any case, they will do damage to each other, and Luca would get ill.

The cold bit our hands and feet, mine especially. I only had a pair of sandals, and in vain did I put on warm stockings, it made no difference. The stockings got wet because of the snow and then froze. After some time my heels turned red and blue, and so swollen that I could hardly put them back in the sandals. If I was in a room for ten minutes, I had to scratch, so that Granny asked: "I hope you did not catch scabies, my dear little soul! Show me! Good God, this is frostbite! Well, here I am in trouble with you, my little one, what shall I do now?"

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The school at Tiszapolgár was a long way away. I set out at seven o'clock not to be late. Since kindergarten age I had been always keenly punctual, I hated to be late. And here we were especially careful—all of us—so that there should never be any complaint against us at school. We were thinking with trepidation that if we were removed on any pretext there was nowhere to go. There was no other school at Tiszapolgár. Our unstillable thirst for knowledge was only increased by the anxiety. In most families there were some 15-16 year olds, who were not able to study anywhere. Fortunately, there were some secondary school and university teachers among the relocated. They gathered the children who did not go to school, who were happy to study. It seems that knowledge too becomes really attractive if one has to suffer for it and feel anxiety about it being lost.

In mud and snow we went punctually and well disciplined. Nobody ever played truant, we went to school even if we were sick. We were not really children but an anxious lot of the prematurely old.

The loudspeaker on top of the municipal council blared from early morning: "Our country is the land of peace, the people are happy." The programme was monotonous: the Council only owned two records. We were especially fond of the other: "Rights and freedom, wherever you may look, they stand firm"...



# IN FOCUS

## DRAFTING CONSTITUTIONS

Since 1948, Professor István Kovács has taken part first in drafting the constitution and later in work connected with its amendments. In 1988, before the relevant party resolution, he already argued on the need for a new constitution and also outlined what had to be done.

Is a new constitution needed? Or can a sound political leadership do its work even in the worst possible institutional framework? According to ancient Chinese wisdom, if a new dynasty comes to power, a new broom is needed. The sociologist of law can add that it must at least be believed that changes have taken place but everyday living conditions must not be disturbed.

In general it can be said that the life expectancy of West European constitutions is on the increase. They are, as for instance the German Basic Law of 1949, more and more of a legal nature, i.e. can be enforced in court, and are not mere declarations. Continually functioning institutions for the supervision of constitutionality and for the interpretation of the constitution have been established. On the other hand, in the socialist countries, there is permanent discussion on transformation. A new constitution will very likely be adopted in Hungary in 1990. At present, the amendments of 1972 are in force, but the basic text follows the 1949 Hungarian and the 1936 Soviet (Stalinist) model.

In the 1949 constitution, for domestic political reasons (because of the arrest of the leading Communist politician László Rajk) the role of parliament was reduced to a minimum. The articles of the constitution were programmatic. According to Kovács the Soviet text was copied, although in Hungary the institutional conditions were entirely different. The Rákosi leadership looked on the Soviet leadership as the source of sovereignty, from which its own powers as lieutenant governors were derived. István Kovács adds that the constitution was kept in such general terms that it could also have served as the foundation of democratic institutions. When the Rákosi leadership lost some of its powers, in 1953, attempts were made to increase the importance of parliament, but in the long term this did not prove successful. The lesson to be drawn is that one cannot give up the idea that democratic principles should be formulated in the constitution as norms which can be implemented.

A constitution is acceptable where citizens participate directly and through their autonomous communities in the practice of power. In other words, a right of intervention is not enough.

This affects directly the question of the power and legitimation of the Communist Party, called Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) since late in 1956. After 1957, the HSWP took up a position which was very difficult to realize in practice. Within the single party system, the HSWP did not



issue orders to other organizations as a commanding power preferring a consensus under its control (e.g. the HSWP should control appointments to leading positions but non-party members should also be appointed). At present this is one of the most contested questions. It followed from the solution chosen that the rule of law did not apply to the way the HSWP exercised power.

The new constitution must deal with the leading role of the HSWP, if at all, in the preamble—but there are constitutions in Eastern Europe which do not contain such a passage. (Recent progress in Hungary clearly points towards a multi-party system.)

The new constitution must also make a break with the notion suggested by the constitution of 1949 that independent Hungarian statehood began in 1945. The very opposite is true. The continuity of Hungarian statehood over the centuries to our days is something exceptional in this part of Europe.

Kovács, István: "Az alkotmányfejlődés elvi kérdései" (Questions of principle of constitutional evolution). *Magyar Tudomány*, 1989. Vol. 2. pp. 89-105.

A. S.

### NATIONAL MINORITIES AND RIGHTS

Professor Antal Ádám, who is one of the drafters of the constitution under preparation, believes that beyond the circumstance that the minority usually indicates some handicapped position, hardly any common feature can be found in the various definitions of minority rights.

The national, linguistic, ethnic, and religious minority communities—just as the protection of their rights—differ from each other in the most varied contexts. Thus, for instance, it makes a difference whether they are linked to some sort of statehood and through what circumstances they found themselves in a minority position (e.g. conquest, immigration, etc.).

In Central and Eastern Europe the legal standing of national minorities has been determined by the peace treaties which followed the two wars, with guarantees of minority rights. This is a point of departure for the analysis of the factual and the legal situation.

In Hungary, the associations of the national minorities establish the number of persons represented by them at four per cent of the total population. (Gypsies may account for a further 4-5 per cent, but their minority rights are disputed. Professor Ádám is of the opinion that "with the growing social utility" of the Gypsies, a basis for their recognition as a minority is also being created.) The use of the native language at school is not satisfactorily ensured: altogether 3000 minority pupils attend schools providing bilingual tuition.

According to Professor Ádám, the constitutional regulation concerning minorities should express their dual ties. It must make possible their integration as citizens into Hungarian society and simultaneously the flourishing of their national features. Protection of collective and individual rights is needed. The constitution should declare that Hungary is supportive of the national characteristics of the Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries.

According to the Professor's proposal, the constitution should list as recognised minorities the Germans, Slovaks, South-Slavs and Rumanians, and should stipulate under what conditions others (for instance the Gypsies) can become minorities recognized by the National Assembly. According to a draft prepared by the HSWP in 1988, any group may decide itself whether it wanted to declare itself a national minority. To make the protection of the rights of a minority dependent on their social utility may surprise those interested in protection for the minorities. But in Hungary, where the protection of minorities—as this article shows—still tends to mean the regulation of national minorities, and where constitutional law relies on



this social utility of rights, this is hardly surprising.

Minority rights should basically represent cultural and educational rights as well as the right for proportionate representation in the elected state bodies, as well as—without going into details—particular national interests. Professor Ádám considers necessary a special allocation of funds for the support of national minorities, as well as—in a cautious form—progress in the use of the national language in contact with the authorities.

As regards belonging to a minority, Professor Ádám shows himself to be a liberal—although in the assertion of rights he does not place too big an emphasis on individual rights. According to his view, everybody decides for himself or herself whether he or she wants to belong to a minority. This respectable liberalism may, of course, undermine the rights of the collective groups (e.g. state support tied to numbers).

Ádám, Antal: "A magyarországi nemzetiségek alkotmányjogi helyzetéről" (On the place of national minorities in Hungary in constitutional law). *Jogtudományi Közlemény*, 1989. pp.

A. S.

#### LEGAL THEORY: MARXIST OR STALINIST

The philosopher Tamás Földesi, who has for some time been the Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Budapest, here surveys the changes in the approach to law in Hungary over the past forty years.

After the Communist Party, then known as MDP, following the amalgamation with the Social Democratic Party, had seized power, arbitrariness was the rule. The role of law enforcement as the representative of the will of the state was overvalued, and the state was considered as expressing social will and interest. At the same time the law created by the MDP itself was also despised. It proclaimed and believed simultaneously that

legislation will have the effect of transforming the economy and human behaviour, and itself disregarded the law, perhaps in order to ensure the sort of society reluctant to come about despite legislation.

How was this reflected in Hungarian Marxist political and legal theory between 1949 and 1956, and to some degree even after then?

In the evaluation of the state and the law, it was examined whether they were efficient as the superstructure which was to serve the economic foundation. The question whether the law should provide guarantees to the individual versus the state was not even raised, especially before 1956. Justice was reckoned a red herring and the alienation of law was mentioned, if at all, only in connection with bourgeois legal systems.

Legal theory considered mandatory the so-called normative definition by Vyshinsky, the chief prosecutor of the Moscow trials. Law was observed only as a declared will, but no heed was paid to its implementation. Consequently, along with branches of sociology—the sociology of law could not exist either.

Although after 1956 there was vigorous legislation, including civil rights as well, the legal approach changed only gradually, simultaneously with very limited political reform.

As one of the early steps of the thaw, the sociology of law was revived in the sixties. Breaking with the normative approach, Imre Szabó—the leading student of law—considered legal norm but a form, and considered the legal social relationship to be the essence of law.

But what does the social nature of law really mean? In replying to this question, György Lukács played a decisive role. Following him, Vilmos Peschka and his associates stressed the relative autonomy of law with the consciousness of law and the assertion of law as its organic parts.

The revived study of comparative law showed that there were numerous elements



in socialist law which had already been characteristic of other social formations, and that legal evolution had a certain continuity.

In connection with the progress of Marxist thought, the problem of value in law became also acceptable in jurisprudence. Although the HSWP proclaimed the freedom of social science research political theory—being more touchy—was unable to rid itself of the view which restricted its role to the interpretation of the classics of Marxism. Consequently, the problems of law connected with liberty and democracy require a novel approach in the near future.

Földesi, Tamás: "Az állam- és jogfelfogás átalakulásának néhány jellemzője" (Some characteristics of the change in the approach to the state and the law). *Jogtudományi Közlemény*, 1989. pp. . . .

A. S.

#### QUESTION MARKS CONCERNING 1956

*História*, a journal of popular history, devoted most of its 1988/6 issue to 1956. In the over thirty years since the event this subject could be discussed only in an indirect way or else clearly taking sides in favour of the subsequent victors. The average reader met only with opinions and judgments, but not with the facts.

This issue of *História*, on the other hand, publishes contemporary documents. First of all, three important speeches which played a significant role at the time, and which have been frequently referred to since. One is an address by Ernő Gerő, the then Secretary General of the Hungarian CP (known as MDP), broadcast in the evening hours of October 23rd, which he intended to cry halt to the popular movement. The speech, according to the general opinion, added fuel to the fire and intensified public hostility. The second is János Kádár's broadcast of the evening of November 1, where he announced

the winding up of the failed Stalinist party, the MDP, and the establishment of MSZMP=HSWP, the new party of the Communists who accepted the popular uprising or participated in it, under the leadership of Imre Nagy, György Lukács, and others. It is interesting to contemplate that at the time when the address went over the air, Kádár, who was Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government, and the First Secretary of the new party, was in all likelihood no longer in the country, but somewhere abroad discussing with Soviet leaders a military and political counter-offensive. The third speech was delivered by the leading figure of the political and ideological opposite, Cardinal József Mindszenty, Prince Primate of Hungary and Archbishop of Esztergom in the evening of November 3rd, a couple of hours before Soviet tanks moved in to Budapest. The Prince Primate, who had been released a few days earlier following nearly eight years in gaol, condemned not only the "failed regime," but also its "heirs" who then held power. Next day he had to seek asylum at the Budapest Embassy of the United States. He was the unwilling guest of the Americans for fifteen years, until he was persuaded to move to Rome under a Hungarian-American accord. His speech of November 3rd could no longer directly affect events, but later it was exactly with reference to it that the Kádár regime claimed that this involved already the unfurling of the banners of an openly counter-revolutionary policy.

In addition to details of the programmes of parties which had been revived during those days, *História* published also two important plans seeking a solution. One is István Bibó's, dated November 6, 1956: "A plan for the compromise solution of the Hungarian question." The social thinker, lawyer and political scientist, who had been appointed Minister of State in the Imre Nagy government at the last moment, was in those days the most active member of the government which was to be overthrown by



outside armed intervention. He forwarded his plans to the United Nations and to the Great Powers, and in a ciclostyled form and as posters they became also publicly known. He was later sentenced to life imprisonment, and was released only in 1963 through the general amnesty.

The other plan, which would have been published on November 16, 1956, if there had been any independent press left, was the "Plan of the Independent Smallholders' Party for a political solution." This contained detailed proposals for ensuring international and domestic political conditions, a military evacuation, and the transformation of the country's government. It is interesting that this compromise proposal which aimed at the maintenance of the fundamental achievements of socialism and democracy within the conditions of a limited multi-party system, is similar to plans hawked around these days.

*História.* 1988/6

Gy. L.

#### MULTI-ETHNIC TRANSYLVANIA

László Kósa discusses the possibility of outlining a total picture of village and peasant culture prior to the industrial revolution in Transylvania, in the spirit of a Central and East European national ethnography. He speaks of the whole of Transylvania, including the Rumanians, Hungarians and Saxons. Unfortunately, he had to establish that studies by the three nations are done independent of each other and according to different principles. These different approaches have always been influenced by the ethnocentric political expectations of various times. Very little work has been done on cultural interaction and interrelations between the nations and it was especially concerning this subject that there was a strong bias, a competition for the appropriation of

various elements of culture. The descriptive registration of the folklore and peasant tradition of the various nations is not uniform. Besides much Rumanian research of recent decades, the author points at the extensive ethnographic literature of the Transylvanian Saxons, compared to which Hungarian ethnographers, less active before the Great War, have been lagging behind in increasingly difficult circumstances.

In 1852, László Kőváry called Transylvania a rich unknown museum. Among the Transylvanian peasantry, compared to Hungary, archaic cultural features had survived to a conspicuously large extent. This cannot simply be explained by backwardness, development or rigidity. This was so, because there were rather big differences then within Transylvania too. It was perhaps in Transylvania that the most modernised and urbanized peasants of the Carpathian Basin could be found. The concept of backwardness itself also requires definition: what are its symptoms, and with what is the comparison made? The Transylvanian Highlands were geographically secluded, and in the 16th-17th centuries, in the Transylvanian Principality, it went through a development which differed from that of other regions in the Carpathian Basin. Under Maria Theresa the situation of the peasant serfs was not reformed and not eased in Transylvania as in the other parts of the country, there were no large estates capable of genuine modernization, as there were in the Hungarian Kingdom further west. The proportion of free peasants was very high in Transylvania, accounting for 27.21 per cent of the tax paying population in 1821. (These included the free Saxons, and the Székely and Rumanian frontier guards.) However, this freedom was rather the conservation of archaic conditions than the early manifestation of modernity.

The author tries to determine the standing of the three major nations in the process of the *embourgeoisement* of the peasantry, and to analyse the cultural differences through this



approach. Seen from Germany, the Saxons "are described unequivocally as an archaic tribe." But within Transylvania they have progressed furthest. It was said about them as early as 1852 that among the inhabitants of Transylvania they alone have industry in their blood. The description of their national characteristics stressed their thrift, sobriety and diligence as well as their own. Under the leadership of a strong élite, they found a successful path to modernisation—at the same time maintaining the consciousness of their medieval isolation—to modern economic management linked to welfare, which they were able to reconcile with their cultural traditions.

The situation of the Transylvanian Rumanians was exactly the opposite of that of the Saxons. Watched from Moldavia, Wallachia or the Dobrudja, they were, before 1920, within the Rumanian people, the most advanced. But within Transylvania the Rumanians were the most archaic ethnic group, although there were big cultural differences among them too. There is no doubt, writes László Kósa, that the Rumanian popular culture of the 19th-20th centuries has been extremely rich in archaic elements. The relative weakness of the Rumanian elite contributed to the coming about of this situation. The Rumanian families rising to noble rank became Magyarised. Few nobles maintained the Rumanian culture of their ancestors. There were also proportionately fewer town dwellers among the Rumanians than among the Hungarians or Saxons. In 1910, 22.40 per cent of the Hungarians, 24.07 per cent of the Saxons, and 5.56 per cent of the Rumanians lived in towns. In the mechanism of the mediation of culture it played a big role that the Rumanians originally belonged to the Eastern Orthodox Church while the Hungarians and Saxons were Catholics and Protestants, although the truth is that since mid-18th century a large proportion of the Rumanians, including the great majority of the politically and economically most active,

were Uniates. Their theologians were educated in Rome and it is largely to them that modern Rumanians owe the consciousness of their Latinity and the theory of Daco-Roman continuity.

From the aspect of progress the Hungarians were between the Saxons and the Rumanians. Within the entire Hungarian-speaking territory, the Hungarians of Transylvania counted as archaic on the whole. But among the Transylvanian Hungarians too some were more open to influence and others more isolated. The flourishing of folk art in the 19th century was perhaps most advanced and differentiated with some Transylvanian Hungarian groups, but the end of century style did not even reach some Hungarians, or only in a very indirect manner. Whoever travelled through Hungary from the West found more and more archaic and more oriental forms arriving to Transylvania. But who came through some pass of the Carpathians, was surprised to see how different the life of the Hungarians there was compared to the peoples living more to the East, to what extent it reflected the adapted influences of Central Europe. Here the traveller crossed a very important and old cultural border which separates Rome and Byzantium.

In ethnography, discussion among the various nations is directed mainly at the question as to whose culture is more ancient, and who had a bigger influence on the other. In this there is, of course, much bias. The demonstrated ancient elements are generally simple and are international. In the more recent features tied to modernization it is more worthwhile to look for the characteristics of socio-economic development than for a national character. Kósa blames the Hungarians, for instance, that in the genesis of Transylvanian Hungarian folk art of the old style they do not pay sufficient attention to the influence of the Transylvanian Saxon towns. On the other hand, some Saxon ethnographers tend to identify Rumanian influence or Medieval German, and prefer



not to recognise Hungarian influence. In Rumanian research, the central objective in recent decades was to offer evidence of an ancient presence even in areas, like the Barcaság in the vicinity of Brassó, where according to Hungarian scholarship Rumanians settled only later being anticipated by Saxons and Hungarians. We therefore know little of the common cultural features of multi-ethnic Transylvania. For instance, in the dance it is characteristic that among the Transylvanian Rumanians couple dances and solos have a decisive role, as with the other nations of the Carpathian basin, Hungarians, Germans, Slovaks, etc. This is the more conspicuous, because South of the Carpathians, on the entire Balkan Peninsula, a more ancient all-European dance fashion, chain dances and the round dances are universal. These include the *bora*, which has become the national Rumanian dance, though it spread among Transylvanian Rumanians only under the influence of official national propaganda, just as the artificial Hungarian *csárdás* spread in several Transylvanian Hungarian areas.

In his short sketch the author does not examine but only indicates how exactly differences in culture and ways of living, trade and the division of work within the region, linked up the various nations. He points out how much—precisely in the case of Transylvania—an unbiased discussion of popular culture would contribute to an understanding of the frontier-zones within Europe and to the understanding of the historic processes, as well as to the rational screening of the antagonisms which are almost inexplicable to the rational mind, and which pitted the nations against each other for generations.

Kósa, László: "Erdély néprajza" (The ethnography of Transylvania). *Kortárs*, 1989. No. 1. pp. 113-121.

T. H.

### POLITICAL JOKES IN 1987

Imre Katona, who is an ethnographer, has been collecting political jokes since the summer of 1954. By the end of 1987 he classified 5054 jokes identifying some 1200 to 1500 types. He maintains an observation service concerning jokes, dates them by their first registration by him, and can judge the time of circulation of some jokes, and their departure from conversation. According to his observations, the first months of the year are usually the most creative, the summer produces stagnation, and in the autumn the crop of jokes again improves, to be followed by a decline in December.

1987 differed somewhat from this pattern, one of the reasons being Matthias Rust's touchdown in Red Square, which gave rise to a whole series of jokes in the summer season which is usually stagnant. The joke crop of 1987 can be termed average, it was certainly not outstanding. The author noted down 142 newly circulating jokes, within which 127 types could be defined, and 15 were only variants—lasting two to three months—of the former. Of course, the definition itself is not free of problems. It is, for instance, difficult to decide whether policemen jokes should be considered political jokes. His own collection enables the author also to examine to what extent the jokes of 1987 were new, and to what extent subjects which had already been popular years earlier recurred. Unfortunately, only one third can be considered new, two thirds of the crop are old jokes. It could be observed that especially jokes which had first arisen in 1956-57, in 1965-66, in 1976-1981 and in 1984-1986, returned. It is characteristic that jokes dealing with domestic subjects dominated by three to one. As against preceding years, economic subjects took over the lead among the political jokes, in a 37:35 ratio. In the past, subjects of public life, mass organizations, the leadership, officials, insignia and slogans were dominant. Among jokes referring to



external relations, jokes concerning the Soviets were most numerous (31), and these mostly dealt with anti-alcoholism, followed by Rumanian jokes (18), which dealt mainly with shortages. Thirteen jokes dealt with the West.

It is understandable that the picture which can be drawn from the jokes concerning Hungarians and the future of the country is not very rosy. Repeated subjects are industrial backwardness, the mistaken large investment projects, the newly introduced income tax, the stagnation of standards of living or their decline, and the jokes dealing with the troubles of old age pensioners represent a special group. Let me quote a characteristic text: "Cohen (the stereotype Jew) goes to party headquarters and asks: Tell me please, is this already socialism, or will it get worse still?" (This joke just made the collection, because it was recorded by the compiler on December 31, 1987.) Or an example from the Rumanian collection: "What kind of lighting was there in Rumania before the candle and the wick? The answer is: electric." In the judgement of Imre Katona, approximately one half of the jokes recorded by him could have been published—this is characteristic both of the nature of jokes and of press freedom—but since the manuscript of the article went to press the proportion of the jokes which could be published has probably risen.

Should and can jokes be taken seriously?—the author asks. Individually, looked at in isolation, they can be witty or less so. But looking over the crop of a year, it turns out that "they look and march in a certain direction even without a commander". The 1987 vintage forms part of an intellectual process. These jokes, as Imre Katona claims, "throw light on the gap that separate desires and reality," they demonstrate the difficulties which most influence public morale, as well as hopes and fears, what they consider desirable and ideal. If we consider the jokes as the expression of dissatisfaction which is not, or cannot, be expressed in other ways

and of the desires and wishes of the masses, then wishes can be read from them which pit themselves against the barriers—considered rigid—of power, and demand a rational economy which creates welfare.

A later era which wants to reconstruct the thinking, culture and conduct of life of the Budapest of the 1980s, will certainly accord in this picture an important place to the jokes of the period. Perhaps it will place in the image of the city also the picture of the urban folklore field worker who—pencil at the ready—eagerly listens wherever people talk to him or each other, catching new ideas on the wing.

Katona, Imre: "Aki utoljára megy ki, oltsa el a villanyt... Közéleti vicceink 1987-ben" ("Last man switch off the light..." Political jokes in 1987). *Forrás*. 1989. No. 1. pp. 59–67.

T. H.

#### VERMIN, BLOOD SPORTS, GAME FOR THE POT

The 18th century was a crucial period in Hungarian history. After the Turks had been driven out, at the end of the 17th century, modernisation began, an ongoing process which ended the feudal era and explains many features of life in Hungary today. It may suffice to remind that on the death of Joseph II (1790), Hungary had nine million inhabitants, twice as many as at the beginning of the 18th century.

Lajos Takács collected data concerning hunting by the common people. Consequences of modernisation were conspicuous in this respect too. Around 1700 practically everybody still hunted, mainly of course the nobility. How the common people obtained their game is much more interesting than the blood sports of the nobility. Reports of court cases are the main source of information on that.

At the time, in addition to the nobility, burghers in towns and market towns were



also entitled to keep arms, and sometimes their charters even obliged them to do so. It was easiest to practice the handling of sword and gun shooting at live targets. A macabre confirmation were the men of Kaposvár in 1754, who arranged themselves for an execution as they did for the kill. Holders of various kinds of leases, including innkeepers, millers, tenant-farmers enjoyed the feudal rights which went with the land or trade they tenanted. In many places innkeepers or millers were noted for the best trophies. They truly enjoyed the blood sports which their occupations entitled them too, in every sense of the term.

In the Turkish times and later too, the limits of estates were uncertain, many villages had become depopulated. Much land could only be used for grazing, which was anyway long established. However, precisely on account of the troubled conditions, those who could carried arms, and things were often not unlike what we know of the American frontier. In a court case in a West Hungarian village in 1702 a herdsman was surprised by villagers. He was accused of being on lands where only the villagers had grazing rights. The headman threatened to have one of the animals shot but the herdsman said he would retaliate by shooting the man in the back. Both then retired, keeping their peace, letting the court decide. Arms were thus needed by herdsmen to be used against rustlers, in case of disputes over grazing, against beasts of prey and to get meat for the pot. In forests dogs were used for fowling as well.

In the 18th century, serfs commonly obtained game that strayed onto village fields. If they bagged something elsewhere they carried their prey home as fast as they could. Poaching was a national sport in the first half of the 18th century and the source of innumerable disputes. These were exacerbated when villages and estate servants confronted each other on fields which were the subject of litigation. Protecting a crop against marauding game was another source of trouble. The

invaders were often vermin threatening poultry or farm animals, since canebrakes, bushes, marshes not only adjoined fields but often houses and gardens.

What weapons were used? Many arms had survived the Turkish wars and the Rákóczi rebellion. Even in the second half of the 18th century, guns were freely bought and sold. In 1750, in a forest owned by a count Festetics gamekeepers seized eleven rifles, valued at between four and nine forints within a short time (the price of a draughty bullock was 15-25 forints). In addition to guns, knives, snares, and traps were used, but much less is known about them. They were concealed and there is little in court documents about them.

Wolves were the most dangerous vermin. They were found mainly in canebrakes and forest flooded regularly by the Danube and around Lake Balaton. There were foxes everywhere. In 1757 Count Kristóf Festetics obliged his serfs in Somogy County to offer to him every fox-skin for sale. Suggesting they were highly prized. Turtles also had to be offered up for sale. Game also included boar and numerous gamebirds, most prominently waterfowl. Hazel-hens (*Tetrastes bonasia*) were the most highly prized. In 1726 a Széchenyi estate obliged villagers to supply two hazel-hens a year. Fines were often paid by hazel-hens.

In the 1750s things started to change. Punishments, prohibitions, rules, and not least the number of gamekeepers grew to such an extent that poaching suffered a decline. This was the time of the gradual consolidation of the large estates and of the modernisation of the local administration. A properly administered game law made something vanish for good that had been part of the earlier anarchy.

Takács, Lajos: "A jobbágyok vadászata a feudális kor végén" (Hunting by serfs at the end of the feudal era). *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 1986. Vol. 28, pp. 419-447.

Gy. G.



## LE CORBUSIER AND HUNGARY

The examination of Le Corbusier's influence in Eastern Europe is important also because his personal contacts too were very lively. He regularly met Czech and Russian avantgarde architects, and he participated in competitions concerning important public buildings and town planning schemes in both countries when he still only built private villas in France. But his influence was even wider than that. In 1935, the *Rencontre Internationale des Architectes* arranged a tour along the route Prague-Brünn-Pressburg-Budapest-Vienna. "During our trip we were able to recognise him in almost every modern building"—one of the participants wrote.

Le Corbusier came to Hungary twice, in 1905 and 1911. On the latter occasion, he sketched Esztergom Cathedral and peasant buildings in Kalocsa. What he taught and photographs of his work continued to travel. First Lajos Kassák published one of his paintings in the journal *Ma* (in Vienna) in 1922. Twenty of his buildings were included in Pál Forgó's *Új Építészet* (New Architecture), published in 1928. Starting with 1928 *Tér és Forma* (Space and Shape), regularly discussed his work. György Rác presented his design at an exhibition of students under the heading *Villa Le Corbusier*. The plan caused such a scandal that the organiser was gated for a year.

From the end of the 1920s, Hungarian disciples too worked in Le Corbusier's Paris studio. Among them, Károly Dávid followed the spirit of Le Corbusier's buildings in his own villa (1933), Ferihegy Airport (1938-1950), and later the People's Stadium (1948-1953). (The first design of the People's Stadium included a shell-shaped structure for spectators, on the upper edge, accessible to cars.) Of course, the influence of a great master cannot be demonstrated in the works of his disciples alone. The strip windows, sun terraces, buildings on pedestals, etc., all remind of Le Corbusier. The town plans of the Olgyay brothers,

Viktor and Aladár, are of special importance. These include e.g. the meander-line design for North Pest after 1945. At that time young architects considered him as the authority. Between 1949 and 1955, any kind of modernity was forbidden. The present writing however suggests that the People's Stadium was an exception. Hungarian architecture returned to the earlier path around 1957 only. Then architects heaped shapes on shapes to adopt Le Corbusier's plastic building mass, his strip houses, the characteristic sun roofs, etc. His most imaginative follower was Elemér Zalotay, who engaged from 1958 on in the plan of the strip house, and its structural patent. In a several kilometre long building of 20,000 flats every tenant could have seen nature through his or her window. Zalotay migrated to Switzerland, where he still continues with his experiments.

Ferkai, András: "Le Corbusier és Magyarországon" (Le Corbusier and Hungary). *Magyar Építőművészet*, 1987. No. 6. pp. 50-51.

I. N.

#### THE FIRST SYNAPSE IN THE SENSORY PATHWAY OF THE SPINAL CORD

Our nervous system receives continuously a barrage of sensory information on which our correct appreciation of the outside world is based. The transducers of the stimuli are the sensory receptors (e.g. photoreceptors in the eye, mechanoreceptors in the muscles, thermoreceptors in the skin), which respond to different stimuli with considerable selectivity. The activity of sensory receptors is carried into the central nervous system by the sensory nerve fibers. The sensory nerve fibers are coupled to neurons in the spinal cord or brain stem through interneuronal connections called first synapses, which are perhaps the most important structure in the chain of ascending sensory informations.

\*A team of neuroscientists studied the first synapse by correlating the functional



characteristics of the sensory receptors with the histological structure of experimentally labeled synapsing elements.

The histological analysis of functionally characterised and experimentally labelled sensory fibers led to the intriguing finding, that although sensory endings are specific in termination site, they are less so in branching pattern and even less specific in the synaptic ultrastructure of their terminals. This means that functionally different classes of sensory fibers (e.g. thermoreceptors, mechanoreceptors) which terminate in distinct regions of spinal matter, although showing some specificity in their terminal arborisation pattern, share many common features in their synaptic connections with nerve cells of the spinal cord. These nerve cells receive, through the first synapse, the sensory message, and send the processed information to higher centers. In another set of experiments these spinal cord neurons receiving direct contacts from sensory fibers, were labelled and stained experimentally, and axon terminals of sensory fibers, establishing synaptic connections with the processes and cell body of the labelled neurons, were sampled.

It was found that the neurons which collect the sensory impulse of different qualities, and as such participate in the build up of the first synapse, are surprisingly uniform. As a result, not only the first synapses are structurally similar, but also the second synapses established between the first and second order nerve cells in the spinal cord exhibit a remarkable uniform and simple structure. It is suggested that, although the specificity of sensory receptors is preserved temporarily by the laminar pattern of receptor endings resulting in separate territories for mechano-thermo and other receptor endings in the spinal cord, during the decoding of the sensory message on the level of first and second synapses information will break down to small bits. This despecification of sensory information at the spinal cord level can be compared to similar despecification of primary visual, auditive or olfactory

information, occurring on the subcortical level. At higher levels of the hierarchy of the brain—mostly in the cortex, but also in the neuronal networks of the spinal cord—the (despecified) information bits will be translated into the language of the brain, and transformed to useful and specific sensory information. It is only at this last stage, that we can speak about vision, hearing, feeling heat or pressure, pain, or smelling.

Réthelyi, M.: Specificity versus convergence of nociceptive and mechanoreceptive impulses in the spinal dorsal horn. In: *Fortschritte der Zoologie*, Bd. 28. Ed. E. Horn, Gustav Fischer Verlag, Stuttgart, 1983; Maxwell, D. J., Réthelyi, M.: Ultrastructure and synaptic connections of cutaneous afferent fibres in the spinal cord. *Trends in Neuroscience* (Elsevier) 10: 117-123, 1987.

J. H.

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

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

*História*—a popular historical monthly

*Kortárs*—a Budapest literary monthly

*Forrás*—a literary monthly published in Kecskemét

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

*Magyar Építőművészet*—a journal of the Association of Hungarian Architects, published six times a year



# HUNGARIAN CULTURE ABROAD

IMRE POZSGAY

## HUNGARY AT THE BARBICAN

As the Hungarian patron of the Hungarian Cultural Festival to be arranged at the Barbican Centre in London late in October and early in November 1989 I look on it as a great opportunity to disperse a number of misconceptions which people still entertain—be it for objective or personal reasons—about my country. True, these have largely abated of late, but they still survive. It is particularly fortunate in this respect that the festival coincides with the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the institution of the Lord Mayor's office in London.

The culture of a nation undergoing renewal presents itself. Culture is always universal, yet at the same time national. It is therefore sound practice to judge a nation's way of thinking on the basis of the best its culture has produced. To be given the opportunity to do so is a great piece of good luck, not to exploit such a chance would not only be a great mistake but an outright crime.

In our changing world it is often said that politics diverts attention from literature, the arts, culture as such, indeed from all that is covered by the German term *Bildung*. This is true not only of a Hungary which is trying to overcome spasmodic conditioned reflexes, but to the East and West of our country as well. This is another reason why I feel that every moment that can be devoted to the transmission and reception of national, European and universal culture must be reckoned a festive occasion and that is how I interpret what will happen at the Barbican. Presenting our culture we can also offer evidence that cultural relations between nations do not depend on the ups and downs of politics. That is the reason why culture creates the most reliable contacts between nations.

The reception given in London to this presentation of past and present Hungarian culture is therefore of great importance to us.



England is a distant country but English culture and civilisation has proved attractive right from the start. Few know that the oldest surviving list of matriculants of Oxford University lists a Nicolaus de Hungaria from the 12th century, a bare two centuries after a recently arrived nomad people had founded a Christian state in the middle of Europe. Naturally there were Hungarian students at other European universities as well. Perhaps this student formed the first cultural link between England and Hungary. English influence gradually grew and later spread to other, indeed almost every field of life.

What can we show of ourselves, what evidence can we provide, what should we like to prove by parading our national culture? To start with that we belong to Europe, and that those periods the practice of which argues the contrary are mere deviations measured by the standards of history. Our faith and reason tell us that for 1,100 years belonging to Europe has been the pledge of Hungarian existence. As evidence we offer works of art in the widest sense of the term that appeal to both the intellect and the emotions.

A myriad threads have linked Hungarian culture to Europe right from the start. Indeed one is an integral part of the other. This may appear a pleonasm since we are talking about the culture of a nation that has lived in the heart of Europe for over a thousand years. Belonging to Europe, as a standard to be aspired to, has ever been a theme of Hungarian culture. In the middle of the sixteenth century the country became the prey of Ottoman conquest and an irredeemable gap between it and the European main-line came into being. Hungary found itself on the fringe. The century and a half long occupation of the central part of the country—, together with the capital—the concurrent wars against the Turks and the Habsburgs of a nation fighting for its independence, bled it white, impoverished it, and, for a long time to come, put an end to urban development. Habsburg rule, which followed the Turks, favoured the magnates who were loyal to the court and thus put a break on social development. Intellectually, however, in spite of these vicissitudes the nation kept up with the West. The Reformation established itself so firmly that the Counter Reformation could not suppress it. It was accompanied as elsewhere by a revival of the vernacular and followed by the Enlightenment. In the second half of the eighteenth century, this time on the initiative of the Habsburgs, economic development and social modernisation followed but the backwardness of centuries could not be compensated for so easily. The nation continuously had to fight for its independence and language, for the very culture which was the vehicle of its identity. Following the 16th century collapse, Hungarian history has consisted of a whole series of failed and betrayed conspiracies, lost revolutions and struggles for freedom.



True, the Dual Monarchy, which followed the 1867 Austro-Hungarian compromise, led to significant progress but it ended up in the Great War after which the country, as one of the losers, lost two thirds of its territory and more than half of its population. The ravages of the Second World War, and the tragedy of the 1956 revolution are part of the living memory of the Hungarians of our time.

Hungarian culture, and literature as part of it, bear the marks of such historical antecedents. Since the very beginnings of written Hungarian writers and poets have always kept a weather eye on the business of the nation. In the absence of the appropriate political institutions, including a free press, they undertook, in keeping with the options open at any given time, to serve the nation, independence, social progress, change, catching up with the European vanguard. These great ideas and ideals found expression in their works. Often enough they had to become the spokesmen of much more concrete and down to earth causes. All this had many consequences for culture, in the first place that it became politicised, which meant that, seen from the West, where such things were less needed and therefore more rare, it often appeared of merely local validity, backward and irrelevant. This was often so in fact but the truly major talents combined subjects of national or local validity with the universal, and thanks to the quality of their work they were able to overcome the handicap of the culture of small nations and gain access to the public of western countries. Bartók's music is just one example which shows that the experience of nations placed on the fringe is part of universal human experience and is able to enrich European culture.

Generally, and seen from Europe, one can say that Hungarian culture is a receptive culture which responds to the peculiar needs of a small nation. Given the difficulties of Hungarian history and the resultant gaps in development, it is only able to make its voice heard in the European context in exceptional circumstances. An additional factor is that Hungarian is a non-Indo-European language, seldom spoken by non-Hungarians. This isolates us even amongst our neighbours whose languages are related to each other, and much more so from Western Europe, and yet it was in the West that Hungarian culture and literature generally delved for its inspiration.

This Finno-Ugrian language is the biggest handicap of our literature and yet, according to unprejudiced scholars, it is extraordinarily rich in shades of meaning and therefore a most suitable vehicle for verse. This in one of the reasons—others are historical and psychological—why poetry is so important within Hungarian culture. But owing to its dependence on translation it has, until lately, been almost completely unknown beyond the



frontiers of the country. The tradition, weight, importance and role of poetry in Hungarian culture has been huge since the end of the 16th century, and Bálint Balassa, the first great poet who wrote not in Latin, but in the vernacular. It has been that ever since, without a break.

How can this be made clear to someone from another country, steeped in the cultural traditions of Europe but barely, if at all, familiar with Hungary? No special pleading is needed to show how universal and yet Hungarian is Liszt's, Bartók's and Kodály's music. Hungarian artists known all over the world have obtained recognition for our nation. I could also list Hungarian films about to be screened in London, or the performance by the Ballet of Győr, but my aim is not to announce the programme, all I wished to do was to seize on certain paradigmatic elements.

