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# The Hungarian Quarterly

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*Fragmentation to Integration*

*The Migration and Landtaking of the Magyars*

*Transformation and the Eastern Enlargement of the EU*

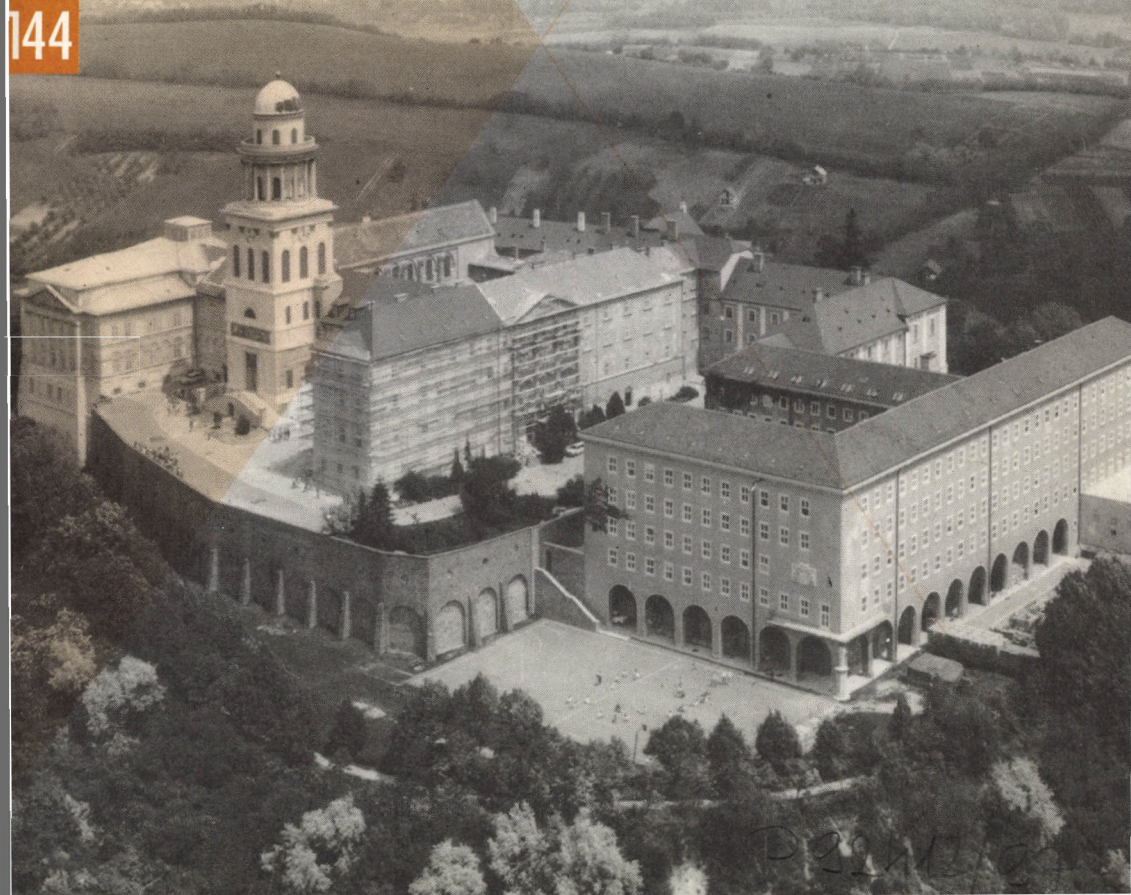
*Why the Poor Are Poor*

*Mátyás Rákosi – Portrait of a Tyrant*

*You Are Not a Primate Here! – The Mindszenty Trial*

*The Churches, Religion and Politics after 1989*

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# The Hungarian Quarterly

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*Busó masks. Photos by Péter Korniss*

# Fragmentation to Integration

"**H**ungary must join the European Union within the foreseeable future" is repeated day after day. The overwhelming majority of the political elite is in favour and so too, albeit with some confusion and misgivings, is the general public in Hungary. At least so it seems, even if the measure of general support is no longer quite as high as it was a few years ago. Indeed, recent public opinion polls appear to indicate that the enthusiasm is waning, although those opposed to entry are still in the minority.

The greatest mistake currently being made by leading political circles is in focusing their interest on the economic aspects of life, leaving little or no attention for the symbolic aspects of power. It is important for the electorate to see how much of the nation the elite is capable of representing, expressing and making manifest, since one of the prime duties of a political elite is to express the continuity of the nation, its values and its pride. Within this context, it is a simple rule of sociology that the elite loses credibility if democracy fails to function properly, but also if the values of the nation appear to be in decline, if national pride is questioned. This is far from being an exclusively Hungarian problem.

The complications surrounding the Maastricht Treaty have shown very well that voters in other countries are also clearly wondering how a unified Europe will affect the survival of their nations. There are a great number of people who fear that Brussels might impose its will upon their government, which, in turn, would undermine the legitimacy of the political elite and induce people to turn their backs on the political process. If the nation has to bow to outside forces, if what is to be done at home can be dictated from outside, then what are politicians for? How can the political authorities of a nation be taken seriously if their decisions are interfered with from outside?

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### **György Granasztói**

*heads the Institute for Central European Studies in Budapest. He is a medievalist who has published widely on medieval urban life in Hungary. As Hungarian Ambassador in Brussels in 1990-94, he was also accredited to NATO and to the European Union.*

In Hungary, amid the problems and tensions a democratic transition has posed, the information concerning integration is even more difficult to interpret. It is hard to view joining the West in perspective, let alone in a historical context. Yet integration affects everyone's life and, if it happens, will determine the fate of many generations. Least of all should it be made a topical political issue in the sense that some would win and some would lose out. Nor can it be said that "we will put up with anything if, in return, we are allowed through the gate sooner." Consequently, voters' opinions—and their national pride—as a constant and crucial factor, must be taken very seriously indeed, or else the political institutions will lose a great deal of their standing.

### Nation and democracy

**T**he main facts, or rather, the most frequently mentioned facts of Hungary's accession to Europe may be simply summed up as follows: The old bi-polar world order has gone, consequently the accession of the less developed part of Central Europe is no longer as important for the West as that of Spain or Portugal was at the height of the Cold War. The Hungarian economy will not be able to meet all the conditions for admission for a long time to come. All it can offer in exchange for admission beyond its own market is, at present, its capacity to serve as a regional centre and to fulfill a mediating role. Less affluent would-be entrants like Hungary are viewed anyway with a certain anxiety by the ordinary voter in the West, where the disappearance of the East-West conflict coincided with the crisis of the entire welfare system, a crisis which seriously disturbs the public. Just as in Hungary, the budget deficit in several EU member countries is high, (in some proportionately even higher) which means that social welfare is increasingly difficult to finance. The West, then, is also struggling with social problems along with an ageing population. From the viewpoint of the West, the real value of the Eastern enlargement is that the region is expected to become more stable—and a major market for its products.

In public declarations, Western integration is depicted to the Hungarian population as basically an economic problem. The main issue is when and to what degree will Hungary be able to fit into a Union, which appears to be fundamentally a kind of free trade zone. The other aspect from which accession to the West is being generally viewed is that of security policy. In this respect, special emphasis is laid on problems concerning the reorganization of, and civil control over, the military, and especially on the costs of defence.

Most news items and commentary involve practical problems of this kind. Deeper, less easy-to-grasp elements, like nation and democracy hardly receive any attention. This, incidentally, carries the danger that their interpretation, and the use of the terms will become superficial and too closely bound to emotions difficult to control. It is my conviction that it will be processes connected with

the nation and democracy, that will determine in which direction European integration, and also Hungary's road to Europe, will take in the future.

The nation-state will remain, in a political sense, a determining factor for the future of the European community. The social and political character of the European Union will develop in association with the existence and destiny of the nation-states. Since nation and nation-state are also key terms in Hungarian political thinking, what that means for accession has to be clarified.

Earlier on, nation was a dominant category which determined a specific elite culture; precisely for that reason the culture itself was indifferent to ethnic and political commitments. Now, however, with the gradual disappearance of all-pervasive regional cultures, the role of nation has become all-embracing for society as a whole and the common national heritage has become extremely important.

In the old peasant societies culture seldom determined political units. Traditional societies do not usually turn nationalist. It is precisely from this point of view that the situation has changed radically. Local, diverse grass-roots cultures have been replaced everywhere by a standardized and uniformly coded high culture connecting everybody to everybody else through literacy and the audio-visual media. The culture they mediate then becomes the basis of modern national feeling. Since national feeling can now be shared by every member of society, there arises the special need and requirement of social equality.

Nationalism is, therefore, an integrating force creating a modern national character and a mass society through cultural homogeneity and centralized education. The integration of the new Europe will, however, hinge on the differences between nations and their adjustment to each other. This makes it apparent that a common European feeling is, of course, a long way off. Despite all the stars on a blue background as flags, parasols and car stickers, "Eurofeeling" is still a non-starter. Even if it should spread some day, the question still remains how far it will be based on a shared European memory and how far on the awareness of a common future.

**T**he anxieties arising from economic insecurity, the general desire for stability and the disappearance of ideologies have brought to the surface a variety of inward-turning attitudes. The jargon term for this is fragmentation, intensified by the disappearance of the Cold War and bi-polar stability. Thus, in our times the nation-state finds itself caught in the dual vice between a national feeling it gave rise to and the tendency to fragmentation. This is something new, different from the chauvinist, archaic, integrating or populist nation state of the past.

Fragmentation poses a fundamental threat to the future Union. The divisive effect may be both political and economic, following from the mere existence of different sub-groups, regional units, interest and ethnic groupings as well as pressure groups, which work against national or international co-operation.

In some cases, this results in specific action against unity. If a federate Europe, seen as supranational, is conceived as a mosaic of nation-states, then such trends clearly diminish the chances of unity since they divert, curb or paralyse the nation-state, itself in a given case.

This situation is further complicated by the emergence of "minor nationalisms". New closed forms of belonging (ethnic-national identities) are being born or are intensifying and these separate the awareness of belonging to a nation from the sense of belonging to a country, a state, citizenship. The sense of citizenship and the sense of national identity may, at times, even come into murderous conflict. These factors had been suppressed but, once the Cold War was over, the entire concept of the nation-state as it had evolved after the French Revolution, was questioned and in some cases actually threatened.

This seems to be a genuinely historic event. Cultural ties are undergoing change, taking on the increasingly violent forms of regional or ethnic clashes, or expressed in hatred against immigrants. Neither ethnic conflict nor xenophobia can be regarded as geographical peculiarities, they are more or less present everywhere; both may intensify at any time anywhere, even simultaneously. Fragmentation and the various forms of particularism make a paralysing impact on modern nation-states, while the more traditional (and because of this) less democratic nation-states are much less heavily affected.

The weakening of the nation-state has a debilitating effect in the process of creating a supranational state organization and its integrated institutions. Indeed, it actually limits their possibilities. The nation-states of the highly developed democracies are on the defensive against various ethnic, cultural and political ambitions, local forces, regionalisms, minor nationalisms and other ideologies. That reduces their capacity for settling conflicts, to find the uniform European principles and mechanisms for handling these.

The elites who had previously thought in a national frame are now voicing their commitment to Europe with growing frequency. Their view is that technological progress and the economy is growing beyond national limits. At the same time, unemployment is being blamed on modernization by large numbers of workers who, though indoctrinated by a spirit of "proletarian internationalism", are now turning increasingly into staunch defenders of traditional national values. France may be cited as a prime example, where this could be seen at work very clearly in the "no" vote against Maastricht. The French example was highly illuminating, since it showed that this was no longer a conflict between the elite and the people but much rather between the middle classes and the working classes: on one side there were corporate leaders, executives, big businessmen, professionals, and intellectuals and on the other, artisans, owners of small businesses, clerical staff, workers, and farmers.

In Hungary, as in many other countries, the political elite as well as those exerting most power in the media have a false view on social divisions; this makes

them unable to politically represent the conflicts of interests cutting across society. The elite fails to understand the nature of what is fragmenting society, the character of the confusion concerning national sentiments and their manifestations.

Any socio-economic structure will retain at least two elements which no compromise can fuse. Two distinctive groups, largely similar in size face each other: a somewhat divided middle class and what might be called a popular or plebeian world.

The conflict between the middle classes and the plebeian classes may be exacerbated, for example, by old traditions. There are regions where laicism and egalitarianism have a long history. In such regions, there is often a widespread antipathy against anything involving social hierarchy, everything that the nobleman, the priest, the gentleman or the burgher used to represent. Amid the new conflicts that the creating of a globalized Europe produces, what so many people across the whole social spectrum do is to reach back to old, egalitarian values that are part of the heritage of an old peasant world. Today's voting maps are frequently also mirrors of the historical anthropology of various countries, and the political atlas of Hungary is a prime example.

This also explains some of the results European elections have shown over the past fifteen years. Economic and social aspects increasingly sway voters, ideological influences are on the decline. In earlier times, many workers used to vote for the Right because they were Catholics, against their own class, as it were. On the other hand, many of the middle classes voted Left because of their atheism. At present these votes go to a large variety of parties, yet social and professional divisions are more marked and explain much more about how people vote than at any time before.

**T**hus, when aspiring to accession to Europe, Hungarians must be aware that many of the difficulties are due to Hungary being a modern nation-state in character. The country has gone past the stage when it was a chauvinist nation-state with a romantic self-image, and displays all the new elements described above. In that sense, Hungary is ripe for Europe.

From this point of view, it is not a contradiction that the homogeneity of Hungary's culture, which transcends the country's borders, actually binds society together in several respects. The many Hungarians beyond the country's borders are Hungarians precisely because they share the modernity of a common culture, a "natural" feature which has to be accepted as such.

Hungarians living outside the country, so frequently the subject of heated political debate, should be seen and explained in this light. When discussing nation-state and fragmentation, the problem cannot be avoided.

The "Hungarian issue" is usually mentioned by foreign opponents of Hungarian membership. Some speak of a "time bomb" in connection with the Hungarian minorities beyond the borders. The Hungarian issue also irritates

those who, as politicians or jurists, recognize civil rights as applying only to individuals, and oppose the raising of "collective" problems. True, there are new developments that can be observed here too. As the contradictions inherent in the nation-state produce more and more conflicts and complications, many are prompted to pause for reflection. Consequently, even those advocating the principles of the Code Napoleon or who are highly conscious of the Northern Ireland syndrome, are now becoming more attuned to the idea of a "nation-creating community".

That change may have very important consequences for Hungarian interests. There is no political force of any significance in Hungary today which is not ready to declare, in a treaty or in any other morally and psychologically appropriate form, that Hungary's neighbours' borders are inviolable. At the same time, there is a consensus that the Hungarian minorities in those countries should be allowed to preserve their language and cultural identity, to associate freely with Hungary, and to be able to live, in a form adapted to the circumstances of their countries of domicile, as that country's citizens. Basically, the "Hungarian issue" can only be dealt with as a consequence of, and to the extent that democratic institutions exist in the countries concerned. The Hungarian issue is a human rights problem, granted, of course, that it is accepted that human rights problems exist with regard to community as well as individual rights.

### Stability and security in Central Europe

**B**y Europe I understand the structured, Atlantic, multi-state *Grossraum* without Russia, usually called Western and Central Europe. The reason that I exclude Russia is not that it is Bolshevik today but because, as a *Grossraum*, it has always been the very opposite of the other: undivided, cut off from the sea, open toward Asia, the Siberian landscape continuing smoothly without a break, a melting pot of the nations of Asia. Its nations are just as big and fuse with each other in the same mental undividedness as its geographical regions," wrote Count Pál Teleki, geographer and Prime Minister of Hungary. The Eastern borders of Central Europe are usually drawn in the same manner, on the basis of religion and culture.

Never before has the Danube Basin been divided into as many states as it is today. Since the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated, Hungary found herself with two new neighbours, bringing the total to seven. Without any increase in its population or territory, Hungary has unexpectedly turned into a middle-sized regional power.

The process had started with the Treaty of Trianon. Then, as now, the beginning of fragmentation could be clearly associated with the disappearance of the great power that exercised hegemony over the region: the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Soviet Union. In the Danube region which, in my view, covers

roughly the former territory of the Dual Monarchy, four regional solutions have been tried since the 19th century. These were arrangements under the Habsburgs, the Trianon Treaty system, the Third Reich (embodying German expansionism) and, finally, the Soviet variant. Going even farther back in history, to the Early Middle Ages, the region either consisted of two or three major local kingdoms or was divided by the great powers among themselves. Its numerous shortcomings notwithstanding, the originality of the Habsburg Empire lay in the fact that it grew out of the region and tried to unify the countries there, trying to organize them into a great power.

The great Slovak historian, Jan Palacky, an enthusiastic advocate of the "Austrian idea," wrote in 1848: "In the South-Eastern part of Europe, along the frontiers of Russia, history crowded a number of nations that markedly differed in language, history and manners: Slavs, Romanians, Hungarians, not to speak of Greeks, Turks and Albanians. These tribes, none of which was ready to resist their powerful neighbours, united their weaknesses, and it is the Danube which links them (...) Actually, if the Austrian Empire did not exist, it ought to be created rapidly for the sake of Europe, indeed, for the sake of the whole of mankind."

If, in the above quote, "European security system" replaces "Austrian Empire," and "peoples" or "nations" replace "tribes," we end up with one of the potential solutions for the great political problem of our times. Regardless of how the "Russian threat" might be seen today, Palacky's idea has lost nothing of its relevance.

One cause for the "misery of the small nations of Eastern Europe" (this was the title of a famous study by István Bibó, a highly influential political thinker) was the dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, a multi-national great power, by Trianon, creating a string of multi-national small states. Consequently, the "birth mark" of the Empire, namely, that the state borders did not follow the frontiers of the major national groups, and so the state found itself in opposition to national aspirations, continued to cause its problems.

It is clear that in Central Europe, and especially in the Danube region, the problems of a nation-state and the tendencies of fragmentation are a great degree influenced by the multinational character of society. A further complication is that, compared to Western Europe, borders took considerably longer to stabilize. In fact, to the south of Hungary, some borders cannot be regarded as final even now, certain countries making territorial claims on others, and with quite a few borders not guaranteed by any international agreement.