Such outstanding works and the careers of noted artists carry a deeper message to an enlightened public. They show, often in a direct manner, that preserving our language was not enough to ensure that we could ride out the storms of history, we had to acquire the culture and civilisation of Europe, and look on our own as part of that of the continent. What I have in mind here is also tolerance of the European kind which does not require a loss of a sense of identity, indeed this tolerance turns into a basic element of national existence. Perhaps we will succeed in showing that Hungarians are Europeans not only in their learning ability but also in their creativity.

These events and functions in London, and similar opportunities to present ourselves, are also occasions where we may declare our intentions. As members of the European cultural community, living in Central Europe, as a nation that is European in culture and civilisation, in our future progress as well, the only possible course open to us is the European one.

I sincerely hope that the opportunity granted by the Barbican Centre to Hungarian culture will not only be crowned by success but that it will contribute to the circulation of cultures becoming two-way traffic in the future. I am certain that this introduction which endeavours to present not political sensations but things of real value, will provide not only enjoyment and delight but perhaps also surprises and discovery.

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TIBOR FRANK

## PROPOSAL FOR AN ENDOWED CHAIR IN HUNGARIAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Hungary has rarely been particularly successful in projecting a suitably complex, powerful and lasting image of herself. In fact, most of her endeavours have been ill-conceived, mischanneled or doomed-before-born. There have, of course, been notable exceptions: Lajos Kossuth and his fellow exiles after the crushed revolution of 1848-49 exerted considerable political influence in Britain and the United States in the 1850s and early 1860s. Count Kunó Klebelsberg was relatively successful with his international cultural policies in the late 1920s, after the Peace Treaty of Trianon and its tragic consequences. *The Hungarian Quarterly* in the late 1930s and early 1940s, under the spirited leadership of former Prime Minister Count István Bethlen (and through the editorial skills of József Balogh) was a carefully designed and quite effective undertaking, also an attempt to balance the increasingly German-oriented foreign policies of the governments of the day. Passing references to some of the more successful examples from Hungary's pre-Second World War history cannot, however, make us forget about the general pattern that was one of failure and ill-fate.

From the turn of the century onwards, journalists and historians from Britain started to transform Hungary's basically favourable 19th-century image in the West: R. W. Seton-Watson, H. W. V. Temperley, and H. Wickham Steed perceived a country of ethnic and social injustice and tensions as well as forced Magyarization. These influential writers started to support neighbouring nation-states then just in the making, some of them with more eloquent spokesman for their cause than Hungary ever had after Kossuth. Their image of Hungary greatly contributed to the notion that prevailed at the Paris

Peace Conference after World War I and led to the partition of the country by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920.

This, I believe, was the single most important example in Hungary's history of how the views of powerful foreign nations might become formative, even decisive forces. The obvious lesson for Hungary is, among others, that the support or the lack of favourable and informed foreign opinion is of tremendous importance. With the monumental development of mass communications, of course, it has become easier to transmit incomparably more information and news. Books and articles are translated in formerly unknown numbers (though not necessarily in intelligible let alone enjoyable language). However, the teaching of the history and culture of the nation in important foreign countries (and all foreign countries are important today) is getting off the ground only with great difficulties—even though this is obviously the most powerful means of international communication.

Teaching is the most direct and personal way to exert influence and explain past, present, and future. It is the way to put books, articles, bibliographies and other information directly into the hands of new generations of students, prospective makers of the foreign image in any given country. It is the way to argue, demonstrate, contradict, question, interpret, provide original evidence—and to listen. There is nothing as influential and lasting as teaching.

Still, it is becoming increasingly difficult to set up teaching positions for subjects like Hungary in the great centres of higher education around the world: all smaller countries have a vested interest in attracting attention, even if they are not always aware of it. Scores of individual countries and various regions from East and West, North and South,



compete. Small countries cannot count on as much attention as more important ones. Students, understandably, want to study areas or fields whereby they may make a living, and new subjects should, in one way or another, fit into the existing curricula of higher education everywhere.

It is particularly difficult, though important, therefore, to try to establish teaching positions for the subject of Hungarian history and culture at major universities of English-speaking countries, today first and foremost in the United States. This can be done in different ways, one being the foundation of new Endowed Chairs, similar to the ones at Indiana University, Bloomington, in the U.S. and the University of Toronto in Canada. We do not, of course, need thousands of Hungarian majors, but a well-trained group of Hungary-experts produced by major U.S. universities will always contribute to learning in both countries and to their relations.

The University of California system is in an expanding stage, aiming at academic excellence in both teaching and research. To accommodate an ever-growing number of Californians, the University is planning to open three new campuses in the foreseeable future. With its 18,300 students, the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California has proved its popularity with the students of California, receiving in 1988-89 the third largest number of applications in the system, behind only Berkeley and Los Angeles (UCLA). The Department of History on the Santa Barbara campus is a medium-sized general department with excellent research faculty and a well-established program of graduate and undergraduate instruction. In 1988-89, the Department's undergraduate majors numbered some 500 students, and total enrolment in History courses exceeded 4,000 students per quarter. The Department of History is well on its way to becoming one of the top-ranked departments in the country.

What follows is the text of a proposal for an Endowed Chair in Hungarian History and Culture, submitted October 17, 1988 to the faculty of the Department of History of the University of California, Santa Barbara, and approved by that faculty on December 7, 1988.

The text of my proposal has been left essentially unchanged; minor additions of an explanatory nature endeavour to make it easier to follow for the reader not so much familiar with all the technical details. It is published here with the kind permission, and some improvements, of UCSB's Department of History. By publishing the proposal I hope to address an issue which may perhaps go beyond the case of one Endowed Chair at Santa Barbara.

# I

Hungary, ancient and modern, is one of Europe's unique and most productive cultures. It has a great tradition, an important cultural heritage, an extraordinary language, and great importance in Eastern European developments today. It can be studied in several languages, English becoming more and more prominent among them. Scholarships to and from Hungary keep growing in number, and the increasingly liberal policies of the Hungarian government enable foreign students at all levels to get ample information.

Library and research facilities in the United States are excellent—on the West Coast alone there are rich Hungarian collections at the University of California, Berkeley and UCLA, Stanford University's Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, and the University of Washington in Seattle.

The field of teaching Hungarian studies is less well endowed. History is taught within the Russian and East European Studies Program in Seattle, where, however, the Hungarian professor of history is about to retire. At UCLA, the Hungarian professor is concerned with literature, and her position is likely to be discontinued after her retirement. The nearest and only Hungarian Studies Chair in the United States is attached to Indiana University, Bloomington. For several



years, this Chair had a primarily historical character; as of 1988, however, a literary scholar has held the Chair, giving it a new focus. Moreover, the Chair is within Uralic and Altaic Studies, and has less connection with historical studies in other areas than perhaps necessary or desirable.

The availability of Hungarian Studies on the West Coast is particularly important today when the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), together with other U.C. campuses, serves as an increasingly attractive centre for Pacific Rim students who have otherwise no access to firsthand information concerning this European region.

The idea of establishing Hungarian Studies at UCSB first emerged in 1984 when the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), a federal government organization administered by the United States Information Agency (USIA) in Washington, D.C., attached Hungarian Fulbright Visiting Professors to both the Departments of History and English. Since then, without interruption, five Hungarian Fulbright scholars have taught at UCSB's Departments of History, English, German, and Psychology. An agreement was also signed between UCSB and Eötvös Loránd University of Budapest for the exchange of professors and graduate students. So far there has been one Hungarian visiting professor invited to teach at UCSB's Statistics and Applied Probability Program. Aspects of Hungarian history have been taught in the Department of History almost without interruption from 1984 to the present.

It is highly unlikely that CIES/Fulbright will support Hungarian Studies continuously at UCSB—in fact, whether a good idea or not, it is contrary to the Fulbright philosophy and practice to support scholars representing the same country and the same field always at the same college or campus. On the other hand, the development of UCSB-Eötvös Loránd University intercampus relations seems to have stopped, mainly for financial reasons. The only way to secure the survival of Hungarian Studies at UCSB seems

to be the establishment of an Endowed Chair.

For a series of scholarly as well as administrative reasons, it is necessary for the new Chair to be administered, financed, and reviewed through one particular Department. While multidisciplinary in character, the Chair in Hungarian History and Culture is best attached to UCSB's prestigious Department of History. In this way, the development of all the essential features of the subject may be surveyed while giving most attention to the historical road that led to the present position of the country in Europe, its significance from a regional point of view, particular ability to absorb and adapt different cultural influences and still preserve a measure of continuity and the capacity to survive. More perhaps than in the case of most other countries, the development of Hungarian culture, language, literature, arts and sciences can best be interpreted in terms of history. All of this speaks very much for a historical treatment rather than any other approach.

## II

An outpost of Western civilization throughout much of her history, Hungary enjoyed national independence through a long period of late medieval and renaissance excellence, later to become part of subsequent multinational empires, from Ottoman through Habsburg. A series of revolutions, two World Wars, massive emigration (predominantly to the United States), and dramatic territorial, political, and social changes in the 19th and 20th centuries finally resulted in the establishment of a socialist system which, after bitter and tragic experiences with Stalinism, is increasingly looked upon today as an experimental model for Eastern Europe. Right now the country is undergoing one of the greatest economic, social, political, and moral crises of her 20th century history.

Hungarian Studies at UCSB would be concerned with the history of not only what is



Hungary today, but also with what has been called Historical Hungary, i.e., areas of East-Central Europe that were included in the country in most of the pre-Trianon (1920) millennium. Thus the Chair would be responsible for a large part of East-Central European history, partly Ottoman and Habsburg, offering students a variety of courses in very diverse fields, complementing the studies on Central and South-Eastern Europe (the Balkans), well-established and successful at UCSB since the late 1960s. By so doing the Chair would undoubtedly contribute to the better understanding of what is called Eastern Europe in the United States today (in fact, a geopolitical misnomer), providing a long-term, regional approach to East-Central Europe and giving historical explanations to what is happening in this region today.

The scope and focus of the new Chair would be the historical reconsideration of the geopolitical position of East-Central Europe. In an attempt to reassess the long-term course of Hungarian history, that of the Habsburg lands, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its successor states, courses offered by the Chair would redefine the role of Eastern Europe and its relations to East and West.

It has been a widely established tradition in the United States since the Second World War to discuss the fate of Eastern Europe entirely within the scope of Russian/Soviet and East European Studies. This approach is ahistorical. Apart from the fact that the term is geographically incorrect, what is Eastern Europe today belonged originally to three very different empires: the Habsburg, the Ottoman, and the Russian. Countries in this region had consequently totally different economic, social, political, cultural, and religious patterns and background. To treat them exclusively within the Soviet orbit is a retrospective political extrapolation of a relatively short historical period, reflecting immediate post-Second World War U.S. values and perspectives and misleading students as to the proper historical context of the region and its countries. Students in the U.S. will probably

appreciate that the natural, geographically and historically given context for a scholarly treatment of Hungary, past and present, is what we might call Danubian Europe, a term increasingly preferred by scholars in and out of Hungary.

The prospective Chair would thus help new generations of students at UCSB to recognize and appreciate the unique character of individual countries, the differences of national dynamics, in what is habitually referred to as Eastern Europe. It will promote the growing awareness of the fact that differences in society, culture, and politics around Eastern Europe are deeply rooted in long centuries of varied religious traditions, ethnic interactions, social composition and the course of social thought. The influence of past centuries today is something remarkable for the American student of Eastern Europe, who is usually surprised to discover how very much alive history is in this part of the world where the past is indeed a thing of the present, always on people's minds—so unlike the situation in the United States!

Increasingly, a great part of Eastern Europe is likely to move towards a European integration, or at least there are a growing number of various signs pointing towards participation in a prospective United Europe. Today it is perhaps not unfounded to forecast that Gorbachev's Soviet Union will, in the long run, build up a new relationship with its (East) European neighbors, among whom Hungary plays a particularly important, experimental role in establishing a new identity between East and West. The Finlandisation of the post-Second World War *cordon sanitaire* along the Western frontiers of the Soviet Union might become the experience of our own generation or the next one, and by studying and teaching the history of the region in the pre-1945 centuries we might perhaps prepare both the way towards a new Europe and a new U.S. perception of that Europe.

Research done within the prospective Chair would focus around the same issues.



This is the way in which the new Chair would fit into the long-range plan adopted by the Department of History at UCSB, in which the emphasis is on a comparative approach to modern European history as opposed to the traditional curriculum of national histories—i.e., an emphasis on European economic history or European socialism versus emphasis on French history, German history or Italian history. The new position in Hungarian history would be a natural complement to his program because the real place of Hungary and her history is in the Danubian area, which would be treated as a whole on a comparative and regional basis. Moreover, the Chair could offer novel and unique courses on East-West European Relations as well as a course on "European Integration" in an attempt to prepare for and help understand 1992 and its possible impact. A strong Russian/Soviet teaching position at UCSB, currently vacant, would of course be vital to complement the Hungarian position.

Since some 5–6 million ethnic Hungarians live abroad, the Chair could also focus on ethnic studies in East-Central Europe, one of the world's most intricate and complex regions, with not only a vast array but also a most remarkably mixed pattern of multiethnic diversities, including one of the real and tragic troublespots of Europe, Transylvania. Several hundreds of thousands of Hungarians live in the United States, so the Chair could also design courses for second- and third-generation Hungarian-Americans in search of their ethnic, social or religious identity, and assess the Hungarian contribution to 20th-century U.S. culture and civilization, almost unparalleled in such fields as science, medicine, music and film.

The library facilities at UCSB are at present far from being adequate for a Hungarian Chair. However, through cooperation with the existing collections on the West Coast via the Melvyl computer catalogue system of California libraries

and through interlibrary loan it is fairly easy to provide the necessary materials for instruction and research. In due time it is also quite feasible to arrange for the purchase of a sizeable Hungarian (Austro-Hungarian, Habsburg, Transylvanian) collection from Hungary or elsewhere in and out of Europe, following the admirable example of the Nikic Collection for the Study of Balkan Peoples now in place in the UCSB Library. An eventual, and sometimes openly discussed, reorganization of the University of California library system might open up additional new vistas. For instance, a 20,000-volume Hungarian Collection now sits unused at the University of California, Berkeley, campus, where no courses in Hungarian history have been offered in recent years; endowment of a Chair in Hungarian Studies at UCSB might provide the impetus for transfer of this collection to the UCSB campus.

The endowment of \$ 350,000 required for the Chair is relatively small. At other universities, a minimum of \$ 1.5 million is now required. The difference is due to the University of California's provision that the faculty position for an Endowed Chair is provided by the Regents and is thereby subject to all the rights and privileges of a regular faculty position. Consequently, the choice of the Chairholder lies fully with the University. The endowment provides funds for the Chair to promote research and other professional activities, such as conferences, travel to professional meetings and archives, and additional secretarial assistance.

It is desirable that holders of the Chair serve long terms rather than quickly rotating on a Fulbright model. The pattern at Indiana University, which so far provides the only model in the United States, has been to have a rotating Chair, with holders changing every few years. Bloomington had its first Chairholder for five or six years uninterruptedly and the late Prof. György Ránki kept returning on a regular basis right up to his untimely death early in 1988. UCSB might decide instead to have one permanent occupant. The holder of the Hungarian Chair at UCSB should be of high academic reputation and an instructor of quality and visibility, with a Ph.D. or equivalent, preferably in European, East European or Hungarian history, and the teaching and research qualifications normally required for a tenured position at the University of California.

Fund-raising for the Endowed Chair in Hungarian History and Culture at UCSB already has begun. Inquiries from potential donors should be addressed to the Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA 93106, U.S.A. (Phone: 805-961-2991)



# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

## THE NAIVE AND THE POSTMODERN

Zsuzsa Szemes: *Boldogsziget* (Happy Island). Szépirodalmi, 1988. 637 pp.  
Péter Lengyel: *Macskakő* (Flagstone). Szépirodalmi, 1988. 542 pp.

Zsuzsa Szemes, according to the title of her first novel published in 1980 when she was thirty, comes from the depths. Her background is that of a peasantry still linked to ancient depths by tradition, yet trying to adjust to the rootless urban life by changing to a so-called civilised way of life. Her volume of short stories *Kanca Hotel* (Hotel Mare) described this new, recent form of silent, almost outside society depth: the hopeless, brutal life of people who have moved from villages and Gypsy colonies to the drab workers' hostels of the cities, losing their dignity and individuality in the process. Her new novel, *Happy Island*, is set mostly on the lonely farmsteads and pastures of a few decades ago, when the peasant way of life was almost wholly intact.

Zsuzsa Szemes writes of this world as if, like her characters, she never heard of literary theories, styles, of the crisis in the narrative form. Stories flow from her pen with a charming naturalness, bringing to mind folk storytellers. The comparison is obvious: she writes in the way the naive painter paints or in the way peasants tell the story of their lives. But this is not the whole truth: the naive, unprejudiced, gripping story-telling of Zsuzsa Szemes creates the impression of being formed: her style is accurate, purposeful and expressive: she draws abundantly from the official arsenal of story-telling and her narrative matches her themes. These stories sug-

gest that there is no other way of authentically describing what she writes about.

What she writes about is not only, not even primarily, that poetic quality of peasant life which has evolved into the classical forms of folk poetry and from which folk-rooted poetry and post-Bartók music, film and art have drawn inspiration. What she describes is the crude reality of this life, the oldest and the most real of realities: nature in the modern sense of the word, as the organic unity of man, beast, plant and landscape. Hence the realism of Zsuzsa Szemes is both more primitive and more modern than socio-critical realism: she presents her characters in their primitive, mythical oneness with nature, or at most in the elementary community of family and marriage. At the same time, she explores their instinctive impulses, the conditioning that runs in the blood and their bitter mental compromise with an extraordinary empathy. In earlier attempts to portray peasant life, the chief concern of bashful peasants was the class struggle; we tended to emphasise the social aspects whereas Zsuzsa Szemes accentuates the instinctive and mythical. She investigates the collective subconscious of an ancient way of life. She preserves her quality of a naive inasmuch as she probably has no other choice than to represent this in just this way, regardless of every aesthetic consideration. Yet she does more than that: knowingly, she also asserts an ex-



terior viewpoint. Her major concern is to tell and describe what she herself knows from personal experience, oral tradition or ethnographic research, and to tell it not to herself, her family or her country neighbours but to the reader. In her style she utilizes the naive story-teller's tone but she writes a novel, a short story, a book.

All these apply primarily to the longest and best chapter of her novel, "Magic Steeds," an independent narrative. Despite a few loose linkage points, the four chapters are four separate stories. Indeed, the individual chapters themselves are not homogeneous, they could be divided into further independent narratives. The author has tried to make a string of narratives function as a novel even though the material resists this. The reader forgets completely what he is reading, being fascinated by the evocation of reality.

The skeletons of the narrative are the images and scenes of a ruined marriage centered around the past of the first wife, then the husband. Franciska Hives, the wife, comes from a peasant family. She is a prisoner of the haughtiness and pride of her mother and grandmother, who wanted to give her in marriage only to a well-to-do farmer but no such person turns up. This frustrated, drying-up woman of thirty unexpectedly rebels and marries the first comer whose eyes alight on her: István Hollósi, with a limp and a life that has also gone wrong. He is the son of a well-to-do peasant who had raped the teenage orphan girl placed on the farm by her relatives and whom young István worships in secret. The confused girl drowns herself, her horseherd relatives take revenge by driving the father into the marshes where he sinks. The curse haunts the son: he is rejected everywhere and when he reaches the age of marriage they almost beat him to death at a ball where he tried to approach a girl chosen by somebody else. Finally, the initiator of the revenge, of the clan of horseherds takes pity on the young man and makes a horseherd of him. At this point,

"Magic Steeds" arrives at its title: the miracle-working magic horses that are the most important totemic animals of ancient Hungarian mythology. In the figurative sense the word *táltos*, 'magic steed', refers also to shamans, those with magic power. Horsemen call *táltos* the horse which has power over the others but does not allow any other horse near it, so the magic steed remains without descendants. The humiliated, crippled horseherd builds a deep emotional relation with one such horse: such a mythical understanding and relationship of man and beast, especially man and horse, is a recurring motif in the works of Zsuzsa Szemes. One of the horses on the farm had taken charge of the raped and demented girl and looked after her as if she were a filly. In another story, first the coachman persuades his horse to pretend to be dead when a plane approaches in the war, later the horse "resurrects" its wounded master.

Although the two parallel preliminary stories to "Magic Steed" take place in the inter-war years nothing, whatever comes down to the level of life in the *pusztá*—the ordinary workdays subordinated to nature, weather and animals pass here just as they have done for many centuries, instructive passions rage on the pastures just as at the time of the Magyar conquest. The bitter days of the marriage of Franciska and Hollósi fall into the 1950s but we would never guess the date if the writer didn't tell us. The ageless drama continues, the woman longs for tenderness but remains haughty and cramped, the man longs for passion and fidelity but he is rude and callous. He literally beats his wife into a miscarriage, then they try to help themselves with an adopted child but the little boy is already as damaged psychologically as the couple. Yet the foster father tries to begin a new life with him: the little boy should make up for his own deprivations: for the loss of his playmate caused by his father, the loss of his father killed by the horseherds, for the loss of his sweetheart and physical integrity caused by his rivals, for the loss of his



magic steed and the stud farm caused by the war, for the loss of his wife caused by his own brutality and the seduction of a mechanic, for the loss of his child caused by his own brutality.

The other three chapters of *Happy Island* which can be conceived as a loosely knit story of three families are less well written: the first set partly on the Russian front deals with material less familiar to Szemes.

The second story, of the Gypsy wishing to be integrated and civilized at any cost, although full of humorous details, is not exempt of some false overtones: it simplifies the problem of the assimilation and emancipation of Gypsies as if it depended only upon Gypsy women giving up their ancient custom of stealing chickens. The title story "Happy Island" is about an idyllic childhood on the *puszta* with many fresh and bright details, where the children appear as resourceful individuals in the still untouched vividness of the natural world. Anyway, if you read this book you do not believe your eyes: is this possible? Can a woman born in 1950 know all these?

Péter Lengyel's new novel *Flagstone* (Macs-kakó) also evokes memories of traditional narrative. The first person narrator says to his small daughter: "You sometimes asked me how I could know this and that if I wasn't there. I asked your patience. Theorists claim that *today* the narrator cannot be an omnipresent and omniscient god. This *today* is their job: they also say that the novel is dead. May it rest in peace. I'll mourn for it when I'll have time but now I have work to do: I must write it. It demands to be nourished, I must know everything belonging to it and be omnipresent."

The traditional, omniscient romantic stratum in *Flagstone* is that of the thriller, "a penny-dreadful"—the title the book had when parts of it were published in periodicals. The story is set in Budapest in 1896, at the time of the splendid ceremonies commemorating the millennium of the Hungarian

conquest. Its core is a real event: the capturing of an international safe-cracking gang and their sensational escape. Péter Lengyel shapes the incident with great professional skill and a fascinating form of omniscience. He reconstructs the Budapest of the period with punctilious accuracy. This was the time when the city grew into a modern metropolis, feverishly founding businesses, just as Vienna, Berlin or Paris. The millennial festivities crowned this new conquest of the land, the victory of industrial capitalism: they took the form of a world exhibition and attracted streams of tourists. The underworld of the city was also up to the European norm: they are presented to the reader by the police inspector Dajka, a Budapest version of Holmes or Maigret. Dajka has been investigating the doings of a large and up-to-date gang of safe-crackers who started in the Austro-Hungarian Empire but have since extended this range of operations beyond it. It is an attempted murder in a Budapest bar and brothel (motivated by jealousy) that leads him on to the right track.

The omniscient narrator is a member of the gang, the perpetrator of a jewel robbery in Budapest, leading a dubious existence changing his aliases; on the other hand, he is also the writer who, while telling the story, puts his small daughter wise to the world in our 1980s. The two first-person narrators blend into one: obviously, according to the writer's intention, they can be considered identical.

Although at the end of the book we learn that the mysterious fourth man, a fugitive from justice who escapes in the last minute and after the detection of his companions manages to go unsuspected, this cool-blooded master criminal, identical with the first narrator's first person singular, perishes when an immigrant ship founders in the ocean.

The identity of the two narrators, the presence of the writer looking back from the present to the past weaves the thriller into a complicated fabric of texts and references. The thriller is interrupted by many *now*



chapters, in which the writer discusses the petty details of his everyday life or gives lessons on cosmology, geology and history to his daughter. The child is present all through unseen and unheard, as the listener addressed by the first-person narrator. This classical situation is the pillar of Lengyel's novel: somebody who knows much—but of course not everything—speaks to somebody who has arrived into the world later and hence needs to be initiated.

But why a thriller as the means of initiation? Although worked out carefully and accurately, crime fiction is in reality a metaphor which should not be understood only in itself but as a sign-post pointing beyond itself. The treatment of the material shows some symptoms of this: the criminal thread is full of quotation marks, alienating effects, remarks and reflections. However, the novel sets its metaphorical function mainly through its references to the present and the past—even the geological past—and by its implicit dialogue. One reviewer, Péter Balassa, called attention to the fact that the musical motto from Bach's *Musikalisches Opfer*, from the six-part *ricercare*, could be a key to the novel's structure. The word *ricercare*, meaning to search for something, has become the name of the old fugue, almost unused in Bach's own age: it treats related themes one after another, looking at them from the basic theme. The thriller in *Flagstone* carries this narrative attitude of hunting, investigating and initiating. As inspector Dajka investigates and as the narrator writes on the investigation and at the same time knows the truth he is searching—although not in full—the writer also investigates through the known means of narrative and makes inquiries into a truth which should be revealed and transmitted.

The truth concerned covers general human problems and concrete historical questions, the painful conflict of the new Hungarian conquest of the homeland in the late 19th century and its present loss. Here we have a problem with *Flagstone*: it has a

certain shorelessness and arbitrariness, suggesting that everything is connected with everything—which in itself is not enough. We cannot do much with the projection of cosmological pictures one upon the other with the scenes of a 19th-century melodrama and the thriller, the Balzacian panorama of a sinful metropolis and the daily worries and memories of a divorced Hungarian writer of our times. There is something very strange in all this: although the thriller unfolds in a complex and difficult way, testing the reader's attention and patience, it is itself so dominant that it casts off everything the writer wanted to hang on it.

The way in which Lengyel has tried to mould this varied and multi-tainted material also arouses the reader's opposition. We understand his intentions, the parallel function and meaning of searching and hiding, we understand the flagstone motif (city pavements at this time had flagstones): we have been living in that city since, and as their slabs are worn with use, road workers come and turn them from time to time until all the slabs are finished. Péter Lengyel also turns the elements of his narrative from viewpoint to viewpoint, he searches for sense and connections and tries to piece the mosaic of the story together, just as inspector Dajka does the details of the jewel-robbery. We understand the duality of the narrator and the many dualities of the novel, "up and down," "then and now," "beginning and end." We understand that the duality of the narrator means that he is both omniscient (he can write about inspector Dajka and jump into the skin of anybody, and yet incapable of jumping out of his own skin, describing only what he has experienced and done, what he has authored. We understand and appreciate all this but it does not leave any real impression on us: the abundance of the material and Lengyel's linguistic sophistication and brilliance are fascinating when he resurrects the old city of Budapest—always confronting it with the present—and after some initial difficulties the tension of the well-made thriller



ler begins also to function. Readers may discover the hidden connections of the motifs, the playful alternation of the flagstone slabs—but ultimately we remain outside this scintillating brilliance. Sometimes the writer's tricks are too artificial, overcomplicated and overused, and we cannot wait to return

to the thriller. The postmodern novelist has conquered the naive penny dreadful-writer—if you like this is what "Flagstone" is about. As in the case of many other historical developments, we cannot be really happy with this either.

MIKLÓS GYÖRFFY

BALÁZS LENGYEL

## THE OTHER KASSÁK

Lajos Kassák is recalled differently by my generation, that of the writers who started out in the '40s, than those ahead of us. Our relationship with him was different too. Our seniors have often written on the many conflicts they had with Kassák. They speak of a hardened personality governed by his will which suffered no will than his. We also learn from what they have written that he tried to force his views, and character, upon excellent people, significant talents when he was editing his journals, *Ma*, *Munka* or *Dokumentum*. It is possible that this was or, might have been, the reality experienced by his contemporaries. From our perspective or distance, however, it seemed that Kassák's personality attracted excellent young people—later excellent writers—and held them under his influence. (Naturally, a sort of fratricidal passion sooner or later crops up in a relationship like that.) In retrospect, it is also to his merit that he netted outstanding figures in this fishing for souls. Ady, by contrast, was surrounded with people who were, almost without exception, unworthy of him, these being the only ones he could put up with. Kassák was different: it is enough to bring to mind the more regular contributors to *Ma*, *Munka*, whose writings he published, whom he encouraged even though

he was to clash with them or they with him later.

Yet we cannot really know the truth about the past. When I met Lajos Kassák, he was almost sixty years old. Our connection goes back to 1946. By then, literary life had rebounded out of its postwar inertia, was rejuvenated, full of strength and vigour. The intensity amid the ruins is looked back upon as a legend today. In those days the Ministry of Religion and Public Education organized cultural festivals in towns and cities in order to provide an impetus to provincial life and spread a democratic literary culture. I believe this sprang from a proposal put forward jointly by the literary historian and translator László Kardos and Kassák. They took me, a young critic, the editor of the magazine *Újbold*, to the cultural festival held in Szeged. I made Kassák's acquaintance on the train, it was then that I was touched by his personal attraction, his magnetism. What was this attraction? His almost rude but sincere, passionate straightforwardness. The novelist Jenő Józsi Tersánszky was also a straightforward individual. He did not care a fig that he was a writer (and an excellent one) and that he had written anything. This he carried to such an extent that one could not engage him in even a few words on literature



or intellectual matters. But Kassák's intellect was fully open, he was interested in everything. He was close to eighty when he almost bludgeoned me to explain structuralism to him, to describe its starting-point and main principles; since he was upset by the explanation, conjecturing that it was after all only another scholarly dogmatic system directed against living literature, I was hardly able to make it clear that I was not a structuralist. He also took an interest in what we, the young writers, were anxious or uneasy about at the time; after a few words, he explained to us that he was worried about the same things, without in the least beating around the bush. In the short transition period between 1945 and 1948, when the writer's autonomy and the artist's independence were in an increasing danger, Kassák edited two papers, *Alkotás* and *Kortárs*, he saw and sized up the forces which were then indirectly on the attack and which were to ban both papers.

It was just then, at the beginning of 1946, when I read his outstanding autobiography, *The Life of a Man*. What is it that puts this book among the classics of autobiographical confession, next to Gorky's trilogy? Its story? The visit of the young soul to the circles of hell of society? Or is it his descriptions of the lot of apprentices and workers in all its sociological precision though written in an infinitely more plastic manner? Could it be the eruption of talent from a background of physical and emotional poverty into the career of a writer? It is all these and much more. The greatest merit of the book, however, lies in his personality and character. Within the personality were two contradictory efforts: the desire to get to know himself and the will to save the world. We have to arrive at ourselves and, at the same time, simultaneously, we have to recreate the world, Kassák believed; both efforts manifested themselves with an amazing strength.

I remember that when reading his book I was seized by the Sisyphean effort to know

himself and, when I met him in person, I was attracted by the other pole of his character: his self-assurance. His unshakeable faith in his ability, internal spurs, the sparks of his intellect. That cultural festival in Szeged almost ended in a scandal. A colleague of ours, a writer having just returned from exile in Moscow, talked to a large audience (mainly of university students) on the counter-revolutionary associations Szeged had in 1920 and, then, carried away, spoke in a most reproachful manner about Szeged itself, the "guilty city", from where admiral Horthy had started out to take over the country. Calling upon the young people present, almost necessarily local patriots, to account for the sins of the past, is hardly the best policy imaginable. The large and full auditorium completely turned suddenly against the writers vehemently. Then came Kassák's turn. He was between the devil and the deep blue sea, a victim of the counter-revolutionary political era himself and knowing that the ex-émigré was a fervent enemy of his; yet he saved the face of literature, the intellect, by delivering what he had to say, ignoring what had happened, the heated atmosphere.

It was only later that I understood that he was always saying what he had to say. Not because he was a skilful tactician but precisely because he was not a tactician. He was a writer proclaiming and creating new art, not a juggler of useful or allegedly useful compromises. He was independent in his dedication.

I was to experience this self-assurance of Kassák many times later on. I happened to visit various workshops with him, heard him argue with urban architects, and stood next to him, close to him, when official policies on art forced him out of intellectual life in the 1950s. After the hardest years had passed, I spent long evenings talking to him or listened to him talking to others on the widest range of matters concerning art.

I had occasions and time enough to glimpse his secret. For me the key to the



secret was not exactly what he offered to the world and especially to us critics. Kassák said that he wrote poems which could be placed on the table like individual objects. He also said—I am not quoting him verbatim—that his poems were just like a square in a town: whichever street one set off along was to lead to the square. And all that was the result of his conscious construction. Whether he was writing a poem, whether he was participating in the public and private life of literature, Kassák heard the voice: the only possible answer that came out of his personality. Just as there is no speculation, sophistication, cunning, wavering, neither-warm-nor-cold wording in what he wrote, there was none in his life either. His personality was always ready to answer but the ripe, finite personality was governed by instinctive orders of passion. Just as a learner driver thinks over carefully everything before giving orders to his limbs to act, and the hands and feet of an experienced driver do their jobs independently—all the limbs of Kassák were Kassák's. His nerve fibres operated accurately.

I saw him in 1949 or 1950 being thrown off a well-deserved throne with an angry frown, in a manner impossible to interfere with. (After all, he was the first Hungarian writer coming from the working class and brought up on the tenets of socialism.) He would have deserved everything, recognition, fame, money—everything a social system can give to the great personalities struggling for it. Everything people who only edged along skilfully were able to get their hands on for some time to come. In those days, at the beginning of the hard years of the 1950s, the Association of Hungarian Writers issued a four-page questionnaire—to probe how the writers could be made use of, as it were. This was the basis for negotiation. Then a committee interrogated those summoned one by one. I was waiting for my turn together with Kassák in the anteroom. His questionnaire had not been filled out: all that was written under his name in firm hand-

written capitals were the words, "I am ill, I do not do any work." I shall never forget the bitter smile on his face when he showed it to me.

It is strange that the memories that emerge conjure up his puritanism. The respectable poverty of the peasant house in Békásmegyer from where, of course, he took the local train to Budapest. The pride, not without consternation, with which he turned his head away when a writer, who had risen from poor peasant to minister, living in his neighbourhood, drove past him in his black government limousine. Or the relentlessness that knew no tact, with which he refused the request from a poet to bring along his wife to a literary morning held for the writers he respected at his exhibition of pictures ("Literature is no family matter").

Yet the puritanical, sincere Kassák—this is the difference in our experience—was a man impartial and equitable, who listened to others. His passion never made him selfish, his wounds never made him blind or heartless. He radiated a human healthiness in a literary life which produced enough paranoids to people a neurology department. Even when his temper was up, he was still susceptible to objections and arguments. True, it seemed that he almost liked to be overcome by passion because on such occasions his talent, intellect worked more intensively. But I never had any experience of his channeling debates towards personal areas or extending his arguments through his reputation or offendedness. I dare say that he was the only one or almost the only one among the older writers with whom one could argue as an equal, moreover with whom it was frequently a pleasure to engage in intellectual gymnastics.

We had different views on several questions, the starting points of our trains of thoughts were governed by different systems of value, different literary categories. I have written elsewhere of him that, with natural tact, he never offended or touched these basic formulae, important emotionally for both of



us, hidden at the depth of the personality, while we were arguing with each other. His former colleague, the poet Zoltán Zelk, stated several times as a counter-argument in connection with my studies on Kassák that as an active editor (for formal reasons merely) Kassák would not have published those poets faithful to form to whom I personally was most attracted. Perhaps that is his experience. And also that of the generation that started out and struggled with him. I, however, looking back on a connection of twenty years which may be called friendly, indeed, without being immodest, even a friendship, can only remember two occasions when he brought up his objections to rhyming poetry and—in a tactful manner—tried to influence me. To mention one of the sensitive basic formulae, he talked about Babits—his bad relationship with whom has been well documented—only with tact and recognition. He was not being forgiving, simply fair. Once, in Visegrád, we had lunch and dinner at the same table every day for two weeks together with a writer whom Kassák—probably with good reason—cut dead. That set the atmosphere of those meals. Kassák was silent but the air vibrated around him.

Now that I am talking of Visegrád, I should mention that Kassák met my mother there on several occasion. He was only two and a half years younger. However, what matters over seventy is not the years but the physical state. Mother was an old woman with one foot in the grave, in her tired body only her intellect had remained intact; Kassák seemed a vigorous man in his prime next to her. It seems to me that one of the true tests of the humaneness of a man, a kind of litmus paper, is the way he treats elderly women who have manifestly lost their

womanliness. I am deaf to the nightingale song on the noble ideas of the man who ignores old people. It would be nice to be able to describe fully how naturally kind Kassák was to my mother, how attentive without overdoing it, and how interested without faking it. They seemed to take a liking to one another in a way. On one occasion, while taking a walk in the garden, my mother led Kassák to a stone wall and, pointing at a flower shooting from among the stones, from a drop of earth on a stone, said, 'Write about this! This flower here!' It was an uneasy moment. There was a gap of two and a half years between them but there was a century in taste. The flower might have been a topic for Hungarian symbolism in its early stage (or, even an allegory in that almanach poetry which preceded it). Still, my mother's suggestion of writing about the flower tortured among the rocks touched and moved Kassák. On that same day, he wrote a poem to my mother, entitled 'I talked with an old woman.' From the title it also appears that the poem's author did not consider himself old. Then he wrote more than fifty poems in the course of some three weeks. Indeed, Kassák was not old among people. His age was demonstrated only by his loneliness as he let himself go in the taxi following the gala in honour of his eightieth birthday or as he stirred when I opened the door visiting him in one of the rest-houses for writers. When alone and reflecting, the face of a man is amazing. His fate is reflected on it. On such occasions I saw the harsh loneliness of greatness on Kassák's face, a tortured Laocoon struggling with the invisible snakes clinging to his muscular torso.



## ARCHITECTURE AS HISTORY AND IDIOM

Anna Zádor: *Az építészet és múltja. Válogatott tanulmányok* (Architecture and its past. Selected studies). Corvina, Budapest, 1988. 258 pp., 130 illustrations.

The book appeared in the bookshops at the moment her students and devotees were celebrating the 85th birthday of Anna Zádor. Its publication is a homage to an outstanding scholar and Professor of Art History at the University of Budapest, who has taught many generations and is probably the most active and expert proponent of the discipline in Hungary. Accordingly, it may well be understandable that, as a student of Anna Zádor, I personally cannot take up this volume without emotion: for my colleagues and I have learned much from the earlier studies it contains.

In her short preface Anna Zádor explains that she selected those studies which inspired further investigations and proved to be the most useful from the professional viewpoint. The writings date from the 1930s to the 1980s and deal with the most diverse topics in modern European architecture. Hungarian and European—they are not treated separately but in a synthesis: Anna Zádor sees Hungarian art and architecture, down to the smallest detail, in the European context. A good example of this approach is the relatively short essay "Imre Henszlmann's theory of architecture and the evolution of the neo-Gothic" (1966) in which she discusses and analyses Henszlmann's lecture to the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1852. She not only outlines an intellectual biographical sketch of this nineteenth-century scholar but also offers a description of contemporary research into the Middle Ages, and thus how Henszlmann's views fitted into the overall picture. "Some problems concerning the development of Neo-classicism" is a longer essay, the first chapter of a monograph on Mihály Pollack, published in 1960, which gained Anna Zádor the highest academic de-

gree. This essay was called upon to suggest the broader European background to which the Hungarian neo-classic architect was connected by many links. It presents the architecture of the turn of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with a wealth of ideas and identifications of different trends; as such, it was the first of its kind written in Hungarian. (Since then, the only other extensive work on the topic has also been written by Anna Zádor: *Klasszicizmus és romantika* (Classicism and Romanticism. Corvina, Budapest, 1976). Here I would like to emphasise only one specific idea, because of its extraordinary topicality. Starting out from an examination of European architectural trends Professor Zádor draws attention to the circumstance that Hungarian architectural terminology—this, of course, is also a question of content—will probably have to be revised because the term romanticism can hardly be applied to the period after 1830 because what followed was a period of historicising architecture in Hungary. The problem has become topical now, with the research of the 1980s, and it seems that it will be resolved in the form suggested by Anna Zádor.

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Architectural plans contain basic information about the buildings constructed from them; they also represent an aesthetical value in themselves. This seems evident today but this was by far not the case in Hungary when Anna Zádor discovered the scholarly potential in them. She referred to this in a paper, "Architectural plans in the 18th century" (1935), and offered readers a number of the designs of J. N. Jadot, F. A. Hillebrandt and T. de Thomon, for buildings in





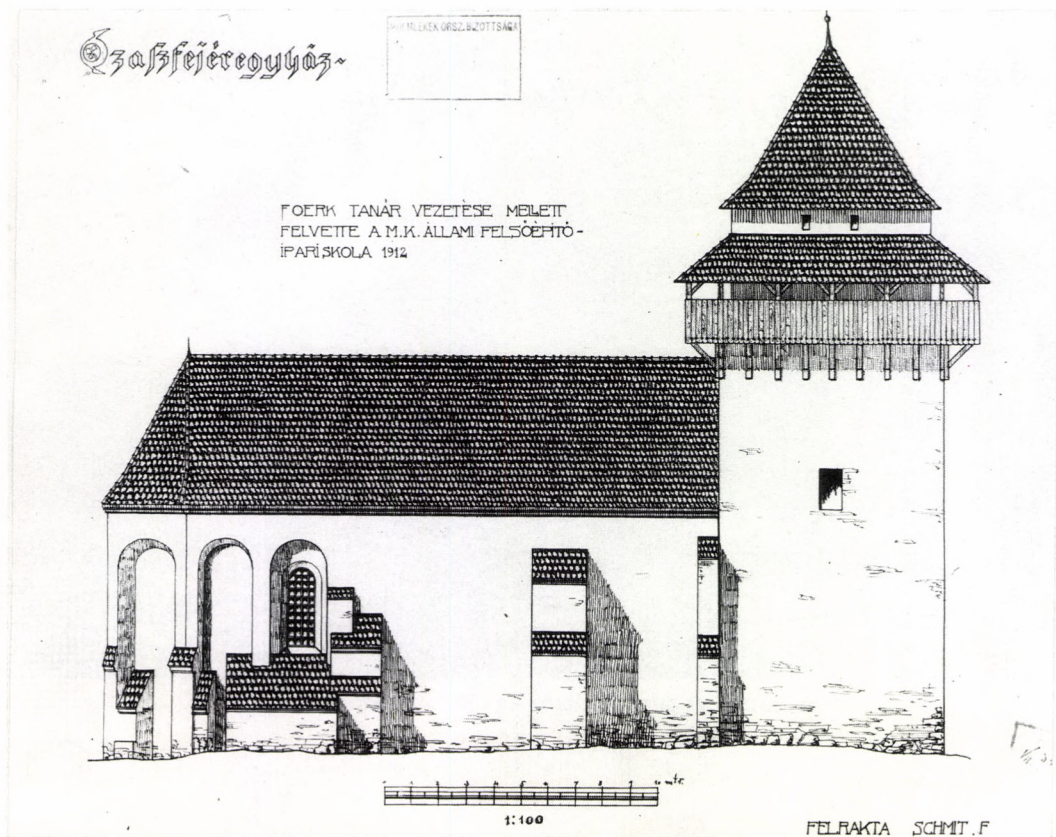
KŐRÖSFŐ. CALVINIST CHURCH. PHOTO BY KÁLMÁN SZÖLLŐSY, 1937.





ÓRALJABOLDOGFALVA. 13th CENTURY CALVINIST CHURCH. PHOTO BY LÁSZLÓ HOLLENZER, cca 1900.

SZÁSZFEHÉREGYHÁZ. NORTHERN FACADE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH. INK DRAWING, 1912.







VAJDAHUNYAD. CASTLE OF THE HUNYADI FAMILY. 15th CENTURY. PHOTO TAKEN  
BY LÁSZLÓ HOLLENZER, CCA 1900

PRÁZSMÁR. LUTHERAN FORTIFIED CHURCH. 16th CENTURY. PHOTO BY ERNŐ FOERK, 1916.

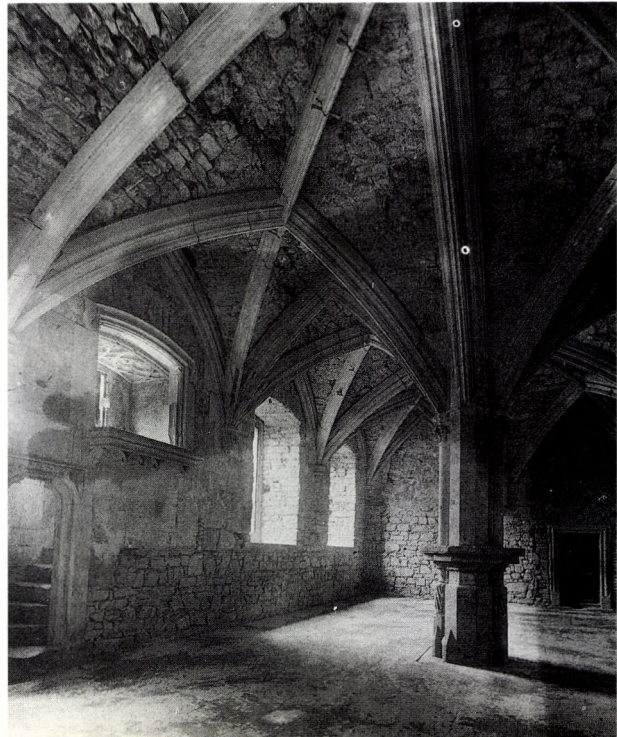






HARINA.  
LUTHERAN CHURCH.  
13th CENTURY.  
PHOTO TAKEN CCA 1900.

*Reproductions by Tamás Mihálik*



KOLOZSVÁR.  
REFECTORY OF THE 16th CENTURY  
FRANCISCAN CONVENT.  
PHOTO BY LÁSZLÓ HOLLENZER, 1903.





*Reproductions by Tamás Mihalik*

MAROSVÉCS.  
KEMÉNY CHATEAU.  
17th CENTURY.  
PHOTO BY LÁSZLÓ HOLLENZER,  
CCA 1910.



SZENTBENEDEK. KORNIS CHATEAU.  
17th CENTURY.  
PHOTO BY KÁLMÁN SZÖLLŐSY,  
CCA 1930.





SZÉKELYDERZS. 6th century fresco in the UNITARIAN church.  
A WATER COLOUR COPY BY JÓZSEF HUSZKA, 1887.



HOMORÓDSZENTMÁRTON. 15th century wall paintings from the UNITARIAN church. WATER COLOUR COPY BY JÓZSEF HUSZKA, cca 1883.



SEPSIKILYÉN. 15th century wall painting from the UNITARIAN church. WATER COLOUR COPY BY JÓZSEF HUSZKA, 1886.



MAROSSZENTANNA. 14th century wall painting from the CALVINIST church. WATER COLOUR COPY BY ISTVÁN GROH, 1912.



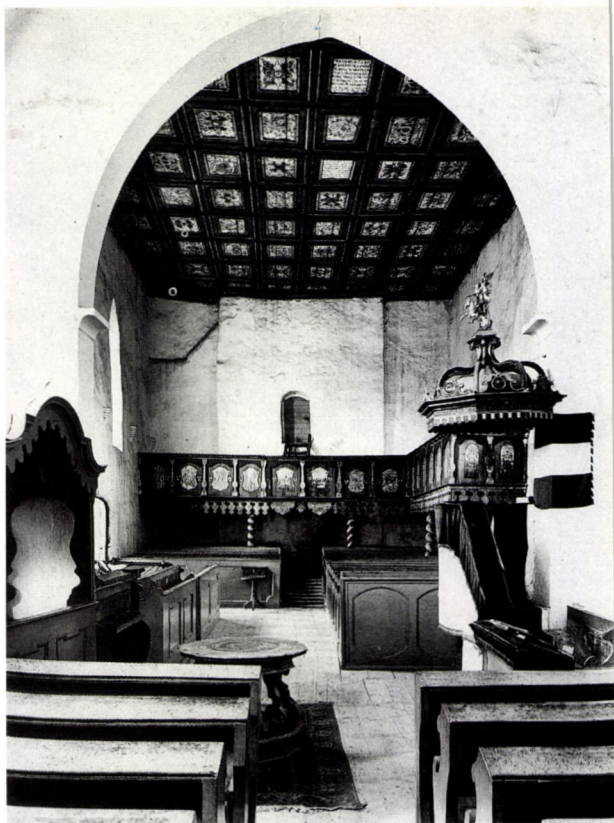


DEMSUS. 15th CENTURY WALL PAINTING FROM THE ORTHODOX CHURCH. ▲  
WATER COLOUR COPY BY ISTVÁN GROH. 1910.

FOGARAS. 17th CENTURY WALL PAINTING FROM THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.  
WATER COLOUR COPY BY ISTVÁN GROH, 1917.

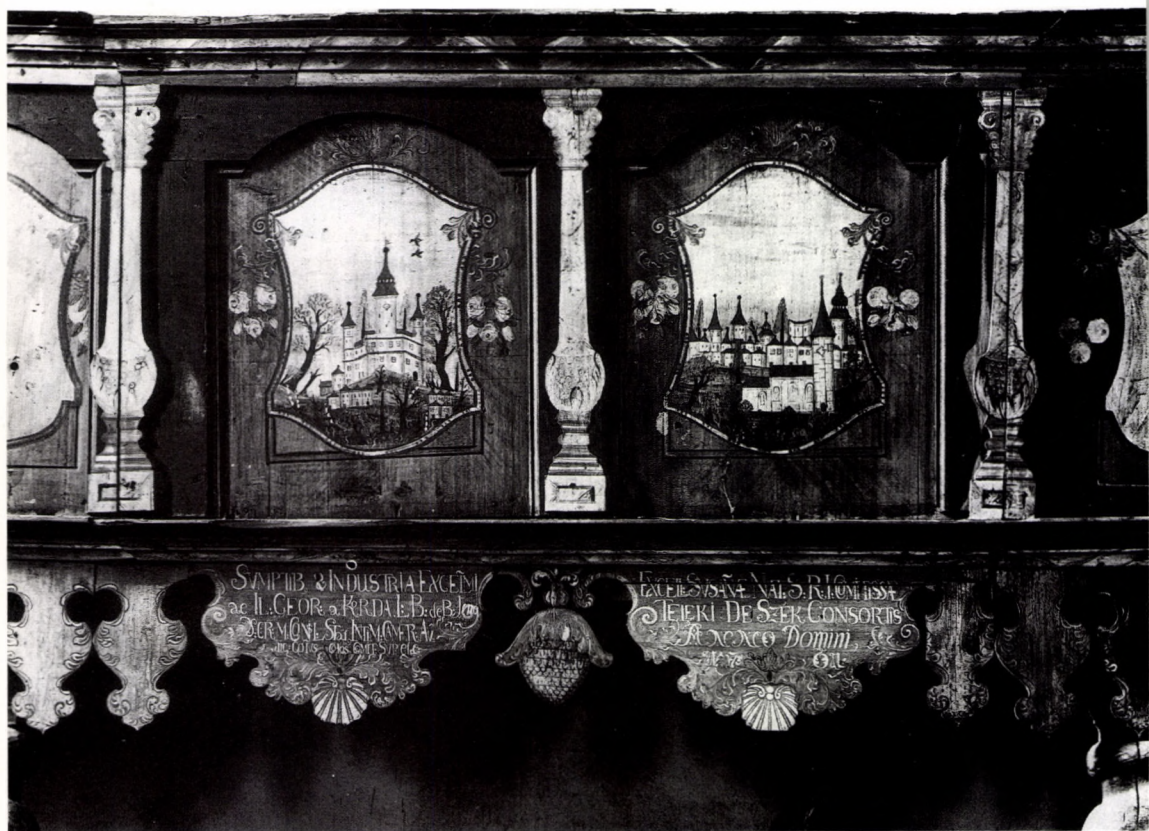


BÖGÖZ. CALVINIST CHURCH  
AND TWO PAINTED TABLETS  
FROM THE CHOIR.  
PHOTO 1940.



COURTESY OMF ARCHIVES

*Reproductions by Tamás Mibalik*







TIBOR CSERNUS: SAINT TROPEZ, 1959. OIL, CANVAS; 140 X 250 CM.

*Private Collection Budapest,  
György Makky*



TIBOR CSERNUS: THE MARKET ON LEHEL SQUARE. 1962. OIL. CANVAS.  
138 X 200 CM.





TIBOR CSERNUS: SAUL I. 1985. OIL, CANVAS. 230 X 175 CM.  
*Private Collection, Paris*

TIBOR CSERNUS: THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC 1987. OIL, CANVAS,  
 230 X 175 CM.  
*Galerie Claude Bernard, Paris*





TIBOR CSERNUS: WORKER.

CCA 1950. OIL, CANVAS, 93,5 × 74 CM.

*Collection of the National Gallery*

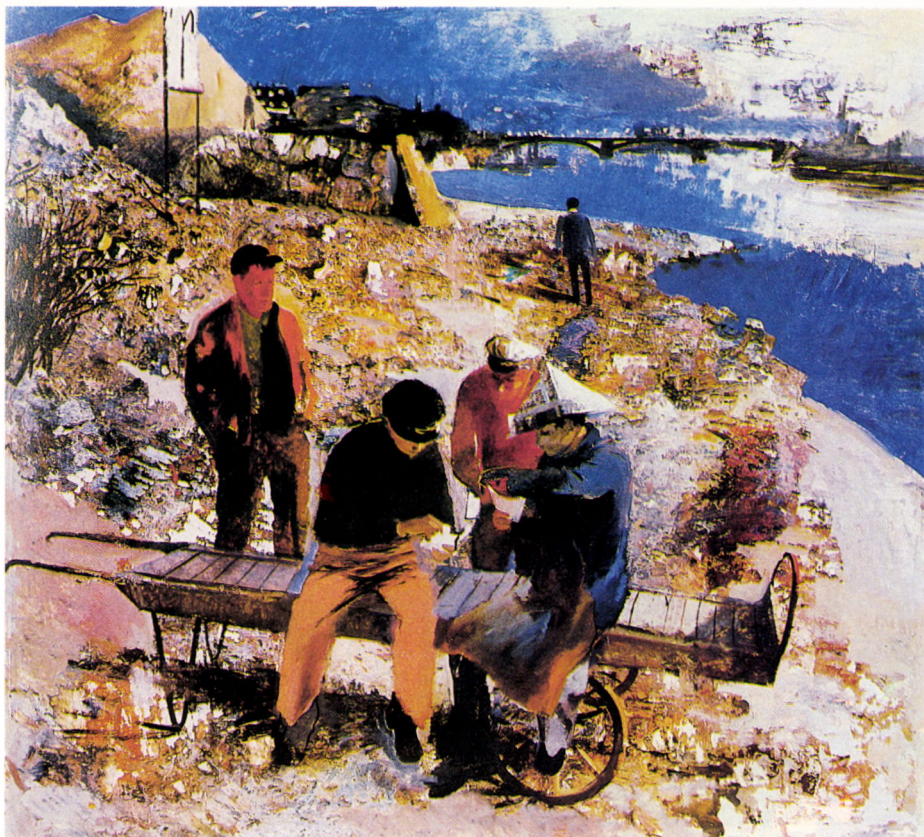
TIBOR CSERNUS: NO TITLE 7.

1972. OIL, CANVAS. 130 × 195 CM.

*Private Collection, New York*







TIBOR CSERNUS: THE QUAI AT UJPEST, 1957. OIL ON CANVAS, 140 X 150 CM



TIBOR CSERNUS: SWANS. 1984. OIL, CANVAS. 140 X 180 CM.  
*Private Collection, Paris*



Vienna, Pozsony, and Kismarton. Earlier, just after graduation, she had come upon very interesting plans in the estate of Leopoldo Pollach in Milan. Pollach was one of the leading architects of the Lombardian capital and the half-brother and teacher of the Hungarian Mihály Pollack, and thus important for us Hungarians.

Incidentally, this *trouvaille* decided the main direction of Anna Zádor's scholarly work. She worked up the plans in the estate and published them in several parts—fortunately for us since the originals perished during the war. This book contains the essay "Leopoldo Pollach (1751–1806)" written in 1963; previously it had only been published in an Italian periodical. Dealing with the blueprints and with Pollach himself, the piece merits attention because it reflects a kind of overall Central European outlook which has begun to assert itself only in recent times.

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While the publication of architectural designs was unusual in the Hungary of the 1930s, publishing of garden designs was much more so. Anna Zádor published more than half a dozen in 1931: "The garden lay-outs in the Grassalkovich Archives." (These too were destroyed in the Second World War.) She did not limit herself to an analysis of the plans, she enlarged also upon the origin of the formal French gardens visible in them, and discussed the history of French garden design. This interest continued for many decades, an essay "The English garden in Hungary" (1973) was the result of a long process of material-collecting work. (In a modified and abbreviated form it was read first as a lecture at a conference in 1972 in Dumbarton Oaks, USA.) Intended modestly as a preliminary study, it is the most comprehensive presentation of the history of English gardens in Hungary so far; it has data on almost 200 gardens based on contemporary letters and designs, reports and books as well as on the modern international literature. In its wake

a branch of art almost unknown in context and detail became part of the history of Hungarian culture and art. An article, "An English garden in Hungary around 1800", describes and presents the garden of Hotkóc with the help of contemporary representations and descriptions.

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We have mentioned the history of culture and indeed the book contains exemplary work on this too, such as "The theatre of Kismarton," and "The theatre of Eszterháza" (both from 1936). "The place and role of art at the turn of the 18th–19th century" (1973) treats a different subject but the outlook is similar. In the decades mentioned in the title, the period of the urbanisation and a national awakening in feudal and backward Hungary, the role of artists changed in society; they were more actively involved in social processes. Anna Zádor examined the parallel phenomena in art, architecture and literature from this viewpoint. She surveyed the building of the rulers, aristocrats and prelates of eighteenth-century Europe in the context of social history in her study "Some characteristics of residential building" (1973) (previously only accessible in Italian). The article on "Palladio and a few questions of the Renaissance in Hungary" is a special treat: it analyses and interprets a letter of Andrea Palladio that is preserved in Hungary. Professor Zádor identifies the letter's unknown addressee as Tamás Nádasdy and demonstrates through analogy and stylistics that the gate of the castle of the Nádasdys in Sárvár, or rather some parts of it, could have been designed by Palladio.

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The commemoration entitled "Professor Lajos Fülep" represents a different genre (1973). Anna Zádor writes on a great Hungarian art historian, hardly known abroad, whom she has spent many years working with



in the University of Budapest. Her article is more a personal portrait than the description of a professional career: the finely nuanced analysis does not hide a few weaknesses of that excellent man and scholar. We must thank her for this sketch and for other portraits of Hungarian colleagues such as Endre Csatkai or Ervin Ybl with whom she has had long-standing relations. She is the only person left who could have written authentic and competent characterisations about them.

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When a few years ago Anna Zádor appeared on Hungarian television, the broader public was able to meet her as a person and scholar; with extreme shyness and modesty she spoke rather of her friends and colleagues than of herself. Details of her life remained obscure. Now the postscript to the book, written by István Bibó, offers some compensation. Bibó, a student of professor Zádor who continues to work on her themes, inserts the major events of her life in the description of her professional career and recalls a few pertinent meetings and interviews with her.

The style of Anna Zádor merits special attention: she has the gift of discussing "difficult" themes elegantly and fascinatingly, whether writing on architectural theory, history or the analysis of a building. This elegance and gracefulness never compromises high scholarly standards.

The selection of articles had to be limited for reasons of the book's dimensions. I would

have been very happy if Anna Zádor's dissertation (written at the age of 22) "Italian architectural theories in the age of the Renaissance and the Baroque" (1926) had been included. Although today she calls this venture "the boldness of a greenhorn," the little opus (a rarity today) is still valid and nothing similar has been written in Hungarian since then. I regret also another omission: "A sketch of the history of Hungarian studies on art until 1945," which has remained indispensable to this day. I could list further regrettable omissions and I think it is an editorial mistake that no bibliography of her works is included. These remarks and wishes do not change the fact that with this book the reader and Hungarian art history have been given a work of lasting value.

For the sake of our readers I append a list of those pieces in this present book which have also been published in English:

"Some Problems of the Development of Classicism in Architecture", *Acta Historiae Artium* VI (1959), pp.135-169;

"Henszlmann and the Theory of Gothicism," *The Architectural Review* CXL (1966), pp.423-426;

"The English Garden in Hungary," in: N. Pevsner (ed.): *The Picturesque Garden and Its Influence Outside the British Isles*. Washington, 1974, pp. 77-98; and *The New Hungarian Quarterly* XIV (1973), No.50, pp.193-200;

"An English Garden in Hungary", *The New Hungarian Quarterly* XXVI (1985), No. 100, pp. 116-122.

JÓZSEF SISA



## THE TOPOGRAPHY OF INFLUENCES

Krisztina Passuth, in collaboration with Dominique Moyer: *Les Avant-Gardes de l'Europe Centrale*. Flammarion, Paris, 1988. 327 pp.

It cannot be appreciated enough that the author of the first comprehensive book on the Central European classical avantgarde is Hungarian. The art of this region has escaped the fate of the Soviet-Russian avantgarde; the fact is that it has been English, West-German, French and American studies, each superior to the others, that have surveyed it with great competence, with an extensive knowledge of the subject whereas the art historians of the country concerned did not publish first-hand studies about their own art. Camilla Gray's *The Great Experiment* published in 1961 and Gassner and Giller's study of sources *Zwischen Revolutionskunst und Sozialistischen Realismus* (Between revolutionary art and socialist realism) preceded the first Soviet publications by many years; hence it is a real pleasure that the first book on Central European avantgarde has been written by a Central European author.

Krisztina Passuth starts by circumscribing the much debated geographical region which can be called Central Europe in the 1920s. Avoiding the difficulties of definition such as East or East Central Europe which imply the struggles for cultural emancipation and the eternal nostalgia for the West in their very name, she has chosen the term Central-Europe which starts out from a more self-determining culture (this is also more accurate geographically), with the art of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Zagreb-Belgrade in its axis along with its Eastern satellite Rumania. The art of the region is shaped under two major influences: Russian art from the East, and from the West the German and international modernism of Berlin which, in the 1920s, developed as a Central-European art centre.

The book presents the avantgarde of these

countries for the first time chronologically and systematically; it outlines the national characteristics and the particularities which unfolded as antecedents to the avantgarde in the first fifteen years of the century. It emerges that Czech art was most receptive to cubism and Rumanian art to futurism. The book shows the bridges between Prague and Budapest, Warsaw and St Petersburg, Zagreb and Berlin which were hidden partly to the actors of this international life—because it is not sure that the "Eights" of Budapest knew about the "Osma" (Eights) of Prague and vice versa. Namely, real internationalism emerged after the collapse of the revolutions of 1918–19, when the paths of the emigrants crossed each other, and the cosmopolitan artists maintained relations with the artistic circles and forums "at home," in Arad, Belgrade, Pozsony, and so on.

The chapter "After 1920" gives a concise description of the changed political and artistic medium into which emigrant groups and individual artists arrived, emphasizing—and this is the novelty of the work—the medium which surrounded those who stayed at home. It follows the "slipping-in" of the main avantgarde trends—futurism, dadaism, constructivism—into Central-European art, including such decisive groups as *Der Sturm* and *De Stijl*, outlining the topography of these influences in detail with much so far unpublished data.

For the first time we are given sharply outlined portraits of the Czech Karel Teige, the Hungarian Lajos Kassák, the Serb Lubomir Micić (the "barbarian genius"), the Polish Berlewi, Strzemiński and Stazewski set beside one other; we follow the path of Marcel Janou, Tristan Tzara, László Péri, László Moholy-Nagy, Constantin Brâncuși



as they are assimilated to Western and international trends; also for the first time, we receive a fluid image of the very complex and complicated artistic medium, in which it is practically impossible to separate East and West. The periodicals of Arad, Prague, Cracow, Berlin, Zurich, Poznan, Újvidék and Amsterdam (Krisztina Passuth is the first to publish a comprehensive list of them), informed and advertized each other, created an atmosphere of internationalism, a symbiosis in the era of the classical avantgarde, which raises difficulties for any subsequent break-up of this art, the result of common work, to its national components. Czech futurism was the international distillate of the original Italian trend; in Prague it exerted its influence especially on theatrical art; Lajos Kassák and his group took over the formal novelty of futurism, dissolved in dadaism and expressionism: the Rumanian avantgarde was most receptive to the original forms of futurism.

Krisztina Passuth's sensitive argument shows that, despite team-work and community, the avantgarde art of individual countries *did* have its national physiognomy; defined as the Central European avantgarde, it is part of an all-European process. Kassák did not only give room in his periodical to dadaist and constructivist works: he personally identified with their spirit and kept it in being for Hungary when he returned home in 1926, just as Sándor Bortnyik opened his "Workshop" school in Budapest in the spirit of the Bauhaus and the European ideal of modernism.

The period discussed in the book closed with the Art Deco exhibition in Paris in 1925, indicating that after Berlin, Paris had again become the artistic centre of Europe—primarily because of the coming into prominence of surrealism—the pilgrimage place for several Central European artists.

The essay is followed by very interesting source-material, with literary works as well as art theory; it seems that most of these sources are receiving their first publication since their original appearance.

The more profound understanding of the Russian avantgarde, the discovery of so far unknown works and artists has created a huge stir which have been followed by very rapid price changes and movements on the art market. Now attention has been directed increasingly towards the Central European classical avantgarde regarded as its background, but apart from one or two partial studies and introductions in catalogues, no comprehensive evaluation of these artistic movements and trends had been published before Krisztina Passuth's book. It now proves convincingly that just as Musil cannot be considered either a West European or an East European writer, this art, interwoven with politics and always socially committed yet working out its specific aesthetic qualities, is also an independent entity: the imprint of Central-Europe on the European map, however closely linked to the art of Western Europe.

The avantgarde of the 1920s can be viewed today from a perspective which shows that what was once a marginal art has left stronger and more lasting marks on the art of these countries than could have been guessed. It also shows that the moral strength embodied in East European avantgarde works was of a quality always very much needed by art in this region, and has helped Central European art to get over the era of Stalinism. And it shows that, even if only through the new generations revolting against it, it has impregnated Polish, Czech, Hungarian, Serbo-Croatian, Rumanian and Russian art to this very day.

ÉVA FORGÁCS



## IN THE THICK OF MARXIST IDEOLOGY

István Mészáros: *Philosophy, Ideology and Social Science*. Essays in Negations and Affirmations. Harvester Press, Brighton, 1986, XIX + 294 pp.

"Ever since Menenius Agrippa addressed the people of Rome who went on strike and occupied the Sacred Mount in sixth century B. C., the organic conception of the social order has been advocated on numerous occasions." István Mészáros begins his latest book with these promising words.<sup>1</sup>

The volume is a collection of occasional papers, of roughly ten years work. As can be gathered from the title and the lines quoted above, the unity is given by the nature of an ideological interest, by an all-inclusive viewpoint, which has become increasingly dominant in Mészáros's activity. If we consider Mészáros's books, it appears that his principal philosophical work revolves on the subjects of alienation, class consciousness and ideology. Problems of this kind are typical elements of Marxist theory. Mészáros, who has since 1966 taught at the University of Sussex at Brighton, thinks in Marxist terms and has been impressed profoundly by the philosophy of György Lukács. All this manifests itself also in the present volume, which is thus in organic connection with his earlier works.

Quasi a separate essay, the introduction is an analysis of the notion of ideology and sets up a sort of typology of ideologies. The first essay, "Ideology and Social Science," is a

critique of various social theories as ideology by reviewing the views of Max Weber, Coser, J. M. Keynes and Talcott Parsons. Following this, the essay "Contingent and Necessary Class Consciousness," reconstructs the way the notion of class consciousness appears in Marx's thinking. Thereafter, in "Marx the Philosopher", Mészáros discusses Marx's novel conception of philosophy, the question of the relationship of philosophy and the proletariat, then, "Kant, Hegel, Marx: Historical Necessity and the Standpoint of Political Economy," sums up a few essential points in the classical German theory of history. "Marxism and Human Rights", is important as a good illustration of the author's opinion. Somewhat more loosely connected with these subjects are the last three essays: "A Critique of Analytical Philosophy," "Metaphor and Simile" and "Alienation in European Literature."

To discuss Mészáros's work is difficult and easy at the same time. It is difficult because—the book in question being a collection of occasional papers—no systematic analysis of the subjects discussed can be expected, and the volume cannot of course present a coherent train of thought either which might be fittingly commented. In a sense, it is nevertheless easy to speak of this work because the totality of the papers in it outlines the principles of Mészáros's way of thinking. Those are the most fundamental principles of Marx: the concepts of a class-structured society, the position of the proletariat, and class consciousness.

Earlier, too, Mészáros has already shown that an attitude prevails in his social philosophy which Marx had outlined as a reality given at that time. This basic position is that of the structural contradictoriness of capitalism and of its tendency leading into a cul-

<sup>1</sup> I ought to mention that not one of the supposed dates of the notable *secessio plebis* is unambiguous. According to Cicero (Brutus, 14), the principal character of the story was the dictator M. Valerius, while according to Piso (Livy, II. 32) the plebs retired to the Aventine. The most likely date of the story of Menenius Agrippa and the Sacred Mount was, on the evidence of Diodorus Siculus, 470 B. C. and, according to Livy's more reliable and generally accepted narrative (II, 32), 494 B. C., thus in any case early in the 5th century B. C.



minating crisis. In an earlier major work on Marx's theory of alienation, Mészáros writes as follows:<sup>2</sup> "Recent events . . . have all dramatically underlined the intensification of the global structural crisis of capitalism" (p. 10.) "In the present phase of socio-historical development . . . for the first time in history capitalism is being shaken to its foundations as a world-system" (p. 21). This view is given expression also in the present work: "The contradictions of the social world become stronger than ever and manifest themselves more and more in a way that approaches an all-engulfing global scale" (p. XVIII). Without being able to fit the development tendencies of our age into a cool and comprehensive theory of history, my impression is that a sound appraisal of present capitalist reality requires a radical reinterpretation, or at least a far more differentiated reconsideration, of the Marxist notion of crisis.

Most of what I have to say will be of this nature. Such critical observations appear to be far more appropriate than reference to, or an enumeration of, the unquestionable virtues of this work, listing the author's wide range of vision and knowledge of the facts. These are questions of outlook and methodology, the nature of which I shall try to indicate by expounding a few problems.

The author defines his general position along the line of Marx's view: "We are talking about class societies" (p. x), and assuming that the classic Marxian notion of class is known and of general validity, he does not revert any more to its broader clarification. In other words, in respect of a general view on capitalist society, the author does not deem it necessary to raise the question whether the factors structuring society at present are wholly identical with those which characterised the conditions of a century or a century and a half ago. That is why, when the terms "modern industrial society," "industrial civilisation," "post-capitalist soci-

ety," "post-industrial society" come up (p. 70), Mészáros can promptly point out that theories using such terms that are meant to be *wertfrei* fulfil the function of an apologia and ideology by obscuring the class problem, but his class concept is no longer enough for him to go on and examine whether these expressions, with their ideological aspect, may nevertheless hint at a recent, special stage of capitalism.

Since Mészáros considers society as a class society, the forms of social consciousness are also articulated as class consciousness and as ideology. Within the framework of a class society, Mészáros consistently applies his principles in the evaluation of ideology. He rightly underlines that practical social consciousness in these societies is necessarily of an ideological character, and that the existence of ideology is indispensable to the reproduction of current circumstances. Since the question is one of class societies, he points out that the contending principal ideologies are not symmetrical: while the ideology aimed at preserving prevailing conditions is of a totalising character, opposition ideology proposes an alternative. Thus the difference in their contents means that the prevailing ideology is aimed at covering up real conditions, while critical ideology is interested precisely in the authentic revelation of these conditions. This relationship indicates, according to Mészáros, that false consciousness is only a subvariant of ideology, and thus it is wrong to identify ideology with false consciousness in general. What fits in here is the notion that Marx's position aiming to transcend a class society must formulate class consciousness as a coherent and powerful ideology. "To imagine that socialist theory could afford to be ideology-free . . . is in fact a self-disarming strategy" (p. XVI).

Mészáros distinguishes three basically differing ideological positions. The first—exemplified by Menenius Agrippa—is intended, in an uncritical spirit, to get the given order accepted as an absolute horizon. The second position—of radical thinkers like

<sup>2</sup> Mészáros, István: *Marx's Theory of Alienation*. London, 1972.



Rousseau—points to the irrationalities of the special forms of a class society, while it also carries in itself the contradictions of a similarly class-determined social position. Finally, the third basic position—contrary to the earlier ones—radically questions the prospect of class society itself, and anticipates the transcendence of all forms of class antagonism. After drawing up these patterns, Mészáros argues: “Naturally, in the history of thought, all the way down to the present, even the most positive varieties of becoming conscious of the fundamental social conflict could not help being affected by the structural limitations of class confrontation. Only the third type of ideology can even attempt—without any aprioristic guarantee of success—to overcome the constraints associated with the production of practical knowledge within the horizon of divided social consciousness under the conditions of divided class society” (p. XV).

Here we already find ourselves in the thick of the problems of Marxist ideology. What heuristic value is inherent in the types of ideology thus outlined? To begin with, in my opinion this classification does not make it possible to form a true notion of the reform ideology. A radical view overly attentive to class antagonism is that which includes the reform ideology as a whole—if it reckons with it at all—with the category of uncritical apologia. The catchwords of reform ideology often cover really quite conservative intentions, but the concept proper of class ideology implies a true critical spirit. Since, on the other hand, the purpose of this ideology is reform, it is natural for this sort of critical view—in order to avoid rigidity and malfunctioning—to be designed to enhance and maintain existing vitality. Although this ideology can really be misused—and perhaps I need not even emphasise—that in any event at least as long periods of history have elapsed in the spirit of this thought, as those taken up with the preparation and under the guidance of revolutionary ideas. These are, of course, justified at the proper place and time.

Furthermore, if we looked farther behind this problem, it would become evident that the setting up of the dichotomy of uncritical apologia and revolutionary ideology (since in this respect the “Rousseauistic” type of ideology is not a third case) follows from the reduction of history to that of the class struggle. I think that a searching appraisal of this divisive problem of historiology is urgent, but it is so far-reaching a problem that I have to rest content with a reference to it. The reason why, in any event, I mentioned this much, is that Mészáros, when discussing ideologies, has formulated conclusions that claim to be valid for all history.

The subjects of Mészáros’s papers are, however, the ideologico-philosophical problems of the past two centuries and their Marxist interpretations. Since it is not his aim here to raise as a separate subject the questions of the broadest correlations of Marxism, and its methodology, essential points and basic trends as a complex social theory and ideology, I also feel it would be unfair to expect and demand at once an answer to, or satisfactory elucidation of, these fundamental questions. Still, I think these papers would have been more fruitful if their author had not stuck to such a degree with his chosen subjects but had included more forcefully philosophical reflections on the most fundamental questions indicated in the foregoing.

In no way can we ask here in earnest what is the real substance of the teaching of Marxism, and what justification there is for raising this question. It is, anyway, generally known from the interconnections of its historiological, economic, political and philosophical views that Marxism—the above-mentioned third type of ideology—aims to transcend capitalist society. This aim lends Marxism sharp features, and highly complex historico-philosophical questions arise in this connection. Among the first subjects to involve such questions is consciousness. At the same time, the author’s thoroughgoing article on this subject, when dealing with the recon-



struction of the concept of class consciousness in Marx, seems to avoid the more important undertakings, whereas—as far as I can see—these questions are not dealt with satisfactorily in Marxist writings.

An issue worth considering is, first of all, the problem of the substance, function and peculiar nature of class consciousness specially during the period of transition, of change, from capitalism to communism (socialism). It was on behalf of all mankind, of the whole of society, that ideologists of both the bourgeoisie and of Marxism sincerely demanded the transformation of the social order, they heralded their revolution as an event serving the advantage of the entire human race and took up the cudgel for it. A change of the intolerable situation in which the bourgeoisie and/or the proletariat as limited and/or oppressed classes got caught is really a prerequisite for more general human progress, and as such, it was in the common interest. Reference to general humanity in this indirect sense is justified. The only question is, in what manner the questions of power and economic activity arise after the revolution is over, and on how broad sections of society do they rely?