Why is then some kind of great power solution required? Because the agreements, treaties and contracts between the countries concerned cannot be fulfilled if there is no controlling and sanctioning mechanism to watch over their fulfilment. In the lack of such a mechanism, nothing but a temporary and, in some cases, not necessarily sincere "goodwill" can be placed on record.

Controllable agreements are necessary because economic ties between the

countries here are insignificant. Stability in relations therefore can only rest on political solutions. From the Baltic to Greece, every country is oriented toward "the West" today. External security is an indispensable condition for their approach to the West as well as for their internal development.

There are several international organizations, from the UN through the Organization for European Security and Cooperation to the European Council. Everyday experience has shown that none of them has the power to enforce agreements. On the other hand, the European Union, economically and politically integrated, and NATO create the belief that they have the ability to do just that.

**A**n unparalleled situation has emerged in Central Europe. For the first time in history, every country in the region wants to join the same power bloc of its own free will; every one of them is ready to voluntarily sacrifice a part of its national sovereignty for that purpose.

Yet there are a number of circumstances which should be considered in connection with this haste to join. It must be spelt out: the crisis in the Balkans is a gigantic exclamation mark, an extremely powerful warning to all those preoccupied with Western integration.

What the crisis reminds us of, above all, is where extreme chauvinism and aggression in the propagation of national cultural values may lead. For integrated Europe, on the other hand, it is a warning of its own impotence and especially the insufficient functioning of its democratic institutions. It is also a reminder that it was unprepared for the changes in this region even though these demand a response.

Hungary was taught other lessons, too, by the events of 1992–1993. One of these was that any peace mediation was doomed to failure if it allowed one of the parties to follow *faits accomplis* tactics. Up to Dayton, the various peace missions lacked the power to enforce agreements. Another lesson was that a few uninhibited sorcerer's apprentices could be enough to turn the Hungarian minority into a hostage and a victim of ethnic cleansing in the conflict; the areas along the country's borders can turn into a battlefield between the warring sides in that civil war.

Luckily, at the time of writing, none of these worries has turned into reality as yet. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that they are unfounded. A special "intermediate" state of affairs makes itself felt in innumerable ways. For one thing, the region's airspace is being patrolled by AWACS aircraft, and there is a major American military base within Hungary close to the country's southern border, serving the UN mission in the Balkans. Violent conflicts ready to erupt and often threatening the West, too, are contained by behind-the-scenes diplomatic activity and various other efforts.

These processes go on along many lines and with many actors. In most cases it is hard to say who deserves the credit or what major forces have played the key role. In other words, it appears as if, in certain respects, Hungary is already

sheltered by the Western security umbrella. There is no security vacuum in Central Europe.

However, it is also true that today's political and security balance is due mainly to a voluntary sacrifice on the part of Eastern Europe. The compulsive force of "European norms" and the firm wish to join explain why all countries in the region are being guided by a degree of self-moderation and soberity in their relations with their neighbours. No one employs the freely available recipe of the Balkans war. Everybody refrains from intensifying tensions beyond a certain point, making sure the fuse is not lit.

### Political factors in accession

**F**rom the Hungarian point of view, the political factors in play are as follows:

1) There is no alternative to joining the Euro-Atlantic alliance. Accession cannot be reduced to the problems of economic performance and the compatibility of the armed services with NATO.

2) As a small country, Hungary may have a greater weight as a member of an integrated organization based on democratic principles. Inside the organization, it can more effectively determine common interests. These are advantages which would otherwise be impossible to achieve.

3) The desire of Hungarians for stability is as strong as that of any member state of the EU. That must be the starting point of any political programme which puts up "joining Europe" as an objective. The geo-strategic value of Hungary, on the other hand, increases when its democratic institutions and market economy function in a climate of internal stability.

4) Only a balance between the factors of fragmentation and the aspirations of the modern nation-state in the political and cultural spheres can secure stability. That balance can only be achieved if elements outside the country's borders are in play.

5) The nation-state character of Hungary is determined by its cultural heritage. Hungarians outside the country's borders are also a part of that culture; attending to what happens to them and the need to preserve an identity are a part of what constitutes the character of the Hungarian nation-state. On the other hand, irredentism is irreconcilable with the nature of Hungarian society and Hungarian parliamentary democracy.

6) The above facts are a part of the process of accession, and cannot be ignored for the sake of faster accession. Furthermore, they are inseparable from the process being interwoven with the view taken of Hungary abroad.

The improving situation in Hungary may contribute to a more rapid accession into the EU and, in particular, may provide a more favourable negotiating position. The political decision, however, will be determined by considerations that Hungary has no control over.

1) "Now, above all, the countries wishing to join must be reassured by letting them know that even if they cannot be members as yet, they already belong to the family," one well-informed expert on European affairs said recently. Indeed, twice a year the leaders of the twelve applicant countries dine together with those of the fifteen members. This is admirable as a symbolic gesture, but it also shows that the European Union at present can hardly offer more than gestures. Looked at from Brussels, the closest date for accession seems to be 2002, but the majority have 2005 in mind. Times are difficult everywhere. Member states fear the costs of enlargement. The example of East Germany is frightening enough as a warning that economic backwardness is harder to make up for than had been thought. Adding to the problem is the fact that many of the aspirant countries are burdened with democratic institutions that are still weak and undeveloped.

From the Western point of view, the situation is not much better in security policy either. Beside the normal functioning of democratic institutions and a market economy, what is needed, above all, is an army which is under parliamentary civilian control, a modern strategic concept and a highly developed communications network. Even the best-placed countries are struggling with huge problems, as the Bosnian experiment shows. Non-Nato members, including Russia, were hardly able to muster units capable of fitting into NATO's system in order to participate in the peacekeeping assigned after Dayton.

2) These are superficial dilemmas. It is by referring to these that the opponents of enlargement point out, beside the threats of ethnic conflicts, how dangerous it is to anger Russia. A formal extension of the Western world toward the East would, in their view, open the way for two new conflicts in the present security system: national quarrels and the Russian threat. The real dilemma, however, lies deeper because it is a dilemma of roles and responsibilities.

The system of consensus-based decisions reveals a lack of historical experience on how supranational organizations like the EU or NATO should operate. The present-day variant makes them communities of nation-states in which decision-making is based on a harmony between national interests, collective values and hierarchy. The Balkans crisis, as I have already pointed out, showed quite dramatically the paralysing effect of this. Today, it is still hard to imagine how this contradiction could be resolved. Yet the present structure of the European Union might actually splinter if new members are admitted. Thus the problem of enlargement in fact raises, or even intensifies, the grave internal contradictions of the two big organisations. A politically new federal Europe based on free elections, with parties cutting across borders declaring European programmes, and based on a strong parliament is still inconceivable. For that reason, governance remains on the basis of consensus, instead of the confrontation of definite European political wills. The situation in NATO is different inasmuch as when there is a crisis, the overwhelming strength of the U.S. carries the

organization to the point of a major political decision, as was shown in the case of Eastern enlargement (Peace Partnership) or the Balkans crisis (Dayton).

3) The idea of a differentially geared Europe also derives from there. Such a Europe would be divided into regions and zones which differ economically. A multi-speed security system would be one whose newly admitted members would not be burdened with certain obligations (stationing of foreign troops, stocking of nuclear weapons, etc.). Although these ideas follow logically from the contradictions of the present situation they are very strongly rejected by all those concerned over the present unity of an EU and a NATO based on central institutions.

**H**ungary's own nation-state interests can be protected only in a federal Europe with strong central institutions. The special position of Central Europe and the dilemma within the Atlantic organizations requires that the Western World take on a peculiar role in the region. A cooperation based on Western-type democracy, a market economy and a balance of forces must develop, guaranteed by general stability agreements. All the states in the region are ready to sacrifice some of their sovereignty in return for accession. The great Western integrated organizations, however, appear to be incapable of taking on a great-power role in the region. Historical analogies cannot be applied to the situation today since there is no common foreign and security policy. The end of the Balladur Plan is highly illuminating in this respect. It seems as if today there is no party willing to take on the great-power role that has been so significant in the life and history of Central Europe. From a moral aspect, it may be possible to call this a good thing; the dilemma nevertheless persists. If Hungary's Slovak, Romanian and Serbian neighbours slip behind, or become undesirable as members, this might reduce Hungary's own chances as well as making the position of Hungarians living in those countries more difficult. A unilateral Hungarian success, on the other hand, would increase external tensions, which, in turn, would again threaten the balance of power. The internal equilibrium of Central Europe is going to be the great issue of the future. ■

Ken Smith

# The Shadow of God

A Poem on the Battle of Mohács, 1526

**I** am Suleyman, sultan of sultans, sovereign of sovereigns, distributor of crowns to the lords of the surface of the globe.

*I am Suleyman, the Shadow of God on earth, Commander of the Faithful, Servant and Protector of the Holy Places.*

*I am Suleyman, ruler of the two lands and the two seas, sultan and padishah of the White Sea and of the Black, of Rumelia, of Anatolia, of Karamania, and of the land of Rum. I am Rum Kayseri.*

*I am lord of Damascus, of Aleppo, lord of Cairo, lord of Mecca, of Medina, of Jerusalem, of all Arabia, of Yemen and of many other lands which my noble forefathers and illustrious ancestors (may God brighten their tombs) conquered by the force of their arms and which my august majesty has subdued with my flaming sword and my victorious blade.*

*I am Sultan Suleyman Han, son of Sultan Selim Han, son of Sultan Bayezid Han.*

*I am Suleyman. To the East I am the Lawgiver. To the West I am the Magnificent.*

*Suleyman. In his dream the far world  
is a basket of heads at his saddlebow,  
sunlight's flash on the edges of blades  
raised in his name to the dim horizon:  
I am Suleyman. At the end of Ramadan,  
in the spring of the year that will send*

---

**Ken Smith**

*is an English poet born in 1938 and living  
in London. His several collections,  
of which the most recent is Tender to the Queen of Spain, are published by Bloodaxe.*

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A few years ago, in Budapest, I came across a postcard of men in sheepskins and horns and fierce masks standing before a bonfire. Masks have always fascinated me, and when I heard that these masked men were participants in the annual *Busójárás* celebrations in Mohács, I resolved to go to the event when it next happened. With me I took a tape recorder and played the recorded mayhem to a producer at the BBC. As a result I was eventually commissioned to go back to Mohács in February of 1996 and write a long (twenty minute) poem, which became *The Shadow of God*. The programme itself has me reading the poem and sounds from Mohács: bells, horns, music, voices, dogs and the cannon from the Battle of Mohács that is fired in the town square. It was broadcast here on November 18th.

The Busó tradition is a Dionysian explosion, part of a carnival tradition involving masks and masking common to many countries in central and southern Europe, and whose origins are lost in the mists. Unique to the Mohács tradition, however, is its declared link to the Turkish occupation and to the site of the nearby battlefield of 1526, where the flower of Hungary fell before Suleyman. In establishing this link within the poem, I developed this section on him and his eighty-day journey in the rain with all his army. Sources were few: the Corvina *History of Hungary*, and Andrew Wheatcroft's *The Ottomans*, and for the first section, the invocation of Suleyman, I am indebted to R. H. Davison's *Turkey, A Short History*, and his transcription of a letter sent by Suleyman to Francis, King of France. The rest, as they say, was work.

K. S.

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*his quarrelsome soldiery north again  
Suleyman rises from sleep, consults maps,  
glancing up glimpsing the evening star  
low in the cobalt canopy of the day's end  
caught in the thicket of new moon's  
upturned horns, and takes that for his omen.  
That year as every year war is a season,  
war is a fetva, a jihad waged on all  
the unreconciled world of unbelievers  
beyond the gaze of the Magnificent.*

*That year his beard points west again  
to the domain of war: glimpse of far hills,  
country scoured flat by the rivers, the beasts  
are deer and wild pig leaving their tracks  
on the soggy waterlands, on the scrubland  
thistles, milkweed, juniper, vines,  
the eyes of the tall white birches  
glimpsed through the pines. The birds are  
swift, hawk, crow and kingfisher,  
the little seedeaters, the buzzards*

*sentinels on his way, the storks  
from their round high nests in the wind  
glance after him, the pheasant's stutter,  
the owl's stare in his tracks, the woodpecker  
tapping in the dark light of the woods,  
the shrike pinning his dinner to a thorn.*

*The Lawgiver, Suleyman, whom the Prophet  
favours and posterity long remembers,  
goes out of the city to his war camp.  
He hoists the six black horsetails of his flag,  
unwraps the forty silk shawls from the black  
sacred banner of Mohammed and raises it,  
and from all the heaven protected empire  
of dur ul Islam come the levies, sipahiyan,  
akinciler, seğmenler, tüfekçiler, azapla,  
topçular, yeni çeriler, tribesmen and the wild  
bowmen of the steppes, the half naked dervish  
not counted into the muster, one hundred thousand  
dreaming of loot, calling his name, Suleyman,  
taking the roads north, Istanbul to Belgrade  
and the rough tracks beyond into the wastes  
of the unbelievers, the mire of the infidel.*

*In his journal there is rain, endless rain,  
day after day the grey slanting downpour,  
vague cloudy horizons and the sky's flood.  
And bitter winds. 80 days on the march  
in the downpour on no road that is a road  
driving the great train north, 80 nights  
pitched in the sheeted rain, slithering  
with horses and camels and weaponry  
in the black Balkan mud of the flood plains,  
left of the river between the rivers  
in that year of the rain. The beasts  
are deer and boar and wolf, the birds  
hawk and butcher bird, black cormorant  
low over his black shadow on the river,  
crows in a black storm overhead, or perched  
on a stump, watching the way God watches.*

Ropes split, the big guns sink in the bogs,  
the cries of horses and men no one hears,  
merely the dead born to die in the muck  
for the enlargement of empire and the word  
of the Prophet, may God's smile ever rest on him,  
for the enrichment of some, enslavement of some,  
somewhere in the mapless country of the rain,  
crushed by the wheels, some lost in sinkholes,  
the ropes falling away from their hands  
and last of them the O of their upturned  
mouths calling his name: Suleyman, Suleyman.  
The names of the days are rain and wind,  
the names of the rivers run into each other.  
Up the Danube day after day 800 boats  
weigh upwind upstream on the downcoming  
agua contradictionis beyond which the barbarians.

Under the six black horsetail standard,  
under the sacred banner the horse army  
lugs its stores and its guns northward  
into the oncoming rain and the clutter of mud  
and the wind in their faces: cavalry, artillery,  
sharpshooters, musketmen, soldiers, raiders,  
shaggy Tatar horsemen, all dreaming of rape.  
300 cannon through the marshes, some lost,  
the horses straining, the whips, no roads,  
no bridges in all this nowhere of mud,  
tracks that run to dead ends, watery graves,  
roads running off into water, marsh paths  
learned at a blade's edge and goodbye  
the quick blood, always eager to be off,  
goodbye the names hawk and buzzard and heron,  
the names Sava and Drava mean nothing now.

Suleyman. The bared teeth of the horses,  
their necks rear from the reeds, screaming  
as horses scream, men scream, the rain falls.  
Imprint of reeds on the sky lances on the wind,  
lancemen and horsemen. The birds are shrike,  
buzzard, crow, the owl falling on its shadow,  
the harrier's underspread wingspan two skulls  
on the grey light rising on the sky, the rivers

*Sava and Drava and Danube though the names  
mean nothing to him. Problems with stores,  
problems with water, questions of powder,  
fuel for the cooking pots, meat, some warmth  
in the long shivering rain, shaving the rust  
from their blades, sword, knife, sabre, spear,  
matchlock and carbine, guns lugged down roads  
built of reeds, the stores rotting away.*

*The sodden saddlesore army of divine light,  
fractious and lice-ridden and chilled to the bone,  
crying Suleyman Suleyman, those running before  
crying Suleyman Suleyman, the Magnificent.  
He is crossing the Drava on a golden throne  
from the domain of peace to the domain of war.*

*To Mohács*

*in the marshlands, still in the pouring rain,  
August 29th, 1526, where those summoned  
and hastily gathered died in thousands  
in the space of a moment the chronicler  
scribbles, in the safety of distance,  
cruel panthers in a moment to hell's pit.  
That day the guns chained wheel to wheel,  
smoke and the cries of men and horses,  
the knights shot from their saddles, armour  
dragging them into the mire, the hooves  
stamping them in, the infantry butchered,  
in the space of a moment the swift  
routine of retreat, slaughter and rout,  
the space of a moment. No prisoners,  
the wails of the wounded, the dying, becks  
brimmed with blood, and the young king  
thrown from his horse, drowned in his breastplate.  
Thereafter Suleyman recalls he sat on the field  
in the pouring rain on his glittering throne  
to the long applause of his army: I am  
Sultan Suleyman Han, son of Sultan Selim Han,  
son of Sultan Bayezid Han. The shadow of God.*

*And they butcher the captives, dig the pits,  
to bury their own brave dead, horses and men,*

30 thousand whose last rainy day was this,  
and the other dead lie in the rain, or scatter  
their bones in the wetlands and the reedgrass.  
Whatever birds pecked out their eyes  
their names are no matter nor the stream  
they drowned in nor the name of the planet  
whose soft brown body they shovelled in after.  
Thereafter the land burns and the churches,  
thereafter women and slaves and silver.  
And thereafter, pronounces the historian,  
his quill's tip brushing his cheek, his point  
squeaking over the page, the lamp's glint  
on his inkhorn: the long Turkish night,  
the tomb of the nation, dug in the rain.

In the space of a moment, in the centuries  
moments pile into, leaf over leaf,  
season by season as the winters pass  
and the wars roll over and the borders shift  
it is ploughland, old bones surfacing  
at the hoe's edge and the plough's iron,  
scapulae and vertebrae rising in a flat  
wide fenced country laid open to the wind,  
prowled by the tractors of the collectives  
and the same wandering birds, black earth  
through white snow, wind beaten scarecrow  
and the white silence of another winter.  
It is a museum of bones in the thick boney  
stew of each other, where some bird sings  
in the evergreens and a boy rings a bell  
in the long white silence that follows.