The bourgeoisie soon proved to have organised society ruthlessly in accordance with its own interests, but in this way it established a certainly viable system. The critical point of the theory is here the question of the proletariat's creativity. Since the proletariat, as compared to the rising bourgeoisie which had economic power, is forced into a state of total deprivation, into conditions absolutely dictated by capital, a paradoxical problem of social theory arises how the proletariat can put an end to the given order and to itself at the same time and, while overcoming this sheer negativity and turning into its own specified non-existence, mobilise socio-political forces which reorganise society explicitly not with respect to those left behind and have at the same time—in spite of their radical difference from

their earlier nature—a real existence, social resources and points of view?

Ágnes Heller has formulated the complexity of the implementation of Marxist theory as follows: "A total social revolution must be carried out in a society whose structure is based on commodity production and the division of labour... A universal restructuring of needs and values must be realised in a society where alienation is general even if amidst such conditions the working class feels unwell in a society where the needs of the masses are primarily either prime necessities or quantitative requirements. Of course, this calls for a political revolution, but political revolution in itself is unable to realise this radically new structure."<sup>3</sup>

The first task with which the proletariat is confronted—the seizure of political power—largely derives from the past. As regards such prospects, I think it is insufficient to explain this merely by the non-classical road of development so far that classless genuine history appears in the form of a process the attainment of which in turn requires a preliminary stage, the transition period, i.e. a continuous deferment in time of the practical solution of the paradoxical problem of theory. The problem formulated before in its paradoxical nature is unacceptable to the theory of proletarian revolution, this is prompted also by the irresistible march of events to bring about, with the aid of its dialectical method, amidst the emphatic discontinuity of a radical change of régime, also a factor which represents the mediation, the continuity, intended to overcome the paradox. That is how fundamental significance is lent to the tenet—rising somewhat to meta-his-

<sup>3</sup> Heller, Ágnes: "Elmélet és gyakorlat az emberi szükségletek szempontjából" (Theory and practice from the point of view of human requirements). *Új Írás*, 1972/4, p. 106. — "Theorie und Praxis: ihr Verhältnis zu den menschlichen Bedürfnissen." In: Lukács, Heller, Fehér u.a. *Individuum und Praxis. Positionen der "Budapester Schule."* Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 1974, p. 28.



torical heights—concerning party and class consciousness, especially ascribed class consciousness, a tenet which, by its cognitive nature, serves as a basis for the evolution of the new society.

As Engels put it, it is not a question of what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment considers as its aim. It is a question of what the proletariat is, and what, in accordance with this being, it will historically be compelled to do. This cardinal position is Mészáros's natural starting-point in his work on class consciousness, which stresses the importance of the distinction between contingent and necessary class consciousness in Marxist theory. Indicative of the importance of the passage quoted above is that György Lukács used it to head the chapter "Class consciousness" in his *History and Class Consciousness*.

Mészáros writes about Lukács's interpretation as follows: "Finally, we have to draw attention to the often-ignored fact that Lukács's famous distinction between 'ascribed' or 'imputed' class consciousness and 'psychological' consciousness has its origin in the Marxian idea which opposed true or necessary class consciousness—one 'ascribed to the proletariat' in virtue of its being 'conscious of its historical task' (as Marx writes a few lines further on, in the passage quoted at the beginning of this paper)—to the contingency of 'what this or that proletarian, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment considers as its aim.' (Even terminologically, the similarity is striking: Marx uses the term *zuschreiben*, and Lukács its closest synonym, *zurechnen*: which both mean 'to ascribe', 'attribute' or 'impute'. (Thus, Lukács' distinction between 'ascribed' and 'psychological' class consciousness is a reformulation of one of the basic tenets of the Marxian system" (p. 67).

In his afore-mentioned work Lukács often refers to the concept of "ascribed consciousness" but, despite his profound observations he ultimately fails to define it more precisely. In one of his well-known self-critical mani-

festations looking back from 1967, near upon the end of his life, Lukács himself formulated critical viewpoints concerning his book written in 1923. Starting already from preparations for his *Ontology*, Lukács found his earlier concept of practice to be narrow and consequently of a distorting character:

"All I have failed to notice is that if the concept of practice has no basis in real practice, in labour as its primordial form and model, then its over-straining is bound to change over into idealistic contemplation. Thus I intended to distinguish the right and true class consciousness of the proletariat from any kind of empiristic 'public opinion poll' (this term was of course not yet in use at the time) and to attach to it undeniable practicable objectivity. But I could arrive only at the formulation of an 'ascribed' class consciousness ('zugerechnet' Klassenbewusstsein). I thought what Lenin says in *What Is to Be Done?*, namely that, as opposed to spontaneously evolving trade-unionist consciousness, socialist class consciousness is brought to the workers 'from without', that is, 'from outside of the economic struggle, from outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers.' What had therefore arisen for me according to my intention, and for Lenin from the proper Marxist analysis of a practical movement within the totality of society, in my description became a purely mental result and thereby something contemplative by nature. The changing of ascribed consciousness into revolutionary practice—objectively—appears here as a wonder."<sup>4</sup>

These lines by Lukács indicate perhaps that ascribed consciousness is not at all a concept of as uniform, unequivocal and constant a character, not a principle considered to be so firmly endorsed by self-evident agreement in Marxist thought as is suggested by

<sup>4</sup> Georg von Lukács: *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*.



Mészáros's related position. It is natural for the categories under discussion to have essential common traits in the thinking of Marx, Lenin (whom Mészáros leaves unmentioned here) and Lukács. It is part of the proper interpretation of the question, however, also that one should present the differences in their approach. I think that this latter element in Mészáros's treatment is given less emphasis than needed. Here the Marxist ideas therefore take the form of a system in which an originally sound and appropriately differentiated theoretical position seems to have a superimposed layer of reformulations most perfectly adjusted to it in the course of time, works built upon one another, overlapping one another, in accordance with one another, regarding the problems they pose as well as their conceptual apparatus. In a sense, of course, this is quite true, but it is so in consequence of the structure of Marxist ideology, of its monolithic nature which continues to this day. For all that, however, Marxism has a history, and this historicity barely appears in Mészáros's way of approach, at least compared to my expectations. I think this is at the back of the fact that, as a clarification of certain matters of principle, Mészáros concentrates first of all on the reconstruction of Marx's related comments on the given question or rather on their verification by confronting them with certain lines in bourgeois philosophy and ideology.

It will also lead on to the next problem if we revert briefly to the Marxist interpretation of class consciousness. It may seem that, discussing Mészáros's work, I pay too close attention to Lukács, but I think a comparison between the two as regards their perception of the problem is important also for the following reasons. Mészáros put at the head of a volume of papers he edited—which also contains precisely his recently republished essay on class consciousness—a few lines by György Lukács from a 1970 letter to him: "The question you raised, concerning the determination of class con-

sciousness today, is fundamentally the same as the real analyses of the inherent nature of present-day capitalism: a task Marxism has failed to realize so far. What is quite certain, though, is that those direct economic motivational forces which used to determine both content and direction of spontaneous class consciousness have radically changed—and greatly weakened—in their immediate impact. On the other hand, the concept of non-spontaneous, general class consciousness, introduced by Lenin, presupposes an adequate analysis of the contemporary epoch."<sup>5</sup>

The views of the old Lukács are complex but not inconsistent. Compared to his aforementioned comments on his conceptions formulated in the 1920s, these more recent conclusions which he arrived at not much later maintain the Marx's position with more universal validity—that is why Mészáros, concurring, could design them as a keynote of that earlier volume. Lukács's and Mészáros's views of the problem are identical or similar on many essential points. The outlook that appears from Lukács's edged formulation prevails to a large extent and is present in Mészáros's present work as well. The problem plaguing me is in a sense overly general, and I know full well that it is of little use at this elementary level: what in fact is the subject of Marxism, more explicitly, of Marx's social theory? Yet I cannot neglect this question which is here necessarily formulated too boldly. What bothers me is the easy identification of the examination of society and class consciousness, and particularly of the theory of this consciousness, furthermore the given treatment of the actual values of "spontaneous" and "non-spontaneous" in Lukács's lines, likewise I am often unable to decide whether Mészáros is guided by his interest in the history of ideas or in an analysis of reality when he discusses the division of labour, class consciousness

<sup>5</sup> *Aspects of History and Class Consciousness*. Ed. by István Mészáros. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p. VII.



and other doctrines held by Marx which constitute reality while emphasizing their validity with a criticism, thought to be timely of vulgar economism and voluntarism.

I think such a dilemma ought not to arise of necessity; in the complex mechanisms and inner logic of theoretical work, concentration on both theory and reality *ab ovo* involves many points of view which are raised on the other side. An examination of Marx's doctrines by Mészáros, however, implies the cultivation of a special field of social philosophy where the action mostly held to be satisfactory to this day as a consideration on the merits of a given social problem is the taking into account of the founding father's relevant ideas. How does this problem present itself in Mészáros's discussion? The best way is to take a look at the paper on human rights in his volume. The practical and theoretical importance of the subject, its political and historico-philosophical significance, has not diminished one iota since the author formulated his views on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Mészáros emphasises that the question of human rights is of particular importance for Marxism. This exceptionally great interest derives from the aspect of the ideological struggle: "The legitimization of a socialist alternative to the capitalist mode of social interchange cannot bypass the issue of human rights" (p. 206). Marxism, however, cannot regard as adequate the given forms of manifestation of human rights: "The point that directly concerns us here is that this insistence on the 'rights of man' could not be more than a formal-legislative postulate ultimately devoid of content" (p. 198). All the same: "There can be no aprioristic opposition between Marxism and human rights. . . . The object of Marx's criticism is not human rights as such but the use of the alleged 'rights of man'" (p. 200). "Marx's principal objection concerns the fundamental contradiction between the 'Rights of Man' and the reality of capitalist society" (p. 197).

"The sore point for liberal theory is that Marx emphatically rejects the view that the right to private property . . . constitutes the foundation of all human rights" (p. 201). Mészáros outlines in detail Marx's well-known ideas on the conditions and prospects of human emancipation, of the proletariat as a universal class, of the superseding of the state and the end of division of labour as foundations of the genuine enforcement of human rights, when the self-realisation of individuals need not be in conflict, and then he declares: "Under such circumstances . . . the question of enforcing rights (be they human rights) cannot and need not arise" (p. 210). Therefore, until the sectional determinations of a divided society are overcome, the totality of human rights is an "abstract idea" unrealisable in its own form, "only proclamation," "mere postulate," "juridical illusion," "ideological rhetoric." "Socialism must prove its superiority to capitalism precisely in overcoming the contradictions of partiality by releasing the suppressed energies of human fulfilment for all individuals" (p. 206).

The author's view is a clear formulation, true to principle, of the most characteristic line of Marxist thinking. It is clear also that this paper is not about human rights but specifically about Marx's philosophical interpretation of these rights. The object of the piece is therefore to gather from Marx's contemporary analyses general guidance of principle concerning the given and, as it happens, still persisting question. This means—and it is in a sense both a virtue and a weakness of this approach—that this paper could have been written, say, fifty years ago or in the future. The problematic nature of this attitude is directly presented by the text itself. Since it deals with the question at length in the manner described above, it concludes with the following short paragraph unrelated to the antecedents: "But so long as we are where we are, and so long as the 'free development of individualities' lies as far ahead of us as it does,



the realization of human rights is and remains a concern of paramount importance for all socialists" (p. 210).

This conclusion demonstrates that, no matter what profundities and essential dimensions are indicated by the principles that make up Marx's doctrines, if we fix them as ready-made and immediate starting-points, it turns out that—like any other concept or theory—they prove to be devoid of meaning. In my view, the train of thoughts on human rights ought actually to start where the author has abandoned it, for the truly interesting and important work follows thereafter: the elaboration of ways of mediation between reality and theoretical generalisations in view of the contradictory unity of the avatars of human rights, their political projection, social background and ultimate philosophical prospects. As Marx himself stressed: the world has long dreamt its dreams: the task must be the examination of how these can be unravelled from the given conditions. The author's mode of discussion makes it appear as if, here as earlier, when it comes to human rights, Marxism as a homogeneous ideology had to reckon only with the bourgeois world of ideas. In other words, once again no voice is given here to a critical self-reflection which might scrutinise the different possible ramifications, determinations, ideological aspects and historical prospects of the Marxist or Marx-based interpretation of human rights.

Such difficulties lend importance to recent realist and critical theoretical work by Tamás Földesi.<sup>6</sup> Földesi outlines different schools of thought. Comparing Western and Eastern points of view, he understandably concentrates attention and critical comments on the ideas that prevail in Eastern Europe to this day, i.e. a conceptual approach to human rights which Földesi calls the monolithic view. Carefully weighing the foremost

principles emphasized in the monolithic conception, he points to the contradictions involved in them. On the one hand, the monolithic view regards socialist society as the political formation in which, essentially, human rights are truly realised for the first time—in contrast to their assurance in bourgeois societies which at best is merely formal. It should be noted that human rights appear in this interpretation as definitely positive values in themselves, and the absence of their appropriate implementation is attributed purely to the impotence of bourgeois society that cannot assure them. On the other hand, however, an idea of the discontinuity of the human rights of citizens is an emphatic principle of the monolithic view and this basically contradicts the above view in an objective sense. Bourgeois societies needed these rights in principle as fundamental rights, in the new society, however, the function of human rights, ultimately the entire basis of their institution, is changing since the state of the proletarian dictatorship combines, as it were, the interests of individuals, social strata and of the whole of society. The critical discussion of these notions is made possible by a rational principle which Földesi defines as follows: "As against the discontinuous interpretation of the monolithic approach, I am of the opinion that, although the human rights of citizens were born during the evolution of bourgeois society and, as a matter of course, firmly bear the mark of their origin, their essence is not bourgeois particularity but universality, a universal humanity that is manifest in them."

On the basis of the above notions of human rights, in connection with the "object" of Marxism, we finally have to tackle another inevitable problem. This is the discussion of an East European political and social reality called—for want of a better term—"existing socialism" within the range of vision of a Marxist thinker. The papers written by Mészáros do not discuss the theoretical problems of socialist societies. First of all, it must be taken into account, of

<sup>6</sup> Földesi, Tamás: "Meditáció az emberi jogokról" (Meditations on the rights of man). *Világosság*, 1988/4, pp. 201–205.



course, that this is not his subject. Given the complexity of Marxist philosophy, however, I suppose that, if this subject were a coherent, organic part of the author's social philosophy and outlook, his points of view would be bound to come up, in given instances, between the lines in the book under review. Since, however, they do not come up there (and I cannot here consider the possibility that he has published on the subject without me being aware of it), the absence of the subject from the current discussion can presumably be interpreted as meaning that Mészáros presumes that it is not in Eastern Europe that Marx's ideas will come true. Far be it from me to express an objection to this approach. In a direct sense, I altogether agree with Mészáros when he argues: "We cannot help seeing that the proletariat did not succeed so far in the historical task of transcending itself" (p. 106). I do not think, however, that it is simply a question of the truth of only this statement. Beyond that is a more serious dilemma confronting a considerable part of the Marxist view of the world. Marxist theory, on the one hand, tries to exempt itself from the vagaries of existing socialism and, on the other, as a critique of actual capitalist society it operates in a different and equally undisturbed sphere. The theory of "self-transcending" retires to the level of an abstraction from where it can, apparently with ease but in reality at the cost of great difficulties, demonstrate its strength and ability to link up with social practice. As I have already pointed out, I think that Mészáros's argument implies a tendency of the theory to rigidify at such an abstract level: the modes and levels of the contacts between socialist and capitalist society and the theory, however, involve so varied and manifold a complex of questions which I can indicate here only as an ideologico-philosoph-

ical problem perceived through the author's work, a problem calling for further consideration and left quite open.

It is not possible here to follow through all of Mészáros's ideas. It would be mere verbiage to try somehow to sum up his argument. One can only meditate on the theme of *habent sua fata libelli* extruding it to ideas and authors. The shaping of the philosopher's position and role is a true reflection of the society he was born into, no matter whether, to use the categories of our part of the world, the thinkers drift on the waters of officialdom, the opposition or even neutrality. He who wants to chart Hungarian philosophical life, will need a world map. In our philosophical self-knowledge such a world map is not in use in these days. If it is, some thinkers will occasionally invite criticisms held to be excellent work, while the career of others—like that of Mészáros—falls entirely out of the sphere of domestic philosophical interest. I well know that colleagues of the same age as the author find their pens stopped by very different motives when they consider each other's work. Characteristically, the only Hungarian appraisal of Mészáros, the only one of its kind I know, was written outside our frontiers. According to Tibor Hanák<sup>7</sup> the historian of philosophy, Mészáros's "works of neo-Marxist conception" are considerable and their influence can be said to have reached international dimensions. Studying Mészáros's works would therefore in any event be highly instructive lessons and bring theoretical profits also to Hungary.

ZOLTÁN FRENYÓ

<sup>7</sup> Hanák, Tibor: *Az elmaradt reneszánsz* (The renaissance that failed to turn up), Munich, 1979. pp. 378.



## THE AGE OF KING MATTHIAS—SEEN FROM CONSTANTINOPLE

Roderick Conway Morris: *Jem, Memoirs of an Ottoman Secret Agent*  
(Bantam Press, 1988)

I met Roderick Conway Morris in Budapest a couple of years ago. In those weeks when Margaret Thatcher was visiting Hungary, the BBC sent a team to Budapest to gather historical background-material in on-the-spot reports on the subsequent highly timely events. One of the subjects was the Chain Bridge which was chosen not only because its designer and builder Tierney and Adam Clark established a connection with the British Isles but perhaps even more so because this great idea came true of Count István Széchenyi's became a symbol of the reform age. Indeed, Hungarians are again beginning to dream of a symbol of that kind. Another subject was Buda Castle, the ancient Royal Palace which was so to speak the epitome of the whole of Hungarian history, from the time King Béla IV, the "Second Founder of State" had the first stone walls erected after the Mongol invasion until the Regent, Miklós Horthy was removed from there after the Nazi take-over in 1944. The palace now houses the National Gallery and other museums.

Roderick Conway Morris was here as researcher for the BBC, and he was most interested in the Royal Palace. He was much moved when he heard how the archeologist László Zolnay had found a cemetery of statues by some divine inspiration, and excavated the Gothic statues of the palace of King Sigismund's age. Roderick Conway Morris studied the renaissance carvings of the palace of King Matthias's age, that sparkled in the warm red colour of Siklós marble in the museum in the south wing of the earth for five centuries. After finished with the reports, he stayed on in Budapest for a

while. I learnt later that he had studied the relics of King Matthias' age.

His purpose became clear recently: Roderick Conway Morris's *Jem* which has just been published, is set in the 15th century, and the Hungary of Matthias Corvinus was important at that time, one could just about describe it as a great power. The book bearing the sub-title: "The Memoirs of an Ottoman Secret Agent" is astonishing and interesting reading, especially for Hungarians. We, here in Eastern-Central Europe, are used to look on the Ottoman empire and the Turkish expansion as a fight to the death between East and West, in which the Hungarian people were bled white. They survived but at the cost of lagging behind a luckier West by a century. This is obviously only part of the truth and, like any other which is created by the confrontation of ideologies and empires, does not contain the whole. Roderick Conway Morris endeavours to compensate this imbalance.

The blurb states that this work is based on documents in the Imperial Ottoman Archives. The characters are real persons figuring with their own names, and the events described are reflected in contemporary diplomatic despatches. The work amply bears out the justice of the claim. The concise documentary-novel only rarely gives way to the temptations of fiction—the power of facts brings it back to reality even in such cases. The complications of the succession to the throne which determined the fate of the Turkish Empire provide the historical background: after the death of Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror in 1481, his popular and talented younger son, Jem—whom the Sultan



had wished to be his successor—rebels against the lawful heir Bayazid, but his army is defeated during the struggle for the throne and he is forced to escape. Jem, divested of power roams about abroad and his very life is a threat to the Sultan Bayazid II. The Sultan orders that he be found and brought back to the Porte. The hero and narrator of the novel, "secret agent" Barak, on behalf of the Sultan travels the length and breadth of the Mediterranean; he gets as far as France, to Rhodes, to Italy, to the Papal court and since he observes everything with the eyes of the Sultan's slave and Mahomet's follower, we get a most interesting picture. We learn that the Sultan is a wise and sober empire-builder even if he had some of his principal advisers beheaded and thrown in the Bosphorus when they became unreliable. According to Barak, Christian Europe is not a superior world thanks to the liberated spirit of the Renaissance but a luxurious, sensual Sodom, doomed to destruction. No doubt, this is an astonishing picture, and looking at it from the distance of five hundred years, one could hardly claim that posterity verified it. After

the pretender Jem dies in exile, most probably by poison given to him by some adversary of the Hungarian King to prevent him from getting to Buda and becoming a decisive instrument in the hands of King Matthias, the secret agent Barak finally turns back into a sea captain and dies in a battle which is fought by the Sultan's navy near Italy.

When I read the concluding passages of the book, I was convinced that a certain poetic licence was at work when the author let the agent of the Sultan die as a hero on board of his galley. But astonishing as it may be, there is no poetic licence there. This was the truth, as I learned from the author. Barak, in fact, died in a naval battle. He was known and revered by the Turks as a hero, his activity as an agent was totally unknown, until Roderick Conway Morris found the secret documents in the Istanbul archives. The fact that the naval hero was a secret agent earlier, may surprise many a historian of the Ottoman Empire as well.

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

## THE TWILIGHT OF FOLK MUSIC

Bálint Sárosi: *Folk Music. Hungarian Musical Idiom*. Corvina, 1986. 188 pp.  
(In English)

Eötvös College—a name to conjure with to this day in Hungary, though it was more than forty years ago that this élite teacher and scholar training institution was destroyed for base political reasons. Generations of linguists, of students of literature and philosophy, classical scholars and historians came to maturity in this institution named after József Eötvös, the great novelist and visionary of education, by his son the geophysicist Loránd Eötvös, the founder of the college, whose name the University of

Budapest was to take up later. Anyone who had a name in scholarship in the first half of this century was either a teacher at Eötvös College, or a student or perhaps even disciple of some teacher there.

Zoltán Kodály who was also an ethno-musicologist of note was perhaps the college's most inspired teacher. One might imagine that the students of the College all clustered around Kodály and that following in his footsteps they were all future ethno-musicologists. But the truth is that most of his disciples



came from other institutions, at Eötvös College he had only two pupils: the composer András Szöllősy, and the ethno-musicologist Bálint Sárosi.

Bálint Sárosi's *Folk Music, Hungarian Musical Idiom* is a direct continuation of Zoltán Kodály's 1937 *Magyar Népzene* (Folk Music of Hungary, in English 1971). Much of that book has lost nothing of its timeliness, and Sárosi was even able to take many of the score examples directly from Kodály. But given the large body of new research and newly evaluated results, many parts of the work had to be updated, and often the basic concept had to be reconsidered.

When Kodály published his book, not much had appeared in the field. With the exception of Béla Bartók's 1924 *A Magyar Népdal* (Hungarian Folk Music, in English 1931), there had appeared only papers on individual aspects. Most significant of these were again those by Bartók and Kodály. Since then, seven large volumes of the encyclopedic *Magyar Népzene Tára* (Corpus Musicae Popularis Hungaricae) have been published: "Children's Games"; "Calendar Customs' Songs"; "Wedding Songs I-II"; "Pairing Songs"; "Laments"; and "Folk Song Types I-II." Earlier folk music collectors had used wax and the recordings were of poor quality. Since then, thousands of technically perfect tape recordings have been made and processed for issue in the various forms that modern technology has given to music lovers. The technical obstacles to widespread familiarity with Hungarian folk music have been eliminated.

In 1969, Bálint Sárosi gave a series of talks on Hungarian Radio with the collective title of *Zenei anyanyelvünk* (Our Musical Vernacular). The title alludes to Zoltán Kodály's aim that from birth, or even prenatally, children should be capsulated by the sounds of Hungarian music. Just like a child first learns his native language and only years later a foreign language, Kodály said, so the groundwork has to be laid in acquiring a musical vernacular of one's home and only later

should one be exposed to foreign musical idiom. Kodály failed: his radical purism in music teaching did not bear fruit. Music imported from Western Europe and the United States cannot be blamed for all the difficulties and failures in Hungarian musical training, but it is nevertheless true that traditional music cannot compete with strident and aggressive pop. By the time Bálint Sárosi started his radio series, folk music was conspicuously on the defensive.

Radio, television, record players, and tape recorders produced music around the clock several times over but only minutes were devoted to precious folk music. There was anxiety that the unusual sounds of authentic folk music recordings that Sárosi used to illustrate his lectures would meet with nothing but derisive laughter.

In such an atmosphere, it took courage to even start a series of talks on the subject. But instead of the predicted indifference or even rejection it met with implicit recognition. In the following years, folk music found new support. Singers, instrumentalists, and ensembles sprang up, the dance house movement, inspired by the tradition of communal dancing in the villages, spread like prairie fire.\* Though Sárosi was never part of that movement, his programme and writings supported those young people who wished to put folk music on the stage and introduce eager young audiences to an old and yet new sound.

*Hungarian Musical Idiom*, which is based on the radio series, is divided into three parts. The first, "Discovering folk music," describes the rising interest in folk music and the initiation and main results of field work. The second, "Why folk music is needed," discusses the occasions when village folk sing and make music. The third, "Instruments and their music," discusses the history, spreading popularity or disappearance of folk instruments, as well as the methods of how they are played.

\* NHQ 98



*The history and topography  
of folk music*

Sárosi's subject necessarily demands a historical overview. Hungarian folk songs were first written down just over two centuries ago. Through indirect sources, however, this musical tradition can be traced back many centuries. The span of two hundred years in which the musical notation of Hungarian folk songs existed is thus only a small fraction of the folk song tradition. The two centuries are, nevertheless, a good index for the history of folk songs, since it was in the seventeenth century that the new style of Hungarian folk songs was born and became popular. The main difference between the old and the new styles lay in their differing melodic structure. The old tunes had a descending structure. They began at a high pitch and gradually descended to the lowest point, the final note. This descending structure corresponds to the intonation of spoken Hungarian.

In contrast, the new style folk song has a convex structure, it starts with a low note and ascends to a high one, then returns to the initial lower note. This structure resembles that of western melodies. Yet the unquestionable foreign influence did not affect the mood as the characteristics of the old style were integrated into the new structure. The result was an unusually rich melodic treasure combining variations of texts and melodies. One of the offsprings of the new style was the *verbunkos* (recruiting tunes) whose original purpose was to persuade village lads to join the army. Growing beyond this role, the *verbunkos* evolved into entertaining dance music and became highly popular wherever Hungarians lived. *Verbunkos* melodies were arranged or otherwise used by the classical Viennese composers, primarily by Haydn and Beethoven.

The *csárdás* became the most popular kind of Hungarian dance tune. It too grew out of the new style and soon dominated village dances. It was played by village groups, called

Magyar bands, or, both in towns and villages, by Gypsy bands.

People all over the world are still hopelessly misinformed about the nature of the relationship between Hungarian and Gypsy music. Liszt is largely responsible. He believed that the popular music which he arranged, for example, in his Hungarian rhapsodies, is genuine Hungarian Gypsy music. The Gypsies always played the popular music of the host nation amongst whom they lived. In Rumania, they played Rumanian music, in Hungary, Hungarian, and so on. The Gypsies have, and have always had, their own music, but it is not identical with Hungarian folk music or folksy music composed for cafés or operettas which people imagine to be Gypsy music.

Another approach to folk music analysis, one which is closely related to the historical one, is the study of the geographic distribution of folk music. Melodies related to the old style of this music have been found in the eastern parts of Asia, amongst the Chermis and the Tartars. Many of the tragic stories of folk ballads stem from the west, some arrived here together with their melodies. These ballads have a medieval origin. Another type of western and medieval melody which is still popular all over Hungary is that of the swineherd's dances. These are considered a characteristic expression of the Hungarian temperament. They are an off-spring of the goliard songs in the mood of François Villon. Their Latin texts always opened with the wish to die in the tavern: *Meum est propositum in popina mori*.

*Popular customs as expressed by songs*

Mockery is a favoured component of the peasant tradition. Often even sacred and respected notions are ridiculed. Parodies of Nativity plays exist and even of laments. Melodies can also be parodied, but in Hungary the serious texts and their distorted versions were usually sung to the same tune. Thus, the tune itself does not always indicate



the song's function, or finer changes in mood, doing so only when heard together with the text.

Popular customs as expressed in the songs reveal all the emotional ambivalences that govern life from childhood to old age, from birth to death.

The danse macabre was of medieval literature and painting. A funeral dance in Hungary is on record to have taken place in 1683. The man acting the role of the deceased had to lie down in the middle of the room, his face was covered with a cloth, and he had to remain motionless while the mourners sang and slowly walked in a circle around him. After that, they gently raised him to his feet and danced with him, carrying the picture of the real deceased who lay in state.

This funeral dance evoking ancient beliefs is not only known in the three hundred years old notation. Ethnographers have found twentieth-century versions as well. But diverse variants also exist: a "deceased" is brought to a house where a wedding is celebrated. They try to bring him back to life using obscene talk, disguised encouragement to the groom to do his duty in the night ahead.

The custom of *regöls* is a fertility charm extended to the whole household. In the last week of the year, groups of young men go from house to house carrying unusual instruments home-made just for this occasion: a stick with a chain that is beaten against the ground and a *köcsögduda*, or friction drum, made from an earthenware pot covered with a pig bladder and a reed stuck through the middle. A growling sound is produced by rubbing the reed. They sing their wish that the host and his family enjoy good grain harvest, fertile hens, geese and that the young should find their mates. The *regös* join in song the lad and lass meant for each other.

It is truly a miracle that customs such as *regöls* have survived to this day, remembering all the troubles the rural population experienced, the countless times when they had to flee their burnt-down and ravaged

homes, resettling elsewhere. But when they did so, they passed traditions on to their children and grandchildren.

Wars were not the only trouble, religious intolerance also had to be survived. In 1552, Gáspár Heltai, the Transylvanian Calvinist writer and printer expressed his indignation at the fact that Christmas, the celebration of the birth of Jesus, is followed by two holidays of Satan, *regöls* and carneval. Both Calvinists and Papists endeavoured to suppress customs where lads and lassies made merry together. One such profane event was the celebration of the summer solstice which included great bonfires, jumping over the fire, and singing love songs. As it is a feast common to many nations, this passionate, joyful celebration naturally has many similar features in various countries.

In their efforts to defend public morals, the Churches attacked the flower songs. It is difficult to understand why they so keenly opposed songs whose texts could be censured for no more than the fact that they dealt with girls symbolised by flowers. Such innocent courtship was persecuted in vain, the flower-for-girl metaphors always bloomed afresh. What is considered the earliest Hungarian flower song was recorded in the late 15th century and has only two lines:

*Virág, tudjad, tüled el kell mennem,  
És tetretted kell gyászba öltöznem*

(Flower, you know that we must part,  
And because of you I must wear mourning)

In more recent times, the term flower song is used in a narrower sense than earlier. It refers to songs of a non-peasant but anonymous origin that were recorded in the late 18th century in whose texts flowers and love are in some way connected. In Western Europe, they would be termed rococo songs, in Central Europe Biedermeier. Taking the texts as the only criterion, they add up to many hundreds among both old and new style folk songs.



*Collectors in the final hour*

Collectors and classifiers of Hungarian folk music have ever been anxious, two hundred years ago just as today, that the final hour is approaching before such songs are lost. Their sense of danger had a stimulating effect, though the justification of their apprehension must be doubted, since for two hundred years the final hour has been moving on with time, while the collection of folk songs has gathered speed and more efficient methods have come into being.

It is peculiar that for decades, or perhaps even centuries, learned music lovers and singing and music-making peasants lived side by side without the least knowledge of each other's music. Hungarians learned from Gottfried Herder that, just like other nations, Hungary, too, must have its own folk music. Only slowly did they apprehend how they could familiarize themselves with this music. It is characteristic that the term folk song had no equivalent in the Hungarian of the time, and there were appeals to people to collect *Volkslieder*. No one can doubt that the authentic folk tradition is approaching its end. Nevertheless, collectors still come across *trouvailles* like sung versions of ballads of which only the text had been recorded, and that more than a hundred years ago.

Two writers were in a position to record both text and music of all the songs they knew and which they could sing. One was Ádám Pálóczi Horváth who, around the year 1800, recorded 450 songs, adding that a few were his own work. The other collector was the great poet János Arany. In old age, in the 1870s, he recorded those songs which he knew and had sung as a young man. He, too, composed a few tunes of his own.

Ádám Pálóczi Horváth was of a strongly political turn of mind, a passionate patriot and hostile to the Habsburg dynasty. His collection contains early 18th century and earlier *kuruc* songs, patriotic songs connected with a series of rebellions against the Habs-

burgs culminating in the wars of Ferenc Rákóczi II. His own compositions included a series of arias about various stages of the Napoleonic wars. They are of a lively rhythm and with ironic lyrics. They should perhaps be called historic chansons; Pálóczi Horváth's irony did not spare Napoleon nor the generals of the Emperor Francis, nor even the *levé en masse* of Hungarian nobles which Napoleon soldiers put to flight in a single attack.

The largest and most valuable part of János Arany's collection consists of songs that he learned as a child from peasants, or which he heard at college in Debrecen. Zoltán Kodály, who published Arany's collection in 1952, remarked with some disappointment that of the more than one hundred and fifty melodies not one is of the old folk song style. There are all the more communal songs of German origin.

In an autobiographic poem, Arany gives a splendid account of the occasions when, as a student and a shy bookworm, he had to overcome his inhibitions to join in the students' roaring communal singing. With similar empathy, he mentioned, in other poems, the dances of village lads or shepherds playing their pipe. He even noticed that the sound of the pipe was coupled with a second melody hummed by the player. Sárosi gives a scholarly account of this unusual double melody by pipe players. His is the first discussion of the subject since Arany's poem of a hundred and twenty years ago.

Arany and other poets of his time held mournful merry-making to be the most characteristic expression of Hungarian feeling. The description of national character is of course something which has never been done in a credible manner neither in the last century nor in the twentieth. The mingling of gaiety and mourning is a generally valid psychological paradox, not, as Arany would have it, a national trait.

Poets of old and new have been associated with folk song themes music. The reverse is also true. Poems in a folksy manner became



part of the treasury of folk song. Tunes were added, either composed or else the words came to be associated with an older melody. This has most often happened to be verses of Sándor Petőfi. As these sung poems became more popular, they also underwent certain changes. Peasant singers would amend the texts and melodies according to their own tastes. In principle, scholars reject these amended versions restoring the poet's original wording. In comparing Petőfi's poems with their folk song variants, it should be noted that the singers often gave evidence of an instinctive mastery of prosody and diction when making their amendments.

Sárosi also contributes reminiscences from his own field trips. One such journey took him to Northern Hungary where, in 1959, he taped an elderly woman singing a love song of a break-up and farewell. In the middle of her performance she broke down crying. Later, she told that she had learned the song as a small girl from her older brother. The old wounds broke open again: her brother had sung the song that night outside the house where the girl he had loved, lived and all the villagers remembered the sad love story that had become ancient history.

Another memory Sárosi relates is of a young mother he asked what lullaby she sang to her child. The woman replied that she sang softly, all kinds of songs, but most often the *csárdás* that goes: *Piros kancsó, piros bor...* (Red jug, red wine...) Which only goes to show that in early childhood, when babies cannot yet speak, it is not the text that matters but the tone of voice, the sense of familiarity and security that lull a child to sleep.

Lullabies in the folk manner were written by the great composers of the classic and romantic music. Ethnomusicologists have shown that there are many other types of

communication with children, beyond rhythmic text recital and the singing of tunes. Besides lullabies and pacifying songs, there are songs and verses to clap or dance to, to wash one's hair to, to bathe to, to stand up to, to walk to, to call out to the sun with, or to ask for rain; there are sounds imitating animals, the ringing of bells, the whooshing of a mill, the sputtering of a train; and there are ditties for riding on someone's knee, riding the swing, and many more. Both text and tune, if there is one, differ in these ditties that accompany motions: they can be varied, expanded or condensed, or combined with a text of an originally different character.

Lines from popular hits of fifty years ago, and long hence forgotten, sometimes surface in the songs of village children at play. There is evidence of multiple adaptations of foreign material in these songs.

Folk songs are in an odd situation in Hungary today. A tradition faces the last stages of decline, ample variety is sinking into oblivion, internationally respected methods of music training are negated by the failure of singing teaching in schools.

What Sárosi presents is a preserved past which is, however, merely stored in the vaults of a museum. A mounted bird does not lay eggs, and a blown egg cannot be hatched by either a broody hen or an incubator. But hold on a moment! Such biological truths are no longer fully valid. Genetic engineers single-mindedly assault yesterday's facts and it could well happen that tomorrow a small fragment of an eggshell will suffice to revive an extinct species. But even if such miracles should happen, there is no analogous or metaphorical hope that the music of extinct cultures can be given new life through cloning.

BALÁZS VARGHA



# ARTS

## SILKWORM—WILD-FOWL—AFTER-IMAGES

Aranka Hübner has been one of the generals of the revolution that took place in Hungarian textiles, which in 1968 broke through the front line of Brezhnevian cultural policies. Hungarian textile art was in synchrony with the international New Textile movement, but like the best exponents of Hungarian Live Textile, Hübner found her roots in the traditions of painting.

Hübner's retrospective exhibition in Budapest's Műcsarnok embraces two decades of her work and is displayed in three rooms, following three cycles. The first presents the cycle of monotypes, printed upon pure silk with textile dye, using various chemical techniques which have given her panel pictures radically different colour effects to those achieved by painters. In an interview she once told me: "I'd like to catch the mood, or rather the behaviour, the essence of fire, of water, of fog, of the rocks." Paradoxically, she does so through organic abstraction, in which the impulse always comes from the inorganic. These monocolour pictures, sensitive in mood, call for the skilled brushwork of action painting. *Blue Triptych* (1972) is consistently abstract; the strange, green *Dream of a Garden* (1970) may in fact render a real landscape, if one were to enter its spirit properly, while the winged male figure of the rusty *Icarus* (1974) is pure mythology, in a wash of patches and shades.