It is a field of poles upright at a pit's rim,  
carved into cruel faces, chiselled in grimaces,  
spiked, helmeted, horned, a ragged line of posts  
that are totems of men straggling off into trees,  
some aslant, the long necks of horses  
rearing from snow. They are flail and bludgeon  
and battleaxe, calvaries of yokes and the bows  
of the swift horsemen, the trailed arms  
of the willow tree. They are the crescent moon

*and the star, the cross, the crown, the turban  
and the tarboosh, gnarled glances of soldiers,  
the figures of dead men rising from the earth,  
Suleyman with a basket of heads at his pommel  
and the dead king Lajos in his blue bonnet.  
Overhead the high jets in the clear blue  
corridor of cloudless sky above Serbia,  
flying the line of the great rivers  
whose names are the same though the names  
of the empires and the nations shift  
on the maps. South of here, not far,  
in the debateable lands of the warring states  
the bones are again rising in the mud.*

*The wooden cock crows from his wooden post.  
In the clear dry air a bell rings.*

*A bell rings. In the town the dogs bark  
and all night again the banging of boats  
on the river and the thud of drifting ice  
on their hulls and the slapping of waves.*

*Always dogs, beyond gates, over walls,  
loose on the streets, howling to the far  
flat ring of the world's edge of woods,  
rivers, barns, border posts.*

*Wolfhounds, manhounds, pit bulls,  
mutts, mastiffs and mongrels bawling  
at cats, cars, bells, footsteps, wind  
in the winter trees, the yellow moon.*

*Each with his patch to scratch, each  
his yard to guard, each with his own  
view of the world, his own particular opinion  
he will not give up easily.*

*Wars begin with this and end whimpering.  
They begin with the squabbles of neighbours  
and end in the baying of men: what's mine  
is mine. And yours is mine also.*

*And someone has backed into the lamp-post again,  
someone has knocked over the empty bottles,  
someone has burst into drunken tuneless song  
on the late street and set all the dogs off.*

*Someone has been beating his wife again,  
broken all the crockery in the kitchen,  
woken the kids and the curs and the old wounds,  
slammed the door shut, kicked the gatepost.  
Gone off to the river to think it all out,  
contemplate drowning himself at last  
as all round in his reeling skull  
in the great dark the dogs bark.*

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*Very fast very slow the music  
a lament from the villages  
a music come down from the mountains  
called across rivers across plains:  
ah no joking and no joking  
a gift for the kolo, bridegroom  
the thieves they are singing  
dance my love dance faster  
faster till we fall down.*

*The reedgrass that will be thatch  
first snowy fields turned in the plough.  
A line of trucks in a white field  
waiting for grain not yet sown:  
end of the winter quarter  
end of the season of craving  
the river's ice drifting south  
snow collapsing from the buildings:  
the days of the death of King Winter.*

*The Busójárás.*

*Time to take to the streets  
wearing the skins of beasts  
masks years in the making offspring*

*of the old whisperers in the hearth  
kin to the devotees of trees  
and certain stones and all rivers  
lord of the vines and beasts  
our lady of the wild things the old gods  
who never made it into heaven.*

*Busós.*

*They step out of the unwritten  
the unremembered out of Illyria  
out of the south the dark the flight  
and the distant remembrance of panic  
the horned hoof footed hard drinking  
god of the shepherds. They step out  
through the winter streets in masks  
horns in sheepskins and bandoliers  
with their bells and their rattles.*

*Busós.*

*With their antlers tall in the skins  
of beasts belled shaggy moustache men  
huge with their clubs and horns  
wild in their tall wooden masks  
coming on from the distance  
all the years they have travelled  
out of the unwritten the agrapha  
the history of the forgotten  
the long shadows of the lost gods.  
At noon they have crossed the river  
they have taken the streets  
filled with organized riot  
the ruckus of men in the male dance  
the clatter and rattle of flails  
the interminable clanging of bells  
rain clanking into buckets  
in mockery taking their ways  
through the orders of anarchy.*

*Busós.*

*Fierce and yet not fierce  
joking and yet not joking  
this is the management of chaos:*

*the war of the great ratchets  
the battle of the bells upright animals  
striding through the streets  
through the cold falling sunlight  
in a wild skirling music  
bearing the skulls of animals.*

*Busós.*

*Others come as veiled hooded women  
a brown friar another the devil  
a joker in a Russian tank mask  
a Groucho Marx an Austrian helmet.  
And these others ghosts in dirty sheets  
rags sackcloth and ashes and stocking masks  
bunched in knots of impudent silence  
young men scattering the girls  
the dead risen from the dead.*

*Centuries ago the traveller  
Evliya Çelebi warned his far flung  
wandering countrymen of the masked  
madmen of Mohács in the marshland  
in their shaggy jackets and bells  
and their faceless faces:  
they are devils devils  
in the place of devils  
no-one should go there.  
In their own legend of themselves  
they chased the Turks out of town  
in terror. In the ill-disciplined  
shaggy masked half-drunk ranks  
among pitchforks and whirling clubs  
the carved severed head on a stick  
of a janissary, moustache top knot skull  
goes round and round in the racket  
and the gathering fire and the dusk.*

*How years ago they were fearless  
in the place of defeat and rose again  
how years ago a pig's blood painted  
a cross in the town square and how  
the masks stained in animal blood  
and the wild cries and the kolo.*

*was their resistance. How once  
they were one with the beasts  
one with men one with the gods.*

*Rutting and butting as beasts  
sticks for pricks bells balls  
and under the mask is another  
and another they are Busós  
three days of the year Busós  
parading their ragged squads  
to the square where the cannon  
from that year of the rain  
thunders mud and rags and smoke.*

*Busós.*

*Come nightfall on the third day  
of marching and mayhem and music  
that is Shrovetide the fire's lit  
in the square. King Winter is dead  
carted off in a coffin and burned.  
On the coffin in flowery  
Hungarian script: it's sold,  
our country, it's sold, we have  
nothing left but our fathers' pricks.*

*Where does this music come from,  
an old woman asks. From all round her  
from everywhere from earth  
from the wind from the long turned  
furrows of defeat the old sorrow  
the old joy the songs  
of the long gone into the dark.  
It's sold, our country,  
and all the thieves are laughing.*

*Time to march one last time  
on the town and burn winter  
with bells and cannon and fire  
round and around the tottering square  
masked men and horses the music  
round and round the kolo  
the dancing of the hairy men  
and winter goes up in the flames  
the tall smoke climbing the sky.*

*Busós.*

*The sliver of moon the first star  
on the pale blue flag of the sky  
as the sparks flare and die. At the edge  
of the embers of memory the borders  
of hearing: bells laughter a child  
a cough girls singing the swift music  
in the ashes of the evening  
whisps of voices at a distance  
in that far off language.*



Photo Péter Korniss

Victor Határ

# The Magic of Money or The Treasure of the Celts

Short story

In England you look in vain for "simple" peasants or "simple" fishermen. Nor was old Willie Whimster, at the head of the Yarmouth fleet, one of those "simple" fishermen from folk-tales. He was an experienced, learned man, had his wits about him and read the posh Sundays, with specs gleaming just as cleverly as any of the directors of the company in Norwich. Nor was his trade itself the romantic seafaring of the past. His was a salaried occupation, much mechanized, wharfage and all that, with the difference that his desk was on a motor trawler, together with his log-book and ledgers and instead of filing cabinets, he had by his side a battered grey wireless, installed for him to listen for wind forces and the rise and fall of the glass.

He had a handsome bungalow, a family with two daughters. One already married, the other marriageable with a fiancé, so that portly, jovial Willie Whimster could consider himself "lucky". In his late fifties, his strength and digestion was like that of an ox and he pulled at his pipe with much satisfaction in the knowledge that he had found his berth (where he indeed lived all his life) in Yarmouth. He had resigned himself to the thought that millionaires are not of his ilk and put such thoughts out of his mind quite cheerfully. And how wrong he proved to be in this, for he was quite unprepared when the Goddess of Fortune raised high her sceptre in order to hit him on the head with it. For when anyone is used and hardened to being relatively prosperous, used to his hearth, his desk, to bell-ringing on Sundays, such a thump either stops the heart or adles the brain.

However, if in no one else in his line of work, in Willie there remained a touch of the romantic. Of a Saturday afternoon he, with youthful heart, liked to venture out to inshore waters, pushing off in one of the small boats of the Company and rowing for the sandbanks opposite the mouth of the Yare. There he arranged his rods, knocked out and then filled his pipe and gently swaying to the surge of

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the Vintage Chart Show on his transistor, gazed out to sea, over the water at the forest of tower-cranes by the docks and puffed contentedly at his pipe.

On one such occasion, he suddenly happened to notice that the cranes could hardly be seen, were being covered by flapping maned, white capped waves and that he must have drifted well beyond the inshore. Promptly he turned around and started pulling diligently at the oars. Anyhow, the world kept disappearing in the troughs between wave crests, and his lines were damnably taut. He thought it best to see to them first, started to haul them in, secretly wishing luck to a large sole, for it to struggle free of the hook—what he needed least of all was a fine catch.

It took him a good half hour to haul in the unwieldy load and, for all his strength, tip it aboard. Anybody else might have capsized. True, he became pretty hot under the collar and needed quite a bit of mopping up with his handkerchief.

He had now neither the time, nor the wherewithall to get rid of the thick encrustation; however, he was familiar with such stone-filled sailor's chests. It was a now nearly obsolete, but touching, custom in Yarmouth, that when a seafarer died, his first chest, with the picture of his first sweetheart, was cast into the open sea.

"Give me a hand," he called out to some lads knocking about, as soon as he got on to the pier and managed to shove the shapeless barnacled mass up onto it. The lads obligingly took hold of the chest and heaved it to his car. He opened the boot for them to tip it in. Grabbing an oil-rag, he wiped his hands, gave them a couple of pounds and shut the driver's door on himself. In five minutes the "fish" was in his garage with Mollie, his better half, disconsolately handing him his tools:

"Willie, Willie, for God's sake, what a mess you're making..."

"Carting it over here."

"Then why not straight into the bin?"

"That's where it'll end up; just let me break it open first."

However, it was somewhat large for a sailor's chest. Nor was it made of deal, but of intricately carved huge hardwood planks, iron bound and embellished with wrought-iron mountings, so that it took time to prise the lid open. Mollie's carping ceased at once and he himself could hardly draw breath and just looked and looked—while Mollie spread out some old Sunday papers ready for him to lay things on. Peculiarly shaped, ill-marked coins emerged, on them ragged profiles of soldiers, demigods, unknown rulers, wreathed around with illegible scrawls. Exquisitely wrought plates, horn-goblets, inlaid with precious stones, oddly shaped pendants, cloak-fasteners for giants, crown-form hair ornaments (or maybe crowns?), steward's chains, bracelets, fibulae, and at the very bottom, a buckler. Diamonds sparkled over the yellow light of mounds of pure gold.

Mollie, wringing her hands while wiping them on her apron, seemed to be consigning the lot to hell with loud lamentation, but from the bottom of her

heart she gave thanks to St Winifred for his intercession. For by this time she was worrying that the bridegroom to be might find Shirley's portion too small.

The master of the fleet put the paraffin stove next to the chest to dry it out, closed the garage, locked it (his car had to stay outside); gulped down a tumblerful of watered whisky and, with more speed than was his wont, traipsed over to his priest to clarify his legal position. No need to hasten, what the devil, and only if necessary—and only on his way back—might he call on the police. The Reverend Morley took a contrary view. Until they see clearly what sort of find it is, they could not know if there is a legal position at all. After that, of course, the police cannot be ignored and even if not immediately handing it over, notifying them was a must. In his heart of hearts, old Whimster inclined towards not creating a legal situation at all and, be the find the treasure of King Darius or baubles from a fair, the lot belonged to him. On the other hand, he did not want to come a cropper, knew the relevant statutes, was law-abiding, the drinking companion of the verger and himself the first bell-ringer! However, the Reverend Morley was now lifting the receiver to catch his old friend MacLaughlin, chief keeper of the Norwich Museum at home. The news lit quite a fire under the chief keeper and he fixed a visit for the next afternoon.

Next day being Sunday, the fisher-folk loved to go for a stroll and no one knew from where—certainly not from the papers, for only on the following Sunday were there colourful reports about the “miraculous catch in Great Yarmouth”—the fact was that they discussed it in excited groups and peeped shamelessly in when passing by the windows of the Whimster bungalow. When the gentlemen—the vicar, the keeper and the verger—filed in with the Whimster family to the sitting room, where the find was displayed on three tables pushed together, there was some confusion, and the vicar retired into a corner with the expert for a private chat. A little while later they beckoned old Whimster over as well—for the treasure was practically being monopolized by the family standing around it, mentally piling up the ghetto-blasters and TVs, lists of dream-cars, dream-houses, as if the old sea-dog had nothing to do with the treasure—and Willie, scratching his stubbly trawler-skipper's chin, smelled a rat. Even Christ's tomb was not guarded free of charge; like valuing works of art, the valuation of treasure trove had a fixed price; MacLaughlin promptly shoved under his nose the official scale for valuing treasure. Up to £100,000, 2 per cent, over that gradually less.

“And for these?”, the trawlermaster enquired, casting a side glance towards his treasure.

“Even among friends it looks more than £200,000,” the expert eye swept over the three tables. “Of course the whole question is purely academic for the time being and, in any case, the police would transfer it to me. Since I'm their official valuer, I can't hush it up and you were also wanting to notify them in any case, weren't you? Always supposing that you have no loophole, because if you have

and some sharp lawyer sees to it, well then, I don't want to fleece you either, Whimster old chap. I know £1,800 is a huge sum for you and you can't shell it out instantly. If that's the way it turns out, let's make it £300 and you could make up the rest when convenient. When you've given up your job and cruised around the world once or twice—I can wait," and he jovially patted Willie's back. "Even if it's only 10 per cent that's coming to you, even then. You'll be rolling in it".

The old gent's face fell, but he nodded in agreement. This proved a double let down for him. Firstly, that all his savings in the bank will have to go on the valuation; secondly that he was not going to be a millionaire, only a measly £20,000 windfall might come his way—on the other hand, he might be the happy possessor of £200,000, if...! If that *if* weren't there and he could find a loophole. Even so, the irresistible mirage of luxury cruises, pleasure palm-beaches, first class travel cheered him up somewhat and, while the curator scanned with a magnifying glass and inventorized the golden hoard piece by piece, humming and hawing with admiration, he made peace with the thought that he may become merely a quarter millionaire, if clever enough. Well he knew that even that was an astronomical sum, for which he might acquire all 35 houses in the town's new luxury development; that a quarter of a million was a marvellously sharp witted and brainy sum, even its odour was a veritable magnet of brilliance. Even if its owner might be a born asinine crackpot, dosh of that size would instantly attract—in the hope of rake-offs—advocates and apologists, its Knights of the Square Table. That even in his sleep it would see to its affairs from the depths of the safe. For money had that much cunning—such magic power.

From the occasionally dropped half-hints, now-and-again high spirits and shaken smirks of the curator, he began to suspect what sort of rare fish he had netted.

"Hm... Golden clasp: Early Celtic, topaz and amethyst, at least fifteen, maybe twenty. Horn goblet, with stand, quite untouched, only its leatherpouch eaten by salt. They'd give thirty-five for this. Golden fillet, it says *Conchobordus Rex*, this one is fifty, no, a hundred thousand, what should I say? Priceless, if this is true. Universal significance. He has found the crown of Great Conchobor the Chieftain. This krater (goldsmith's craft fit for a king!) to say the least (maybe Conchobor himself dunked his bread scowered on the tip of his dirk into the venison gravy in this) it's covered in algae, should not be touched, only experts should clean it. Another twenty... thirty-five... how could I tell. Good God! This is some war-hammer! Its head is gold and on its shaft in Old Irish *Cuchulainnus Rex*. Great Cuchulainn's war-hammer, dropped from heaven! Priceless. I don't want to go on."

But he did. Delighting in the royal profiles on the coins, bucklers and softly cogitating as if to himself only, the curator made the legendary campaigns of the ancient Celts march past his fascinated audience. The first horseman,

Cuchulainn, the Hound, (as this savage mace-wielder was described in the heroic poem of the Cattle Raid of Cualnge)—followed by his king, Great Conchobor, Inventor of the Bloodbath, on his war-chariot with his war-hounds, on the necks of his horses dangled the heads of the peace-emissaries, slung in bunches. There was Conall Chermac the Reckless, Wiley Bikriu, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: in-cal-cu-lable. The place for the coins is the Numismatic Department of the British Museum, before the scent of them wafts over to the U.S. and knowing the vultures in the sales rooms, the bidding might be run up to the region of £200,000, and as for the buckler...

By the time the curator finished, the estimate ran to £450,000 and the trawler-master felt himself a half-millionaire—that is to say might have felt, if. If only that *if* would not be there. His temerity in daydreaming was caught by the Reverend Morley as well: with beaming face he saw the donor of rows of new pews, altarpieces, altarcloths, roof-tree and bells; old Willie's weatherbeaten visage appeared to the others—radiating from the stained glass window above the baptismal font. They couldn't refrain from admiring his domed forehead, manly profile, the piercing fire in his eyes, all the exquisiteness of his person; and this too was the magic power of money, that it embellishes our unassuming self, as if with precious stones. Yet old Willie was embarrassed by this suddenly-acquired charisma and remained that honest chief bell-ringer of the parish that he was.

He did not want to hear about security deposits, bank vaults, transport. In all his days he had put no trust in scraps of paper and now he asked the curator for a couple of months of grace, so that he could buy a huge safe and a burglar alarm with his savings—until that is, somewhat belatedly—he would do the notification. He ordered the safe on Monday morning and it arrived from Norwich by evening. He put it in the garage, the outside door of which he barricaded off with sacks of cement and installed an extra safety lock on the entrance to the house. He now felt that the treasure of the Celts was safer with him than in the vaults of the Bank of England.

He phoned the police station—knew them all—the lads came promptly, looked over the treasure and his arrangements, congratulated him, accepted a drink, left a form to fill. Never mind a small irregularity, what's a couple of weeks between friends. He expressed his views to the papers just as the whole of England expected of him: the treasure will not change his way of life at all, he will not give up his job. He read the interviews with satisfaction, showing him as a living embodiment of modesty. On the other hand, he got cold feet reading the letters from half a dozen legal firms in Norwich offering their services if and when his right to the treasure of the Celts would be contested from above, which could be taken for granted, because whosoever hid a treasure trove was the purloiner of goods belonging to others, which, all things considered, based on the pertinent statutes... Old Whimster did not like the statutes cutting this way and that way, least of all he liked lawyers: he smelled hyenas and carrion vultures.

He changed his mind, when with gnashing teeth, he deciphered the letter from the Crown, which with polite firmness announced the Crown's legal claim to the treasure trove and where to deposit without delay the treasure of the Celts, until Her Majesty in her Gracious Pleasure, deemed to make arrangements for the percentage of the reward for the honest finder...etc. etc.

"Well, well, well; die if I must, I won't let anybody hound me there. Why is it so urgent suddenly? And anyway who is the Crown? Would that Crown go fishing of a Saturday afternoon, would it risk its skin in a dinghy, to get to shore with what looked like a millstone lump of algae, up to the gunwales in water and bathed in sweat?!"

Old Whimster reached for the receiver with the temper of a tiger fretting for the safety of its cubs and chose at random the envelope of one of the legal firms. Lo and behold, the phone proved to be a mindreader. Before he had a chance to dial, it rung like hell.

"No interview here, understand? Do you understand?! What am I going to do with my money?! It's not mine, but once it is I'll buy a Rottweiler to run along the length of my fence; I'll buy a strictly private private life and it won't be anybody's business what I'm going to do with my money and that's the end of it." Slowly his screeching stopped as the blazing light of truth entered his brain. Behind his back the six law firms had formed a syndicate and decided to plead his case jointly. The call was an enquiry whether the police had pestered him yet and what about the Crown staking its claim? He began to consider it reasonable that all by itself, out of nothing, a star chamber should recruit itself around the treasure of the Celts, until he fought out his battle of the foolscap and took possession of his opulent realm of all those palm-beaches and lots and lots of palatial cruise ships sailing to the Bahamas. By that evening two representatives of the syndicate were having dinner at his house.

"Let them bray, Whimster, old chap. Of course the Crown would like to have actual possession and then we might scrape it back for your heirs only through summary restitutional proceedings, and that might take years. Never fear, Whimster old chap, the Crown hasn't a leg to stand on and even if we cannot prevent sequestration, we shall achieve its suspension and come hell and high water, until the court rules, the Crown can't remove a single nail from here, let alone the treasure of the Celts".

Nevertheless, the old man could not take it in that the Crown had no "leg to stand on" at all. Though he knew of those paragraphs well enough, he had so far nothing to do with them. If only a single golden bowl were involved, well, the devil take it. There goes the honest bell-ringer, who handed it in ... On the other hand, the coronet of Conchobordus Rex—the treasure of the Celts! So there was the "legal situation" and he just kept paying close attention.

At a time when everything that had fallen off the backs of carts travelling through his lands belonged to the lord of the manor, in the awfully distant

twelvethundreds, Haycockheaded Bertha extended the jus primae noctis to the newly married serf lads and ordered them from the church up to the castle, from where by dawn they crept miserably home, bitter-faced, fagged out tomcats—for a dismal bridal dance. Berta's illustrious son, Gherkinlegged Richard then extended the right of the Crown to "all Treasures and found Chatteles in our Domaine," extended it to all the Unclaimed Caboodle washed up and fished out of inshore waters, under pain of beheading. It was a convoluted paragraph, praised the inkhorns-and-quills of long-dead Chief Circumlocutor Scribes, haughty Lord Chancellors. The Long Parliament tried to annul it, but was not long enough to do a thorough job, merely changing the removal of the head to cutting off of nose and ears of the finder-keeper, because the age of humanism was by then dawning over England.

"In coastal waters ... who said so, in coastal waters?," mumbled the old man all mixed up and started to guess what they wanted to put into his mouth.

"I was well over the three miles out, the Crown is off its head!"

They got into motor boats and organized on-the-spot investigations. They anchored a buoy, measured the distance from the shore, and marked it on the admiralty chart: five miles. He knew it, swore to it, found the thing on the open sea, the Crown had nothing doing with the treasure of the Celts. In less than three months, half a dozen platforms on huge iron barrels were swaying around the buoy. Divers were lined up on the sea-bed, thick beams of light raked the boat skeletons, where they suspected lay the sunken fleet of the ancient Celts, returning with the spoils of wars. Only sailors' chests were brought up, with penny trash from the bazaars of Bangkok, bric-à-brac from Hong Kong and the soaked photos of the sweethearts-in-Zeppelins of many an old sea-dog, gone to a better world.

In Great Yarmouth old Whimster knew all the policemen, all the inspectors were his boon companions. Even so, they started to look askance at him and some of the snotty-nosed lads hardly returned his hello. Someone who did not hand a thing in, purloins, and whoever purloins, is a thief. Indeed, once one of them phoned him—ratings in the Navy they'd been together—a sergeant, dryly, officially, as if he never knew him. "I warn you of the consequences". They gave him a deadline, those sponging skivers, a deadline!

Frantic weeks, sleepless nights. When towards dawn sleep took pity on him, even then he dreamt now of fighting the police, now the Crown... "The Crown! the Crown!"—he swore with foul-mouthed wrath in his sleep and hurled above the head of the judge the war-hammer at the Crown, the golden war-hammer of Cuchulainn the Great. The ringing of the alarm clock made him emerge from his nightmares. At his head office they were green with envy and at home ... "at home"? He hardly dared to go home. Were they any better? Just for being his "flesh and blood"? Covert hints like landmines exploded under his feet, open family petitions were dropped in his soup. For the grandson a fold-up mountain

bike, for Harry (not yet his son-in-law) the (twelve cylinder) Jaguar. Dad, pappy, pop, gov, listen, Shirley and Harry had their eyes on a five-bedroomed one, with double garage, it's a honey.

"Let me be, you crowd of slaverers, you leave me alone! Maybe the two of you would sleep in five rooms at once? All that cuddling must have added your brains ...!"

A strange visitor paid him a call, a young sixfooter, a gentle Irish giant, correspondent of the *Transatlantic Bi-Monthly* of Denver, Colorado. Drank like a fish and his kneecap seemed to fill half of the room.

"Look, Willie, old fellow, the question is not whether you toe the line or not. We don't appeal to your conscience. America ..."

"What has America got to do with my conscience, Mr ... Mr What-shall-I-call-you?" (He didn't know that in the States everybody who is anybody uses first names.)

"Robin O'Hara"—the young giant said informally, "call me Rob". "Glad to meet you," interrupted old Willie coolly. (Nice of him not to call me old cock). O'Hara continued: "My paper is published in Denver, but my ranch is in Oklahoma. I know a nice stretch of woods for sale. Frisco ... a few hours away, no distance at all, I have it all here, it only needs your signature. Everything will be at your disposal, from the airport on. Look Big Daddy, don't be such a booby. We have an Indian story about a Cherokee chieftain who kicked his luck in the belly. It's America knocking on your door, the Opportunity of a Lifetime and the Land of. I don't like this dirty work, but there are some whom you have to knock on the head make them unload. You are naive enough to believe about America ... you must know, that America ..."

Even so, old Willie didn't want Denver, nor Oklahoma, America neither as the Land of the Opportunity of a Lifetime, nor as Depository of the Anglo-Saxon Race's Future, nor as a Museum of the Old Country. Did not want the \$3,000,000 on offer, himself relocated, family and all, not a care in the world. The Federal Museum in Frisco would own the treasure of the Celts; in the glass cases inscribed on tasteful little plastic plates: *The Buckler of Cuchulainn the Great (From the Collection of Mr William Whimster)*. He still wanted the treasure of the Celts—in Pounds Sterling.

"You are crazy enough to be locked up, Big Daddy. Not only shortsighted and naive, but also stubborn and as dumb as a jackass". (Sleight of hand with his lighter: endless somersaults; hypnotic smile on gleaming wire-rims). "A jackass is what you are, Big Daddy, can't you get it into your noodle, that America is Big. That you may find in America some desperate freebooters, who for a few grand would easily surround and shoot up your measly bungalow. Before you even had an idea of what's happening, the treasure of the Celts would be on our motorcruiser and you may whistle after its wake. Confound it, Big Daddy, I have a mind to show you, just so, for a bet. Make them lay siege and when it's already

ours, we won't take it after all. Leave it for you. Only to show you. This is no threat I'd carry out in case you won't sign of your own free will. Collect your wits, America wants the best for you, don't play the fool, Willie-Billie, sign it, shall I let your family loose on you?"

Even so, the masterfisher pushed away the pen and signed nothing. "I thank you Mr O'Hara, I'm not interested".

He had not even time to be pleased about the lawyer's letter (although the find is blocked, but they have managed to have that order lifted, the case of the Crown is in a mess), just wanted to have a quiet bite when the breakfast ceremony was disturbed. By whom or what? Dayak headhunters run him over with gurgling screams. The house collapsed upon him burying his papers, volcanic eruption under his chair. The bacon stuck in his throat, couldn't splutter nor swallow. Writ Issued in Triplicate. Her Majesty's Customs and Excise contest the legality of the Crown's claim, inasmuch as interpretations of the legislature affected treasure trove from the open sea, the crown had no right to a measly penny. On the other hand, open-sea finds are not exempt from Customs and Excise Duties, see para 125 section 22 (unprocessed and processed precious metals, jewels, etc.) arrived not only from overseas, but from the distant shores of thousands of years. The duty—four-fifth of the gross value—is payable in cash. The Customs Authorities are not interested where this might have been unearthed from, or if the treasure of the Celts had to be thrown away at auction at any price ... "Looks like I've had it! They're quarelling over my corpse, my corpse! They aren't contesting my legal claim, the rogues, the scoundrels! ..." He screamed, was still able to scream, the honest master of a trawler, but after the second letter, from the Fishing Company, he could just sit there, with eyes glazed over, annihilated. For the unauthorized usage of the Company's boat during the weekend they overlooked the offence against regulations in consideration of his long years of service and nearing pensionable age. But in lifting and beaching the treasure he had used the Company's vessel, pursuant to the articles of the Company, they file a claim to one-fifth of the treasure or its value in cash. The determination of this sum they entrusted to Mr MacLaughlin, the curator of the local museum. The legal department of the company accepted the opinion of the Legal Countersyndicate and would not like to take the case to court, however ... although ... if not ...

The family thought he had a stroke, patted his back, pressed a glass of water on him, made him drink it.

"Dad! Daddy! Aren't you well?! Good grief, a doctor!"

His Mollie called the saints, his Shirley phoned for the doctor. They put him to bed. The doctor found that he had the heart of an ox and his lungs were like that of a bull—he wished to be as healthy and complained about his own asthma.

By the night the house calmed down, all retired to bed, to dream about tomorrow's riches—the fold-up mountain bike, the five-bedroomed joy, the

Jaguar, the jackpot of a dowry. Only old Willie grumbled wide awake (unshaven), never before was he so wide awake (or so bristly), by his snoring Mollie. Fourth in duties, one-fifth to the Company. As if he had never existed. "What I think is, that the carrion kites are quarrelling over my corpse in my coffin; they have no intention of speaking to me". Three thieves squabbling over the treasure of the Celts, the fourth lurking there in the shadows: the agent for that museum in Frisco, Rob O'Hara. Of the seized gold he himself could not sell a single clasp and the three months grace nearly gone; he owed the curator a fortune for the valuation (two years' of his salary), and he had the cheek to bustle around at the Company for another two thousand. Before long he, Willie, won't be able to buy petrol or food. An ugly sailor's oath escaped from him. Wriggled out of the marital bed with great care, put on warm clothing and in the garage his yellow oil-skin, for the night looked ominous. Then he opened the safe for a last look at the treasure of the Celts by the beam of his torch.

Goblets, inlaid hafts, coins, fibulae. Cuchulainn the Strong, the mighty Cattlerustler; Conchobor the Great, Inventor of the Bloodbath; Reckless Conall Cernak, Cunning Bikrin, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight—still rung in his ears, though he could not tell them apart. The Numismatic Department of the British Museum started to close in on him like Frankenstein with all twelve of his sons and the Crown took on the look of Dracula. "Drop dead, all of you".

The burly old sea-dog put everything back into the iron-hooped ancient chest, hoisted it up in his arms and stole out on tiptoe through the hall, for the garage door was still blocked up with sacks of cement. He then heaved the lot into the boot of his car which he pushed on for a few hundred feet or so, before starting the engine to avoid waking the house. And so he took it to the port. Where was the Crown, and the rest of the carrion-eaters, the Customs, the Company, when he nearly burst himself to drag it up and nearly capsized with it? Where was America then? They all want the treasure of the Celts, so they do, do they? Well then, they should fish for it. Wish them a lucky catch, good fishing. Them and to Gherkinlegged Richard who issued that order hundreds of years ago and to his charming mother, Haycockheaded Bertha. That everything belongs to them, no chestnut pulled out of the fire anywhere by anybody, but for them.

Coils of rope lay at the dinghy's stern, so that neither dropping the chest nor him jumping after it made any noise. He untied it and rowed out beyond the breakwater. Surely not here, where a child might fish it out? Like hell they will, he knew better than that. He thought it was calm enough to make out to open sea, leaving behind the buoy with the diving platforms around it, where he had found the chest. The treasure of the Celts: if he can't have it, then nobody will. Here they can all go to hell. The police, the Crown, the Treasury, the House of Lords, the United Legal Syndicate of the World, journalists, curators. Tomorrow, when they come, he'll show them, show them the open sea. Fish it out, if you all want it. Sucks to you all. The treasure of the Celts. You all take me for a fool! ...

With bitter glee he put his arms round the ornate chest, not noticing that the rope was caught in several of the iron decorations on the chest and that he was standing in the middle of the coil. He heaved to and lifted the chest to the side of the boat and tipped it into the foamy waves. Before he heard the splash, his left foot was snatched by the rope. Icy cold closed in on him, a black Himalaya of towering waves cut off the horizon—disappeared the half-light of dawn, the dim reflection of the esplanade's illumination on the sky. The sea demanded him as well and he just kept spluttering and swallowing. Christ! the rope is around my foot—flashed across the drowning mind, for he felt it but could not cope with the prodigious drag. He still had composure enough to grab the side of the boat. It tilted and in the swell soon filled with water. They all went down together, the corpse somewhat faster, for it was dragged by the treasure of the Celts, the boat with dignified tilt, gracefully dipping and swaying, comfortably seeking a bed in the pitchdark amid the rocky caves.

Should old Whimster have learned about what followed, a fat lot of good it might have done to him. However, he never did get word. While he was making the acquaintance of the deep sea fishes, four wild-eyed gangsters stormed his house, his wife, daughter and grandchild, gagged and bound, were tossed into a corner, the safe was blown open with gelignite and the rogues, roaring with rage, demanded Shirley and Mollie tell them where the treasure of the Celts had been stowed away. All four were caught. Their leader, some scribbler who made out to be a correspondent of the obscure *Transatlantic Bi-Monthly*, a certain O'Hara, kept on insisting that it all was only a joke, he wanted to show the old man that the treasure of the Celts would be much safer in the museum in Frisco than in a garage in Yarmouth. Furthermore, that he also promised to pay him \$3,000,000—even his own defence counsel did not believe that. English Law—very properly—never judges by the intention, only by the deed. He was not willing to give up his accomplices, who had bolted with the treasure, nor where he hid the body of the old man. The gang of murderers got fifteen years each. •

*Translated by H. P. Pragai*

# The Migration and Landtaking of the Magyars

The origins and the migration of the Hungarians has been, since medieval times, a passionately debated question and not only among Hungarians. In the last century it became generally accepted that the language of the Hungarians pertains to the Uralic linguistic family. It formed, together with Vogul and Ostyak, the Ugric branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. This is disputed only by dilettantes. On the other hand, when the Hungarians appear in written sources they not only feature as Turks, but are expressly called so. Almost two hundred years after the landtaking, in 1074 the Byzantine Emperor Michael VII Dukas sent a crown to the then new Hungarian King Géza I. The crown, the lower part of the Holy Crown, now in the National Museum, bears the Greek inscription *Jeuvitsa the faithful king of the Turks*. The Hungarians are called Turks in several other Byzantine and Arabic sources from the 9th century

on. In other sources they are called Ungri, Hungar, Ugri, Bashkir or even Huns, Avars or Scythians. This great variety of names is in contrast with how the Hungarians named themselves. We have data on the fact that the Hungarians called themselves Magyars at least since the 8th century, but this has undoubtedly been their self denotation since much earlier times. The self-nomination *magyar* is of Finno-Ugric origin. It consists of two parts. The first part *magy-* goes back to an earlier form *manš*, which is identical with *Manysi*, the name of the Voguls, now living in Western Siberia, and with *Mos*, the name of one of the two main groups of their relatives, the Ostyaks. The second part, which sounded earlier *er*, is also an ethnic name, with the meaning "man, creature" and was the name of another Ugric group. From the two groups with Finno-Ugric names and languages was formed the name of the Hungarians *manš+er* > *magy+er* > *magyer* (this form, lacking the vowel harmony, is recorded until the 13th century) > *magyar*. In a lecture given in 1984 at the Academy of Rhein-Westfalen, I concluded that at the time of the landtaking the Hungarians were a people who spoke a Finno-Ugric language, but had a Turkic way of life.

Without going into the deeper past we can summarize the early history of the Hungarians as follows:

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The ancestors of the Hungarians separated from the other Ugric speaking people about 800-500 B.C. They lived for a shorter period in the vicinity of the ancestors of the Proto-Permian people, which is reflected in a few but interesting borrowings from the early language common to present Zuryen and Votyak. At those times they were already a people which cultivated the land and bred animals, while they also engaged in mounted hunting, and fishing. In a period of about thousand years they had close contacts with Iranians, which is reflected in the vocabulary of the Hungarian language. Some elements of agriculture and animal husbandry were learnt from these Iranian groups on the Western side of the Ural mountains.

Hungarian scholars such as Németh, Bárczi and Ligeti claimed that the Hungarians lived together with the other Ugrian people in West Siberia. This claim was based on a small number of etymologies which admittedly were borrowed into Proto-Ugrian from Turkic. If these etymologies would be acceptable, they could have been borrowed only in the neighborhood of the original homeland of the Turks, that is in West Siberia. A thorough checking of these etymologies shows they do not support these claims. Some of these etymologies are simply wrong, as H(ungarian) *hód* "beaver" ~ T(urkic) *kunduz*, H *hattyú* "swan" ~ T *kotang*, H *nyereg* "saddle" ~ T *eger*. Others are valid but the borrowings were made much later by the Hungarians on the coast of the Black Sea, as H *homok* "sand" ~ T *kumaki*, H *hajó* "boat" ~ T *kayik*. There are also words which entered separately into the Ob Ugric and the Hungarian languages as H *ló* "horse" ~ T *ulag*, H *szó* "word" ~ T *sab*, etc. Thus these reasons for supposing a West Siberian homeland for the Hungarians disappeared.