Hübner's later, folded, embossed juxtapositions of pieces of silk could best be

compared to montage or collage. Here she has already turned colourist, in her own manner, though she eschews stridency, with the few exceptions proving the rule. *Two Surfaces* (1976) still uses pure, snow-white silk, treated like an open book viewed from the front. *Joint II* (1976) is a folded, though not glued, collage, with narrow white and orange, or rather flesh-pink silk rectangles at right angles, in the form of parquet flooring, while *Above the Clouds* (1976) for Hübner almost counts as constructivist. But the basic geometric idea is sharply broken by the unexpected trills of drapery motifs. The perpendicular oblong is filled almost to the top by a system of unicoloured bourette foldings, only to have the rainbow of grey, yellow, lilac, and magenta of the uppermost, narrowest, strip prevail all the more loudly.

Her reliefs of bourette pleating revert to her earlier silk paintings which transmit the inorganic world. She irons the pleats of the ecru material so that it is as creased as a pleated skirt. These plaits imitate the tectonics of geological formations in parallels, in concentric circles and in concentric curves, at first with simple concision and later in a growing complexity (*Petrification*, 1976, *Segment*, 1982). These bourette reliefs then start expanding more and more boldly into the third dimension (this was the time when spatial textile appeared), as in the case of the mini textile folded in the shapes of a fan and a shell, *Improvisation* (1979). She went even



farther when creating large spatial objects by suspending them so as to make use of the force of gravity, such as *Nike* (1976), or some stone-crystal formation, or again a summary process, as for example in *Phases of a Relation* (1978).

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Concept art has been a godsend for Aranka Hübner, as her gentle irony, her critical sense and her inherent bent for banter, verging on farce, could all find their place in this trend. The technique of *International Women's Year* (1976) still places it among the frottages of pure-silk monotypes, with the artist's personal touch expressed on the surface by a vigorous dark ochre patch; yet this accelerated manner of performance already employs different requisites. The painting centres on a bunch of white artificial flowers, which could even be taken as a women's day present. But on the two vertical sides of the frame dangle a pair of suspenders, with white machine lace, the kind usually put on the shelves of a linen cupboard, glued above them. A few years ago Hungarian textile designers also discovered runner painting for themselves. Runner is the name of the cotton cloth which runs together with the printed material in the textile mill and which is usually thrown away as waste. Its random, haphazard informal pattern, however, provides a splendid basis for continuing this pattern in a painting. The runner paintings in this exhibition are the lyrical abstract *Fire!* (1968), *Bullet* (1988), and a large composition entitled *The Revelations of St John* (1986). But Aranka Hübner has also found a dirty grey runner (the colour of the field-grey army uniform in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire); as she put it, she could never have found anything uglier. This cotton cloth was saturated with chemicals to an extent which made it as rigid as artificial leather, preventing it from fraying when cut or ripped. Hübner stretched the material on a frame and cut windows and a gate into it, creating grey, suburban, nineteenth-century eclectic façades. Neglected,

depressing walls, including some totally denuded, since after the war some architects removed the ornaments that still remained on houses damaged by bombs thinking this would make reconstruction work cheaper and make them look more modern as well. This cycle was introduced by a dismal building in *Váci Road* (1988), the main street in one of Budapest's industrial quarters, and the house, split metastatically to provide a summary, as it were, in *Analysis* (1988), still with some elements recalling constructivistic abstract. The path led to *We Are Celebrating* (1988): here she has cut arched vaults into the coulisse of a house wall, put up crumpled shutters, imitated a dusty, cracked shop-window, and then decked the house with the Hungarian national flag and the red banner, even pinning on a badge of Eminent Worker for good measure, to mark the compulsory international holiday. These sociographicising front elevations went beyond the principles of conceptual art; they belong to non-fiction, one might say.

As with the entire Hungarian Live Textile movement, Aranka Hübner's is principally a painter's outlook. As I have mentioned already, she spans her textile on a stretcher as a painter does with his canvas—these are the panel pictures. It is no accident I have used so many art terms—organic abstract, collage, object, concept art, verism, and so on. Yet Hübner keeps aloof from the stubborn anti-material approach of object art, and in her disloyalty to industrial art she has remained faithful to the textile, to noble materials and to exquisite workmanship. She has never joined the textile-without-textile group, however strong its attraction might have been; she has adhered to the Laufer, the cotton cloth, the bourette, and above all, to pure silk. From this last she has woven a morbid mini textile *A Find from the Sixteenth Century—Ottoman-Turkish Empire* (1978), a silk bow-string. She has really earned the *Order of the Silkworm* (1986)—a concept of concepts, this cocoon suspended on a standard triangular rep silk ribbon.



Aranka Hübner made this mini textile herself, and she bestowed it upon herself, as the sole knight of the order.

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I found a crowd, almost a riot, unusual for a Budapest exhibition, at György Szemadám's display in Budapest's Danube Gallery. The majority of the visitors were strikingly young, as the painter, originally a self-taught artist, has become a legendary educator, first of adult amateurs, and for the past ten years of children, teaching them to paint and mould. The exhibition resembled a *Kunst und Raritätenkammer* of an aristocratic country house of the days before museums. Szemadám mounted his show jointly with the art-collector Ákos Vörösváry, who has brought along his antiques, and so the paintings have been put on show together with card-tables, kitchen utensils, folk-art objects, mounted reptiles, and so on.

Szemadám himself is a complex phenomenon. He is very fond of animals, and particularly of birds. For a time, he worked as a keeper at Budapest Zoo, and we, his friends, received New Year's photographic greeting cards in which he embraced a lion and a tiger with either arm. In 1971, he even mounted a picture exhibition with some fellow painters in the lion's cave. Publishers always welcome his books and scholarly studies written in literary style, and, as I have mentioned already, he teaches drawing. But over and above and above all these, he is a painter.

Ten years ago I wrote about Szemadám that with him everything is static, \* and this I can repeat today, but I could not repeat the other remark I made then, namely that he avoids tone intransigently. Today, Szemadám's painting is polyphonic, or rather dualistic, with nearly all his pictures marked by a metaphysical, almost benumbed stationariness, a vacuum, which is coupled with a minute, or indeed pedantic description of the

subject of the picture, charged with the profusion of a drawing of academic precision. He wields a fine brush, but overemphasises plasticity and renders atmosphere only rarely and then only through hints. His most personal artistic traits are glazing and a lavish use of lustrous laquering, as if one were to walk into an exhibition in the Paris Salon in olden days. He often alternates the realistic with the abstract, sometimes bringing the two simultaneously into his canvases. His elaborated, complex oil entitled *To Sigmund Freud with Compliments, on the Nature of Castration Complexes* produces an abstract and decorative design of signs and shadows of birds, side by side with a half-length female nude with a repugnantly masculine fade. Critics have termed him an iconoclast, since there are several cuts in more than one of his canvases, for instance in *Time Travellers at an Exhibition*. If he himself had not told me the story of the painting, I would have taken the knife marks for effects as well. In fact, however, Szemadám had bought a nineteenth-century painting of minor significance, presenting two little brothers dressed in period costumes, and painted his own abstract, minute picture as a background to them, in a style faithful to the custom of the time, as if non-figurative Szemadám painting had existed in the past century as well. The only character in the painting, *Arrow-winged Duck (Duck in the Water)* is a brightly-coloured mallard swimming from the left into a blueish stretch of water that fills the whole picture plane. A horizontal seam in the upper third serves to divide the surface of water, with the duck above the seam and its pale reflection below it. (In fact, the whole picture plane has been sewn onto a separate, unbleached holland.) Wild fowl also appear in the oil *Tern's Eye*, as if the profile of another bird had been blown up with the help of a rubber lens, and the canvas being predominated by the bird's expressive, shining eye, its dark-blue, feathered head is round and the base of its jewel-like, red bill meets the plumage along a sharp borderline. The peak of the bill and the full

\* NHQ 69.



arch of the bird's head do not feature in this horizontal oblong.

Szemedám's pictures, with their meta-physical approach and brilliant painterly merits, could easily serve as illustrations for an ornithological handbook. Indeed, after a detour to the lion's cave, this bird lover has returned to the birds.

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"Ilona Keserü is a classic of modern Hungarian art. She has always been one, ever since her first strokes of the brush," was how I concluded a review of her retrospective exhibition in 1984. Five years later she mounted her new paintings in Budapest's Ernst Museum. The most significant stage in this material is represented by her series of "after-images." "After-image," the artist writes in the preface to her catalogue, "is the spectacle flashing behind the closed lid, a coloured, metastatic image of the dark-and-light, light-and-shade phenomenon seen previously." Metastatic it really is, indeed to an extent that I associate it with the cross-section of the eye, with the iris, the retina, the ocular muscles, even though the painter perhaps never had anatomy in her mind. The eyelid is, of course, a recurring element in its near-reality.

*After-image 3: Treble Sun* (1985) is displayed in a black, floodlit recess built to Keserü's own design. The shape of the eye's horizontal O forms the borders of the picture plane, with a red-and-silver chess-board system in it, which immediately reminds one of Vasarely (who, like Keserü, was born in Pécs, Hungary), and yet this is something completely different. This is a spheric and tonal chess-board, in which the three green blue and silver drops appear like the bull's eye of a target. *After-image 8: Glitter*, on the opposite wall of the black cage, has a red-framed yellow base, including a mass of excited, curved strokes of the brush, in the manner of gesture painting. *After-image 2: Light Signals* (1984) is even more direct: in the inter-

secting, blueish-green curves in two diagonal, prolate ellipses drawn with an almost dry brush on a yellow ground against a dark background. I welcomed a second renaissance of Zen-Buddhist calligraphy; but one with an utterly different, biological sign. The After-images have not developed in any chronological order; the painter reverted to previous states many years later, for example in *Off* (1988), in a horizontal, broader form, as if beside a blue stream there were a gritty, red stream as well. Transversals, with yellow multiplexly meandering strokes of the brush. The black-and-grey frame (an eyelid?) already appears on a raised, stuffed linen, with indications of hills which would fit a mock-up. The painterly attitude of wandering into a relief-like third dimension has always been very close to Keserü in the past too. A related relief-map is *Warm Night* (1987), which again takes the eye for its theme, this time at night, in the dark, without light, not even the memory of electric illumination. This Keserü picture is a perfect model of blues and blacks, with a measure of lilac. Since no one has enjoined the painter to spend her life in the plane, in *After-image 10: Gesture in Space* (1986) she used an *objet trouvé*, the strange, hard double-pointed, blade-shaped corkscrew pods of the honey-locust on a blue, gentle-lined (eyeball) ellipse cut off on either side. But first she glazed the pods with red varnish-paint, making them as durable as the wood used in furniture.

The same pods, now employed in their straight form, are lined up like the ribs of the chest, in their unpainted brown state, but against a background in typical Keserü colours (*All*, 1986). This is not an after-image, though it is still typical; so too is *Outside-Inside* (1988), in which Keserü has used her favourite colours of the rainbow, then she slashed the canvas and rolled it up to display its brown reverse side, the inside, the very soul of the painting. *Homage to Ferenc Martyn* (1986-87), paying tribute to her real and intellectual master, is and is not an after-image; again it employs intensive col-



ARANKA HÜBNER:  
IMPROVISATION I., 1979.  
PLEATED FELT. 24 × 35 CM.



Imre Juhász

ARANKA HÜBNER:  
THE ORDER OF PURE SILK.  
1986. SILK AND SILK YARN.  
10,5 × 15 × 8 CM.







ARANKA HÜBNER: NATIONAL HOLIDAY. 1988. COLLAGE, 100 X 150 CM.

*Imre Juhász*

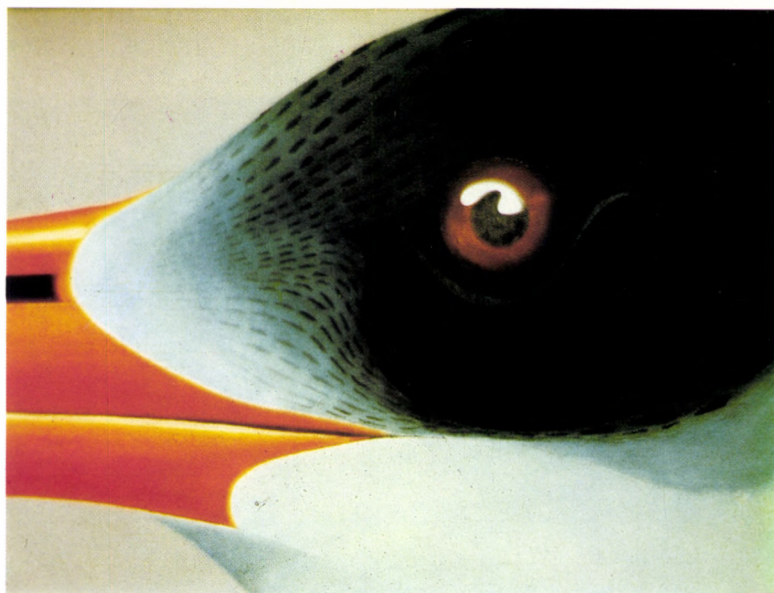




ARANKA HÜBNER: BLUE TRIPTICH. 1972. MONOTYPE, SILK, CENTRAL DETAIL 85 × 122 CM.  
*Savaria Museum, Szombatbely*



GYÖRGY SZEMADÁM:  
THE TERN'S EYE. 1984.  
OIL, CANVAS. 30 × 40 CM.



GYÖRGY SZEMADÁM:  
THE GREAT GAGGLING  
OF EGYPT. 1985.  
OIL, FIBRE,  
26 × 24 CM.







GYÖRGY SZEMADÁM: SINCERELY TO SIGMUND FREUD. 1987. OIL, CANVAS,  
APPLICATIONS. 100 X 75 CM.

László Lugosi-Lugo



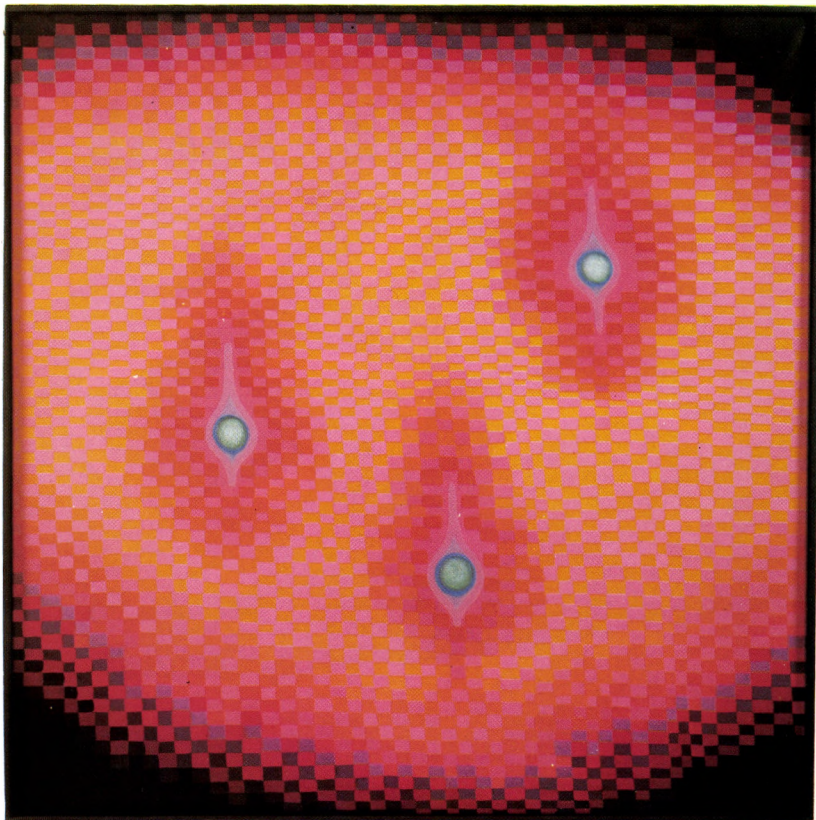


GYÖRGY SZEMADÁM: PERFORMANCE I; 1983. OIL, CANVAS, 46×38,5 CM.



ILONA KESERŰ:  
POST PICTURE 3.  
TRIPLE SUN. 1985.  
CANVAS OIL,  
120 X 120 CM.

*Private Collection*

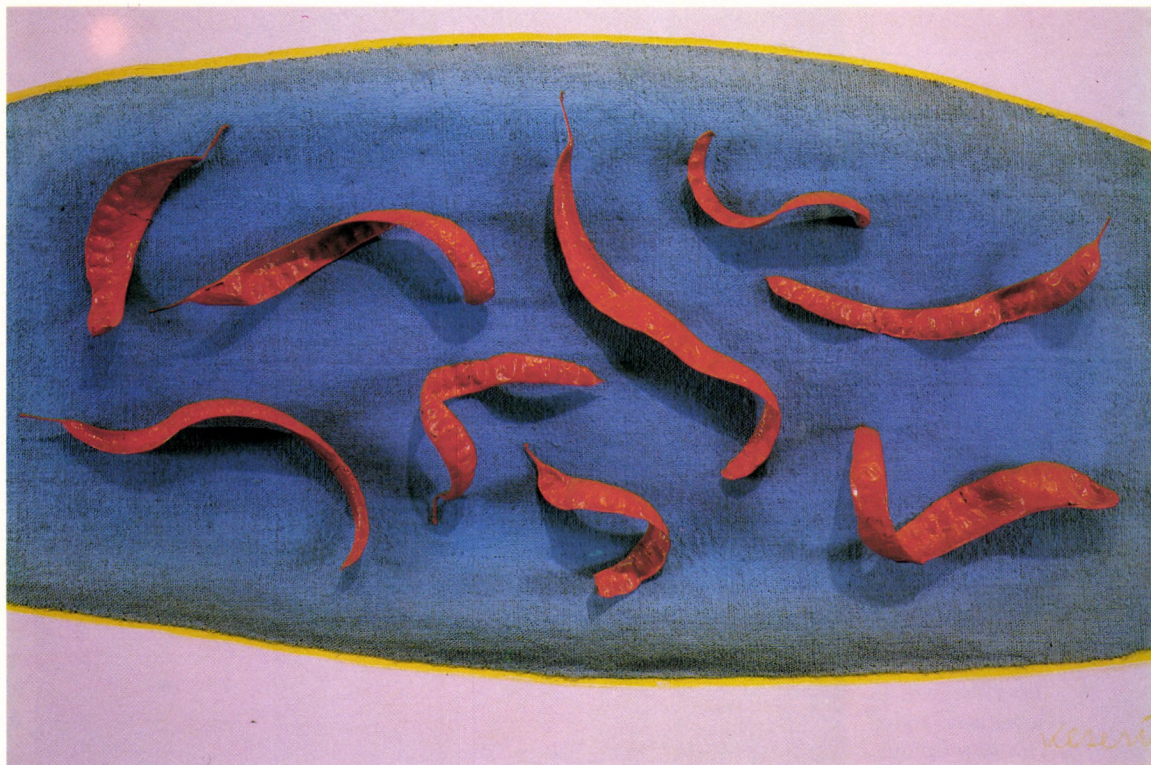


ILONA KESERŰ:  
POST PICTURE 8.  
FLASH. 1985.  
OIL, CANVAS.  
140 X 140 CM.

*Imre Juhász*







ILONA KESERŰ: POST PICTURE 10. MOVEMENTS IN SPACE. CANVAS RELIEF, OIL,  
MIXED TECHNIQUE, 1988. 60×90×8 CM



ILONA KESERŰ: POST PICTURE 11. OFF. 1988. OIL, CANVAS, 110×200 CM.

Imre Juhász





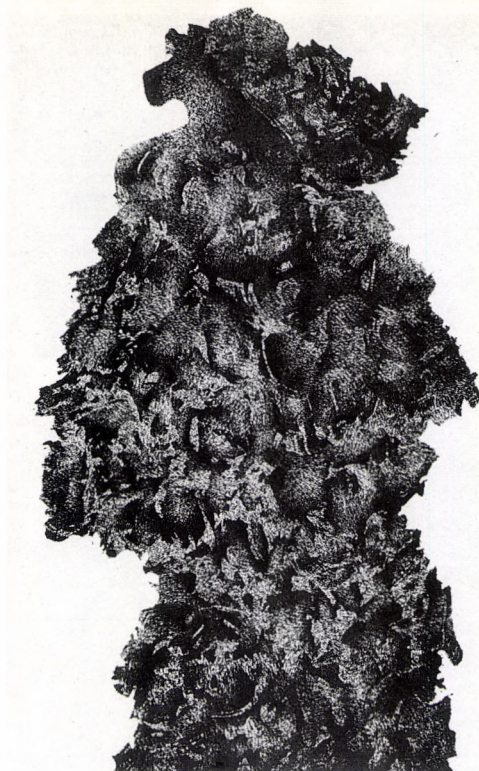
ETIENNE HAJDU: LES DEMOISELLES NAGY. 1979-82.  
PAINTED WOOD, CCA 200 CM HIGH EAHC

*Judit Russka*

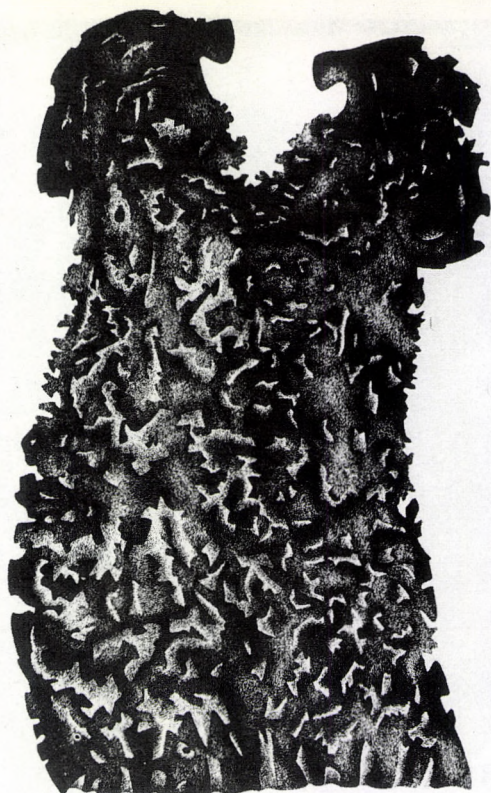


ETIENNE HAJDU: INTERIEUR OF THE BUDAPEST EXHIBITION





ETIENNE HAJDU: NO TITLE, 553.  
1982. PEN AND LAVIS, 900 X 630 MM



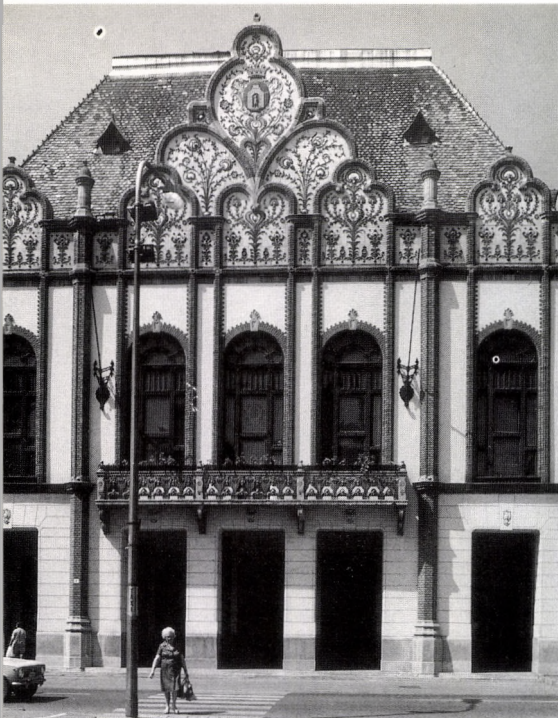
ETIENNE HAJDU: NO TITLE, 396. 1984.  
PEN AND INK. 1618 X 970 MM



ETIENNE HAJDU: SCULPTURES IN HIS BAGNEUX STUDIO GARDEN

Judit Russka





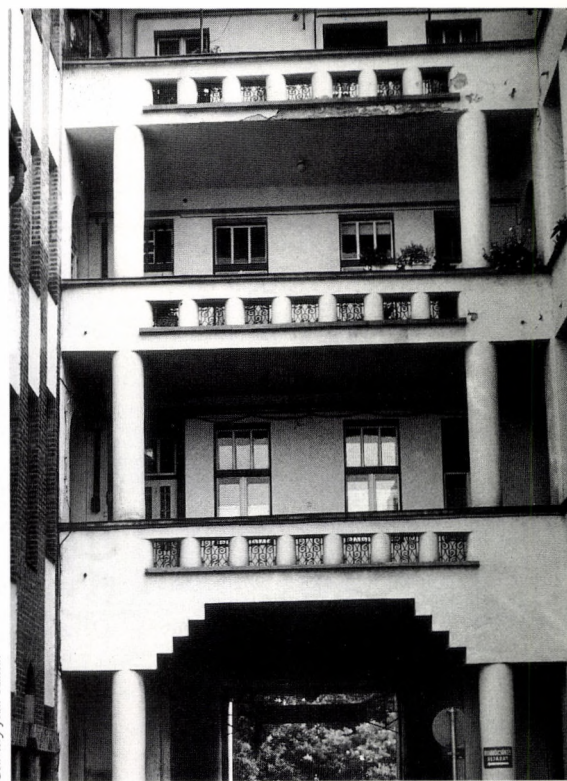
MOBITZER: CITY HALL, 1911. KISKUNFÉLEGYHÁZA



KOMOR: CLUB FOR TRADESMEN, 1905. KECSKEMÉT



VALÉR MENDE: SCHOOL, 1912. KECSKEMÉT



VALÉR MENDE: APARTMENT BUILDING.  
1911. KECSKEMÉT





GROUP PÉCS—TIBOR JANKOVICS:  
HOTEL FADD, 1979

*Courtesy John Mészai*

GROUP PÉCS:  
APARTMENT BUILDING, 1973. PAKS





ours and also black. In my article in *NHQ* five years ago, I enthused over her *Message* (1968), this series of badges against a snow-white background, which seemed to be "an other-worldly Highway Code." *Wind Sequences 2* (1984) is a reincarnation of this chart. The background here too is white, but now the signs are painted in a graphic, tonal manner, as against the planar character of *Message*. Nor are the elements of the picture painted directly on the canvas but on separate pieces of linen which she has sewn on one by one in cross-stitch; the stitches can scarcely be seen yet they still carry significance. This is no after-image either, but it is one of my favourites, just as *Message* was.

For the closing ceremony of Keserü's exhibition her pupils built a huge linen cube stretched on lath frames. The lamps went out on the ceiling and a reflector was lit

within the cube. Inside the cube they started painting, with the paint quickly soaking through the thin, white linen. The strokes of the brushes kept growing, and so did the patches of colour, until all four sides of the cube were completely filled, producing action painting at its best. Then came an unexpected split in the linen, made with a sharp knife from within, and some seven boys and girls flitted out of the cube, their hands covered with paint up to their wrists. There is nothing new in actions where the painting is executed in front of the viewers; here, however, although the form came from the pupils themselves, they paraphrased Keserü's typical colours, on a total surface of twenty square metres. A lap of honour before a much loved master.

JÁNOS FRANK

## THE COOL EYE

### Tibor Csernus retrospective at the Műcsarnok

Tibor Csernus was born in 1927 and graduated from the Art School of Budapest in 1952. He was one of the great talents in Hungarian realism, which at the time meant socialist realism. This was in spite of the fact that his early canvasses are capable of two possible interpretations: in subject-matter, his *Worker*, painted in 1950 while he was still a student, fits well into the programme of a committed painter, but in content, it is a highly autonomous work. What the painter does is to set the required realistic manner of painting against the required aim. Instead of an optimistic worker smilingly bearing the burden of the country's future, we are confronted with a tired, numb, hopeless man with a bleak look in his eyes and wearing poor, ragged clothes. It is similar to

what the socialist painters of the thirties produced with titles like "Navy", as their criticism of society. In 1960, Csernus painted an exploited proletarian under the title *Worker*. There are another two paintings of extraordinary tension that stand out among the work he did in the fifties and now exhibited for the first time. *Evening school* (1953) with a rare intensity gives off the stifling atmosphere of the party meetings of the fifties: the setting is an empty room fitted up for a conference for party members. The table on the platform is covered with a red cloth—the shade of red that our historically-sensitive sight can immediately distinguish from all other reds; on it is a jug of water, a glass, and before it rows of black chairs; to complete the impression, the room is decorated



with flimsy crepe paper strips, telling us this is immediately before or after the delightful event. The same room houses an evening painting class. A lone painter in a suit, which shows he is an amateur, sits opposite a slim standing nude model, absorbed in painting her in front of the empty rows of chairs, the chairman's table covered in red, the crumbling walls, the garlands. The painting electrically captures the essence of the period with all the tension and numbness in the paraphernalia; Csernus achieves this impression by accurately selecting the subject-matter for an all but plotless picture. The rendering of this canvas anticipates several later paintings: the painter is detached from the scene, looking at it from a certain physical and emotional distance; the persons portrayed carry on, unaware of the painter's presence—and this creates a peculiar Csernusesque aura: an absent-minded moment, an instance not perceived by the depicted persons transferred into the picture.

His best work of the fifties: *Three literary editors* (1955), is perhaps the only exception to the pictures exhibited (if not to all his pictures). The three persons (the editorial triad of Szépirodalmi Publishers, Mátyás Domokos, Pál Réz and the *NHQ* literary editor to be, Miklós Vajda) as it were look into the camera. It is a classic composition: balanced, symmetric, arranged in a frame. The three men are sitting in a restaurant, snug, with life shown blurred in the mirror behind them; they glance out of the picture tired and slightly run-down, but still young and not yet frustrated. It is unmistakably a picture from Budapest. The faces are Budapest faces, in a Budapest café or restaurant, with a wilted tulip on the table: the tension and weariness of the times permeate all the details and the composition as a whole. In the paintings of the fifties narration does not interfere with painterliness; these pictures are no programmatic pieces, the selection of hues, shades, lights gives them a lyrical quality. There are few pictures of Budapest as beautiful as Csernus's *Angyalföld* (1956): in the dirty and

tumble-down district a tacky traffic light blooms under the blue dusk.

After 1956, Csernus seems to have surfaced from the depths of his underwater existence. A new kind of painterlyness flourishes in his pictures; this was to be labelled surnaturalism by someone later in 1964. His *Saint Tropez* of 1959, of the harbour and the promenading crowd, with the sea and a ship in the background is still a realistic picture. Seen from a distance, it looks like a peculiar blend of a Renaissance seascape and a Pollockian texture. It is a crammed and agitated composition with Gothic perpendiculars, the innumerable repeated musical motifs of masts below with the teeming vegetation of life fills the canvasses. There is good reason why I mention Gothic and Renaissance together with Csernus's new experiences: it was, and still is, a classic and chaotic, ordered and entangled picture all at the same time, yet one of monumental dimensions. It is a manifesto, if you please, proclaiming that the texture, the crude technique of a painted surface interests the painter more than the subject-matter, yet here the ordered vertical lines of the masts create a powerful composition. What came next was food for scandal and myth-making. Among scores of pictures (including *The market on Lehel Square* 1962 and the *Naval battle* (1961) *Reedy marsh* (1964) is the best document of the ecstasy caused by the discovery of the new technique of scratching (with a razor blade or knife, etc.). Realistically painted details are embedded in an exuberance of forms growing into a surrealist vision; paint applied to the surface not with the soft brush but hard metal, creates an unprecedented sight. With shapes like reeds, stalks, hollow tree-trunks, stripes of various thickness, interwoven sedge and lian, these paintings are the documents of the liberation of the art of painting, so far restrained by thematic discipline. They provide a palpable explanation for pictorial abstraction: a master of composition and technique, Csernus refuses to take into account anything but form and colour and the synthesis of the two in a



composition free of anything imposed from the outside.

After painting *Reedy marsh*, Csernus went to Paris where he has settled. His painting has changed radically. At first he painted realistic-fantastic pictures about flying, such as *Lindbergh's aeroplane* (1971), *Without title* (1970), paying tribute to flight and describing his new surroundings in Paris. His self-portrait painted of 1972 is entitled *Without title 7*, in it he portrays himself as he usually paints others: seen at a distance, sitting in his room lit by a reading lamp; a model aeroplane is suspended from the ceiling; the left side of the room is in daylight, which is reflected in the mirror in the dark corner of the room. It is an odd composition; the spectator is at the bisecting point of the long side of an isosceles triangle, the painter sitting opposite him at the apex of the triangle—in the farthest corner of the room—at ease in the lamplight, absorbed in the evening solitude of modern man. That was followed by Csernus's hyperrealistic period: he took photographs first. In this way, a composition came to life through a double filter: photography itself meant selection, cutting something out, defining and composing the subject, while the painting picked out the essential points—the main theme—from the photograph handled with a novel light or lit exactly as in life. These pictures of the seventies reverberate with the spirit of the cold and aloof poetry of the *Evening School*; they are usually *Without title*, marked by serial numbers; the figures turn their backs on us, not looking at the spectator; they are caught in some trivial moment or a mental blackout by Csernus's camera, and then by his brush. For instance, the man in a coat and hat in the market (*Without title 13*, 1973) has his face shaded by his hat; the sharp light glides across the raincoat of the elderly woman's back (again the relic of the tastes and experiences of a decade); the market woman shields her bananas with her hands and casts a searching glance at the man, yet we get the impression that she is not there,

in just the same way as Csernus is not there in the self-portrait described above and the figures in *Without title 2* (1975) and those in the rest of his hyperrealistic pictures are not there. The market shoppers, the beach attendants, the sports officials in the break between rounds of a prize fight are all absent: for Csernus captures a moment when, completely absorbed by the routine of their activity, they cease to exist for the outside world, they become as numb as objects, they become still-lives. Csernus's hyperrealistic pictures including his self-portraits are all still-lives: they represent objects viewed from afar, shown in a strange light, petrified in the silence of the moment torn from the continuity of existence. These objects can be anything from a street in Paris, the corner of a studio, a market scene to himself: the approach is the same: a very attentive yet cool observation.

In the pictures of the fifties, this coolness, however, was confronted with the explosive tension of the compositions and served to mute it: it offset the deep personal involvement of the painter. Such pictures reveal this as *Orlai painting Petöfi* (1951) in which Csernus applied the metaphor of placing his poet friend Ferenc Juhász in Petöfi's role and himself in the role of the poet's friend and portraitist Soma P. Orlai. But Csernus needed a certain distance for so intimate a confession, so he painted himself sideways (his face hidden). By contrast, the hyperrealistic paintings of the seventies seem to be imbued with a real chill; with a contemplative, professional craftsmanship apparently taking delight in its accomplishment. For Csernus can indeed paint perfectly everything, in every style and assuming any painterly attitude. He used several forms of photonaturalism, relished in a virtuoso representation of any type of material on the canvas. Surf, a streetscape reflected in a bus window, a grassy hillside in the outskirts, sand and sunshine on the beach: there is no challenge that his skills cannot respond to.

There was an odd turn in his art in the



second part of the seventies. Realistic—hyperrealistic—illumination disappeared in the *Self-portrait* of 1976 and *Without title 10* (Mariane I) of 1977, giving way to an archaistic, warm, yellowish, candle-like light. At the same time he tried his hand at other areas of archaism, painting still-lives reminiscent of the old Flemish masters or sometimes Chardin: fishes, a dish of cherries, onions, a corner of a violin-making workshop—objects of sunken ages in the light of earlier times. In *Mariane* there is a hint at self-reflexion in the form of a long electric wire winding at the feet of the Mona Lisa-faced model lit by an archaizing light. This, however, is the last of such references. Instead, a new theme appears after the still-lives of bundles of asparagus, pieces of ham and watermelon, quasi-dramatic representations in the style of Caravaggio, nudes lit amply by a warm, yellow, irrational light. Biblical and Greek mythological scenes rendered in a 17th century manner. Yet they also remind one of scenes photographed from

the Csernusian distance: the positioning of the figures recalls the hyperrealistic paintings. *Swans* (1984), *Parrots* (1985), *Still-life with Chicken* (1988).

One cannot help asking: what happened to Csernus? What is it he can convince us of, apart from his virtuosity in painting? What was the mental bridge he crossed that led him to the world of Caravaggio, Velasquez and the painters of the Low Countries? What is his drama that can be compressed in the red-lit figures of Saul or Joseph? What personal message is trying to make its way out of him?

The debris and garbage in the milieu of the *Újpest quay* (1957), the afternoon idyll of card-layers—I can understand. The hyperloneliness of his hyperrealistic *Self-portrait* of 1975—I can understand. But the Baroque mannerism and Daliesque artistry of the *The sacrifice of Isaac* (1987), the snow-white elegance of *Swans* and the rococo sultriness of *Parrots*—I choose not to understand.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

## THE NATURAL ABSTRACTS OF ÉTIENNE HAJDU

### *Exhibition in the Vigadó Gallery*

The history of modern Hungarian sculpture is full of Hungarian artists who have worked outside Hungary. Joseph Csáki, László Péri, Gustav Miklós, Étienne Beöthy, László Moholy-Nagy, Nicolaus Schöffner, Gyula Kosice, Étienne Hajdu, Marta Pán are among them. Their work runs the range from cubism to kinetics, and from Berlin to Buenos Aires although their most common link is with Paris and abstract art. Hungarians have always been among the international set of the École de Paris, thrown into the world by the waves of emigration that the history of their country has produced.

Étienne (István) Hajdu was born in 1907 in Torda (Transylvania), which was then part of Hungary. His father was a vet and he often accompanied him on his rounds. In 1925, he moved to Budapest and studied wood sculpting in a trade school; in 1927, he travelled first to Vienna, then to Paris where he studied for three years working by day and drawing and modelling from 8 to 10 p.m. A 1930 exhibition introduced him to the great masters of modern sculpture through the works of Brâncuși, Archipenko and Laurens. He wanted to travel to Italy but his teacher advised him to go and see the French



cathedrals, which showed him the beauty of transfigured art. In 1937 he was fascinated by Greek Kykladic art. These were, by and large, the experiences which determined his art: closeness to nature in childhood, the monumental sculpture of French cathedrals and the simplified forms of ancient Greek art emphasizing the contours of figures. Although his studies and usual sculptural practice compelled him to model naturalistic heads and nudes, he realized soon that the object of sculpture was not exclusively the human form, and that the concept of nature was much broader than that the traditional methods of portrayal could express. His study of biology and his acquaintance with cell-theory also helped him not to consider the model and sight a starting point for sculpture. All this has pushed him towards abstract art based on experience of nature.