The change from a simple agricultural economy to a nomadic one took place

within determined geographical limits. Taking into account the latest results in historical climatology and botany, this could not occur more to the North than the 50-52nd latitude. Weighing all data at our present disposal, the changeover of the Hungarians to nomadism occurred in the 5th-6th century A.D. and at the southern end of the Urals, at the river Yayik or Ural. This change is marked by a strong influence of Western Turkic languages, predominantly, if not exclusively, of the Chuvash type, as H *ökör* "ox" ~ T *öküz*, Chuvash *văgăr*. The change lasted more than hundred years and several groups remained in the wooded steppe as agriculturists for even longer. The adaptation to the new way of life was gradual, otherwise the Hungarians would have disappeared in the ocean of Turkic speaking people.

The next events were connected to the migration of the Bulgar Turks from the Kuban-Don region to the Dnieper. This occurred about 600 A.D. Earlier it was supposed that the Empire founded by Khuvrat in 630 was at the Kuban river. However, after having identified the tomb of Khuvrat in Malaya Pereshchepina, near Poltava on the Dnieper river, other sources also had to be revised. We can now claim that the Old Bulgarian Empire lasted until 670-675 and had its centre near the Dnieper.

The area vacated by the majority of the Bulgars about 600 was soon occupied by the Hungarians. They lived north of the Alans, whose location is well documented. The Hungarians lived in the region between the Kuban, the Don and the Azov Sea i.e. the Meotis. The Alan contacts are reflected by such loan-words as H *asszony* "noble woman", originally: "princess" ~ Old Osetian *axsin* "princess". Here the Hungarians came into close contact not only with the Alans but also with the Khazars, who were, already in the 720s, dominant in the region. After the Khazars

freed themselves from the rule of the Eastern Turks, they attacked and defeated the Bulgars. Four sets of Bulgarians moved to the West. The first founded the Danubian Bulgarian Empire around 678, the second joined the Avars in the Carpathian Basin, a third migrated to Italy and is mentioned around Ravenna. The fourth appeared on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea. A not unimportant section of the Bulgars, however, accepted Khazar rule and remained within the realm of the Khazar khagan. Many of the early Turkic loan-words of Hungarian borrowed at this time, e.g. the name of the "ash tree" H *kóris* ~ West Old Turkic *keürič* or Hungarian were terms in horticulture, and viticulture, as H *gyümölcs* "fruit" ~ OT *yemiš*.

Around the end of the 7th century the Hungarians moved westwards and occupied the territory between the Dnieper and the Lower Danube where the earlier Western Bulgars lived. The relationship between the Hungarians and the Bulgars, both dependent from the Khazars, improved. We know what the Hungarians called this territory, because two Hungarian noblemen visited the Byzantine capital around 948 and the Emperor Constantinos Porphyrogennitos or his clerks noted their story. The name was *Etelküzü*. This Hungarian name had the meaning "the region within the rivers, Mesopotamia", where *Etel* is the Western Turkic generic name for "river" (Turkic *etil*) and *küzü* is the Hungarian name for a region "which is in between", i.e. the Hungarian equivalent of Greek *mezo*.

The Hungarians lived in *Etelküzü* until the landtaking. We can not exactly say when they moved to *Etelküzü*, but their stay must have lasted longer than was supposed earlier. A very large number of loan-words were borrowed here, as e.g. H *szőlő* "wine grape" ~ T *yedlig*. The Bulgars, trying to loosen their ties with the

Khazars, slowly moved northwards. After a serious defeat of the Khazars by the Arabs in 737, the migration of the Bulgars towards the Volga and further north accelerated. Some of the Hungarians moved with them. Both the Volga Bulgars and the Volga Hungarians reached the line of the Kama river around 900 A.D. The Volga Hungarians, or as they used to be called "the inhabitants of Magna Hungaria", were visited by Ibn Fadlan, mentioned by other sources and met by the Hungarian Friar Julian in 1235. In the following year both the Volga Bulgars and the Volga Hungarians were seriously defeated and destroyed by the Mongols.

The greater mass of the Hungarians remained in *Etelküzü*. The Hungarian tribal federation was ruled by a chieftain, appointed by the Khazars. In the middle of the 9th century his name was *Levedi*, and his tribal pasture lands were called *Levedia* in Greek sources. According to Arabic sources around 870, he bore the title *kündü* and, though he was the legitimate ruler, he had no real power. The power of the military commanders, the members of the *Almish-Árpád* clan grew considerably. According to Muslim sources, they bore the title *ĵula* or *ĵila*. They controlled the army and the administration. The claim, however, that the Hungarians had a sacral kingship similar to that of the Khazars is unfounded and lacks any evidence.

From the year 862 on, written sources relate that the Hungarians living in *Etelküzü* took part in the fighting and wars in Central Europe. In 862 they fought in alliance with the Moravian ruler *Rastislav* against the Franks, in 881 they appear at Vienna where they fought alongside the *Kabars* (*cum cowaris*) against the Franks. The importance and power of the *Almish-Árpád* clan can be seen in the successful western raids but also in the fact of the three *Kabar* tribes leaving the Khazars

and joining the Hungarians. A few years before the landtaking, the Árpád clan dethroned the Levedi clan and concentrated power in its own hands.

In 894 they fought in alliance with the Moravian ruler Svatopluk against the Franks and in alliance with the Byzantine Empire against the Danube Bulgars. Both military expeditions were very successful. In fact in 894 the Hungarians joined the Moravian-Byzantine coalition against the Danube Bulgarian-Frank alliance.

The spring of 895 began with the campaign of the Hungarian host under Árpád, who wanted to attack the Danube Bulgars by moving down the Tisza river. A smaller Hungarian host attacked the Bulgars at the Lower Danube. However, the Byzantines did not keep their promise to attack the Bulgars from the south, and the Bulgars defeated the smaller Hungarian host attacking from Etekküü.

At the same time, a Pecheneg army appeared in the East. They were pushed by an alliance of the Oghuz, Kimeks and Kharluks, who themselves were defeated by the Samanid ruler. The Pechenegs could not enter the Khazar Empire proper and, most probably on the prompting of the Danube Bulgar ruler Boris, attacked the Hungarians left behind in Etekküü. After the disastrous defeat of the Hungarians in Etekküü by the Pechenegs and Danube Bulgarians, they could only flee to the army of Árpád who was slowly moving to the south along the Tisza. In 895 the Hungarians occupied only the eastern part of the Carpathian basin and did not cross the Danube. This happened in 899 when, on the invitation of the Frankish ruler Arnulf, they raided Northern Italy. The Hungarian host returned in 900, and on their way back they learned of the death of Arnulf in December 899. The Hungarians occupied Transdanubia and moved westwards. They were stopped only in 902 with

a temporary truce between the Franks and the Hungarians.

The pacification of the people living in the Carpathian basin was easy. The Avars, most of whom converted to Christianity in the first half of the 9th century, had lost their power. The Danube Bulgars and the Franks crushed the Kaghanate and only small, petty rulers functioned. The Turkic speaking Avars had step by step been Slavified. Some of them were still bilingual when the Hungarians arrived. There are loan-words in Hungarian which clearly show the bilingualism of the Avars. Such a word is e.g. *H terem* "great room, palace" (also in the well known Hungarian word *étterem* "restaurant") ~ Avar *term*, West Turkic *terem*.

In the Middle Ages older peoples or ethnic groups disappeared and new ones emerged. In Europe roughly three types of ethnogenesis can be distinguished. They can all be studied as to how they adapted themselves to the "civilized" Roman Empire and how they formed their new feudal state organization with its personal and territorial bonds. The three main types were the Germanic type, the Slavic type and the Turkic type. In the Turkic type, tribal confederations tried to change into a centralized Empire. The Turkic type had three subtypes, the Avar, the Khazar and the Danube Bulgar. The Khazar and the Avar processes proved to be dead ends, both people disappeared. The Danube Bulgars, although they long kept their ethnic consciousness, were slowly absorbed by the Slav majority.

The Hungarians lived also in a Turkic type of tribal confederation: their name was the Seven Magyars (*H Hetümagyer*) on the model of the Ten Ogurs, the Three Karluks, the Thirty Tatars, etc. We know that in 895 this tribal federation consisted of at least eleven tribes, three of them of Khazar origin. One of the most interesting

questions in the history of Central Europe is why and how the Hungarians managed to continue to exist, keeping their language and ethnic identity while all other tribal confederations of the Turkic type disappeared as the Avars or the Khazars did, or were absorbed as the Danube Bulgars were. The reasons were multiple and there is no single cause which can be selected as the main one. I have no space here to discuss this process and can only point to such external factors as the role of the Khazar institutions, the small local organizations of the Slavs under Avar and Bulgar rule in the Carpathian basin, and Frankish military and Christian missionary activity. Among the internal factors, the rapid dissolution of the tribal organization with the temporary strengthening of the clan system, the mixed economy with a temporary equilibrium between nomadic pastoral and relatively strong agricultural components have to be mentioned. Within a historically extremely short time, the Hungarians, who finished their landtaking about 902, founded under Saint Stephen in 1000 A.D. a Christian state which succeeded in becoming part of the medieval European community.

**F**inally, a few words about the long line of celebrations of the landtaking, or conquest. The landtaking, the *ingressus ex oriente* has always been at the centre of the Hungarian historical tradition. We meet it already in the middle of the 10th century, and later in the Hungarian chronicles written in Latin. It was always a glorifying of the heroic past, mostly contrasting it with the bad and decadent times of the author of the chronicle, be it the 12th, 13th or 15th century. Though all Hungarian chronicles of the Middle Ages dealt with the landtaking, the historically verifiable data in them are very scanty. In 1896 the Hungarian Kingdom was a member of the

Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, under the Habsburg Franz Joseph, who had crushed the Hungarian revolution of 1848/49, but with whom the Hungarian elite reached a historical compromise in 1867. In this situation the political message of the celebrations was more or less clear. The celebrations should have been held in 1895, but because of organizational problems they were postponed by a year. They took place amid an unprecedented economic and social boom. Many of the famous sights of Budapest, Heroes Square, many of the museums and other public buildings were erected in 1896. A typical product of the Millennium was the panorama on the landtaking by Árpád Feszty, now in Ópusztaszer. The celebrations were marked by a romantic nationalism, but did not attack or discriminate against the national minorities. Of the 24 peasant houses and courtyards in the Skanzen-type ethnographic exhibition of 1896 twelve demonstrated the life of the minorities. In 1895, they accounted for just half of the total population of Hungary. Many books and scholarly works were published, a plethora of paintings, sculptures and musical compositions celebrated the event. But the romantically painted and sometimes pompous curtains could only temporarily hide the great social and ethnic tensions which soon resulted in two world wars. Some of the ethnic tensions continue.

The celebration of the landtaking remained a political issue even in most recent times. Hungarian scholars, however, concentrate on new data, on new sources and on historical reconstruction. In 1996, exhibitions, books, papers, public lectures, several television and radio programmes celebrated the event. All in all the balance is positive. Most of what was said and done was kept within the solid framework of scholarly knowledge. ■

László Csaba

# The Second Round

Transformation and the Eastern Enlargement of the EU

The 1995 Madrid resolution of the European Union confirmed that the extension of the EU to the East had been settled. Following Cyprus and Malta, consultations would start with the candidate countries, on the principle of "equal starting position". The beginning of negotiations, however, would in no way be the equivalent of a ticket of admission: Turkey has been negotiating entry for thirty-five years. The conditions included in the Copenhagen declaration of June 1993—democracy, a functioning market economy and the ability and willingness to participate in a European economic and monetary union—may reflect the complex interests of the Union, in the last analysis, however, crystallize into

a single question. That question is maturity for membership in an EU, far more closely integrated by the time of the applicant's eventual accession than it is at present. There is no easy answer to this. As Paul Hare (1966) so aptly put it in his plenary lecture at the conference of the World Economic Institute in Kiel, if one were to take the formalism of the White Book or the meticulousness of the EU questionnaire as a basis, no country would meet every single condition. On the other hand, if the approach is according to categories of quality, then the Central European countries he calls G1—the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia and Hungary—are likely to cross the threshold of eligibility, both with respect to the speed of transformation and to the development of the main elements of a market system, in the foreseeable future. This duality allows broad scope for the EU countries for making—based on a variety of momentary, budgetary, domestic or international considerations or according to the tactics of the games they play between each other<sup>1</sup>—individual judgments on the timing and conditions of decisions on enlargement, on the "hardening" or "softening" of their position at any time.

This article may be relevant from the aspect of economic policy, because it reveals what those who study the theory of systemic change regard as important, and

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on what basis the decisions on admission to the EU are expected to be taken. The first part provides a functional overview of the problems in transforming a system, while the second deals with the consequent tasks and the dilemmas faced when enlarging the EU.

Several recent major investigations (Granasztói, 1996, Berend, 1996) make it clear that there is no such thing as modernization outside the EU. Indeed, the concept itself has become dependent on it. On the other hand, changing a system, developing the middle classes and modernization are kindred notions, notions that are inconceivable without each other and also outside the context of European integration. The success of switching to democracy and a market economy and achieving the maturity required for integration are thus neither separate processes, nor are they processes that advance in conjunction but independent of each other. They are two sides of the same coin. Compared to this, the cost-benefit analysis of industry or the contemplation of commercial advantages and disadvantages are secondary. All the more so because the advantage inherent in integration is *dynamic* by nature—large market, competition, capital inflow, membership of "the club", the binding power of contracts; in contrast, all the calculations that may be made in advance are *static*. Furthermore, in the case of a number of measures, there can be no unanimity as to whether, in a dynamic sense, they are sacrifices or not. Eliminating the global quota on consumer imports, in the interest of certain Hungarian consumer goods traders, or the abandoning of discretionary measures that are hangovers of the old arbitrariness of the authorities in agricultural trade, would be a recognition of self-interest based on economic reason rather than one-sided concessions.

## New elements in the economics of transition

**A**t the dawn of transition it was the duel between those who advocated a gradual approach and those who advocated shock therapy that provided the conceptual framework. That conflict has now turned out to be totally misleading. For one thing, institutional shock therapy, namely, the abrupt introduction of highly developed capitalist institutions, proved to be totally illusory. In the Czech Republic where, in principle, the evaluation of companies by the stock market was given priority, the larger share of privatization occurred through means other than the voucher method. Moreover, a form of computerized trade that linked the value of vouchers and the real stock market turned out to be a long and difficult process. The primary form of asset valuation is not the stock market, since most companies simply do not qualify. The fall in support for the voucher method, regarded earlier as the touchstone for a radical transition to a market economy, can be felt in both the literature on the subject and at scholarly forums. However, the gradual approach cannot be said to have triumphed either. There is no known instance of the putting off of a measure ripe for introduction at a given time being more profitable than its introduction. On the contrary, as is shown by the prolongation of voucher-type privatization in Poland, when a move is put off for years, it ultimately loses its sense. Arguing in favour of shock therapy, Balcerowicz (1995, Chapter 9), for example, rightly points out that the nature of various measures and the time they require is different, and so is therefore the maximum speed of transformation that may be achieved in different areas. This means that some things can and must be introduced

rapidly (for instance, market equilibrium), while in other fields, transformation may take decades (for instance, in the social security system). Thus the speed of the transformation of the system cannot really be used as an indicator of success, or its slowness made a point of criticism; on the other hand, well-based doubts may be raised concerning the quality of a measure or other features it involves. For example, privatization will make little sense if all it results in is private monopolies or in the simple passing of property ownership from domestic public owners into the hands of foreign public owners.

On the basis of the above, it is clear that the indicators of the privatization race the media and international bodies constantly use tell little more about the real state of affairs than the earlier plan fulfilment indicators or production figures used to. The fact that the ratio of private ownership in Russia has reached an overwhelming two thirds has not led to any halting of the fall in production or to a start growth even by 1996 and 1997. In the Czech Republic, official accounts report that privatization has been completed, while the problems of corporate governance and control remain chronically unsolved. Further empirical studies (Pinto van Wijnbergen 1995) suggest that in Poland, the pressure of a competitive environment and private companies has led to a major increase in efficiency in state-owned companies even without any change in ownership. That, by the way, conforms to experience in the West (Dallago, 1993).

It follows from the above that ownership change and the speed of it are no longer in the forefront of attention. The Chief Economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Nicholas Stern (1996), for instance, emphasizes three issues as genuinely rele-

vant: company management, infrastructure and regulation. As to the first, much more important than the nature of ownership (whether state or private) is that foreign owners should exercise control rather than company management, thus supervising the latter. The distortion of the infrastructure is manifest not only in its quantity but also in its composition, inasmuch as too much weight is given to energy, meant to accommodate heavy industry, whereas telecommunications and the financial and service infrastructure are backward. In developing this area, regulation is especially important since with the passing of natural monopolies into private hands, without creating competition, the privatization of public utilities—while distorting income distribution—may also contribute to an ongoing inflation, especially if the investors may base their prices on backward looking indexation formulae.

It must be clear from the above that it is far from indifferent what kind of private property, what market structure, regulation, and consequently, what propensity to invest, are produced by capitalism. These conditions determine how dynamic the emerging system will be, and to what extent the elements of development and modernity will be present as a result of the changes.

A balanced, sustainable development is, in all likelihood, impossible if the populist slogan that "cheapest government is also the best government" is obeyed. The quality of governance is seen as the cornerstone of a civilized market economy by some very detailed and thorough investigations (Blommstein—Staunenberg, eds. 1994). Thus one of the main tasks involved in the transformation of the system is to develop independent and competent government agencies (rather than simply destroying the bureaucracy in a kind of revolutionary fervour) and then to make

these agencies function smoothly and ensure their credibility. That is a condition for avoiding the overweight of rent-seeking, which distorts the market economy, as well as the nightmare of the arbitrary/Mafia economy.

Without a certain level of legal stability and civic society, it is futile to dream of a civilized market economy. Where the latter conditions are weak, progress can (or could) be made, as is recognized, through the integration of constitutional rules and with the limitation of the discretionary decisions of the government (Buchanan, 1992). The main direction for institution-building, in this sense, is towards restrictions on interference by public authorities in the private lives and business enterprises of citizens, at the least, in a discretionary manner. It is especially in the use of public funds and in privatization that it is reasonable to create the maximum transparency and to minimize the number of discretionary decisions.

**T**he other area where self-imposed limitations are suggested and required by the philosophy of the European Monetary Union is exchange rate policy. According to empirical surveys, ensuring autonomy of the monetary authority is not enough; a stable price level requires a consistence in economic policy, within which the discretionary use of exchange rate policy should be avoided (Hamacher, 1995, pp. 58–73). From this point of view, the pre-announced crawling peg regime introduced in Hungary in 1995 may be regarded as the first step toward calculability. However, on the road toward EU membership, the coefficient of the crawl must become smaller and smaller, and overall economic policy must ensure the country is not forced to rely on competitive devaluations. Among other things, that requires self-restraint on all subsidies.

It is especially important that according to empirical investigations, the traditional economic assumption the Phillips Curve describes—that by allowing for higher inflation, higher economic growth may be achieved—is not valid for these countries. Quite to the contrary, in a survey World Bank officers conducted in 28 post-socialist countries (Gelb et al., 1996) a statistical correlation was established between both the progress of liberalization and disinflation and also between it and the resumption of growth. That study also demonstrated that, beside the intensity of reforms, their duration was another important achievement which also played a major role in the unfolding of favourable economic influences. This may now seem self-evident. However, a few years ago it was still widely held that a long history of reforms was disadvantageous compared to rapid transformation. The above achievement, however, corroborates our experience regarding the advantages of experience and practice in any field.

The rearrangement of price relations—not independently of the country's accession to the European Union and of a market-type transformation of previously free services—has not yet been completed. This means, however, that the volume of the GDP, the most frequently employed yardstick in international statistics, is evidently becoming problematic as a measure for success. This point holds especially true for effective demand; consequently it becomes highly doubtful whether any Keynesian interpretation of transformational recession is adequately grounded. The question may even be raised whether “regaining pre-crisis levels” makes any sense at all here, if the new structure and quality are completely different. It is also highly questionable whether the achievement of those levels can be regarded as a yardstick in any sense. In the case of steel

production or life expectancy, as partial indicators, of course, meaningful answers may be given to these questions. However, all this is hardly relevant as regards the whole of the system, of the macro-achievements, since an indicator there is but an element in what is a new quality and a different structure:

One of the few elements of the transformation that is well-definable in terms of both quantity and quality is the flow of foreign direct investment and the spread of foreign acquisition. A major characteristic of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe is that investment is concentrated in the region's more advanced countries. It suggests that the qualitative elements of the economic environment, difficult to express in figures, weigh much more heavily than the availability of facilities or production costs expressed in hourly wages in dollars. It follows that in certain countries the ratio of foreign capital in domestic accumulation is now far from negligible: for example, in the Czech Republic it reached 6 per cent in 1994 and 5.3 in 1995, in Hungary in the same years, 13 and 12.6 per cent, and in Poland, 6.7 and 5.3 per cent: the Czech Republic overtook Chile and Malaysia with regard to per capita foreign capital investment, and Hungary reached the European record level established by Spain and Portugal (Hunya, 1996). As this Viennese economist observes, the macro-economic impact of investments is greater than their value in figures, since it involves joining interfirm networks, the adoption of labour and management cultures and a number of other positive factors. This also shows up the limited value of populist mass privatization techniques for what it is, since where these were employed, there is hardly any sign of a genuine reorganization of enterprises; whereas in the case of foreign ownership, that is the most important aspect of the whole thing.

That situation is only made worse by the fact that the equity market visibly remains secondary to the banking system in the financing of enterprises. In Hungary, the issuing of corporate bonds and direct borrowing of enterprises, together with financing through the parent company and foreign or joint venture banks provide an opportunity for high-quality financing, if the venture is large enough; that possibility is totally untypical in the other countries undergoing a change of system.

The fundamental reason for this is that these countries have delayed transforming their system of financial intermediation and also that they have taken a path different from Hungary's. In Hungary, through legislation on accounting and bankruptcy, a series of bank consolidation measures<sup>2</sup> have become unavoidable; under these, and putting the main burden on future generations, the banks received capital injections and were privatized (Balassa, 1996). As a result of this, the proportion of Hungarian-owned and, in particular, state-owned banks has shrunk. This is positive, since it is equivalent to narrowing the scope for political motives in allocational decisions.

**T**he above may be taken to mean that privatization in itself—and for macroeconomically understandable reasons too—is insufficient for improving efficiency, and for establishing the conditions for independent economic management. The latter requires (or would require) the development of institutional guarantees for a separation of business enterprises from public power. An over-emphasis on ownership change has led to the neglect of regulations needed to support the latter; as a result, the relationship between ownership change and improved efficiency has loosened. The greater the role of government allocation granted at favourable con-

ditions, or, in other words, the stronger the position of insiders—without external control and restraints force—the less can an improvement in efficiency be expected from ownership change. For that reason, it is hardly chance that the condition included in the Copenhagen criteria for EU admission is not a given ratio of private ownership (say, 50 plus 1 per cent of all firms) but the broader condition of a “functioning market economy”.

Since, in the first stage of the transformation, government redistribution in the economy was reduced quite radically, it is the reinterpretation of the social role of the state, the reform of the welfare state, that has become the key issue in the second stage. The starting point of this far reaching complex of problems is the experience of the OECD states more highly developed than those now in transition and their welfare systems emerging by the 1970s by now unfinanceable because of an ageing population, a lower level of employment and the moderate levels of economic activity. That contradiction in our region is manifest in a far more pointed manner, basically for three reasons.

**1)** Productivity in these countries is substantially lower than in the most highly developed countries, yet their health services, old age pensions and social welfare are run on the same principles—entitlement by right of citizenship, financing through current taxes paid by the active population, without regard for capital investment and returns.

**2)** As was foreseeable (Csaba, 1990), post-socialist countries would suffer from a double lack of capital in the welfare sector. On the one hand, assets accumulated over previous generations, which could have been used to finance these objectives were wasted and redistributed into abortive industrialization. On the other hand, and partly because the main princi-

ple observed was financing current expenditure, capital for financing provisions for the inactive population was simply not built up.

**3)** As a consequence of the characteristics of the transformation, a major transformational recession was the result. This was especially true for those countries where considerable balance adjustments had to be made, there the real value of domestic income has dropped below that of the “last peacetime years”. In addition, the number of those employed full-time in the “official” economy, of those bearing the communal burdens, has diminished drastically as compared to the number of those receiving care. In Hungary, for instance, the output produced by 2.4 million people employed full-time has to be assigned to nearly 3 million old-age pensioners.

A comparative study of the tax and benefit systems of the transition countries (Newberry, ed., 1995) makes a special point of the heavily egalitarian features of the Hungarian redistribution system. For instance, the difference between the lowest and highest income quintiles clearly fell between 1989 and 1994, and the income structure measured in deciles is conspicuously stable. According to the theory of optimum taxation, in poor countries lower tax rates should be employed, and it is reasonable to link a falling tax base to lower tax rates. As opposed to this, in Hungary, beside a sharp growth in the implicit tax burdens (the tax bands have not been adjusted), explicit burdens have also grown; this clearly shows that in Hungary, even when there was a centre-right government, distribution continued to dominate over growth promotion and structural adjustments.<sup>3</sup> The clearest evidence for this is the effort to make up for the shortfall in corporate taxes collected by raising income tax. Symptomatic, too, is the fact that the fall in revenues never results in

lower spending, and that the real income of the working population has fallen more rapidly than the real value of the benefits of those who live on transfers. A way out of this could be found in making tax collection more rigorous, that is, in a more efficient tax administration.

On the basis of the above, there is a grave danger that in the majority of the transforming countries, including Hungary, price rises may be stuck at the moderate inflation level (about 25 per cent) where they currently stand. That in itself would harm savings, investment and income redistribution; it would result in a poor equilibrium, and would, of course, raise doubts regarding the maturity of the countries concerned for EU membership, especially because the EU of today and tomorrow (i.e. the EMU,) would be unable to accommodate these economies.

It is therefore justified that the choice between the shares falling to the individual and the community should come into the focus of economic investigations, fundamentally reviewing the approach of the leisure-oriented societies and welfare mentalities of the 1960s and 1970s. In his most recent book, János Kornai (1996, Chapters 5 and 6) subjects the expectations and approaches, and their consequences, widely held today to a detailed and multi-disciplinary examination. He emphasizes the growing role of self-care and self-activity especially in terms of the youngest and most concerned age groups; he also makes it clear that transformation here will take decades.

Without delving deeper into the issue, it is clear that what is required—just as in some EU countries, for instance, in Belgium, France, Italy and Germany—is the rewriting of the social contract made after the Second World War. One reason for this is the change in conditions—ageing, slow growth, etc. There is also evi-

dence that in the last fifteen years or so, the model has developed some major points of stress. For one thing, compared to the demands of global competition, economic growth in Europe is now—even in the best years—very slack. Not less important is the fact that even a 3 to 3.5 per cent growth produces a negligible rise in demand in the labour market of the EU. The labour-saving character of development, (hardly independent of trade-union influenced overregulation of the labour market) makes permanent double-digit structural unemployment a real threat. It is evident that this, coupled with the extremely high proportion of the inactive population, could undermine society. Finally, the unfinanceability of the entire process, the lasting insufficiency of savings, point to long-term limitations on this model of development.

### Market maturity and EU maturity

Concerning its Eastern enlargement, the EU is of two minds, shown in the ambiguity of support in principle and reservations in practice. On the other hand, it is also clear that through the Copenhagen resolutions (Portes 1944), and the publication of the *White Book*, by accelerating the association agreements and by the structured dialogue accepted in Essen, the EU has gone further to accommodate the new candidates than at the time of any of its previous enlargements.

What follows is mainly a review of the arguments against enlargement. The basis of this approach is the frequently measured and well-proven fact that Central Europe has a major trade potential, and offers important resettlement opportunities and cost reductions for industry for the Union.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, at a macro-economic level, it is unlikely to trigger major job losses even in sensitive industries,

and even the most optimistic variants show a maximum of 8–10 per cent market share in the most sensitive areas (Wang-Winters, 1994, Faini-Portes, ed., 1995.) Regarding the costs, it should be kept in mind that in respect of trade, the accession of Austria alone weighed heavier than the admission of the entire Visegrád Group would.

A classic collection of counter-arguments can be found in Richard Baldwin's book (1994). Its main thesis is that the countries of this region are too poor, too agricultural and too populous for Union membership. Not one of these frequently cited arguments is sound. Baldwin's calculations are made for the unrealistic case of full membership for each and every applicant at one and the same time, and, moreover, under the conditions in force back in 1992.

It was declared in 1994 by the EU that the last collective entry was the Northern enlargement. In the future, a case by case approach would be employed. This is self-evident, considering that the admission of new members, if divided into 10 equal parts, is likely to cause a much smaller shock—and of course, costs each time much less—than any collective group therapy.

The variegated character of the countries concerned also has a good many reason for individual treatment. Cyprus, for instance, is territorially divided, the admission of the Baltic states involves strategic considerations; for Slovenia even to sign the association agreement took a constitutional amendment and a leftist government in Italy. Baldwin's book, like a number of papers published since, points out that two thirds of the agricultural and regional development funds would—under the 1992 rules—go to Poland and Romania. In other words, these are the countries whose admission has to meet special

financial considerations. In their case, and in their case only, either a geostrategic decision has to be made (in which case there should be no more complaint about the costs<sup>5</sup>) or a decision is made on fiscal grounds (which means that there would be no further room for raising foreign policy points). Estonia is a great deal ahead of the other two Baltic countries in economic stabilization, so a bloc treatment is out of place there, too. Finally, the domestic stability of Slovakia, despite all the good macro indicators, is judged so unfavourably internationally that any rapid admission for Slovakia looks highly unlikely.

The "too agricultural" argument does not hold water either. The 5 per cent agrarian population of the Czech Republic is well under that of the South European member states, and even Hungary's 11 per cent is far from extraordinary. According to surveys conducted in the EU, the present agricultural policy, costing 38 billion ECUs, would require an increase of 10 billion ECU (not more than 25 per cent) for the entire Eastern enlargement (the accession of 11 countries). (*The Wall Street Journal*, 24/25 November 1995.) It must be added, too, that with the agricultural agreement concluded at the World Trade Organization and the plans for agricultural reform accepted at the Madrid meeting of the EU, it would be unrealistic to make any predictions concerning the previous arrangements.

Finally, the arguments regarding backwardness and overpopulation: it is foreseeable that some kind of progress will have to be made on majority decisions and the restriction of working languages. But it is not because of the enlargement that better, more proportionate representation, is timely. With these changes, however, the EU may be able to accommodate the co-operation of a greater number of countries.

When the EU was previously enlarged, neither the size of population nor the development of the countries involved figured among the criteria of admission. Nor did the Treaty of Rome and the Copenhagen Declaration include any such conditions. Furthermore, the Southern enlargement unambiguously showed that countries at different levels of development have been able to work together in the single market framework. The Portuguese and Spanish examples were evident that accession itself was the real source of impulses—in other words, the narrowing of the differences in levels was not a condition for, but a consequence of integration.

The co-operation of countries at different levels of development can only accord with the EMU criteria targeting the limitation of the fiscal role if redistribution for social policy purposes is restricted. Therefore future members will have to take it for granted that the transfers they will receive will be smaller, both proportionately and in size, than those of the southern members. Nevertheless, even this will be more than the nothing of today.

These arguments show that it is unjust to compare the level of the new candidates to the average level of the 15-member EU, enlarged recently by some of the richest states in Europe. The real height of the bar is the average of the southern member states. Of course, these must be approached not by the official GDP/market rate but by a procedure measuring real GDP—that includes the irregular economy—by applying the purchasing power/parity of the local currency. While preparing for a foreseeable date of accession, in the latter method, the increases in real (dollar) wages and the appreciation of the exchange rate, which mutually strengthen each other here, must also be taken into account. If today's official

Hungarian GDP is, at purchasing power parity, \$7,700 per capita (EU Regional Forecast, 3/1995), once the value of the black economy (estimated at a third of the GDP) is added, then we are already at the level of Greece. The six to ten-times estimates of current GDP differentials, or similarly, the resultant catching up periods of twenty to thirty years are simply expressions of misconceptions and methodological errors.

It may be concluded from the foregoing that meeting the Maastricht criteria is not a condition for accession.<sup>6</sup> The criterion is that the nature of economic policy and the direction of development make it credible that a country joining in, say, 2002, will be able to fulfil those criteria within a foreseeable time. Therefore it is not the dismantling of the welfare state but its reduction within financeable limits, and the long-term tendency of the domestic debt linked to the latter, which form the basis for assessing the suitability of a candidate.

In the same way, the *White Book* should not be seen as an entry test. It has been explained several times by Commission representatives that it was meant as a tool of orientation, listing the specific requirements of the internal market; through which it becomes clear and concrete to the governments involved what is expected once full membership is attained. In that context, it would be high time if the difference between structured dialogue and major photo call opportunities (as these were characterised by former Spanish Prime Minister González) was recognized. That framework provides an opportunity for the candidate countries to learn about the working methods of the EU in a variety of fields, from the fight against crime to environmental protection; it provides an opportunity to learn about thinking behind the reforms in progress, so that the candidate countries may participate in the de-

veloping of new solutions. Especially in farm policy, the proposal (Mizsei-Rudka, 1995, p. 10) should be paid due consideration that instead of "winning the fight" for further price supports, efforts should be concentrated on taking part in creating a new type of common agricultural policy in Europe, where success is no longer measured in maximizing transfers to the East.

This viewpoint is all the more important as the greatest danger threatening the actual enlargement negotiations is that the total process becomes captive to industrial interests and pressure groups (von Hagen-Kumar, 1996, p. 46). As long as Eastern enlargement—like every previous enlargement—is primarily of a geostrategic character, the process may be halted despite its insignificant macroeconomic impact. That threat would be especially strong if groups from various countries with contrary interests—e.g., the steel industry, textile industry, agricultural producers or those representing unskilled workers—were able to make the outcome of the political process dependent on results favourable to them. Thus the real interests of those aspiring to membership would be best served if enlargement were continue to figure as a primarily political question. For that reason too much emphasis should not be laid on the viewpoints of producers, (always in the guise of national interests). The meticulous counterposing of every minor pro and con should be avoided, since this would only lose out against the much stronger and more experienced parties.

In this context, it is worthwhile noting that, with all the uncertainties surrounding its enlargement and its own future, the EU will be, in all likelihood, incapable of establishing a timetable of accession for those wanting in. The intergovernmental conference in Turin can be expected to reach only preliminary decisions on the

issues most important for enlargement, that is, on agricultural rules, decision-making and structural foundations. Putting the decisions into a concrete form and then executing them may take years. For that reason candidates should concentrate not so much on the timetable as on credible, specific and incentive criteria similar to the EMU, involving automatic membership or non-membership.

Of the candidates, the Czech Republic and Hungary and (since July 1996) Poland, are already members of the OECD, which serves by definition as a kind of certificate of their market maturity.

This also means that many of the factors causing the EU uncertainty, and thus favouring postponement of enlargement, are gradually changing. The circumstances mentioned here may lead to a recognition of the many objective threats binding the Western and Eastern halves of Europe to each other, and may provide a frame of reference for the decision-makers of the EU for deciding on the basis on which it may be—and must be—possible to differentiate amongst the eleven applicants, regarding the steps to be taken in the course of admission.

**T**he eastern enlargement shows favourable differences from the southern. The Mediterranean states began to open up their economies only after accession; in Central Europe, on the contrary, the process of opening up in the field of foreign trade was already completed between 1989 and 1992. Moreover, by going through their transformational recession, the countries of the region already paid the price of transition. Thus there is no reason to be afraid that, compared to the liberalization of the external economy, which now extends to the financial sector too, full membership would mean intensified competition—something like the oft-

mentioned "integrational shock"—to the Hungarian, Czech, Estonian or Polish markets. On the contrary: membership would make the present openness more symmetrical, since it would make a full joining of the unified market possible.