Hajdu likes to talk about his works and gives a lively description of his artistic goals. In a 1978 interview for Hungarian radio he said: "The difference between old and modern sculpture is that the former offered a sort of totality of the exterior, visible elements of the human body. I could compare this to a locomotive which we see moving; in the case of modern machines we know that the movement is in their interior but we don't see anything. . . . Yes, today we need to see that a flower is beautiful, and for this one must only look at a flower or insect or any part of nature closely. If we do this, we can create an entirely new world. I did a sculpture and entitled it Grass. I simply looked at the size of the grass on which people had trod."

"Greatness" and the movement of living material may be found in the tiniest part of nature—these are the major sources of inspiration for Hajdu's art: that harmonious and timeless beauty of the Mediterranean cultures which abstract things from the dramatic topicality of everyday life and seek the forms for expressing elementary existence from the movements of stars to the growth of grass blades. What can the themes be of this art? Hajdu's titles are seldom concrete, those that

are come chiefly in his early period, such as *The Morning* (1945-46), *The Paris Woman* (1947); *Clowns* (1953), *Traces of Water*, etc. Then followed birds and female heads: since the 1960s many such typical plant-like female busts have been created, and given rare, melodious names from Anita to Virginia. Their basic form is always identical—much hair, head in profile, long neck and bust—but the variations are inexhaustible. Narrow, arabesqueline forms from diverse materials, from bronze through rare sorts of marble to semi-precious stones, from massive stone blocks to open-worked lace-like formations. And here it is best to quote the artist from a French catalogue: "Voilà ce qui est important: que la matière perde sa matérialité".)

Hajdu belongs to the second generation of modern sculptors who started their career after Brâncuși and Arp. They admired Brâncuși's utterly simplified, closed forms but knew that it made no sense to repeat them. So by opening the closed forms they sought an entirely new relation between space and mass. If, as in the classical interpretation, a sculpture was a mass placed in space, then they wanted to draw space into the sculpture. Hajdu's most original works are the forms which enclose a part of space, like dynamically bent screens. (*To the Memory of Louis Pasteur*, 1967) or where the screen-like configurations irradiate from a center (*Convergence*, 1968). He prefers the thin, blade-like forms set in space: he showed five of them in his 1989 exhibition in Budapest. (*Les Grandes Demoiselles*, 1979-82). These white wooden sculptures were accompanied by 34 ink-drawings which showed the other aspect of Hajdu's art, the equal of his sculpture. These types of graphic works are unusual in Hungarian art because his graphics are nearer to illustrative representation. Hajdu's drawings remind one mostly of giant leaves which, turning to the light, show their complicated patterns.



Hajdu started work in the second half of the 1930s, and in 1938 he presented himself in Budapest in the Tamás Gallery at an exhibition of the works of Hungarian abstract artists living in Paris. During the war, relations were interrupted but in 1937 he was a member of the European School, a trend in Hungarian art. In the 1950s, Stalinist cultural policy chilled the atmosphere for modern art in Hungary, and the process of emancipation was very slow. Although Hajdu visited Hungary in 1961, the public was only able to see his art in 1978 at an exhibition of his collected works. This is all the more peculiar as articles about him have appeared in Hungarian art reviews since the

mid-1960s; Hajdu's world concept expressed in his art is rooted in the problem complex of the turn of the 1950s and 1960s. If he could have exhibited his works in Hungary at that time, it would have been a tremendous inspiration for Hungarian art. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Still, this year's exhibition had a sensational success and the Corvina Publishing House brought out a fine book on his art. This is perhaps a satisfaction to the aging master, and a warning to Hungarian intellectual life that every kind of isolation leads to a deficiency in the culture of a country which can never be compensated.

ILDIKÓ NAGY

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## THE PATH BETWEEN

### Hungarian Architecture between the Classical and the Modern

The architectural revolution, signalled by the 1966 publication of Robert Venturi's seminal book, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, overturned the half a century old domination of modernism. Like all revolutions, it was fuelled by dissatisfaction. Modernism (often referred to as the "Bauhaus" or the "International Style") did not fulfil its implied social promises, a comfortable, efficient, sunny, and affordable home, or flat for the masses in a utopian city of parks, trees, and communal facilities. The modern buildings when produced in large quantities by second rate architects, following the planning rules of third rate bureaucrats, presented a dull, monotonous, depressing sight. Modern architecture's "simplicity" that grew out of the minimalist aesthetics of constructivist painting, its low budgets and its desire to imitate streamlined, seamless machines lead to the elimination of ornament and embellished detail, items that are supposed to catch the eye and delight it. Those conserva-

tives who predicted that the buildings of the Bauhaus or the villas of Le Corbusier will only look good as long as their pristine conditions and pure whiteness were maintained, were proven correct. Modern architecture, even its finest examples, did *not* age well, and after a while looked outright drab.

In contrast, even the neo-classicist façades of the nineteenth century with their phony stucco rustication and applied Renaissance or Baroque ornament looked good even when worn and dirty because their details, albeit ersatz, caught the sun, cast a shadow, drew our attention, and stimulated our senses.

A large number of the dissatisfied architects—the group became known as post-modernists—turned their attention for inspiration to the past, to the Renaissance and the period following it, mainly because classical architecture had a well established language that could be learned (in contrast to modernism where everything had to be "invented") or at least copied. Post-modernism,



however, with its applied or, at best, reinterpreted, classical elements is rapidly nearing its decline as an empty, rootless pastiche.

Neo-classicist post-modernism was only one—if the most common—response by those dissatisfied with modernism. Another answer, using the local vernacular as inspiration, was by far the most popular among the young Hungarian architects who were as tired of the prefabricated panel apartment buildings of their predecessors as they were of the classicizing façades imposed on them in the early 1950s under the name of socialist realism. To this generation of architects (Imre Makovecz,<sup>1</sup> József Kerényi and the group in Pécs<sup>2</sup> under the leadership of György Csete and Péter Oltaí) resuscitated neo-classicism was just as “international,” therefore non-Hungarian and alien, as was the International Style or the Bauhaus.

#### *National romanticism*

What makes this Hungarian reaction so fascinating is that it had already happened once before in Hungary's architectural history. Around the turn of the century, a group of young architects, like their counterpart elsewhere in Europe, were disenchanted with the historicist, eclectic architecture of the nineteenth century and were in search of something indigenous, local, something that could be called Hungarian. This turn-of-the-century movement, called national romanticism, has eluded the interest of historians. One reason for this neglect is that national romanticism flourished in parts of the continent not well known by western art historians. Another reason reflects the polarization of architectural education and thought in Europe after the Great War. In the eyes of the *beaux-arts* trained architect, nothing worth while happened after nineteenth century eclecticism. Art Nouveau and anything following it, unless it was neo-classicism,

were anathema. The avant-garde, on the other hand, were convinced that architecture was born with Gropius or Le Corbusier.

National romantic architecture in Hungary was immediately preceded by Art Nouveau (in Hungary generally referred to as “Vienna Sezession”) which prepared the way for it by declaring war on nineteenth century historicism.<sup>3</sup> The philosophical foundation of national romanticism was the English Arts and Crafts movement which guided it towards folk architecture. The fuel for national romanticism was European nationalism, the search for cultural identity and the desire to create a truly national architecture, especially among nations under foreign domination.

By approximately 1900, specific aesthetic characteristics differentiated various branches of turn-of-the-century architecture throughout Europe. Peter Davey, author of *Architecture of the English Arts and Crafts*, observes that “the European anti-classicists could be divided broadly, and with many exceptions on each side, into two camps by a line running roughly along the Dutch/Belgian border and down through Munich to Vienna. To the south was the territory of Art Nouveau with its sinuous intertwined curves; its profusion of elaborate ornament; its structures curved and twisted to take the shapes of bones and plants. To the north, a much more protestant spirit prevailed. Structures were simple, straightforward and clearly expressed; ornament was restricted and, where it was used, it tended to follow the stiff, heraldic form of the English Arts and Crafts movement.”

Peter Davey's line needs, however, to be extended eastward along the Danube to Transylvania because Hungary, next to Finland, was the strongest supporter of the new arts and crafts-inspired national architectural style. The reason for the intense nationalism was that both countries were fighting for independence—Finland from Russia, Hungary from Austria.

<sup>1</sup> NHQ 100.

<sup>2</sup> NHQ 113.

<sup>3</sup> NHQ 104.



By 1900, Hungary had been under Habsburg domination for almost 400 years. The nation's survival in the multinational empire ruled by German language, culture, and bureaucracy depended upon strong national identity. Subsequently, Hungarian nationalism found its expression in speech, drama, literature, art, music, and even in fashion. Nationalism in architecture could only arise when architects and critics became disenchanted with historic revivalism, when fresh winds were blowing from England via Ruskin, Morris, and the Arts and Crafts movement.<sup>4</sup>

Following the example of the English Arts and Crafts movement, Hungarian architects looked to the vernacular for inspiration, searching for forms and methods used in native villages. Inherent in this movement was a sense of the puritanical, a distrust of the decadent urban life, an antagonism to industrialization and the machine, as well as a certain amount of pantheism, harking back to mystic roots, folk legends, and rural crafts. Hungary, like many countries in Europe, had an extensive and genuine vernacular tradition. Her folk art had a rich vocabulary expressed in weaving, embroidery, leatherwork, wood carving, ceramics, and painted furniture, as well as in rural architecture. Hungary was also fortunate that the native art of the village still existed in the latter part of the nineteenth century and that industrialization had not spoiled her comparatively backward and agricultural countryside. During the 1870s and 1880s, Hungarian rural art and handicrafts became the center of intense attention evidenced by village research, collections, publications, exhibitions, and the establishment of museums of folk art and ethnography.

The area richest in folk art and architecture was Transylvania, an independent principality in the mountainous section of Hungary that escaped Turkish occupation and resisted the Habsburg domination for many

years. The paradigms of Transylvanian folk architecture were the peasant house and the village church.<sup>5</sup> The peasant house, as sketched by enthusiastic architects travelling the countryside, was usually built on a rustic stone foundation. It had a simple, white-washed stucco exterior, its upper wood roof structure was steep and predominant, and its wood members were well articulated like those of arcades or porches. These members, often with carved ends, were stylistically similar to the gates of the fences surrounding a family compound consisting of peasant houses. The other prototype, the white-washed village church, frequently displayed as its major feature four characteristic "baby steeples" on the corners of the tower around the tall spire. Sometimes a free-standing wood bell tower appeared and occasionally the church was surrounded by stone walls that served the defenders in case of attack. Calvinist church ornament, like decoration on the peasant house, was minimal and was concentrated on the richly painted wood ceilings. The simple exterior of the churches made them affordable variants of the Gothic style—a poor man's Gothic. Of all the styles of the past, this was the one that was accepted to national romantic architects, partly because Pugin, the "father" of arts and crafts, judged Gothic as "moral," as evidenced by its fidelity to structure as well as to place.

Because rural buildings evolved slowly, often by periodic additions, the village produced structures that tended toward asymmetry and agglutination.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, village style did not completely exclude symmetry or an occasional classical treatment either. It was, in fact, a very tolerant style. Building tenets included fidelity to materials, but within reason; since expensive materials were not affordable, economy dictated use. Where stone was scarce, its application was limited to the base of the building and perhaps the entrance. Adobe walls were not "ex-

<sup>4</sup> NHQ 53/70.

<sup>5</sup> NHQ 112.

<sup>6</sup> NHQ 69.



pressed", but were stuccoed since exposed adobe would deteriorate in a rainy climate. Brick was also rarely "revealed" since stucco-covered common brick was cheaper than good face brick. National romanticism's belief in truth to material frequently manifested itself in the careful way materials were treated in detailing. Well-worked stone, rough hewn or highly polished is one example; others are lovingly detailed and laid brick, wrought or hammered metal, and wood members carved with skill and feeling. The philosophy of truth to material, like asymmetry, did not however become dogma. This pragmatic, freely composed, tolerant village style allowed the architects of national romanticism a broad range of freedom.

National romanticism stood between historicism and modernism that became widespread after the Great War. It turned against the period that preceded it, but it was not a forerunner of modernism as Pevsner, in his *Pioneers of Modern Design*, claimed about arts and crafts. Instead, it was a neglected side street in architectural history, one that, curiously enough, successfully avoided many of the mistakes we now associate with the orthodox modern movement.

Having drawn its inspiration from machine aesthetics and abstract painting among other sources, orthodox modernism minimized detail and practically rendered it extinct. What little detail was considered absolutely necessary, and therefore tolerated, was reduced to pragmatic needs. Detail had to give the impression that it contained nothing but essentials even if the process of achieving this impression was contrived, as in the case of some details by Mies van der Rohe. Modernism failed to recognize that detail is an elaboration, an intensification of texture and image that can take place where two materials join, where volume turns direction, or anywhere else as decoration. This celebration of significant joining, one that catches light and casts shadow in order to stand out, was almost completely missing on the buildings of orthodox modernism.

While the national romantic movement preferred plain wall surfaces, it also loved ornamentation and returned it to locations that had functional or constructional significance, such as edge, joints, and openings, rather than let it meander aimlessly over the façade as did Art Nouveau. As Demetri Porphyrios observed in *Sources of Modern Eclecticism*, "sculptural and textural intensity around openings or junctions of architectural members constituted decoration itself."

Roger Scruton defines detail as "in itself a small, but completed form." As such, when done well, it can carry the essence of the whole and, like the whole, it can reflect its creator and its time. This was especially so in this period when well-crafted detail was not only desirable but, through the love of handicrafts and dislike of machine production, it also became one of the movement's motivating forces.

The architecture of the national romantic movement should be seen and reexamined in the context of our current pluralistic, inclusive attitudes toward architecture. In *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Robert Venturi stated his argument for an architecture of richness and ambiguity in contrast to the pure straightforward architecture of the modern movement. He called for an architecture that is inclusive, pluralistic, and ambiguous with contradictory levels of meaning. Hungarian national romanticism answers all of Venturi's criteria.

The architects of the national romantic period<sup>6/a</sup> preferred the asymmetrical and picturesque to the symmetrical and classical; they preferred tension to calm; ambiguity and contradiction to simplicity. While they thrived on truth to material, they also enjoyed the symbolic and referential, and loved the unique and idiosyncratic. Though they rebelled against historicism and revivalism, they were tolerant and pluralistic.

<sup>6/a</sup> NHQ 87.



The initiator of Hungarian national romanticism, Ödön Lechner<sup>7</sup> (1845–1914), not only consciously introduced folk elements in his work, but also wrote essays and articles and delivered speeches advocating the furtherance of a national style. In the 1890s, Lechner applied Hungarian floral ornament of terra cotta to his buildings. These borrowed, decorative patterns were very much part of the peasant art that could be found on village embroidery as well as on rural ceramic ware. Lechner, however, was severely criticized by the next generation for being only “skin deep,” for using surface ornament on rather traditionally composed building masses instead of comprehending village architecture’s structural truth, its characteristic volume, composition, and fenestration.

An entire school of Hungarian architects, including Lajta, Mobitzer, Komor, and Jakab, followed in Lechner’s footsteps. Their buildings, while bearing their own individual stamp, still displayed Lechneresque decorative surface ornament, sculptured parapets, sinuous Art Nouveau lines, and, as often as not, traditional symmetrical composition.

The buildings by Lajta, Mobitzer, Komor, and Jakab typify the complexity of the national romantic movement through the use of duality, juxtaposition, double readings, and the idiosyncratic. The Institute for the Jewish Blind by Lajta (Budapest, 1908) has a piano keyboard detailing of the brick beneath the windows that has a dual reading; it can be seen both as an embellished sill detail and as a reference to a French balcony railing. Lajta’s Home for the Jewish Aged (Budapest, 1911) has a center portion with a pedimented entry that is a violent juxtaposition both as a classical element superimposed on a national romantic building and as polished stone in contrast with the rough hewn field stone background. The jamb detail on the City Hall by Mobitzer (Kiskunfélegyháza, 1911) has a recessed terrace near the top floor with

a strangely configured opening that can also be deciphered as an upside-down arcade.

The next generation of architects, under the leadership of Károly Kós<sup>8</sup> (1883–1977), broke the use of pseudo-Art Nouveau surface ornamentation. Having often sketched vernacular architecture, they understood the real essence of national romanticism, asymmetry, large plain wall surfaces, irregular window rhythm, strong roof shapes, well-articulated structural members, minimal but concentrated ornament, and well-crafted detail.

The paradigm of Hungarian national romanticism is the Roman Catholic Church by Kós and Jánoszy (Zebegény, 1908), a building that abounds in ambiguity. The church has a single bell tower which is not uncommon in Hungarian village architecture. The fact that the tower is not located on a central axis is unusual and results in an asymmetrical façade. Upon further observation, we discover that the façade reads as both nave and tower. The two are not clearly articulated, but ambiguously merge together. This ambiguity is again present in the detail where tower and steeple intersect. While the two are clearly separated (the steeple stands on its own little round legs), the corners of the tower are severed in a triangular configuration in order to continue the steeple’s slope. Or is the steeple completing the conical shape already prevalent on the corners of the tower? There are other contradictory levels of meaning. The building is asymmetrical, yet its parts are all symmetrical; the stone base is rough hewn, yet it becomes polished where significant detail is suggested.

The dominant romantic element in the Folk Art Museum by Kós (Sepsiszentgyörgy, 1912) is its powerful roof of various shapes covered with tile. Several parts of the building echo this roof: the entrance gate with its own roof, the little roof acting as coping over the stone garden wall, and, most uniquely, the use of the roof on the museum’s semi-circular, apse-like wing. Its projecting piers

<sup>7</sup> NHQ 101.

<sup>8</sup> NHQ 6.



are reminiscent of those of a Gothic church which widen near the bottom. A simple sloping stone would solve this widening of the pier, but Kós covers it with a far more elaborate little roof than protection against rain would warrant.

Károly Kós also accentuated the importance of the roof in the Budapest Zoo (Budapest, 1912). The juxtaposition of the heavy roof structure superimposed on the low building is achieved by a difference in scale. The details of the Budapest Zoo buildings also have double meaning. They serve the functions of details and are also witty references to the inhabitants of the structure.

The Protestant church by Károly Kós (Közlösvár, 1913) is full of the ambiguity and resulting visual tension that is a major characteristic of national romanticism and is called for by Robert Venturi as an antidote to bland modernism. The tension between the symmetrically fenestrated but asymmetrically placed nave and tall spire is further heightened by the placement of the recalcitrant square clock in the corner. The clock wants to be round, but primarily it wants to be in the centre. The rustic stone that surrounds the arched entry comes to a point like a gable end. However, this stone triangle touches the sill of the Romanesque windows on the second floor, creating a rather curious, awkward relationship. In the hands of such an accomplished architect as Kós, this cannot be an accident; it is a purposeful arrangement to create tension. This stone triangle, the clock, and the steep roof that bites into the main façade on the left the entrance are all conscious tension-producing elements. The square main tower and the small, barely existing, but compositionally just as important, round one were created for similar effects.

The Protestant church by Károly Kós is also full of details with double meaning. The door handle serves as hardware and also as a reference to the wooden grave-markers, common to the rural cemeteries. This detail is not the only one that makes a reference to the roots of the village. The fence of the

building incorporates a favourite symbol of Hungarian Calvinist churches—the rooster—that symbolized “the call for repentance and atonement, according to the part the bird is allotted in the gospels in the disavowing” of Jesus.

Probably the most tolerant Hungarian national romantic building is the apartment house by Jánoszy and Szivessy (Kecskemét, 1912). It places symmetrical elements, like the classical entrance pediment with a circular opening and the windows supporting the balcony in an asymmetrical relationship to one another. It not only accommodates romantic fragments, but also tolerates an entire section of the building that is treated in a style that resembles the work of Joseph Hoffman and foreshadows art-deco.

The heterogeneous architecture of national romanticism tolerates, and even adapts to, the unexpected. Two buildings by one of the most imaginative of Hungarian national romantics, Valér Mende, are good examples. Mende's apartment building (Kecskemét, 1911) is asymmetrically composed on its street façade consisting of many symmetrical elements. It is full of ambiguities and double readings. What separates the windows? Is the separation a wall, a pier, or a column? Punched windows are contrasted to horizontally or vertically grouped ones. Which are the norm and which are the exceptions? When the roof turns down on the top floor and interrupts the stucco façade, is it really a roof or is it a wall? A classic Palladian arch is adapted by transformation; it is turned into a pointed arch of the peasant house arcade. The decorative squares incised in the stucco under this arch can also be read as spaces between balustrades (recalling the balustrades of the courtyard). The columns between the windows continue as metal balcony dividers and window sills extend as planting boxes. The classically symmetrical courtyard contrasting with the freely composed street façade is a surprise. This kind of contrast between inside and outside is a major example of the pluralistic attitude of this period.



Valér Mende's high school (Kecskemét, 1912), a fundamentally symmetrical U-shaped building, has a totally symmetrical fenestration on the highly ornate street facade. Nevertheless, it tolerates and is enriched by many asymmetrical details on the side elevations such as the arched opening of the side entrance. The stone detailing of this arch characteristically contains both rough and polished stone. The contrast between the decorative, symmetrical front facade and the rear courtyard facade with its plain treatment and asymmetry reflects the tolerant nature of national romanticism.

The Palatinus Apartments by Vidor (Budapest, 1911) are full of double readings. On the top floor of the apartments the windows have a common Art Nouveau shape: the upper corners are sliced diagonally as if there was the beginning of an arch. Looking closer at the detail, it appears that the diagonals continue as incisions in the stucco until they coincide and form a "roof" over the window. It now reads not only as a window, but also as a "house." There are also contradictory levels of meaning found elsewhere in the Palatinus Apartments. The columns and beams of the apartment building are both part of the wall and, at the same time, independently existing.

The Lutheran church by Árkay (Budapest, 1912) is a good example of the use of juxtaposition in national romantic architecture. The difference between surface detail and the size of the element on which it appears, can be seen on the entrance of the church, the scale of the small glazed tiles juxtaposed against the huge arch.

One of Árkay's villas uses a fragment that is symbolic of the whole villa (Budapest, 1912). A simple attic window is pulled from the wall surface like a bay window and is roofed over to become a miniature image of the whole, to look like a little house, an example of symbolism that the following period of modernisms was not articularly known for.

While national romanticism died in most countries with the Great War, vestiges of it survived in Hungary, if not in pure form, at least as a curious mixture of national romantic and the official neo-Baroque, or national romantic and the avant-garde modern. A vernacular-inspired romanticism was revived in the 1930s through the work of the Hungarian version of the German *Heimatstil* as an opposition to the Bauhaus. Even social realism, during the Stalin years after the Second World War, did not entirely escape the influence of romantic folk architecture.

It would be interesting to speculate what would have happened to European architecture had the national romantics held on to their ideals longer instead of turning to neoclassic inspiration as so many did, like Tessenow in Germany, Hoffman in Austria, and Lars Sonck in Finland to mention only a few of the turn-of-the-century romantics. In England, the neo-Georgian became the new model, supposedly better suited to urban problems than the vernacular of the country.

One is tempted to think that such outstanding and versatile talents as Béla Lajta and Valér Mende would have directed Hungarian modernism into unique channels had they not died so young in 1918. This possibility is clearly foreshadowed by Lajta's office and apartment building on Martinelli Square (Budapest, 1910), one of the most ingenious combinations of the modern and the romantic. One is also forced to believe that had the World War I partition of Hungary not forced Kós into a self-elected "exile" and had he stayed in the mainstream of Hungarian architecture, his unusual talent would have resulted in a different modernism than the rootless Bauhaus did.

After the Second World War the rebuilding of the country continued in a modern style and the immense housing shortage was solved by mass production and prefabrication. The aesthetic results of these free-standing panel-constructed apartment slabs were monotony and drabness, the urbanistic result was the destruction of the street and community life,



and the breaking up of the scale of the Hungarian village and town.

Opposition to this architecture of prefabrication started in the 1960s. Those who felt that Hungarian architecture again has to reach back to the vernacular for inspiration and rejuvenation, found a fertile ground among those architects, critics, and laymen whose sensitivities to the vernacular were sharpened by the strong movement of historic preservation.

The desire to create an architecture of local roots received the first public attention in 1975 through an intensive debate in the press about the work of a group of young architects in the city of Pécs (György Csete, Péter Olta, Tibor Jankovics, István Kisteleldi, and others).<sup>9</sup> Their attempts to humanize the drab panel apartment buildings by colouring the panels to resemble Hungarian floral patterns and cutting the panel edges in the silhouette of wooden grave-markers from rural Hungarian cemeteries was less successful than some of their other buildings; nevertheless, it put the group in the centre of public interest.

Independent of the Pécs group, and according to some its spiritual inspiration, was Imre Makovecz,<sup>10</sup> clearly the most unique talent in the country. All his buildings respect local materials, proportions, and traditions and seem to grow out of the local soil like his famous cultural centre (Sárospatak, 1982). The buildings of his camping ground look like they have been there forever, part of the terrain, like some ancestral warriors (Mogyoróhegy, 1975); to quote Makovecz directly, "architecture that is not born out of local inspiration may be outstanding in volume and space, may be elegant, may be good

art, may be anything, but it cannot be a vital influence in our cultural life."

Another Hungarian architect whose work is effortlessly rising out of the local context is József Kerényi. His toy Museum (Kecskemét, 1980) is a direct outgrowth of his contextual sensitivity. He perpetuates village scale and imagery (white walls and prominent tile roofs), as well as village detail (dormer windows, entrance fence). The roof shape itself, exuberant, blown up in scale, and richly silhouetted with many dormers not only gives the building presence and identity, but also recalls the enchanted palaces and castles of Hungarian children's stories.

Makovecz, Kerényi, and members of the Pécs group—who since have disbanded and now work independently—are all nearing middle age. They have inspired, however, another remarkable bunch of young Hungarian architects who—not surprisingly if one is acquainted with the liberal architectural leadership, the scenic setting, and the deep historical past of the city—all practice in Pécs. They are less narrowly "organic" than their elders, they seem to be more eclectic. Their buildings respect and celebrate the city's rich past that contains Roman, Gothic, Ottoman, and Baroque remains. They respond to all the forces of the surrounding context in a happy, carefree manner. They are clearly eclectic, but still unmistakably Hungarian. All of them are indebted to the spirit of the turn-of-the-century, to arts and crafts in their use of materials, in their knowledge of the art, and in the processes of construction. The way they put materials together, the way they detail joints "all shows that an understanding of traditional construction can point towards innovative solutions." In Hungarian architecture they point to the future that is full of hope.

JOHN MACSAI

<sup>9</sup> *NHQ* 113.

<sup>10</sup> *NHQ* 100.



# THEATRE AND FILM

## GOD BLESS...

Sándor Sík: *Szent István* (Saint Stephen the King); Gyula Háy: *Mobács*; Margit Gáspár: *A császár messze van* (The Emperor Is Far Away); György Schwajda: *Himnusz* (Anthem).

It has long been thought that the Hungarian national anthem is the most pessimistic hymn ever written. It starts with "God bless the Hungarians" and ends with "This people has already atoned for the past and the future." Is the Hungarian destiny really doomed? This has been a major concern of our playwrights which one glance at our theatre repertory will prove.

Stephen the First (Saint Stephen), the founder of the Hungarian state who ruled from 1000 to 1038, is the hero of countless plays, including a rock-opera that has been in the repertory of the National Theatre for years. The Petöfi Theatre of Veszprém has now revived a play which has not been seen on our stages in the past fifty years. The hundredth anniversary of the birth of its author, Sándor Sík, was commemorated recently. The Catholic poet, translator and historian was a member of the Piarist Order, and indeed its provincial in 1948, when he was rewarded also with a high state distinction. Later he edited a Catholic literary and arts periodical though, owing to the religious inspiration of his poetry, he was no longer one of the group of much-published and officially popularised poets.

"King Stephen" is also founded on religious motivation. "Christ does not bargain! He who is not with him is against him!", thunders the eponymous hero in one scene. However, the second sentence has been omit-

ted from the production lest it should give rise to bad political memories. ("Who is not with us is against us" was the slogan of the Stalinist policy in the Hungary of the 1950s, later reverted by János Kádár in the 1960s to "He who is not against us is with us." With regard to the words attributed to Christ, the latter version is the authentic one, at least according to the evangelist Luke).

Although the words evoking political memories have been left out from the text, politics have remained very much the subject: indeed, the two stage directors, István Paál and Géza Tordy, have insisted on topicality in the production. They seemed to have an easy task: since our first king, Hungarian history has enforced several compulsory choices between alternatives, such as progress, belonging to Europe but within the Habsburg empire or national independence. In Sík's drama, King Stephen in seeking a successor must choose between the Venetian Pietro Orseolo, a Christian and vassal of the emperor, and Vazul, a conservative fanatic insisting on pagan Hungarian traditions. The problem of the ruler preparing for his departure is the same in almost every drama about him but the Catholic author tries to find the solution not in the political but in the ideological sphere: instead of two unsuitable candidates, Stephen puts the country into the hands of God. In the play's final scene he crowns a king: "Not for today, not for to-



morrow. For eternity." And he places the crown on the altar at the feet of the statue of Mary.

The directors in Veszprém avoided this transcendent solution by simply lopping off the end of the play which, although understandable from a practical viewpoint, transformed the work. In 1933-34, when Sík wrote the play, he was very far from wishing to up-date his work; all the same, the time of its presentation, after Hitler's takeover, a rejection of the German path certainly had a political content. But the Stephen of the play commends his country to God "on the ruins of his life, as a child erring in the night," disillusioned with politics. "I kick the earth from under my feet": according to the stage directions, the king draws himself up in transcendent rapture, and, breaking the fetters of this world, he seems to rise in the radiance of religious vocation. Without this Christian dénouement, Stephen is a much more tragic figure: a ruler too old for power whose indecision has brought his country to the brink of civil war; at the moment of collapse he sorrowfully prays to heaven. "You are old, you have done your work," says one of the conspirators while the young attack each other behind his back. So the close of the play refers to the lurking danger of political chaos. This is one of the questions of the hour in present-day Hungary.

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After Stephen's death, the country fell into anarchy for a time. Later, almost every century brought its own national disaster. In the thirteenth, the Mongols invaded and ravaged vast areas; plays have been written about this too though they are not seen at present. Most tragic of all was when the expanding Turkish Empire occupied one-third of the country for one and half centuries. 1526 was the date of the decisive battle at Mohács which has since come to symbolise the loss of great power pretensions. "Mohács is the great cemetery of our national greatness," wrote a poet in

the nineteenth century. Independent Hungary as an important factor in Europe did indeed cease on this famous day of the lost battle.

Mohács also has been the subject of many plays. One of the most important was written by Gyula Háy whose life is a remarkable story. Born in 1900, he was not yet twenty when he played a role in the political life of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. He went into exile after its collapse. His literary career unfolded in the Weimar Republic: his play *Isten, császár, paraszt* (God, Emperor, Peasant) was presented in Breslau in 1932 with great success. Later, Reinhardt also performed it in the Deutsches Theater of Berlin but the Nazi demonstrations soon forced him to take it off. Háy was a communist who took part in the Austrian workers' uprising in 1934, and fled from Hitler to the Soviet Union. After the war, he returned to Hungary and headed the dramaturgy department of the College of Dramatic Art and became a major figure in literary life. Realising the crimes of Stalinism, he joined the ranks of political reformers. For his part in the uprising of 1956 he was sentenced to prison. After his release he moved to Switzerland and lived there until his death in 1975. They started to perform his plays in Hungary only in the 1980s.

*Mohács* was written in prison between 1958 and 1960. The subject is the political anarchy of the period preceding the fatal battle, and especially the irresponsibility of the government. The news of the advance of the Turkish troops is known to be true but the country's rulers are still concerned with their own power-interests. Apart from archbishop Tomori, the future Hungarian commander, only the young king, twenty-year-old Louis II takes the measure of the approaching disaster. Louis II is in love with his young wife Maria. They are two playful, ecstatic royal children who, during a meeting of the national council, forget everything to rejoice in the birth of puppies of their favourite dog. Yet these two try to save the



country. Maria utilises even her feminine charm to win the support of the magnate who controls the country's largest army. Louis addresses himself to his Habsburg relatives, including the Emperor Charles V, but gets supercilious sermons rather than effective help. In this scene, written with grotesque irony, the imperial and royal youngsters play ball with the peoples of Europe with the same naturalness as they once played in their common nursery with their toy ball.

King Louis remains alone when he discovers that everybody wishes the battle to be lost: the aristocrats calculate on his death, since his childlessness means they can compete for his throne. They hurry to war because they are afraid of arming the serfs, whom the pope has called on to participate in a crusade. They disguise their private interests under heroic poses. In a typical scene, they become intoxicated by their own patriotic feelings and start toward sure defeat with the rhetoric of nationalism. In this disastrous situation, Louis II has no choice other than suicide. He takes command of the army and, as his great predecessor, Stephen, 500 years earlier, he commends the country to the mercy of God.

József Ruszt, who directed the National Theatre of Szeged production, sees the play from the viewpoint of the theatre of rites. His king experiences ruling as a nightmare and in private life he is not so much in love with his wife but implores Christ with religious devotion. In the most emphatic point of the performance, the huge cross suspended from the theatre's cupola slowly descends onto the stage. Louis clings to the life-size Christ and begs for redemption in a whisper. The prayer is repeated in the final scene. This performance narrows a little the interpretation, and fits into the tradition which appeals to transcendent heights.

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Another leap forward of 250 years in history, and a new king appears on the horizon

who has been the hero of several plays. (Two of the best-known Hungarian writers, Dezső Szomory and László Németh, also wrote about him.) The Austrian emperor Joseph II whom Hungarians used to call the hatted king because he was reluctant to be crowned, in protest against the Hungarian Constitution that preserved medieval conditions: this attitude provoked the hostility of the Hungarian nobility. In Margit Gáspár's play *The Emperor Is Far Away*, Joseph II expresses his opinion on the Constitution and the conservative nobility: "They say that I must take the oath if I put the crown of Saint Stephen on my head, so I prefer not to put it on." The crown, the symbol of the Hungarian state, which King Stephen commended to God in Sándor Sík's play is linked here to social progress and the building of the country.

This play has been clearly written in our days. The dramatist, past eighty, has written a youthful piece on the need for reform. The historical parallel is not artificial since Joseph II was a reformer, he tried "to improve the quality of society." His reforms covered economics and politics, he issued decrees on customs, reorganised the political institutional system, proclaimed religious tolerance. In so doing, however, he was running counter to the interests of the Hungarian nobility, guarding their privileges and resisting reforms with reference to the justified or alleged concerns for national independence. The most tragic conflict or rather pseudo-conflict of Hungarian history became acute again: homeland or progress? The nobility proved to be more powerful: on his death-bed Joseph II withdrew most of his reformist decrees.

In the play, the king is a minor character, the hero is Mátyás Ráby, his confidant on whom Mór Jókai, the great nineteenth-century writer, wrote his novel "Captive Ráby"; the stage version is based on it. Joseph II sends his trusted friend to Szentendre, a small Hungarian town, to find out why the Hungarian gentry so fiercely resists Euro-



peanisation. Ráby is handicapped in advance because anybody nominated by the emperor "must prove all the time that, despite this he has remained a good Hungarian." Hence he fails in his attempts to sweep clean the Augean stables of corrupt public life; indeed, he is the victim of a miscarriage of justice and can extricate himself from prison only with difficulty. As the play's title says, the emperor is far away; he manages to save the life of his man somehow but his programme of reform suffers failure in local meshes of interests.

Those who sense up-to-date overtones are not mistaken, especially concerning references to preparations for the social conditions of the new century; the play is set in the late 1700s. To cover herself the playwright sends on the stage a representative of posterity, the strolling player Figúrás who summarises the comments on the present in aphorism or song. But the acerbic and disillusioned footnotes are misleading, they should be read backwards because they manifest the intellectual's romantic inclination, which forces those who dream of improving society to stubborn struggle. These are the men who—in Simon Bolivar's words chosen as motto—wish to plough the ocean. Mátyás Ráby, the middle-class hero remains finally alone just as his royal predecessors, Stephen and Louis. His sweetheart who, in the most critical moments, has offered a blissful alternative in private life to the frustrated world-redeemer, wearies of the futureless struggle and joins a company of actors. Ráby travels to France where the revolution of his dreams is taking place, but he is almost arrested as a spy; he clears himself of the accusation with the utmost difficulty. The dying Joseph II entrusts his reformist dreams to the future. When the play ends it seems that the fate of Hungary is still where the kings of the past have placed it: in the hands of God.

The production in the József Attila Theatre of Budapest was directed by István Iglódy as a school-play in the best sense of

the word, in the simple style of illustrated chronicles. The theatre operates in a workers' district, the bulk of its audience is non-intellectual. All the better if we could believe that they are applauding not only the actors but also the reforms.

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The last stage of the historical journey has brought us to the present. There are no kings any more, the middle class exists still but this play is about manual workers. The protagonists of György Schwajda's play are the so-called lumpenproletariat. A couple whom we meet only at 4 a.m. when Józsi, the husband, sets off for work. His wife Aranka wakes him and Józsi crawls out every day from the coal-bin where he has spent the night instead of the bed. Their brief, curt dialogue tells us what happened the previous night. Quickly the couple's way of life is unfolded from the intentionally delayed exposition. Józsi brings home his modest salary but every morning he collects the scraps of food in his briefcase and takes them to the inn-keeper after work who fattens a vulture with leftovers and gives Józsi liquor in return. He arrives home completely drunk every evening, and rouses his three children from sleep to sing the national anthem together at midnight. In the morning, he does not remember anything: he wonders a little then starts off to work with the scraps of food in his briefcase. In the evening, everything starts again.

Society rallies to help the underprivileged family. At first the rowdyish, boisterous Józsi has only to pay a fine for which naturally Aranka must find the money while she has not even enough for food and clothing. Later, not only the house porter helps them but also the district council and Józsi's work-place, and finally television comes to make a deterrent report about the unfortunate woman, the victim of alcoholism. As the result of all this help, Józsi makes his family sing the anthem in court instead of the room; he



smashes not the kitchen furniture but television sets in a shop-window, and does not beat Aranka up but kills the wife of the porter who has started the whole thing off. Before Józsi, sober, sets off to the police to give himself up, he sings the Anthem for the last time: "God bless Hungarians..."