That is, in fact, what appreciates Central Europe as an investment spot. In this sense it is not the official transfers but the foreign capital flowing into the region that must meet the need of the transition countries for resources. In that context, the question as to (who and when) will reach 75 per cent of the EU average, and how much net transfer they will receive through official channels, becomes clearly secondary. It is enough to compare the score or so of million dollars in aid coming to Hungary to the 14 billion dollars of investment and the country's 12 billion dollar foreign currency reserves to see clearly that those identifying the advantages of EU membership with the magnitude of official transfers are labouring under a misconception concerning both the order of mag-

nitude and the structural aspect of these advantages.

EU membership would therefore involve advantages for the economy on three planes: those of the market, the currency and uniform security and regulation. The market is attractive, and a condition of any kind of economic dynamism. The acceptance of the obligation to establish a stable currency is also important; it is basically this common interest that is manifest in the Maastricht requirement. Finally, uniform regulation, on the one hand, increases the country's ability to enforce its interests *vis á vis* the non-EU world, including some of Hungary's neighbours. On the other hand, it becomes a factor that directly raises the ability of the country to attract capital. It also means that Hungary's modernization will not depend on the order of magnitude of domestic savings directly and at any time. Thus the limitation of savings will be overcome, and poverty will not be a direct obstacle to the process of catching up. ♦

## NOTES

1 ■ The Greeks drove the whole EU into a tight corner on the issue of the membership of Cyprus: the same was true of the French position on Malta, which involves keeping the Mediterranean card on the table.

2 ■ On the other hand, few valid arguments could be found to justify the debtor consolidation programmes, a form of bail-out operation intended to save large companies ridden by debt.

3 ■ As Paul Marer puts it (1995, p. 26): from the economic point of view, the centre-right government implemented a centre-left alternative.

4 ■ Seen dynamically, this necessarily entails the upward valuation of real wages and the real exchange rate. It is interesting that despite falling

average incomes, rising dollar-hour wages in our region could be observed between 1991 and 1995 (von Hagen-Kumar, 1996, Supplements).

5 ■ Even this variant, favourable for us as it would be, would not mean that it would be realistic to expect a kind of modernization transfer from the EU, and especially to emphasize this during negotiations, as Inotai and Palánkai urged (1994, pp. 874-876).

6 ■ A merciless attack on the corruption contaminating the administrations of several of the transition countries, however, is a requirement; so too is the elimination of the interplay furnishing the basis for this corruption (Eastwell et al, 1995).

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# The Social Costs of Transformation in Central and Eastern Europe

For some two years now, reports on the former socialist countries have repeatedly stressed the much higher social and economic costs of the switch from a planned to a market economy than was expected in 1989. Thus, the Secretariat of the UN Economic Commission for Europe writes: "A prolonged economic downturn, high levels of unemployment, sharply reduced social security, widening income and wealth differences, falling health standards and the rise of organized crime, have all contributed to frustration, disillusion and mounting political tensions. As a result, the current mood among the East European populations is very different from the enthusiasm and hope which were raised by the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989." (ECE, 1995, p. 9.)

Such developments tend to be discussed under the heading "the costs of

transition", an effective enough rhetorical device in journalism, but far less easy to define if the purpose is scholarly or scientific.

For a start, what is "transition"? From where to where? We know the starting point and, at most, we know that progress is in the direction of a modern market economy. But what will indicate the completion of transition—the creation of the institutions of a market economy, overcoming economic regression, achieving sustainable growth, or even catching up with the development levels of full market economies? Presumably the answer is: all these jointly and severally; yet we are not really familiar with precisely what any of these processes imply, nor with their duration.

What, however, causes most anxiety is that such changes may not be feasible and that the end results are themselves doubtful. The term "the costs of transition" suggests that we are talking about something that is obvious and quantifiable, about a determinacy of the sort proclaimed over many decades by those who vulgarized the theory of historical materialism. We all know the results. As Rudolf Andorka concluded in a paper jointly produced with a number of Western scholars, "it was an illusion in 1989–90 to imagine that the direction and path of European development, or even that of the countries of

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Eastern Central Europe were settled, that they would, in the years to follow, speedily advance towards a modern market economy, democracy and welfare. Successful modernization and the collapse of modernization are both real alternatives. Not only progress but also stagnation and even regression are possibilities. Alternative paths of development lie ahead. There is no historical determination that would necessarily impel these nations whether towards modernization, or towards stagnation or towards economic decline and a return to an authoritarian political regime." (Andorka-Heady-Krause, 1994, p. 80)

The term "costs" is also ambiguous. We do not know the costs of what are under discussion, nor what "costs" means in this context. The word generally means one of two things. One is the efforts, expenditures needed to achieve a particular result. Creating a competitive market economy—structural changes in the economy, constructing a modern infrastructure, training the workforce etc., all require resources that can be defined and quantified. But such costs cannot be covered in general by the former socialist countries, now experiencing an economic crisis of unprecedented depth.

However, what is obviously at issue is not the calculable costs, but the sacrifices that have to be made. For instance, changes in economic structures go together with skills that become redundant, jobs that are disappearing, redundancies and unemployment, declining standards of living. All these are sacrifices made in the interest of the future, of a more viable and productive economic structure.

In fact the decline in living standards and the deterioration in living conditions in the former socialist countries did not start in 1990. It is impossible to tell today what the economy of the "socialist camp" would have looked like if there had been no systemic changes and the Soviet Union

had not collapsed. "Evaluations of any policy made on the basis of comparing the present situation and the past are always methodologically wrong". (Balcerowicz, 1993, pp. 4–5.) It is certain that a good part of the troubles and anxieties ("costs") of the changes cannot be debited to the "transition" for they were unavoidable. They were bound to occur even if the old regime had continued. What we cannot tell how large that share would have been.

It is not my purpose here to answer these questions. My aim is more modest: a few preliminary steps that may help to formulate an answer. I shall attempt, as best as I can, to outline the social costs of transformation in the second sense of the term, in an international comparative context. Generally, we cannot unambiguously distinguish between the problems caused by the terminal dysfunctioning of the old regime and the losses caused by the transformation. Therefore "social costs" are here understood as the negative phenomena that accompany the systemic change (cf. Balcerowicz, p. 27.). What I shall list there are factors which determine or express working and living conditions, health and social status. Living conditions and economic processes influence each other in a manner that makes it difficult to differentiate between them. It is the former, however, that are my present subject.

## Unemployment

**U**nemployment was undoubtedly something new, something that appeared in the course of the transformation into a market economy, something that was essentially unknown to many generations who had grown up in the socialist countries. The fact that full employment in the socialist planned economy was largely pseudo full does not matter. It is true that poorly paid labour of low productivity was

often used to produce loss-making goods that could not be sold on the world market; not to mention the armaments industry and its suppliers, which counted for a large share of the economies of the countries within the "camp". But this redundant workforce consisted of people who didn't regard themselves as redundant at all—they secured their existence, had a social status, had a chance to make good.

Unemployment was very likely the worst blow those who live in the former socialist countries have had to face—except for civil war, naturally. Unemployment affects income, social status, way of life and morale, and through these, health. Advanced economies are also familiar with the anxieties of unemployment, and have shown themselves incapable of coping with them; the consequences, however, are incomparably more serious in post-socialist countries with their much lower income levels and their inadequate preparations to handle it. Nor is there any chance that the economic growth which is already on in most of these countries—even if a long-term upswing eventuates—will be able to absorb the mass of the unemployed. Many of the present unemployed—lacking skills or appropriate capabilities—will not be able to satisfy the expected demand for labour. Long-term unemployment frequently disqualifies the individual both as regards skills and morale.

Employment and unemployment statistics—in spite of their lacunae and imprecisions—show that the number of the employed in the region has shrunk or is shrinking at an extraordinarily fast rate. Table 1 probably provides a truer picture than Table 2, although the latter also shows a two digit rate in every one of these countries with the exception of the Czech Republic. The unemployed figures only include registered jobseekers. Thus, those forced to take early retirement, or those in

receipt of invalid pensions whose numbers have sky-rocketed, are not included. As many are in the black economy, so the picture is not quite as bleak as the figures suggest, but the working conditions of those illegally employed are much worse, and they are not entitled to various benefits.

The following special features are made apparent by an examination of the two tables.

■ Among the Central European countries (the Visegrád Four and Slovenia) employment underwent the worst regression—by more than a quarter—in Hungary. The Hungarian figures are even worse than those for Bulgaria, where the economic situation can be compared to that of the post-Soviet region.

■ Of all these countries employment declined least in the Czech Republic and (except for the CIS) the unemployment rate is also lowest there. This is not explained by the state of the economy but by the obvious policy—though not explicitly stated—of carrying out the economic changes while maintaining high rates of employment.

■ Full employment continues in Russia, the Ukraine and in the other CIS countries, but only in terms of the official unemployment register. Few register since the procedure is involved and meaningless. Unemployment benefits are minimal. Thus, in June 1995, in Moscow, I discovered for myself, on the spot, that benefits did not amount to as much as a monthly public transport season ticket. According to OECD, 1995, p. 165, they amount on average to one tenth of the average wage, or one third of the official minimum wage.

Table 2, however, includes data produced by the labour market survey regularly conducted by the State Statistical Committee which, in accordance with ILO guidelines, include not only registered but actual job seekers. According to these the

Table 1

**CHANGE IN TOTAL EMPLOYMENT, 1990-1994**  
(annual average percentage change)

Country	1994	1990-1994 <sup>a</sup>	1993	1994
	(labour force in thousands)	(a cumulative change over the period)		
Bulgaria	3,242	-25,7	-10,6	0,6
Czech Republic	4,885	-9,6	-1,6	0,8
Poland	14,475	-14,9	-2,4	1,0
Hungary <sup>a</sup>	4,045	-26,1	-5,0	-2,2
Romania <sup>a</sup>	10,012	-8,5	-3,8	-0,5
Slovakia <sup>a</sup>	2,110	-15,7	-2,6	-0,4
Slovenia	752	-20,5	-2,2	-1,8
CEFTA-4	25,515	-16,0	-2,7	0,3
Russia	68,484	-9,4	-1,7	-3,3
Ukraine	23,025	-9,4	-2,3	-3,8

<sup>a</sup> end of year

Source: ECE, 1996, p. 83.

Table 2

**REGISTERED UNEMPLOYMENT, 1991-1994**  
(thousands and per cent of labour force, end of year)

Country	Unemployment (thousands)				per cent of labour force			
	1991	1992	1993	1994	1991	1992	1993	1994
Bulgaria	419	577	626	488	11,5	15,6	16,4	12,8
Czech Republic	222	135	185	167	4,1	2,6	3,5	3,2
Poland	2 156	2509	2890	2838	11,8	13,6	16,4 <sup>a</sup>	16,0
Hungary	406	663	632	520	7,4	12,7	12,6	10,4
Romania	338	929	1165	1224	3,1	8,2	10,4	10,9
Slovakia	302	260	368	372	11,8	10,4	14,4	14,8
Slovenia	91	118	137	124	10,1	13,4	15,5	14,3
CEFTA-4	3085	3567	4075	3897	9,7	11,4	13,4	12,8
Russia	62	577	836	1637	0,1	0,8	1,1	2,1
According to								
ILO definitions	..	3600	4100	5300	..	4,8	5,5	7,1
Persons involuntarily								
working part-time, or								
on compulsory								
unpaid leave	..	1700	4000	4800	..	2,2	5,3	6,4
Ukraine	7	71	84	82	..	0,3	0,4	0,3

<sup>a</sup> Since December 1993 in Poland a new labour force estimate has been used to calculate the employment rate. The unemployment rate for December 1993, based on previous labour force data, was 15,7 per cent.

Source: ECE, 1995, p. 111, Table 3. 4.

unemployment rate was around 7 per cent in 1994, and, according to locally obtained information, around 8 per cent in the summer of 1995.

As regards trends in unemployment, two possibilities appear likely.

a) Rates of unemployment (the proportion of those registered) will decline, or at the worst stagnate (though not in the CIS countries); nevertheless, one cannot count on a significant growth in employment in the immediate future, not even after long-term growth kicks off. Poland is a case in point, where GDP has been growing for almost five years. The obvious cause is that there are still significant labour reserves within the employed. Growth relies on the exploitation of these reserves, largely restructuring and labour mobility within the enterprise sphere. A future factor is that the nature of growth is changing in the former socialist countries. At long last, extensive growth is being replaced by the much talked about intensive growth, which has a much lower demand for labour.

b) It is this fact rather than the protracted economic regression which is responsible for the long-term mass unemployment, which affects particular and well-defined sections of the population. International figures show that in the countries in transition a constantly growing proportion of the unemployed stay jobless for over a year. According to the UN ECE information service, in the third quarter of 1994, the proportion of long-term (over one year) unemployed was 59 per cent in Bulgaria, 22 in the Czech Republic, 39 in Poland, 41 in Hungary, 48 in Romania, 45 in Slovakia and 58 in Slovenia. (ECE, 1995, p. 114.) The Hungarian Household Panel Spring 1995 Survey showed a higher proportion, 56 per cent, for Hungary, with 83 weeks as the average duration of unemployment. According to the Hungarian Household

Panel sample, the average period was only 41 weeks in 1992, 52 in 1993 and 71 in 1994. The same survey showed that 39 per cent of those unemployed in March 1994 were still without a job a year later. (Nagy-Sík, 1996, p. 26.)

There is a consensus in the literature that the great preponderance of the long-term unemployed are unskilled manual workers with little education. The situation is even more serious if this handicap is concentrated within a national, religious or ethnic minority. (Coloured people, primarily Afro-Americans, in the US are an example.) The position of Gypsies in Hungary and its neighbours alarmingly resembles this state of affairs. In the 1995 sample of the Hungarian Household Panel the unemployment rate for Gypsies was 45.5 per cent, but 10.6 per cent for non-Gypsies. Figures regarding Gypsies must be treated with caution because of their small number within the sample, but the scale of magnitude is largely in accord with the data of the September–November 1993 survey published by Kertesi (1995).

### The growth of poverty and of inequalities in income

In these countries, standards of living were subject to considerable swings in earlier years as well. A peculiar feature of the five or six years of the transition has been, however, that the deterioration experienced by the majority has been accompanied by the *enrichment* of a tiny minority. The income–inequality scissors are opening up; in contrast to the masked inequalities of state socialism, society is openly and markedly polarized. In Central European countries the degree of income inequality has reached that customary in Western Europe, in Russia—more of that later—all the indications are that it has

outpaced that in the West. All this is happening where average income levels are only a third or a quarter of those in the West. Unavoidably, this means that a significant part of the population is close to or below subsistence level: they have become pauperized. Furthermore, market economy principles aim to further shrink redistribution by the state, which may well mean taking away the crutches from the walking wounded.

Consistent surveys of reasonable methodological reliability are available for two countries, Russia and Hungary. I am inclined to accept Russian data for the whole of the CIS region; if they deviate from the other successor states, it is in a favourable direction. Much the same can be said about Hungary in relation to the other East European countries, with the possible exception of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

In Russia an official minimum subsistence income in rubles has been calculated since 1975 and has been revised every few years. It served to determine the value of social benefits linked to a "social minimum." That sort of regulation became meaningless with the price liberalization early in 1992 and the resulting hyperinflation. Following World Bank recommendations, the Russian Ministry of Labour then calculated a minimum subsistence income which took WHO nutritional guidelines (food basket) as its starting point. This 1992 consumer basket is used officially for defining the poverty line, and it is this which is accepted by international organizations.

According to Jeni Klugman (1995), a World Bank expert, at the time of the systemic change, i.e., early in the nineties, around ten per cent of the population were below subsistence level. According to her data and those published by Sergei Fateev (1995) in Moscow, the proportion of those below the poverty line was 25.2 per cent

in 1992, 31.9 per cent in 1993 (Klugman), 24 per cent in 1994 and 31 per cent in January–February 1995 (Fateev). Thus around a third of the population of Russia are officially described as the poor.

Hungarian surveys generally speak of similar proportions. The difference is that, in Hungary, the subsistence minimum calculated for an urban family of four, projected per capita, was in 1994 roughly the equivalent of \$120 a month, and the Russian official poverty line—calculable on Fateev's data—was the equivalent of \$39 according to USD–Ruble rates of exchange, and \$96 in terms of purchasing power parity. I do not think that the poor in Hungary have incomes that are three times as high as those of the Russian poor (this would follow from the 120:39 ratio of dollars); what appears certain is that, in an absolute sense, poverty in Russia cannot be compared to that in Hungary, and that in Russia the relative fall in both average and minimum incomes was much greater.

The situation in Hungary is far from rosy either. Sociologists, using the Central Statistical Office minimum subsistence level, maintain that, in March 1994, around a third of the population (3 to 3.5 million) were below the poverty line (Kolosi–Bede Kovics–Szívós, 1994, p. 9.), as against one tenth in the eighties.

The Hungarian Household Panel—a joint venture of the Social Science Data Processing Association (TÁRKI), the Department of Sociology of the Budapest University of Economics and CSO—has, in annual surveys between 1992 and 1995 (four so far), used a number of simplified definitions of poverty. One takes the 1994 minimum subsistence income, that is an absolute poverty line, as its starting point. In the first three years this poverty line was around the upper limit of the lowest per capita income quintile; the Hungarian Household Panel defined households and

persons belonging to the lowest quintile as paupers, that is they employed a relative poverty line. This simpler operational concept facilitates a variety of analyses.

The present day composition of the paupers is most instructive. The following can be discerned from data published by Andorka-Spéder (1996, pp. 40–43.)

■ Contrary to what is generally believed, poverty is not most frequent amongst the old—although the situation of those over 70 is worse than the national average—but amongst children and young people. 25 per cent or more of those under 19 belong to the lowest quintile. It is particularly noticeable that 32.9 per cent of infants under two (that is of families with small children), live in poverty.

■ Poverty in Hungary is concentrated in villages and homesteads, where it is less visible. A quarter of their population can be classified as paupers. According to the 1994 survey, 71.4 per cent, i.e., almost three quarters of the village population, belong to the three lower income quintiles. As against this, 40 per cent of the Budapest population are in the highest income quintile (Andorka-Spéder, 1994, pp. 34–35.)

■ The distribution of incomes, much like the employment situation, reflects the serious state the Gypsies are in, a state which has turned them into an underclass. In 1995 two thirds (66.5 per cent) were in the lowest quintile, below the poverty line.