Here, as one can see, the national poem stands as a symbol different from the tradition. The play's title is "Anthem"; ten years ago, when it was first performed, most critics analysed it as a drama of the absurd, while remarking that its representation of reality was almost naturalistic. In opposition to most dramas of the absurd, *Anthem* does not treat general human conditions but concrete social ones: it does not examine things from the metaphysical viewpoint but from the social; its interpretation of the world is not transcendent but highly empirical. If we examine the logic of this grotesque tragedy, it becomes clear that it shows the reverse of formal humanitarian action which cannot really solve a social problem. Now one can already say openly that the economic and political institutional system of East European socialism has not been able to solve basic conflicts such as pauperisation, mental degeneration, and marginalisation. Recently, several plays have been dealing with this, thus György Spiró's *Csirkefej* (Chickenhead)\*, which has also received a production in Bonn. Schwajda wrote *Anthem* when the social

weight of the problem was not yet expressed openly, when the theme was more or less taboo.

The play, revived in the Játékszín Theatre of Budapest, was directed by János Taub who worked for many years in Transylvania, is living now in Israel and works in Hungary increasingly often. (Last time I reviewed his version of János Székely's *Caligula's Proconsul*.\*) With his strong inclination to stylisation, he emphasised chiefly the Beckettian features of the play: he kept the naturalistic environment in the background and represented the characters as sociological amoebas. Apart from a shabby piece of kitchen furniture or two, there are only tokens, the barren dialogues are embedded in the flow of information coming from the radio and the TV spots advertising luxury articles. Compared to them, the failure of these people pushed into an underprivileged social position is even more heart-rendingly amusing.

The real tragedy in the play, and in the production, resides in the characters' efforts to articulate their situation. Since they have no adequate words, they sing the Anthem. This symbol, many times used falsely and demagogically, is here the stammering manifestation of national consciousness, a bitter, sobering theatrical moment calling for self-examination.

TAMÁS KOLTAI

\* NHQ 106

\*NHQ 113.



## A GENERATION WORN OUT BY PEACE

### *The Open Forum of Young Hungarian Playwrights, 1988*

This is the fourth year that this Open Forum has been held in Egervár Castle and in the Hevesi Sándor Theatre of Zalaegerszeg. The idea originally came from József Ruszt whose starting point was that it is almost impossible for young Hungarian playwrights to have their plays staged; for economic reasons, theaters do not want to take risks and thus mainly stage the classics or the works of internationally known contemporary authors. In 1984, Ruszt believed that an annual professional forum might encourage tyro playwrights working in a vacuum and, to this end, the director offered the studio stage of the Hevesi Sándor Theatre for the plays the Forum judged best.

Since then, the Open Forum has become institutionalized: a professional committee selects the works to be discussed and presented and the five or so plays selected are argued over by playwrights, critics, dramaturgs, directors and actors. The Open Forum is of great interest—not only for the playwrights concerned but theatrical professionals too—because the plays discussed and presented (in part) are mostly on the present state of Hungarian society.

Currently the Open Forum is the only opportunity in Hungary where young playwrights can have their works explored and set. For the tyro writers, a first play in Zalaegerszeg means nationwide professional attention. Those who have a play presented by the workshop of the Hevesi Sándor Company, can expect other companies to be interested. The Forum has acquired a broader interest in that recent visitors have included theatre people from the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

The Hungary of today was the leading topic of the Open Forum of 1988 too. Four of the plays selected for discussion dealt, di-

rectly and realistically, with social problems or the general state of Hungarian society.

One of the most original and bravest works discussed at the Forum was Miklós Györfy's *Don Sarlós*. Set in a villa in Buda on New Year's Eve 1987, this is a play reflecting the moral bankruptcy of society and all its generations. It has a funnel structure: the first act starts as a chamber-play, in the second the number of the people coming to the party on New Year's Eve increases to eight, and the third act is a dance of death, in which almost the entire street invades the stage. The structure indicates a dynamism: the leaving of the flat and the gathering alludes to the process of leaving the political centre and returning there again. However, different generations meet each other without any real confrontation at the scene of the party.

The play, then, is drama examining the background and destiny of the forties generation of intellectuals. Their life is completely ruined. What they do in the present is banal to us, their monologues conjuring up the past are more important; these, however, do not carry much dramatic tension, they do not allow the play to quicken its pace. These figures reflect the inability to handle life that was the hallmark of the generation which was subject to the shock of 1968: their amorality permits them to commit any kind of crime. Thus the play may be looked upon as a kind of Central-European gamesmanship, although what the figures mostly present is their techniques of unfitness for life. In terms of dramatic structure, the work is a brilliant piece of marking time, free of dramatic processes.

One of the main characters, Győző, constantly harps on the distant similarity between Jesuitry and the centrally directed East European state structures. The other main



character, János, stands outside the medium presented on the stage right to the very end: he is the only more or less ethical being. He carries out his moral judgement on the company by executing himself at the end of the play with the symbols of the hammer and sickle. Those taking part are one of a kind, almost puppets: the creatures of a petty society, members of a generation worn out by peace. In a sense, Miklós Györfy's first play added to István Csúrk's plays of social criticism. In *Don Sarlós* the central point of the characters is their avoidance of confrontation and this both indicates their survival and their morality.

Three generations of the lower-middle and artisan class are at the centre of János Gécz's *Sötétség* (Darkness). The emptiness of the two couples living in a high rise block in the suburbs is indicated by their common family names too. One of the men holds a middle cadre post, the other is a mechanic; yet their way of life is scarcely different. They are protozoons in a chaotic world of sentiments who fail to respond to anything and their real element is darkness, the "national shortcut"; in this, they are able to liberate themselves as creatures of instinct. They, however, are merely immoral; in contrast, their childrens' generation is consistently amoral, exploiting everything and everyone with a soulless rationality in order to attain objectives which prove to be unattainable. Nor can they act rationally in an irrational medium either. A trace of morals and love is only to be found in the grandparents' generation, represented by the elderly concierge in the play. Although the old woman is a perfect representation of the ideal type of concierge for she knows everything about those who live in the house, is happy to indulge in intrigue, she at least loves the cats whom she gives a home to in her flat. The last of her cats falls victim to the dissecting knife of the medical student (who represents the generation of the grandsons). The ritual killing of the cat is the final term in the series of dehumanisation.

On being informed of the death of her favourite cat, the housekeeper in *Darkness* is struck by a heart attack. Tried by a jury of cats, she is acquitted. Perhaps she is of the last generation for which a verdict of acquittal can exist at all.

István Dancs's *Bilincskecsok* (Handcuff Keys) is also a play which directly criticizes society and retains realistic elements. The central figure is a middle-aged woman living alone, whose intellectual horizons, origins and life sets her more as working class rather than among the white-collar class. Dancs raises the questions of how the individual is oppressed and loses ambition; the play also presents a regular self-exploiting society of women, the mother oppressing daughter, daughter oppressing sister.

Men appear only by accident and on the margin; their personalities are thus dim and uncircumscribed. However, they are oppressors and oppressed at the same time. Paradoxically enough, it is a policeman who attempts to resolve the whole situation, a policeman willing to assume the role of liberator. (He himself is alienated, a chaos of emotions.) The attempt, however, meets with failure; the family mechanism of oppression proves to be stronger than he is.

Everyone in the play has two faces and nobody knows what they want. An interesting, an essential, question is being raised but the deficiency of narrative does not enable him to clearly relate what he has to say.

More nature technique is available to Sándor Lezsák in his first play *80 vödör levegő* (80 Buckets of Air), a socialist drama of the absurd. The play is an experiment in every respect: its conflict is consciously retarded, the figures are not sketched strongly enough nor the situations precisely enough. The grotesque tone of the opening becomes naturalistic by the end. Also worth noting is the fact that the play makes no hints, unequivocal to everyone, at painful turning points in Hungarian history such as Trianon, the Arrow-cross terror of 1944/45 or the deportations of the Stalinist years.



In fact, were there any such references, a better understanding might be had of the two central figures, the Old Man and the Old Woman. All we do learn about them is that they may have been small landowners and they, especially the Old Man, have been infected by the paranoia of survival. For he is prey to an obsession that a new global war is just about to break out and all the great powers aim to seize a Hungary which has been pretty well maimed by now. He makes a shelter in the bottom of the well in the yard of his house, equipping it with home-made protective systems and enough food to last years. His persecution phobia, for which there are justifiable reasons after all, results in the Old Woman rebelling against her tyrannical, monomaniacal husband and, in an attempt to escape, her accidentally blowing up the shelter and destroying them.

Another first play, *Horatio* by Zsolt Pozsgai, who is just twenty years old, is much more indirect. The play is a continuation of the Hamlet dilemma, in which attention is shifted to the other characters in Shakespeare's work. The axis of *Horatio* is Hamlet's diary and the tribulations the diary has had to go through before it finds its way to Horatio. He is now Fortinbras' counsellor and when he finally receives it, its message is of no help in a daily life lived under constant external oppression.

The play tackles the idea of how it is possible to remain a decent Danish patriot under Norwegian oppression, when insurrection by the people is doomed to failure because of the enormous power of the invader and Fortinbras, governor of Denmark, is a well-meaning tyrant with a sound moral judgement, a kind of optimal solution for a weak, humiliated and helpless Denmark that has fallen prey to the great powers.

Structurally, Pozsgai's play turns on the continuity of starting again, referring to a dark historical fate which neither insurrection nor heroic death can change. If Hamlet himself has become the symbol of Denmark, then the diary is bound to be lost or

its message is doomed to be neutralized in the changed medium. Pozsgai's characters are one-dimensional; only Luppo, the omniscient Norwegian spy, conspirator and omnipotent counsellor is a fully traditional character. However, perhaps not surprisingly, the mechanism of oppression operates in this historical parable, too, in a way similar to the way it does in the directly critical, naturalistic works analysed by the Forum. The principal male figures react to oppression in public life by oppressing their lovers who, in their despair, enter into a Lesbian relationship with each other. Horatio himself becomes the absolute victim of an historical deadlock; in happier times he might have become a statesman, now, however, he is no more than a theatrical anti-hero. In him, the Hamlet fate is completed: reasoning is the death of action, and in his unfortunate situation all Horatio can do is reason.

András Nagy's *Anna Karenina pályaudvar* (The Anna Karenina Railway Station) is the transcription of a great novel intended for a great stage, for what must be accommodated is a whole railway station. The playwright sets the love triangle in the period of the Crimean war and Karenin is so much younger than his model in Tolstoy's work that, in theory, he can be Vronsky's rival. The railway station, in which all the action takes place, is the arena of the actions of social publicity. The characters are of epic inspiration and they seem to be asynchronous. Their actions, too, appear not in the author's instructions but in the dialogue itself.

To what extent is *Anna Karenina Railway Station* a play for today? After all, the railway station itself, as metaphor, is a typical device of the last century. Anna's desire to realize herself completely does not place her among today's women, only and at best, among the forerunners of the early twentieth-century suffragettes. Association with the present would be facilitated if the language the characters use were not so elegantly literary.

To round off the genres at the Open Fo-



rum, also discussed was József P. Körössi's absurd drama *Házigazdánk, avagy az Ötórás tea* (Our Host or the Five-o'clock Tea). The author thought it best to "clear away" all the concrete elements from the stage: thus the reader of the work finds it difficult to imagine where, when, in what flat the action is taking place, what the characters are like; what is especially difficult to understand is what is taking place on the stage. Nor is there opportunity to learn of the characters' past or how they are connected to one another.

An interpretation of the play may be facilitated by the fact that it was written to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the birth of Mrożek's *Tango*, wishing to call the attention to the continuous threat of fascism and terrorism. On the stage everything is downgraded and devalued; that may be a remote reference to the personality cult and the terror of power at any time.

In the world created by Körössi all that is bad may happen while the radio, almost continuously on, tries to make the characters believe that all is for the best. Of course, the play would depict a really horrible Apocalypse if the transport workers figuring in it still had something to empty; however, on the dramatic level there is not even an end of the world any more. Aggression, not humour is the hallmark of the language. This again raises the question that dramatic theory has been chewing over for years, whether it is possible to represent on the stage shapelessness by shapelessness, a morass by a morass.

Of course, if we look upon József P. Körössi's work as a version of the absurd carried to the extreme, or just as a parody of the absurd plays, then a judgement is far from being unequivocal. The library room described by the author as the setting has no precise features or character. The reader of the manuscript of the play does not learn much about the strange agreement under which the owner of the house suffers his enormous library to be stolen and himself to be tortured. Thus the fate of the Hungarian nationality minorities in East Central Europe today is not addressed.

One of the customs of the Open Forum is for two plays to be given a preliminary run-through on the stage. This is a heroic undertaking on the part of the Zalaegerszeg company, since there are only three days allocated for rehearsals, which is equally wearing on director and cast. In spite of that, these run-throughs naturally not undertaking to present the whole play, are always refreshing for those attending the Forum.

In 1988, János Gécz's *Darkness*, considered to be the worst by the critics, proved to be highly interesting when put on the stage and Sándor Lezsák's *80 Buckets of Air* proved to be a play ready for the stage, and what seemed to be artificial while being read sprang to life on the stage. In view of the publicity the Open Forum receives in Hungary and abroad, the other plays selected for analysis may also meet with similar fortune in other theatres.

IRÉN KISS



## FACTS ON THE SCREEN

István Dárday-Györgyi Szalai: *A dokumentátor* (The Documentator);  
Gyula Gazdag: *Túsz történet* (Stand Off)

The 1989 Hungarian Film Review confirmed the specific and perhaps unique position the Hungarian cinema is currently enjoying as a mirror for the historical and social changes which have begun in Hungary, and also, unfortunately, for the rapid economic regression of the country. Hungarian film-makers are fighting a heroic struggle for survival against a background of a fall in state support, partly due to the steeply rising inflation, and the diminishing amount of money available for leisure spending. Indeed, they can triumphantly point to the fact that in spite of all, this year's Review saw thirty-one films projected, considerably more than in the recent past. This is true, but the increase in numbers has been the result of a major change in the types of film made. Nearly half of the films on show are documentaries, many filmed years ago, shelved and only now shown publicly, as a token of *glasnost*, a process that is now reaching areas inconceivable even a year ago. This is also indicated in the change of name, up till now the Hungarian Feature Film Review, to Hungarian Film Review. It would be unjust to assign the practically unparalleled unfolding of documentary-making in Hungary solely to economic factors, even though they are considerable and strongly felt. Social problems, or rather national problems of vital importance, which for several decades were swept under the carpet have surfaced all at once; since the number of people able to bear personal witness to the national tragedies of the last fifty years is rapidly decreasing, it has become urgent to have them speak. So from a Hungarian point of view it is of great significance indeed that these films received the green light, virtually at the last moment. They contribute to a clear view of the past

for the present generation and also render great service to historians.

On the other hand, this type of full-length documentary, interview and report film in which people speak of their lives, their experiences, their destiny, make the overall picture excessively introspective. For people abroad they may be scarcely comprehensible and of little interest; indeed, attendance figures here in Hungary do not come up to those for feature films, particularly for those documentaries three, four or even more hours in length.

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There are four crucial areas which Hungarian film-makers producing documentaries are concerned with. All four raise problems more or less valid for the whole of eastern Central Europe. At the open discussion after the showing one of the members of the judging committee, a historian, said: "We historians lag far, far behind this level of presentation."

The first area concerns the disclosure of the crimes of the Stalin period in all their complexities. This includes the film *Törvény-sértés nélkül* (In Keeping with the Law)\* by the Gulyás brothers, on internal exile in the 1950s, and the staggering film by Livia Gyarmathy and Géza Böszörményi, *Recsk, 1950-1953. Egy kényszermunkatábor története* (Recsk 1950-1953. The Story of a Secret Labour Camp), which they had preceded last year with *Faludy György költő* (The Poet György Faludy), on the noted Hungarian antifascist poet, a former inmate of Recsk who now lives in Toronto. (Böszörményi,

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one of the film's directors, had also been a prisoner in the Recsk camp.) Also included in this category is Judit Ember's *Pócspetri*, about the first show trial in the anticlerical campaign during the Rákosi period; this became known as the Pócspetri case and the pretext for it was furnished by the death of a policeman in circumstances, that have not been cleared up yet. Another work by Judit Ember shown in the Information Section at the Review was her six-part series *Menedékjog* (Right of Asylum), in which six of the survivors of the forty-two Hungarian politicians and their families who, on November 4, 1956, fled to the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest with Imre Nagy and Géza Losonczy, recount their being forcibly taken to, and held, in Rumania, along with all they know of the court-room reprisals that led to the executions in the years that followed.

A second painful theme concerns the calumniations and humiliations of ethnic minorities, which gathered headway after the Peace Treaty of Trianon, and have reached their climax in Ceaușescu's neo-genocidal policy on minorities, the systematic lunacy of his bulldozer solution.

Sándor Sára made a stunning series of films—*Sír az út előttem* (The Road Before Me Weeps)\*—on the Hungarian peasants who, during the reign of Maria Theresa, fled to the Bukovina and settled there in purely Hungarian villages. During the Second World War, they moved into villages formerly inhabited by deported Serbs, then, after the return of the Yugoslav partisans, were uprooted again to move into the homes of similarly deported Germans. This process is continuing with the oppression of Hungarians, native to Transylvania for many centuries, and forming the largest national minority in Europe, their loss of human rights and their flight to Hungary.

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The third subject area concerns the history of Hungary in the Second World War. The area under exploration is of a country and a people which became the victim, and virtually a toy, of great power relations, becoming involved on the wrong side in the war—in conflict with their own interests and against the wishes of most of them. In the wake of the criminal decisions taken by their purblind and fanatic leaders, they perished in huge numbers in the Don bend, in a campaign for which there was neither political nor military justification. The disclosure of this is one of the merits of Sándor Sára's series, entitled *Pergőtűz* (Drumfire), Parts 3, 4 and 5 of which have now been shown.

Finally, the fourth group of subjects concerns post-Stalinism, more precisely the criticism of the neo-Stalinist political structure and institutions which, with their anti-democratic features and manipulated arbitrariness, have impeded *perestroika* in Hungary. Ágnes Tölgyesi has made a film on the surviving nuns of the Hungarian religious orders, *Evilágból* (From this World). János Erdélyi and Dezső Zsigmond's *Egy zárkózott ügy* (Another Secretive Case) deals with the manipulations of a village leadership, their oppression of democracy and public demands. István Tényi's *Felmentés nélkül* (Not freed on appeal) treats the vilification of an old and dissatisfied worker who sent an anonymous letter to the Party Central Committee. Through the good offices of an officious postmaster, it arrives at the State Security Department of the County Police Office, who conduct an inquiry against a person unknown. György Dobray deals with prostitution in Hungary, for long a taboo subject, while József Magyar, a fast-rising documentary film-maker, studies the links between heart attacks—Hungary's statistics are the worst in the world—and an ailing society in *Lenul-lázott légión* (The Written Off Legion). The list could easily be continued.

This economic, social, and intellectual panorama, a mirror to its age, is in keeping



with what the feature films are saying as well. These, however, employ the more esoteric idiom of a specific Hungarian handling—the term Hungarian aestheticism was first used by Jean de Baroncelli to describe it. *Álombrigád* (Dream Brigade) by András Jeles, *A dokumentátor* (The Documentator) by István Dárday and Györgyi Szalai, and *Jézus Krisztus horoszkópja* (Jesus Christ's Horoscope) by Miklós Jancsó, have already become involved in controversies. The discussion raises questions such as whether they have succeeded in creating a new film idiom, or in Jancsó's case, whether his film signifies a reinvigoration or a tired self-repetition. These questions I propose to return to in future reviews.

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What was in short supply at this Review were narrative films meant for the general public, using traditional means in treating important issues and capable of competing with the American film, to win back the dwindling Hungarian audiences for Hungarian films. There were altogether three such films: Géza Bereményi's *Eldorádó* (The Midas Touch), set immediately after the war, the adventures of the uncrowned king of the flea market under the new conditions. *Soha, sehol, senkinek* (Never, Nowhere, to No One) by Ferenc Téglassy, a directorial debut, recounts the staggering story of the deportation of his family in 1951 through the eyes of a small boy. Finally, Gyula Gazdag's *Tűz-történet* (Stand Off), on two muddle-headed, desperate teenage boys, taking eighteen girls hostage to extort a huge ransom and departure from the country. Typically, all three of these films are based on real events and so, even if at one remove, they are of a documentary nature. Bereményi speaks of his grandfather, Téglassy relates the life of his own family in the grim years, Gyula Gazdag reconstructs an event known as the Balassagyarmat hostage story, which took place in 1973.

Even more typically, the biggest hit of

recent years, the only one of these films to draw capacity audiences, is Péter Bokor's *Isten akaratából* (By the Grace of God), a filmed interview with Otto von Habsburg, the last Hungarian crown prince, now one of the Vice-Presidents of the Parliament of Europe.

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As to two films currently being shown in the cinemas, the title of *The Documentator* suggests some kind of a job, duty or assignment. The protagonist is a sharp operator in the video black market, who through his legal and illegal operations, "lives with his beautiful blonde girlfriend at the peak of Hungarian consumers' society in his private Eden," as one review put it. He has the strange hobby of collecting various video documents which reflect the history and the people of our age, in their political, economic, cultural, and psychological peculiarities. The documentation played in the film is in places undoubtedly fascinating. But since it is a question of a private hobby for private use, one feels the makers of the film (written and directed by István Dárday and Györgyi Szalai) to be the real documentators, much more than the actual protagonist. Taken all in all, the film, with its positive and negative features, is an interesting neologistic attempt. However, it seems to be at a stage Esperanto was when it was still only known to its inventor, Ludovik Zamenhof and a narrow circle around him. Furthermore, Esperanto was intended for universal use, to make communication easier and simpler—something which cannot be said of this film.

The Dárday-Szalai combination wish to document their hero and not to portray, to analyse, to present, or to describe him. They wish to render him through and within the objects which surround him and become the objectives of his passions and endeavours. The problem is that these externals, however interesting they may be by themselves, remain externals. They can provide the key to



a period but cannot provide a key to a man. Particularly not to a man whose character blends contradictory features. Raffael is both a cynically egoistic and hedonistic beneficiary of the *dolce vita* of the Hungarian *nouveaux riches*, and an intellectual engrossed in the problems of the day, trying to capture them through the help of audio-visual documents, all in one.

I think the two directors must have been taken by our contemporary symptoms of alienation, by the state to which people are being manipulated, a process in which the audio-visual media play a growing role. What they wished to say was something like this: manipulation duplicates people, who live in part the ready-made life of the television man and in part their own life, but because of this duality, neither of these lives are authentic, both are sham. The synopsis of the film seems to reinforce our suspicion: "The film is built out of the stereotype people of a matrimonial triangle."

Dárdai and Szalai are concerned with the *hinterland* of the characters, their base of operation. For this reason they treat the plot in a rough-and-ready manner, as an off-chance, and instead underline the elements which are accidental to the plot as the essential. Thus they did not record the story of this eternal triangle, either including it in the scenario or later, extemporising it through the camera, but hoped for the video documents to tell everything necessary for the understanding of the story. But the video documents do not tell these things: they are incapable of doing so. Because the material world—the video tapes and television inserts—can speak on behalf of the creators but they cannot speak instead of them. The film strives for an extensive visual totality, but this visual totality allows no room for empathy towards the human problems. The ordinary viewer understands some of it, without understanding the rest. By and large, he can follow the love strand but is unable to digest its connection with its hero's documentary passion. Yet it is this which the film

relates in minute detail, without actually being about it. Dárdai and Szalai have fallen victim to an illusion—their faith in the omnipotence of the image.

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The hostage drama at Balassagyarmat profoundly shocked people in 1973. It was the first criminal offence of its kind in Hungary and perhaps in the whole socialist world. It shattered the illusion that such things are only possible in the West. What made it so gruesome was the desperate and banal brutality through which the two teenagers carried out their well-contrived but infantile plan. The two brothers were the children of a high-ranking army officer father and a leading party functionary mother, members of the establishment. The Hungarian public followed the drama of eighteen trainee nurses taken hostage in their hall of residence in a rural town and kept captive by stolen weapons; the young criminals threatened to kill them, blackmailing the authorities for one million US dollars, half a million Swiss francs and West German marks, and a lorry and a plane to take them out of the country. The public also lived through the social drama, which should have served to disperse the illusions that had been nurtured on the prevailing moral conditions in the country, indicating the dangers inherent in the evolution of a caste system and in the abuse of privilege.

Antal Végh produced a literary treatment of the story, which Gyula Gazdag used for his own scenario in his film *Stand Off*. It is an excellent and authentic film, well up to the professional norms of a taut action film. Its cinematographic professionalism compares well with anything done abroad, while it also maintains the virtues of the school of reconstructed documentarism one of whose creators is Gazdag himself.

The basic situation is that the two spoilt, privileged young thugs are in possession of deadly weapons that could go off any minute.



The girls are at the mercy of the whims of their captors, without food or water, not even allowed to relieve themselves in a normal way. Suspense, dread, despondent resistance immediately retaliated against, panic all ensue. The police try to resolve it without giving rise to a catastrophe and saving all the lives; they have to face an incalculable adversary, not knowing what steps to take to play for time with or what would provoke the hooligans to butchery. And they also have to face the understandably growing impatience and stress of the parents, relatives, friends and the whole town and its environment. Just as in real life, this war of nerves has a semi-happy ending. The girls are saved, even if psychologically worn out, but the elder of the two boys is shot dead by a marksman.

The film masterfully renders this tension. The emerging faces, including those of the girls, are flashes of character and moral outlook. Gazdag's casting and directing of the actors is faultless. Ary Beri as the elder of

the two terrorists, Gábor Svidrony as his younger brother, Tibor Bitskey, the colonel father, going to pieces and taking to drink, Judit Pogány, the party functionary, who has settled in the town with the arrogance and isolation of a coloniser, Zbigniew Zapasiewicz (dubbed by Tamás Jordán) in the role of the police colonel in charge of the operation, working with such a honourable sense of responsibility, István Szabó (the Oscar-winning director) as the house-physician venturing into the lion's den ready to sacrifice his own life—are all masterstrokes of casting. The girls in the supporting roles produce polished acting. Cameraman Elemér Ragályi has excelled by avoiding bombastic solutions.

This film lived up to its promise. I sense a modicum of snobbery in the lack of attention it met with at the last film survey, almost as if craftsmanship was being discounted.

ERVIN GYERTYÁN



# MUSICAL LIFE

ERZSÉBET TUSA

## ORPHEUS HAS LOST HIS LYRE

As many of the arts in Hungary, music is also undergoing major and badly needed change. Can the teaching of music in Hungary—for all its worldwide reputation—need reforming? What the world actually knows of Hungarian music education is the Kodály method. It has to be admitted, however, that the Kodály motto of "Music for All" has not only been unrealized but appears to be a hopelessly remote utopia. Kodály's originally comprehensive conception of teaching was first reduced to a method and that, in turn, was further distorted, becoming an end instead of a means, and an end in itself at that.

In addition, everyone is aware that the old forms no longer suit contemporary needs. Approaches to education have remained practically unchanged for some fifty years, indeed in some cases for as long as a hundred years, while needs are changing by the hour so to speak. Just to mention one decisive change: new sound producers have appeared. Earlier, the daughter of the house at the piano or the quartet of friends or family members were the sound producers, while the amateurs (who loved music) and the dilettantes (who took delight in it) were the context in which music-making existed.

The trouble is that the goal of musical education is to turn our children into mere sound producers and nobody remains to love, enjoy and even, perhaps, understand

music. Consequently, the first crucial change must affect the make-up of music schools: instead of turning out might-have-been professionals and artists in a void, the school should lay the foundations for an attachment to music for life, a spiritual resource for everyone, whatever profession he or she may eventually follow.

Instead, what we have is a contradictory system of admission, to begin with. Music schools only admit those who display signs of talent (though we all know how delusive they can be). The majority, however, drop out sooner or later and so all the future holds in store for most children is a negative experience and failure. It would be far more desirable if everyone had equal opportunities to discover music; in the course of this process, those who have talents requiring special care will be identified.

In Hungary, there are some 150 state-run music schools where music is taught and there are many state-run schools where no music is taught, in what often appeals to our foreign colleagues as a system worthy of emulation. But is this system so excellent, after all? In other countries, there may be fewer state music schools, but most schools—primary and secondary—have their own chamber orchestras or ensembles that make music happily and to a reasonable standard.

As for the training of professionals, we do not so much need large numbers of artists



giving or dreaming of giving concerts as we need musicians who can pass on the infinitely important contents of music to children in a manner that is appropriate and attractive.

One thing I am convinced of is that what music contains is of crucial importance. And this is exactly what we have to preserve for the musical culture of the future. But in order to specify content, we will have to define the place of western music in time and space.

The "in time" has to be measured on a geo-historical scale. If we confine ourselves to European culture and "European" music in the short span of history, pointing out facts such as the emergence of the piano, that at first only the middle fingers played the keyboard instruments and so forth, the justifiable question arises as to what fingering and hand-hold have to do with the sheer magic of sound, a magic that must have been a reality in prehistoric times too.

I do not mean to depreciate technical perfection, since this is useful to have. But pupils must not be turned away from music just because they hold their hands like this or their instruments like that. It is perhaps the magic of sound that has prompted them to study music and now the teacher is dispelling the magic. Surely it is terrible, grotesque, and even satanic, that it is often the music teacher who shatters the magic.

Comparing the different musical cultures "in space," we shall find that, no matter in how many ways the octave is divided, into 21 or 7, or any number of equal parts, the octave is always perceived in the same way. These relations between string and wave length also apply when extended in the micro and the macro. If we enlarge wavelengths to the order of magnitude of the planetary system and to distances measured in light years, the relations will remain the same. If there existed a super-creature capable of perceiving them, he would experience the octave as the octave. Obviously, these proportions can also be transposed into the micro. When sound waves reach a certain

length, they automatically transform into earthquakes. The phenomenon of sound, so central to our lives, pursues its existence as the life or motion of the Earth. We could go on listing example after example from rotational or orbiting motion right up to motion of galactic dimensions. Conversely, when the microworld is examined, we can proceed through the micro music of bird song to the realm of ultra-sound which, we now know, is the natural medium of communication among dolphins and bats, for example. But once arrived in this domain, we have no reason to assume that these relations no longer prevail even in the world of sub-atomic particles.

Some might infer that all this goes to prove the insignificance of music being restricted to a negligibly small range. I am positive, however, that the polar opposite is true: it is precisely because music is organically embedded in the relations between the microcosmos and the macrocosmos while being perceptible in this narrow "human" range, that music is significant.

Thus, one of the important aspects a new pedagogy of music could concern itself with, is the cosmic relations of music.

Another aspect of music that is pushed aside behind the problem of fingering and hold is that music is an art. To perform a musical piece means giving the message hidden in the work a chance of being made flesh. The available work is the stabilized form, and performance turns it into a moving *Gestalt*. Goethe made a subtle distinction between these two concepts: *gewordene Form* and *bewegte Gestalt*. It is as in a tale where someone or something has been turned to stone and someone else is required to shatter the spell and redeem the petrified substance. How often, we may wonder, does this redemption take place in music teaching and in concerts? The answer would be, I fear, disheartening. Notes made audible at the necessary pitch and with the necessary decibels is not yet music. (Let me add that the increase in pitch and decibels, so fashionable



today, appears to be inversely related to the chance of redemption.)

Yes, Orpheus seems to have lost his lyre.

The third aspect to be emphasized here is the significance of music in the development of the personality. An experiment was conducted at the Institute of Psychology of the University of Salzburg under the guidance of the late Wilhelm Revers. The objective was to examine how music influences the development of intelligence. I expected to read in the report that the influence is indeed great. But Professor Revers did not do what most researchers would normally do: he refused to slightly alter the parameters and modify the hypothesis so as to achieve the results he had anticipated. Instead, he acknowledged that he had failed to obtain any results in this form but pointed out that he had arrived at a far more important recognition. As is well known, the right hemisphere of a child's brain—which carries imagination, intuition, holistic vision—is still undisturbed, while one of the duties of schooling is to develop the left hemisphere, the location of logical thinking and analytic vision. This, however, often results in a clear break or in distortion. The left hemisphere may be developed so successfully that imagination and intuition either waste away or assume a vague, strange, and unhealthy form. The above experiment has demonstrated that music absorbs both hemispheres in such a way that it largely contributes to a harmonious, balanced development. Thus music is not an optional gimmick or extra but an indispensable factor of development of the personality.

Most regrettably, traditional musical education all but ignores these basic potentials of music, those encompassing its relations with the microcosmos and macrocosmos, its being art, and its role in personality development.

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What could and should be done?

Here let me just list a few key words, without expanding upon them at length; they are current these days, anyway. Nevertheless, if we feel committed to laying the groundwork for future education and the teaching of music, these key concepts are not to be ignored.

One basic notion is integration.

Both culture in general, and music in particular, are conveyed along isolated channels now. Classical music has dropped popular music, while light music depreciated serious music. The necessary integration would not mean a blurring of the boundaries but a recognition of their true values, or, if you will, the development of a new value system.

But integration is necessary on a larger scale too, by which I mean a *rapprochement* between science and art. Quite independently of one another, Zoltán Kodály and the mathematician Alfréd Rényi put to paper the same sentence: "Science and art have one and the same root."

Another key concept is improvisation. All I wish to stress here is the reason why I consider it indispensable: because it prepares one for life. Just as an unexpected musical situation demands quick decisions, individual solutions, in the same way we must find adequate responses to the constantly changing problems that occur in everyday life. Since the problems are always new and different, stereotypes and inculcated responses are less and less satisfactory. Someone has voiced the harsh and severe opinion that if our youngsters are unable to improvise and make rapid decisions, they will be unfit for survival.

Of no less importance is group dynamics. It is much advertised in connection with things that are true and with things that are suspicious. It is, however, incontestable that in group activity, and through the medium of music, children learn to interact and communicate socially. Group work seems to be indispensable even in subjects that require



individual tuition (thus, in teaching instruments, one lesson a week should be individual, the other in a group, as is the practice in schools in Hungary). A brief description of the inverse relation between the traditional and the desirable future methods of teaching an instrument would run like this: formerly, the teacher brought the pupil to acquire a standardized knowledge in individual lessons, while under the streamlined system, the teacher should be able to give individual assignments tailored to each pupil within a group activity.

A concept closely related to these is creativity. Many books have been written on creativity, so let me only emphasize now the importance of not giving ready information to the child but guiding him to heuristic recognitions through as many "adventures" as possible and making the child able to creatively apply the knowledge and skills acquired. Modern instruction also needs creative teachers if they are to successfully devise individual tasks cut out for the personality of each pupil.

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What then has been done in Hungary so far in the areas mentioned?

In a 1983 article in *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* I surveyed new music paedagogical initiatives in Hungary.\* Let me add to this without aiming at completeness.

As regards integrated education, we have tried to synthesize, the interdisciplinary connections in the material construction of music. These relations elucidate the way how music is embedded in the microcosmos and the macrocosmos. The Hungarian experiments rely heavily on research carried out at the department of *Harmonikale Grundlagenforschung* at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, headed by Dr.

\* "Art Education or the Art of Education," *Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, No. 25, 1983.

Rudolf Haase. Adducing analogies, our experiments drew on quantum mechanics, the system of chemical elements, Mendel's basic laws, the planetary system and so forth. An intriguing kinship has been discovered concerning the coordinate system of the ancient Greeks' *lambdome*, the table of hexagrams, of "I Ching" and the genetic code. We have illuminated the geometric mean and the centrally important proportion of the Golden Section in various disciplines (in terms of astronomy, architecture, music, natural formations).

Since my 1983 survey, the model elaborated by Judit Dimény in her book *Nyev, zene, matematika* (Language, Music, Mathematics), and by Andrea Kárpáti in her project "Picture, Language, Music, Mathematics" has been spreading in the country. An editor in Hungarian Radio's youth section, Judit Dimény has turned the radio through her programmes into an important forum for integrated education. Andrea Kárpáti is advocating the new ideas at the Department of Education of the University, of Budapest and within the teacher training section of the Academy of Applied Arts.

A recent publication is Éva Vágvölgyi's "Do You See what I Mean?—Do I See what You Mean?" in which an integrated programme of art education is based on communication theory. In view of the increasing misbehaviour of our youngsters, the rigorously constructed programme's treatment of various behavioural forms makes it especially promising. The main chapters of the work are: Gestures, signs; Mimetic art; Regulation of interpersonal distance in situations of communication.

Over the past decades, motion has been relegated to the background even in music education in Hungary, since the Orff, the Dalcroze methods or the study of "rhythmics" established no "school." That is why Mária Tatai's recent model based on movement is so essential; it turns on an interesting tradition, that of orchestrics developed by Valéria Dienes. Let us summarize Mária Tatai's de-



scription of the model. In the system of orchestrics a movement has four determinants: spatiality, temporality, balance of forces, and meaning. Accordingly, theory itself divides into four main branches: the study of plasticity, rhythmicity, dynamics, and symbolics. The first branch is concerned with spatial constructions taken from human movements, with the geometry of the human body in motion. Rhythmics studies the temporal articulation of motion, similarly to musical rhythm and prosody. Dynamics explores the laws of a motion's expenditure of energy and examines the shifts of the centre of gravity and the kinetic rules affecting different parts of the human body. While perfecting a movement, we learn spatial precision, we improve our sense of time and acquire the ability to regulate the kinetic economy of the body, in compliance with the above three aspects of motion. These three physical determinants are at the service of the fourth: of meaning or expression. Movements bring to the surface some of our inner mental or psychological elements. The point to orchestrics is to enable us, through the examination and improvement of our movements, to convey to each other what is best expressed through the language of motion.

As for improvisation, the teaching methodology developed by Mária Apagyí and Ferenc Lantos still holds sway. Its stronghold is the Educational Centre at Pécs. Here follows a brief account of its development. Analogies were first sought for between music and the visual. Later movements and conceptual behaviour such as language and mathematics were examined. The guiding principle behind this work is an *aperçu* of Albert Szentgyörgyi's: "Nature is built on large principles. Nature does not construct distinct principles for a tree, a bush, a flower, or a man. All are built on a common, comprehensive basic principle—therefore it does not really matter what topic we study if we are intelligent enough to understand the basic principle, the structure of life." This basic standpoint is approached in two ways: (1) Sim-

ilarities and common bases in the structures of various fields are sought, that is, identity in variety. (2) An attempt is made to show how many diverse relationships are concentrated in one single field, in this case music.

The children come to a recognition of relationships through various types of analyses. In this way, they arrive at the smallest parts, the basic elements (in the language of music: tone, melody, cluster and their visual analogies: dot, line and body) as well as the constructional principles (thus, parallels, contrasts, proportions: symmetry-reflection, symmetry and asymmetry in time, Golden Section) which are implemented by the pupils in their creative work. In this activity, improvisation has an essential role by way of its facilitating the fluency of the language of music, art, movement, etc. The results of this approach have been published and demonstrated at home and abroad at various professional fora. The starting point to such a demonstration may be a piece of music to which all the analogies are being related through examples taken from nature and the visual arts as well as through children's drawings, movement, conceptual and musical improvisations related to this piece, which may be of contemporary or classical origin. I find it very important that this approach fosters the need for order and also enables the children to observe and create order both in art and life. Mária Apagyí and Ferenc Lantos have held many courses in Hungary; their pupils have gone on to popularize their method (e.g. Ildikó Szűcs in Budapest). Especially successful is Éva Balázs-Szatmári with very small (four-year-old) children; she has held several highly acclaimed demonstrations for foreign colleagues.

Of outstanding significance is the work of János Gonda who initiates his pupils into improvisation in both the idiom of jazz and classical music. He is convinced that jazz will stand the test of time only if it is organically integrated into the mainstream of classical music, improvisation being of vital importance for both. The workshops he has



held in various parts of Hungary have successfully realized his view. Mária Apagyi and he agree that music is a language to be spoken. They don't want "to educate composers," they want to educate people who can communicate musically. Their demonstrations in which pupils solve the same compositional problem both in classical music and in jazz enjoy great popularity among professionals and laymen alike. We hope to see the publication of Gonda's major educational work soon; this will guide the student to the single language of music through the above dual approach and through the recognition of the identical laws of both idioms.

I broadcast a twelve-part radio series on improvisation entitled "Planned Accidents." The children (of various ages and playing different instruments) and I worked out tiny improvised scenes, for example musical miniatures built on the same material: "Grief" and "Jest"; group improvisation: "Machines and Bells"; a cycle based on a great literary work: "Odyssey Suite." The movements: Penelope—Scylla and Charybdis—Sirens. The series was also published in book form.

A memorable event in recent years was the *Ludus Stellaris*. As part of a joint programme between the Bartók Béla Music School of Vác and the music school of Winnenden in West Germany, *Ludus Stellaris*, a

game of group improvisation, composed for this occasion by Zsolt Durkó, was premièred by the two schools. Both schools had to create an approximately one-hour programme using appropriate motifs from the arts and sciences, structured around a musical piece lasting some twelve minutes. The video recordings of the performances can now be used as a way to cross-cultural comparison.

The notes used in *Ludus Stellaris* were determined by the constellation *Canis Major* laid out on the music paper. A minimum of seven and a maximum of twenty-seven instrumentalists can perform the piece, taking part at their own level of competence. In each section of the composition, the composer's parameters—notes to be used, manner of performance, handling of instruments—provide for a homogeneity of sound and harmonic construction and for a fluent musical development.

Upon my suggestion, the Music Department of Hungarian Radio is planning an international game, *Ludus Cartographicus Musicus*, as the next *ludus* on the occasion of the World Music Day, 1st October, 1989.

I am convinced that, apart from being an inexhaustible source of pleasure for teachers and pupils, these games and activities will help rekindle the long-latent sense of artistry. Orpheus will find his lyre again.

## THE RECONSTRUCTION OF MUSSORGSKY'S FRAGMENTARY SALAMMBÔ

Conversation with Zoltán Peskó

In 1980, *Salammbô*, Mussorgsky's first opera which has survived in a fragmentary form, had its world première in Italy, orchestrated and conducted by a Hungarian-born conductor now domiciled in Italy. I was not really surprised. Over the past fifty years, we have had to give up expecting real dis-

coveries—either in production or publications—of Mussorgsky's works in the composer's homeland. The last great undertaking where the composer is concerned was launched in the young Soviet Russia in the 1920s: the volumes of a complete Mussorgsky edition, edited by Pavel Lamm, were published



from 1926 onwards. In 1928, the original version of *Boris Godunov* was performed in Leningrad, while a dozen publications of source value were issued on the 50th anniversary of the composer's death, in 1931. During the war-time years, this surge of activity was followed by a countermand, which has lasted practically to the present day. The leading opera house in the Soviet Union, the Moscow Bolshoi, refused to accept the original score of *Boris Godunov* and had the opera re-orchestrated by Shostakovich, yet even this version was not to the taste of the powers that be: in 1946, the opera was produced once again in Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration. Ever since, the Bolshoi has, for more than four decades, stuck to this version. Needless to say, Mussorgsky's other great opera, *Khovanshchina* is also staged in the Bolshoi in Rimsky-Korsakov's eclectic version, with drastic cuts to the original. The publication of the complete edition of Mussorgsky was abandoned in 1939 and has never since been renewed. Pavel Lamm died in 1951. It is not known (although it may easily be guessed) why he had never continued this great project. In the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, there was no Soviet musicologist who would have undertaken to make those works of Mussorgsky's, still in manuscript form, available to the public. I know of one single exception: in 1968, a hundred and one years after its composition, the publishing house Muzika issued the original score of *Night on the Bare Mountain* (which widely differs from the generally known Rimsky-Korsakov version) in 650 copies. A modern edition of the score of *Boris Godunov* was published by the British musicologist and conductor David Lloyd-Jones, in the second half of the 1970s. The reconstruction of *Salammbô* is the work of Zoltán Peskó, a Hungarian-born musician, who lives in the West. It is thanks to the efforts of Claudio Abbado, the *Generalmusikdirektor* in Vienna that this year, on the 150th anniversary of the birth of Mussorgsky, *Khovanshchina* reached the stage of

the Vienna Opera House in a production that approaches the closest possible to the composer's intentions. As far as scholarly research is concerned, Alexandra Orlova, the only Soviet expert who has given serious attention to Mussorgsky during the past decades, emigrated to the United States in the late 1970s, and there she has joined an eminent American team engaged in publishing the excellent volumes of *Russian Music Studies*. The West has also taken the lead as far as recordings are concerned: the finest performing tradition for *Boris Godunov* in Rimsky-Korsakov's orchestration was established by Issay Dobrowen in Paris, to be followed by Herbert von Karajan. The original version of *Godunov* was first released by EMI, in 1976, and the symphonic work, *Night on Bare Mountain* has so far only been appeared in Western records in its original form. Zoltán Peskó's production of *Salammbô* has been released by the Italian Fonit-Cetra firm. Rimsky-Korsakov's powerful transcription of *Khovanshchina* only exists on Soviet records, but when in 1976 I asked Evgeny Nesterenko in Moscow whether he could recommend a good recording of the opera, he shook his head sadly. Mussorgsky's songs are the only works by the composer for which some high-quality Soviet recordings have been made. My first question to Zoltán Peskó was:

*What is the reason for all this? Why is Mussorgsky held in such low esteem in his own country, even 150 years after his birth?*

This is a complex problem. Roughly speaking, I may say that Tchaikovsky's music has always been closer to the Russian soul than Mussorgsky's. Mussorgsky was misappreciated by his contemporaries as well, as they considered many of his musical manifestations unacceptable unless they were recast, or touched up, as it were. I have read precisely in an article of yours that, apart from a single cycle of songs, *The Nursery*, it did not even occur to his contemporaries to show his great works—*Boris Godunov*, *Pictures*



at an *Exhibition of Songs and Dances of Death*—to Liszt in Weimar; though Liszt was passionately fond of Russian music and did a great deal to popularize it. So his contemporaries did not consider Mussorgsky's music worthy of Liszt's attention. What could have been the reason for this? Mussorgsky's dissolute life and his heavy drinking undoubtedly contributed to their aversion. Another factor was his outlook as a composer, which was quite apart from Russian tastes and this has remained true for later times as well. When I began to deal with *Salammbô*, I was fascinated by the beauty and dramatic force of the music, and I was amazed to find that over the past fifty years, since Lamm's score edition, no one has thought of having the work performed as a whole, that is to say in the fragmentary form in which it has survived.

*What made you take up Salammbô at all?*

The idea was not mine in the first place. In 1976, I was working at the La Fenice theatre of Venice, and at a meeting of the board of directors, we were discussing plans for the coming season. The works of Bruno Maderna, known to be a heavy drinker, cropped up. The composer Luigi Nono, who was at this meeting, suddenly asked, with a singular association of ideas: "Why don't you people try to reconstruct *Salammbô*?" All four of us, the leaders of La Fenice, were sitting there with our eyes downcast, as we did not have the faintest idea of what this *Salammbô* might be. It then turned out to be Mussorgsky's first opera, which he had left unfinished and whose piano reduction was published in 1939, as Volume 19 of Lamm's complete edition. Of course, the score was not to be found in Venice, and I went on looking for it in vain elsewhere as well. . .

*The volumes of the Mussorgsky Edition were published in such limited numbers that practically none of them have turned up abroad—certainly not in any libraries in Hungary. . .*

You can rest assured that they have not reached Italy either. . . I contacted a Moscow musicologist, a certain Volkov, who generously offered to send us the score of *Salammbô*—for thousands of marks. However, this astute Russian drew a blank, as meanwhile I succeeded in finding *Salammbô* in the library of the Milan Conservatoire, in a Kalmus edition. This American company had in fact simply reprinted the full Lamm series in a pirate edition, taking advantage of the tremendous demand for the works and without waiting for any permission or contract.

*Russian musicologists are now starting to realize what they have missed, and they are preparing a new complete edition of Mussorgsky's works for the forthcoming anniversary. This will perhaps also include those works which so far have only existed in manuscript form—Salammbô, the orchestrated sections of Khovanshchina, and the like. But you have succeeded in getting hold of the manuscript of the orchestrated scenes of Salammbô as well.*

I owe this to my friend Francesco Degrada, the eminent Italian musicologist, who went to Leningrad and managed to have a copy made of the manuscripts of *Salammbô*, not only of the score but of the piano reduction as well. This latter was important to me because the Lamm edition is full of errors and if you want to perform Mussorgsky in an exacting and correct manner, you have to look at the original manuscript as well.

*Mussorgsky completed six sections of Salammbô: three complete scenes, two choruses and a song insert. For one of the scenes and one of the choruses Mussorgsky wrote the orchestration as well, but the rest has remained in piano reduction. Zoltán Peskó is a graduate of the Faculty of Composition of the Budapest Academy of Music, and he is also known for his interest in the history of music. All this has obviously helped him on reconstructing or rather preparing the orchestration of the remaining four sections of Salammbô, which make up more than 80 per cent of the fragmentary opera.*



Naturally, I did not intend to make a creative reworking of the Rimsky-Korsakov type, nor did I wish to interfere in the work to the extent Shostakovich did with *Kbo-vanscbina*. Rimsky-Korsakov rewrote and orchestrated a few choruses of *Salammbô*—in my view in a not entirely felicitous way, with harmonic and rhythmic modifications which have changed the very essence and flavour of the music. Needless to say, I on my part did not “correct” a single note in Mussorgsky’s score. It never entered my mind to supplement nor, even less, to complete *Salammbô*. My only intention has been to provide orchestration for the unorchestrated sections of the work in a spirit faithful to Mussorgsky’s, and by so doing help the fragmentary opera reach the stage or the concert hall. Of course, it is not that simple to provide orchestration “in a faithful spirit to Mussorgsky’s”, as his treatment of the orchestra includes things that are utterly singular, often amazing and incalculable. It has been repeatedly said that the reason why Mussorgsky’s orchestration sounds so unusual, so extravagantly original or affectately original is that, contrary to Rimsky-Korsakov’s enormous professional skill, he had very little practice in orchestration. This is partly true for the orchestrated sections of *Godunov*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, and *Salammbô*. But you have to differentiate between certain awkward orchestral features and outbursts of creative originality in which Mussorgsky was far ahead of his time, anticipating Stravinsky, Bartók and Shostakovich. I think it was a mistake to reject Mussorgsky’s specific orchestral combinations only because their performance constitutes a harder and less rewarding task than usual. For instance, the way in which, in *Salammbô*, he mixes percussion with the ensemble of pianos, harps and chimes is a fantastically modern concept. It took some fifty years for a similar sound effect to reappear. I have been criticized for using two pianos in *Salammbô*, sometimes as a quasi percussion instrument and sometimes as a quasi harp, because they claim such a solution is charac-

teristic of a 20th century orchestra and not a 19th century one. . .

*They must have been unaware of Glinka having used the piano in the same way in his Ruslan and Ludmila in the early 1840s. . .*

Nor did they know that in this part of *Salammbô*, the scene set in the temple of Tanit, Mussorgsky himself used pianos, harps and jangling percussion in the musical formulation of the ceremonies of that strange oriental religion. This scene has survived in the form of a short score, which, however, includes directions for orchestration.

But let me return to the problem of the reconstruction of orchestration which you mentioned in your previous question. I studied the original orchestration of *Boris Godunov* and of other works, but when I became fully involved in the work I was forced to realize that I had to start principally from the music of *Salammbô* and not from some Mussorgskyesque sound picture as conceived by scholars. And that extraordinarily colourful, at some places almost impressionistic music, called for a colourful orchestration. And so my orchestration of *Salammbô* has the effect of being more lavish, more varied and more colourful than for instance the composer’s own orchestration for *Godunov*, as here it is a different music and a different theme than in *Godunov* (even if later Mussorgsky transferred some of the music pieces from *Salammbô* into *Boris Godunov*).

*Flaubert’s Salammbô is set in ancient Carthage, after the First Punic War. It relates the conflict between the rich Mediterranean town with the mercenaries it had hired for the war against Rome, but whom it did not want to pay, and so the barbarian rabble, tens of thousands of them, turned against the city. They were headed by Matho, a Libyan warrior of immense strength, who had a passion for Salammbô, the daughter of the Carthaginian general Hamilcar. Flaubert had gone through dozens of historical and archaeological works on the period of the First Punic War, and*



he had carefully examined the setting itself. He described the exotic environment and the romantic love story with the same objective, almost naturalistic minuteness he used in portraying the life of a small French town in *Madame Bovary*; this novel was published in 1862 in Paris and the Russian translation appeared in 1863 in St Petersburg.

This close chronological proximity of the two dates says a great deal to me; it represents the close links between French and Russian culture, and the great interest in and openness of the Russians for French culture. As it is generally known, Empress Catherine the Great corresponded with Voltaire, Turgenev spent several years in Paris, and both Tolstoy and Mussorgsky spoke excellent French. The French influence is strongly felt in music as well: Mussorgsky and his fellow composers, known as the Mighty Handful, were passionately fond of Berlioz and also of Liszt, who was reared in Paris. The reception of the novel was also typical: while literary circles in Paris sniffed at *Salammbô*, the Russian intelligentsia devoured Flaubert's new novel with a passionate interest and enthusiasm. And Mussorgsky was one of the first enthusiastic readers in St Petersburg. . .

It's worth mentioning that the novel was not only sniffed at by contemporary French critics; it has not been given a rapturous reception by Hungarian men of letters either. György Lukács described the historical background and local colour in *Salammbô* a "rigid, lunar landscape of archaeological exactitude", with the human figures, rendered with modern psychology, only fitting in it inorganically. Not being a literary critic, I myself have read Flaubert's novel with great interest, profound admiration, and a certain degree of aversion. What might have induced 19th century Russian intellectuals, including Mussorgsky, to enthuse over *Salammbô*?

I am no literary critic either, nor am I a socio-philosopher, and I don't wish to enter here into an analysis of the historical and

social projections of the reception of Flaubert's novel in Russia. Naturally, I have often meditated on why Mussorgsky started to come to grips with *Salammbô*. His way of life must have played a part in this, as it also did in the fact that a few years later he abandoned the composition of the opera. In 1863, Mussorgsky was 24 years old, and he lived in a commune in St Petersburg, with five young men about his age, not one of whom was a musician. In fact, very little is known of them. . .

*Practically nothing, apart from their names . . . at most that they were all public servants like Mussorgsky, and in their free time they possibly had world-redeeming conversations. At the time, the commune was a fashionable form of life among Russian intellectuals in St Petersburg, following the lead Chernishevsky had set in his novel, What is to Be Done?*

In Mussorgsky's commune, Flaubert's *Salammbô* counted as common reading material, and during their conversations it was bound to come up immediately that the composer in the commune should set the novel to music.

*While the fellow composers, the other members of the Mighty Handful, for quite some time were not even aware of Mussorgsky's plans of the opera. . .*

In 1865, Mussorgsky's mother died, and this deeply affected the composer. Reading his letters today, with an eye to our current state of psychological knowledge, it may safely be said that he had a mother fixation. In the summer of the same year, he became seriously ill; according to his brother, he suffered from delirium tremens and his brother took him away from the commune. After that, in 1866 he wrote one more chorus for *Salammbô*, and then laid the whole thing aside. Naturally, I do not want to say that it was solely these external circumstances which brought the plan of the opera into being. Mussorgsky heeded his companions' encour-



agement because the colourful, exotic world of Flaubert's novel, with the barbaric religious rites and the strong characters of the two protagonists aroused his interest. And he put the opera aside because he had to realize that this was not a theme made for him and he should look for a Russian subject. Two years later, in 1868, he started to set Gogol's *The Marriage* to music. One could hardly imagine a more glaring contrast than that between the worlds of *Salammbô* and *The Marriage*. But he did not warm up to this subject either, and having finished one act of it, abandoned the work. Finally, he found the right thing—Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*.

You have mentioned the exotic theme of *Salammbô* which might mainly have aroused Mussorgsky's interest. According to Vladimir Stasov, a close friend of the composer and his first biographer, "Mussorgsky was captivated by the powerful oriental colour of the novel, an oriental colour the musical formulation of which engrossed him throughout his life." This last comment seems to be somewhat exaggerated, but it is interesting to meditate what Stasov meant musically by the expression oriental colour, and what actually this colour signified in 19th century Russian music. Because this is not the kind of exoticism which marks Flaubert's novel and which was termed by György Lukács a "straining for decadent exoticism". Exoticism in Russian music signifies not some shining tinsel, some external ornament, but an essential element which subsists on the musical dialects of the peoples of Eastern and Southern Asia who had been absorbed into the Russian Empire.

That is so. And let me add that Mussorgsky was also taken by Jewish folk music and by church music constantly during his life, as his songs and choruses with Hebrew themes bear art. The oriental colour scheme of *Salammbô* brought forth a wonderfully colourful, fantastically fertile music of sensuous beauty, which only found a continuation in his later, mature works, but it can be considered as the direct antecedent for

French Impressionism in music, the art of Debussy and Ravel, and it foreshadows even Puccini's *Turandot*. But the oriental world of *Salammbô*, the oriental religions inspired Mussorgsky dramatically as well: the fragmentary opera includes three scenes which are composed all through, and two of these three, the two lengthiest, express cycles of religious rites. One is set in the temple of Tanit, the goddess of love and fertility, where her priestess, the virgin *Salammbô* conducts various ceremonies and after praying falls asleep, to the background of a droning, sensual women's choir composed of the priestess singing a hymn to Tanis. Matho sneaks into the temple to steal the holy veil, and he sights *Salammbô* in this environment... The other great scene portrays a cruel ceremony to Moloch, the evil, anthropophagous god; in this the Carthaginians offer their sons to Moloch to protect the city from the mercenaries. The huge crowd in the scene surrounds the red-hot idol of Moloch (waiting to receive the children as burnt offerings), next to it the high priest of Carthage with the children to be sacrificed, around them the priests, and on a lower level are the people of Carthage—desperate, frightened, superstitious and submissive. The children's chorus, the priests' chorus and the people's chorus are all independent musical entities, as the first, splendid realisation of Mussorgsky's choral operas where the chorus is no longer a kind of citizens, soldiers, etc. but an active multitude.

*The Salammbô fragment is the cradle of Mussorgsky's oeuvre from more than one point of view...*

Right, and the novel choral technique is only one of these features. One can discover in the opera the formulation of the two great Mussorgsky archetypes: the *mezzosoprano* *Salammbô* and the *bass* Matho served as patterns for later protagonists of Mussorgsky's. In fact, the same combination appears in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* as well. *Salammbô* is



interwoven, even in its torso form, by a singular system of *Leitmotif*, which radically differs from Wagner's. Perhaps it stems from Glinka, and its continuation appears in *Godunov* and then in Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It is surprising to discover in Salammô harmonic structures which have also been used by Stravinsky and Bartók. In part, they spring from these composers' familiarity with Mussorgsky and partly from a common use made of a related folk music tradition. The fifth section that has survived, Matho's scene in the rock prison in the Carthaginian citadel, is unique in operatic history. Mussorgsky's characteristic *Sprechgesang* appears here in its completed, full maturity. Not to speak of the many beautiful pieces of music which Mussorgsky, having buried *Salammô*, salvaged in his later works, particularly in *Godunov*. Audiences listening to *Salammô* for the first time, are mainly amazed at this: "But really, this piece is from *Godunov* and so is that piece too!" And I would like to tell them: "No, ladies and gentleman, all these are from *Salammô*—*Godunov* is only the second stage!" Let us not forget, Mussorgsky composed all these musical and dramatic gems at the age of 24 and 25, five years after taking composition up seriously.

The idea of a production of *Salammô* was born in La Fenice in Venice, but its realization took place somewhere else. The fragment, conducted by Zoltán Peskó, was first heard in a concert performance in Milan, in December 1980, on the eve of the centenary of the composer's death. This was followed by concert performances in Rome and Prague, and most recently, in March 1989, in Budapest and Leningrad. Meanwhile, the work also reached the stage: in 1983 it was produced by Yuri Lubimov in the San Carlo theatre of Naples, naturally under the baton of Zoltán Peskó, and in 1986, the same production was taken to Paris. How has Lubimov brought Mussorgsky's fragmentary opera to the stage, what has his production added to the work?

Lyubimov started out, I think very correctly, from having to handle a work that is not a complete opera but a torso. The production opens with a prologue: in one corner of the stage an actor, made up as Flaubert, is digging in the sands with his walking stick, and various things come to light from the time of the Punic wars. In the other corner of the stage another actor, made up as Mussorgsky, is strumming on the piano, looking for melodies. Meanwhile megaphones give out excerpts from letters Flaubert wrote at the time he was writing *Salammô*, and quotations from Mussorgsky, the first in French, the second in Russian, both read by Lubimov. The melodies from the piano gradually change into the prelude to the first section of the opera, the song of the young Balearic warrior. In Lubimov's interpretation the opera itself is about war and about dictatorship—the dictatorship of the cruel Carthaginian religion which cripples the life of the people and kills love. I also think this is the basic idea of Mussorgsky's *Salammô*.

Unfortunately I have not seen Lubimov's production. But I must say that studying and listening to Mussorgsky's *Salammô* did not give rise to these thoughts in me. What you just said about dictatorship crippling people is to my mind valid for Mussorgsky's last great opera, *Khovanshchina* as well, in which an invisible, impersonal but ubiquitous power forces various individuals and social strata into destruction, into causing destruction, and into self-destruction.

I am firmly convinced that this interpretation and rendition of dictatorship is also present, in an embryonic form, in *Salammô*, of course in a completely different story and context.

Finally, I would like to return to the problem we touched upon at the beginning of our conversation: the question of the appreciation and misappreciation of Mussorgsky. We know that after Mussorgsky's death, Rimsky-Korsakov, a good friend



of his, reworked (and practically falsified) almost all of the composer's works, his operas, orchestral works, songs and piano pieces, with a well-intentioned purpose of popularizing them and making them easier to comprehend. The world has become acquainted with, and fond of, Mussorgsky's works in their revised form, but recent decades have brought an urge to return to the original versions. What future do you foresee for Mussorgsky? Will his work ever reach the stage of being exclusively played in the form he himself envisaged—even in his own homeland?

Look, I do not see this as gloomily as you do. It would be different if Mussorgsky were not played. But this is far from being the case, not even in Moscow, even though I claim that the Mussorgsky image they have developed needs radical revision. During the Stalin

era, with the Baroque pomp of the personal cult they naturally felt Rimsky-Korsakov's beautified, scintillating orchestrations to be more suitable. But times have changed now, even though this cannot be yet sensed on the musical scene. But the spirit of reform in all certainty will reach here as well. Once they are "rewriting" history and revealing the truths of the past, the demand to find the true face of one of their greatest composers—if not the greatest one—must also emerge. As far as the West is concerned, I know a growing number of people to whom the music of Mussorgsky already exists in its genuine form and sound, and who aim at becoming acquainted with the composer's original artistic intentions.

MÁRTA PAPP

## NEW HUNGARIAN QUARTETS

After a decade of vocal works, György Kurtág returned to instrumental composition with his . . . *quasi una fantasia* . . . op. 27 for piano and ensemble, picking up from where he had left off by using some ideas from his Twelve Microludes op. 13 string quartet of 1977–78. His next composition, *Officium breve in memoriam Andreae Szervánszky* op. 28, now goes back to the medium of that earlier work, and offers a sequence of fourteen short movements for string quartet, some of them very short indeed (the smallest is the first, just four bars for solo cello: a picolude, perhaps, rather than a microlude). At the same time, there are other memories at work: of Szervánszky, of course, whose Serenade for string orchestra is briefly quoted in the brief finale, but also of Webern. One is invited to recall that the Viennese master's op. 28 was also a string quartet, intensively canonic as Kurtág's is whenever there is the space (and sometimes when there is not: the sixth movement is a four-part canon that dies after

only four bars). More particularly, the work makes reference to the sixth movement of Webern's Second Cantata, itself also a canon. The tenth movement is a direct transcription of the Webern, transposed up a tone so that the alto line can be played by the second violin, but otherwise unchanged, and even bearing under each part the text sung by the respective voices in Webern's chorus. This is prepared not only by the original Kurtág canon of the sixth movement but also by a free adaptation of the Webern (no. 7) and by a "fantasy on the harmonies of the Webern canon" (no. 5).

But the importance of the Webern seems to go beyond the level of arrangement and musical allusion. Webern once likened the six movements of his Second Cantata to those of a Renaissance mass, and Kurtág's work explicitly declares itself to be a "short office," a liturgy in instrumental terms. Moreover, the finale of the Second Cantata is the last movement of Webern's last work,



and Kurtág's *Officium breve* is surely also, like so much of his music, concerned with the last things. It is, of course, a memorial to a composer colleague, but the gravity, intensity and terrifying wit of these movements suggest that the deathwardness is more than a matter of dedication. These movements are alternately elegiac, touching, savage and absurd in the manner of tombstone inscriptions—though this is the style too of many of the vocal works, notably including the *Kafka Fragments*. Like that work, the *Officium breve* swerves violently from one extreme of feeling to another, and yet each extreme seems tightly controlled: an inscription indeed.

Two other new quartets do not search out this rarefied air. That by András Szöllősy, dedicated to the Orlando Quartet, is cast in one movement, though moving through varieties of tempo and texture to affirm a conventional sort of quartet weight. There are unusual things here, such as the stuttering start with all four instruments high on the treble staff, but the music seems composed

rather in the large, in terms of slabs of texture, often imitative or in some other way repetitive. Nevertheless, this is obviously an effective and exuberant work, by a composer with a very thorough knowledge of the possibilities of string instruments, and indeed of the quartets of Bartók. In retrospect, it is odd that he should not have produced this quartet before.

Zoltán Jeney's *Sostenuto* (1988) is also a single movement, but, as the title suggests, one of a more sustained character. Quite what the character is may not be so clear: the score bears no indication of tempo, though one would judge that the speed should be low, if only to assist ensemble in a work where the four instruments often have to strut as one in numbly isolated gestures. This is a hiccupping of chords and octaves in a generally quiet dynamic, the remnant, as it appears, of a quartet from which many of the notes have been washed away, together with most of the substance.

PAUL GRIFFITHS



## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

ESTERHÁZY, Péter (b. 1950). Writer. A graduate in Mathematics of Budapest University. Made his literary début with the collection *Fancsikó és Pinta*, 1976, and has published six other successful books of fiction, some of which have been translated into French, German and Swedish. He published, among others, the novels *Pápai vízen ne kalózkodj* (Don't go pirating in papal waters), 1977, *Termelési regény* (Production novel), 1979, *Ki szavatol a lady biztonságáért* (Who guarantees the Lady's security), 1982, *A szív segédigéi* (Auxiliaries of the heart), 1985 and *Tizenbét battyú* (Seventeen swans), 1987. See his short stories in *NHQ* 99.

FORGÁCS, Éva (b. 1947). Art historian, on the staff of the Budapest Academy of Applied Art. Has published *Kollázs és montázs* (Collage and montage), Corvina Press, 1976 and studies on the Bauhaus and the art critic Ernő Kállai. Recent contributions include: "The Precise Surrealism of Albert Kováts", *NHQ* 90, "Károly Schmal's Three-Dimensional Pictures," 94, "Decorative and Functional Textiles," 99, "New Sensibility, III," 101, "The Rediscovery of Hungarian Art Deco," 102, "Eclecticism," 104, "Interactions—Hungarian Artists in the Weimar Republic," 106, "The Mythology of Today," 107, "The Bauhaus in Budapest," 111 and "The Logic of Form," 114.

FRANK, János (b. 1925). Art critic, one of our regular art reviewers.

FRANK, Tibor (b. 1948). Historian. Graduated in English and History at the University of Budapest. Now lecturer in the English Department of the same university and secretary of the Modern Language and Literature Association. See his "A Leap Backwards: Leslie Stephen in Transylvania," *NHQ* 52 and "Beliefs—Interdisciplinary Conference at Visegrád," 60.

FRENYÓ, Zoltán (b. 1955). Philosopher. Read history and philosophy at the University of Budapest. Now on the staff of the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Specialises in the philosophy of history, in anthropology and in the theory of religion. See his "In the Labyrinth of the Theories of Alienation," *NHQ* 96.

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GYERTYÁN, Ervin (b. 1924). Our regular film critic.

GYÖRFFY, Miklós (1942). Our regular reviewer of prose fiction.

KERTÉSZ, Imre (b. 1929). Writer, translator. Taken to Auschwitz inmate as a boy. 1948–1951 a journalist, then he was fired and unemployed for a time. Then freelanced for Hungarian Radio. His first novel *Sorstalanság* (Without fate) was published in



1975. It was followed, in 1977, by two short novellas. In 1988, he published the novel *A kudarc* (The failure). Translated Nietzsche, Hugo von Hofmannstahl and Joseph Roth into Hungarian.

KOLOSÍ, Tamás (b. 1946). Sociologist. Read philosophy, aesthetics and Hungarian literature at the University of Budapest. On the staff, later Head of Department of the Institute of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the HSWP. Since 1985, has also taught at the Department of Sociology of Budapest University. Publications include *A párttagság és a társadalmi rétegződés* (Party membership and social stratification), 1985, *Struktúra, rétegződés, egyenlőtlenség* (Structure, stratification, inequality), 1985, Status groups in Hungary (a collection of articles on sociology), 1986, *Strukturális csoportok és reform* (Structural groups and reform), 1986 and *Tagolt társadalom* (Articulated society), 1987. See his "What is in Crisis?", *NHQ* 111.

KOLTAI, Tamás (b. 1942). Our regular theatre critic.

KUBINYI, Ferenc (b. 1928). Journalist. Read Hungarian, history and philosophy at the Universities of Szeged and Budapest. Until 1957 an electrician and a miner, 1957–1963 taught in various *gimnáziums* in Budapest. 1963–1986 on the staff of Hungarian Radio. Has written about radio documentary plays, and published 11 volumes documenting the history of Hungary of the recent past. In 1986 in Paris he published *Az egyetem lova* (The horse of the university) on the new red aristocracy. A regular contributor to *Kapu*, a new independent periodical, and other journals.

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MACSAI, John (b. 1926). Architect. He practices in Chicago and teaches at the School

of Architecture, University of Illinois at Chicago.

NAGY, Ildikó (b. 1944). Art historian, on the staff of Corvina Press. Her main field is 20th century Hungarian Art. Published a book on the sculptor András Kiss Nagy in 1975. See among her latest publications in *NHQ* "Tibor Vilt—a Composer of Statues," 94, "Endre Bálint—Sacral Painting of our Age," 99, "Space and Man," 103, "György Jovánovics—From Games of Chess to Complete Vision," 104, "József Róna, a sculptor of the Fin de Siècle," 106 and "250 Years of Sculpture in Streets and Squares," 108.

NÉMETH, Miklós (b. 1948). Prime Minister. Member of the Four Men Presidium of the HSWP. A graduate of the Karl Marx University of Budapest, and Harvard Business School. After 1971, taught at Marx University, after 1977 also was a Deputy Head of Department at the National Planning Office. After 1981 on the staff of the Department of Economic Policy of the Central Committee of the HSWP, which he headed for some months in 1987. That same year he was elected Secretary to the Central Committee. See his "Economic Performances—Social Values," *NHQ* 111.

ORBÁN, Ottó (b. 1936). Poet and translator. Has published several volumes of poems and a great number of translations, as well as volumes of nursery rhymes. See his poems in *NHQ* 35, 37, 46, 58, 67, 71, as well as "Notes from America," 67 and "Poet in the Green Tent: László Nagy", 110.

PAPP, Márta (b. 1948). Historian of music. A graduate of the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest. Since 1972 on the staff of the Music Department of Hungarian Radio, since 1982 has been teaching as well at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music. Her special field is 19th century Russian music. Has published much on this subject in



periodicals such as *Muzsika*, *Magyar Zene* and *Studia Musicologica*.

PETRI, György (b. 1943). Poet. Studied philosophy at the University of Budapest. Has published a number of books of verse, some in samizdat, including *Magyarázatok M. számára* (Explanations for M.), 1971, *Körülírt zuhánds* (Circumscribed precipitation), 1974, *Örökkéfiő* (Eternal Monday), 1982 and *Valahol megvan* (It exists somewhere), 1989. A volume of translations by George Gömöri and Clive Wilmer is about to be published soon. Original titles of the poems published in this issue are: *Kizsarolt, nevetséges életünket*; *Az államtitkár nyilatkozik*; *Anzix*; *A bagyma szól*; *In Memoriam Hajnóczy Péter*; '80 télén; *Viturbius Acer fennmaradt verse*; *Szeretők*; *Elégia*; *Elektra*; *Ká-európai értelmiségi*; *Búcsú*; *Kegy*; *K. S.*; *En*.

POZSGAY, Imre (b. 1933). Member of the four men Presidium of the HSWP, Minister of State (Senior Minister without Portfolio). Read History and Philosophy at the University of Szeged. Worked for the Bács County Committee of the HSWP, then as a Deputy Editor of *Társadalmi Szemle*, the Party's theoretical monthly; later Minister of Culture, then general secretary of the National Council of the Patriotic People's Front. Among his recent publications in *NHQ*, see "The Interaction of Economics and Politics," 76, "National Unity, Socialism, Democracy," 101, "Life and Politics," 112, and "A New Constitutional Basis for a Pluralistic Society," 114.

SEBESTYÉN, György (b. 1932). Hungarian-born Austrian writer. A graduate of the University of Budapest, wrote literary and theatre criticism for various Budapest papers. At the end of 1956, he fled to Austria where he wrote his first and immediately successful novel—first in Hungarian then in German, followed by even more successful novels like *Die Türen Schliessen* (The doors close) and *Der Mann im Sattel* (The man in the saddle). Author of more than thirty

books, including three books on Burgenland. Founder of *Pannonia*, an Austrian journal dedicated to European cooperation. Translated a number of Hungarian classics into German, including *Az ember tragédiája* (The Tragedy of Man), by Imre Madách. See his *Gyula Krúdy's World* in *NHQ* 34 and *A Piece of Life*, 105.

SISA, József (b. 1952). Art historian. Read English and History of Art at the University of Budapest. Specialises in 19th century architectural history. Has published much on this subject in Hungary and abroad. On the staff of the Research Group of Art History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. See his "English Influence on Hungarian Romantic Architecture," *NHQ* 87 and "A Royal Hunting Lodge," 105.

SÓLYOM, Ildikó. Actress, member of the Budapest National Theatre Company. She writes: "An artist's life is her work, if, without reason, she is not allowed to do work she apparently continues to function as a living being but in fact she only hibernates waiting for the faceless ban to be lifted so she can play again and do what she did before she was silenced, appearing on stage and platform, before the film or television cameras or a microphone. Being kept from public view also defined the fate of this writing. In spite of signed contracts, publishers shelved the MSS which was only sent to press eight years later and only appeared in December 1988. A one-woman play *Could it happen?* based on the book was produced in a small Budapest theatre, also in 1988. Four years earlier the company to which she belongs, the National Theatre, promised to stage it but nothing has come of that promise to this day. The actress has not thrown in the towel, she keeps on hoping and waiting, as has been her wont since she was a little girl, always waiting for something, in those days that house arrest should come to an end, that the order of banishment should be lifted, that the classification *class-*



*enemy* which meant that she had no chance of anything, be wiped out. She waits and hopes that the time will come when she may freely publish and act, that is live."

SZIRTES, George (b. 1948). Poet born in Budapest. Has lived in Britain since 1956. Teaches art and runs the Starwheel Press in Hitchin, near London. His latest volume of poems, "Metro," was published by Oxford University Press in 1988. During recent visits to Budapest, he has begun to rediscover his native language and culture; his autobiographical essay, written for *NHQ* 99, as well as a number of poems and translations, including *The Tragedy of Man* by Imre Madách (Corvina, 1989), are the first results of this experience. See "Örkény in English," 102, a review of Miklós Radnóti's autobiography in English, 105, "Moholy-Nagy," 109, "The True Life of Verse Translations," 112, "Being Remade as an English Poet," 113 and "Haunted Objects: Ágnes Nemes Nagy in Translation," 114.

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VARGHA, Balázs (b. 1921). Literary historian, former editor of the monthly *Budapest*. On the staff of the literary monthly *Kortárs*. His fields are: the Hungarian poetry of the eighteenth century, children's literature and playful aspects of language. He produced two television series for children. Has published numerous collections of games and two volumes of essays, both in 1984: *Jelek, jelképek, jelleme* (Signs, symbols and characters) and *Irodalmi városképek* (Literary townscapes). See his "Visitor to an Enchanted Country," *NHQ* 98.

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