■ 44 per cent of the unemployed and a quarter of those with no more than primary school qualifications (eight years) are paupers.

Summing up, in Hungary today the best chance of avoiding poverty falls to those who went on to some kind of secondary education or trade training, who are not Gypsies, who do not live in a village, have no children or other dependents, and who, of course, have a job.

The poor in Hungary and in Russia resemble each other in many ways. The table below is taken from a World Bank source.

Table 3

**RISK OF POVERTY IN HOUSEHOLDS  
WITH SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS, 1993**  
(per cent)

Type of Household	Poor	Very poor*
1 child under 6	49.0	19.0
2 children	45.2	27.4
3 children	61.1	29.5
Pensioners	21.9	9.2
Has unemployed member	48.1	23.0
Has disabled member	45.8	20.0
Head works in:		
Forestry	51.8	26.8
Agriculture	46.5	18.5
Manufacturing	32.6	10.2
Construction	32.0	9.9
Trade	21.6	6.5
<b>National Average</b>	<b>31.9</b>	<b>12.0</b>

\* Very poor households are those with expenditures at less than 50 per cent of the poverty line.

Source: Klugman, 1995, p. 7.

As the table shows, households with children, or unemployed or invalid members are much worse off, but pensioners do better than the national average. Unbelievably, around 50 per cent poverty is found amongst those employed in agriculture and forestry, i.e., the village population.

Another common feature, manifest in Russian and Hungarian household surveys—one that is surely general in countries in transition—is that poverty has not jelled yet, it is not overwhelmingly long-term yet, it is still on the move.

According to Andorka and Spéder (1996), data collected by the Hungarian

Household Panel in four successive years (1992–1995) using the same sample show that 63.2 per cent of the households were never poor (the poverty line being drawn at 60 per cent of the average income), 17.1 per cent were poor in just one year, 8.1 per cent in two years, 5.8 per cent in three years, and also 5.8 per cent in all four. Taking persons, 64 per cent were never poor, 17.1 per cent in a single year, 8.2 per cent in two years, 5 per cent in three years and 5.7 per cent in all four. Thus around 30 per cent of the population ( $17.1 + 8.2 + 5$ ) were on the move. They either climbed out from below the 60 per cent of average income poverty line, or sank below it, or may have moved in both directions.

Looking at the period as a whole, more than one third of the population (36 per cent) were poor at one stage or another, but something like one sixth of them (the above mentioned 5.7 per cent) were long-term paupers. Sociologists conclude from the above data that only a relatively small section of the poor have terminally sunk into the underclass and only a similarly small section of the rich have firmly established their position. They see the growth in inequality as “not the result of the separation of the classes but of a forceful and increasing mobility between income groups.” (Andorka-Spéder, 1996, p. 39.)

Klugman (1995) gives some similar data about Russia, though only for two years, 1992 and 1993. Almost half the households classified as “very poor” in the summer of 1992 were no longer that a year later. In the same period a quarter of households which were not classified as poor sank below the poverty line.

There is a simple explanation for this mobility. Too short a time has passed since the change of system. People who, as regards current income, are already below subsistence level still have reserves. They

have their social qualifications and education, their homes, the possessions their life-style demands—clothes, furniture, household appliances, etc.—and they have their contacts. This gives them a choice of survival strategies, a chance to find a way out of poverty. The barriers have not come down yet. State and local government services of a non-market character that still operate are of tremendous importance in this respect. Access to health services, nurseries, schools, public transport keeps alive the hope and possibility of getting a hold of oneself and climbing back. This is an advantage the citizens of the post-socialist countries still enjoy *vis-à-vis* those in the Third World albeit with similar incomes. But how long will that advantage continue, and how many can climb back or at least hold on? Soon their reserves will be exhausted and the barriers will come down.

Poverty is aggravated in these countries by inequalities not only coming into the open but also growing apace. The quantifying and international comparison of inequalities is, however, even more problematical than that of poverty. Tax evasion makes it difficult to estimate the income of the rich.

In Hungary, declared incomes of those legally classed as entrepreneurs are, on the average, a third of those of employees. Obviously, the situation is no better in the other post-socialist countries. There are other difficulties. Thus, should incomes before or after tax be the basis, do these include social allowances, in money or kind, i.e., the results of redistribution by the state? Thus the latest World Bank report (1996) calculates the Gini coefficient of inequality for around a hundred countries on the basis of four kinds of indices, but different kinds of data are available for different countries. Since I want to confine myself to establishing trends only, I shall,

wherever possible, only use indices from the same source or such as obey the same principles in their calculation. Such are available for the two countries I have chosen, Hungary and Russia. I shall use the Gini coefficient of inequality which ranges between two extremes, 0 (absolute equality in distribution) and 1 (absolutely unequal distribution, which obviously cannot occur.)

According to Rudolf Andorka et al. (1994), Hungary before the systemic change, in 1987, showed 0.21 on the Gini scale. The figure comes from a 1992 book by two British authors, A. B. Atkinson and J. Micklewright. This reading rose to 0.26 in 1991 and 0.27 in 1992. In the old Bundesländer in Germany, the Gini scale reading for 1990 and the years mentioned was also 0.27 and 0.26. Thus Hungary in the early nineties had reached the German, Belgian and Dutch income inequality level. This deterioration occurred over a very short period of time. Income inequalities grew to exactly the same degree in Britain under the Thatcher government, but over a period of ten years (see Milanovic, 1994, p. 3). Furthermore, in Hungary, the process has certainly not come to an end. It would appear that income inequalities in Poland are somewhat greater than in Hungary, and much the same is true for the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Income inequalities in Russia are greater and they are growing faster. According to official figures—quoted by OECD 1995, p. 123, in agreement with other sources the reading on the Gini scale was 0.256 in 1991, 0.370 in 1993, and 0.412 in 1994. As Klugman points out, this degree of inequality compares with that of Argentina or the Philippines. The only reason why a growth of 15–16 points in three years (three times that in Hungary!), cannot be called unprecedented is because the calculation of the Gini points is not old enough.

## Deterioration in living conditions and its consequences

### Diet

What was characteristic of Central and Eastern Europe was an unhealthy diet, not an insufficient amount of food. In essence, this is still true with the difference that the diet is now even less healthy. Both these statements are confirmed by the figures of Table 4.

For a start, daily calorie intake declined by 2 to 18 per cent in every country (returning to the original figure in both Poland and Romania) but the average was and is still above the 2,300 calories internationally considered to be sufficient, though the Russian figure is already pretty close to it. Much the same goes for proteins, for which the daily minimum is 60–65 grammes. It is certain that the polarization of incomes, i.e., the growing deviation from the average, and impoverishment will be accompanied by nutritional deficiencies for many, with all the consequences this has for the health of the nation. The post-Soviet states and Bulgaria are particularly exposed to this danger, should income inequality and pauperization trends continue.

There are undesirable changes in the composition of the diet. The share of carbohydrates is growing within a diminishing food consumption. The consumption of flour and cereals has grown or it has maintained its level in every country. This is a characteristic feature of a deterioration in standards of living and of impoverishment. There is only one significant deviation from this growth trend and that is in Hungary, presumably because of the relatively higher price rise of bread and pasta, as a consequence of the liberation of prices generally and particularly the significant rise in the price of fuel. Carbohydratic

Table 4

**PER CAPITA FOOD CONSUMPTION**

Country	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1994 data as a percentage of 1989 data
<b>BREAD AND CEREALS (kg)</b>							
Bulgaria	158.2	168.1	179.3	160.4	157.2	156.0	98.6
Czech Republic	156.0	155.5	161.4	163.4	164.5	..	105.4
Poland	120.5	118.4	121.1	120.6	126.4	117.8	97.7
Hungary	112.2	110.4	102.9	106.0	98.0	92.0 <sup>a</sup>	82.0
Romania	157.3	158.5	145.3	146.5	159.6	..	101.5
Slovakia	153.4	158.6	158.2	147.8	142.0	141.2	92.0
Russia	95.9	96.9	100.6	103.9	107.4	110.4	115.1
Ukraine	137.7	141.0	142.5	142.5	141.0	146.0	106.0
<b>MEAT, FISH AND THEIR PRODUCTS (kg)</b>							
Bulgaria	56.7	57.1	42.7	52.4	49.7	44.1	77.7
Czech Republic	103.4	101.9	92.2	91.2	88.8	...	85.9
Poland	64.3	68.9	72.1	69.5	69.8	65.6	102.0
Hungary	81.0	75.8	74.3	76.2	70.9	69.5 <sup>a</sup>	85.8
Romania	57.1	66.1	61.1	49.9	49.8	..	87.2
Slovakia	88.5	88.4	80.8	73.3	68.7	68.2	77.0
Russia	71.7	69.8	65.3	57.9	57.3	59.0	82.3
Ukraine	68.6	68.2	65.5	53.4	46.0	...	67.0
<b>DAIRY PRODUCTS (kg)</b>							
Bulgaria	132.2	136.1	114.8	92.5	83.5	82.4	62.3
Czech Republic	259.6	256.2	242.7	214.4	190.1	..	73.2
Poland	133.2	124.2	117.6	114.4	111.2	107.0	80.3
Hungary	189.6	169.9	167.9	159.7	145.1	141.1 <sup>a</sup>	74.4
Romania	135.9	140.1	163.3	163.7	176.9	..	130.2
Slovakia	253.2	226.3	211.8	193.8	170.6	166.1	65.6
Russia	388.6	378.4	348.5	294.2	305.1	294.0	75.6
Ukraine	366.9	373.2	345.5	284.5	275.0	256.0	69.8
<b>DAILY CALORIES INTAKE</b>							
Bulgaria	3269	3284	2894	2801	2682	2665	81.5
Czech Republic	3234	3304	..	..	..	..	-
Poland	2891	..	2767	2744	2667	2955	102.2
Hungary	3499	3386	3218	3298	3126	3052 <sup>a</sup>	87.2
Romania	2949	3038	2832	2758	2959	..	100.3
Slovakia	3234	3333	3276	3126	3143	..	97.2
Russia	2603	2590	2527	2438	2552	2427	93.2
Ukraine	3517	3597	3445	3151	2860	2895	82.3

<sup>a</sup> Hungarian Statistical Pocketbook 95. Budapest, 1996

Source: UNICEF, 1995, pp. 135-137.

consumption characteristically grew in Russia, but there too only that of cheap or state supported foods such as bread and potatoes. The consumption of more expensive, imported sugar has declined, just like that of all other kinds of food (see OECD, 1995, p. 124).

■ The consumption of biologically important dairy products and meat and meat products is declining. Table 4 shows this to be an unambiguous trend. The only exceptions are milk consumption in Romania and meat in Poland. The first is due to the distribution of land and the larger number of domestic animals kept on household plots in Romania, the latter clearly to the end of an artificially created shortage of meat. The ancien regime had kept meat prices irrationally low, the liberalization of prices put an end to this. As a result the consumption of meat first grew, and then declined.

■ The consumption of fruit and vegetables is declining further in the post Soviet states (see OECD, 1995, p. 124). The situation is not as clear in Central Europe. In Hungary, for instance, time sequences published in statistical yearbooks up to 1992 show a slight growth in the consumption of vegetables; the consumption of home grown fruit has clearly fallen, that of tropical fruits has risen. Fruit consumption as a whole has significantly declined compared to 1989. It is likely that in countries to the north of Hungary, an end of import restrictions on fruit and vegetables had an even larger role, but deteriorating income conditions made it impossible—in spite of greater choice—to improve the earlier unsatisfactory state of fruit and vegetables consumption.

### The demographic picture

Demographic processes perhaps most faithfully reflect changes in living conditions and morale. Long-term demographic

trends hardly change in the short run, therefore larger breaks and swings over shorter periods always indicate important changes in the statistics. Vital statistics are more reliable than other figures. This is the oldest statistical discipline, which is better organized, using well established methodologies. Data collecting is continuous as a rule and is based on comprehensive registers kept by the authorities, unlike many economic data. Vital statistics tell us much more about a changing society than economic indices that are less precise and subject to differing interpretations.

Mortality rates have noticeably risen in the five years of systemic change and life expectancy at birth has fallen. According to UNICEF, 1995, pp. 110–111, mortality per thousand inhabitants has risen by 4.9 and 3 per cent respectively in Russia and the Ukraine between 1989 and 1994. This is a huge difference, and implies a deterioration of 45.8 and 25.6 per cent respectively.

In Central and Eastern Europe mortality figures have only fallen in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, elsewhere they have risen, by 10 per cent in Bulgaria and 9.3 per cent in Romania. At 5.1 per cent the deterioration was smaller in Hungary, or in Poland, where the rise was only temporary, in 1991, and by 1994 the original rate was reestablished. Shock therapy meant accelerated deterioration for both living conditions and vital statistics. The year when shock therapy started appears as a watershed: 1990 in Poland, 1991 in Bulgaria, 1992 in Russia. After that Poland succeeded in stabilizing the processes, Russia did not.

Life expectancy at birth (Table 5) manifests the same interconnections. Here, too, there is a catastrophic shortening in Russia (by six years for men) and in the Ukraine. In Russia life expectancy at birth for men

(58.2 years) is below the age of retirement. Here too, the position improved in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Poland showed in 1991 a significant decline for both men and women; the indices improved later. Unfortunately, the trend is unfavourable in both Bulgaria and Hungary. Life expectancy at birth for men in Hungary is 64.5 years, the shortest in the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, not counting the CIS. In most of the countries the scissors gap between the life expectancy of men and women continues to grow.

UNICEF experts examining mortality and life expectancy figures have established that it was not the children and the aged, i.e., the most vulnerable biologically and socially, who were most at risk during the "transition" but men of working age.

Indeed, the figures show that infant mortality rates (below the age of one) have improved everywhere except for Russia, the Ukraine, and Bulgaria, the same being true for children between one and four. Mortality rates slightly declined everywhere for the 5–15 age group. Deterioration starts with the 15–19 age group, and is greatest in the case of young male adults between 20 and 39. Poland and Slovakia are the only countries which showed any improvement for that age group. The growth of mortality rates is somewhat less steep for men between 40 and 59. For that age group the situation improved not only in Poland but also in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Unfortunately, mortality rates for that male age group in Central Europe are highest in Hungary, equal to those in the Ukraine.

### Human losses due to the transition

**T**he leap in the crude death rate in the former socialist countries, lower life expectancy at birth, changes in male and female mortality rates and that of various

age groups, are all in some way connected with negative social and economic processes that kicked off or gathered momentum at the time of the change. The list of possible causes is not exhausted by mass unemployment and impoverishment. Law and order, public health and labour safety problems also figure here. There is no space to discuss other relevant processes connected with the dismantling, liquidation or simply the further deprivation of the state health and social services. As a summing up of these negative effects, that is as a part of the social costs, I propose to discuss a computation concerning the loss of human life attributable to the first four years of the transition, from 1990 and 1993.

The computation is the work of UNICEF research staff. The purpose was to discover what proportion of the growth in consolidated crude mortality rates was attributable to the rise in age and gender specific mortality rates, independent of natural changes in mortality rates due to an aging population and changes in the size of the population (see UNICEF, 1994, p. 42). In countries where the mortality rate rose, they took the crude death rate and adjusted it taking account of the above factors. The remainder after the subtraction of the natural changes in mortality they called "excess mortality".

Bulgaria and Hungary and male Romanians showed excess mortality for the 1990–1993 period. In these three countries 38,000 excess deaths over four years could be attributed to the transformation. Was this loss small or even negligible compared to a total population of 41.5 million? Be that as it may, there is no doubt, however, that what is happening in Russia, the Ukraine and surely in the other post-Soviet states as well amounts to a demographic catastrophe.

It is shocking that the annual growth in the total number of deaths compared to

Table 5

## LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH, 1989-1994 (years)

		1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Change between 1994 and 1989
Bulgaria	men	68.6	68.4	68.0	67.8	67.7	67.2	-1.4
	women	75.1	75.2	74.7	74.4	75.1	74.8	-0.3
Czech Republic	men	68.1	67.5	68.2	68.5	68.9	..	+0.8 <sup>a</sup>
	women	75.4	76.0	75.7	76.1	76.6	..	+1.2 <sup>a</sup>
Poland	men	66.8	66.5	66.1	66.7	67.4	67.5	+0.7
	women	75.5	75.5	75.3	75.7	76.0	76.1	+0.6
Hungary	men	65.4	65.1	65.0	64.6	64.5	64.8	-0.6
	women	73.8	73.7	73.8	73.7	73.8	74.2	+0.4
Romania	men	66.6	66.6	66.6	66.1	..	..	-
	women	72.7	73.1	73.2	73.2	..	..	-
Slovakia	men	66.9	66.6	66.8	66.8	68.4	68.3	+1.4
	women	75.4	75.4	75.2	75.3	76.7	76.5	+1.1
Russia	men	64.2	63.8	63.5	62.0	58.9	58.2	-6.0
	women	74.5	74.3	74.3	73.8	71.9	71.4	-3.1
Ukraine	men	66.0	66.0	66.0	64.0	63.0	62.8	-3.2
	women	75.0	75.0	75.0	74.0	73.0	73.2	-1.8

<sup>a</sup> 1993 data compared with 1989 data

Source: UNICEF, 1995, p. 111.

the 1989 level grew in Russia from 73,300 in 1990 to 545,000 in 1993, in the Ukraine from an annual 28,800 in 1990 to 129,700 in 1993. Combining the two, the excess mortality can be said to be around 842,000 in the four years following the changover. Bearing in mind that this computation only extends as far as 1993 and that the crude mortality rate grew further in Russia in 1994, from an annual 14.5 per thousand to 15.6 per thousand, this could mean an additional loss of close to half a million for Russia alone. There can be no doubt that the situation did not improve in 1995.

Human losses due to the dissolution of the Soviet Empire and the first four years of the systemic change can be compared to those caused by war. The around 600,000

so lost by Russia are almost one and a half times the British military and civilian fatal casualties for the six years of the Second World War. The 842,000 human losses of Russia and the Ukraine combined are far in excess of the joint Second World War losses of Great Britain and the US, whose population at the time corresponded to the present joint population of Russia and the Ukraine. But all this happened at a time of "peaceful transition".

### Some conclusions

**A**s I showed, the social costs of transformation so far have been heavy in every country, though differing from country to country. It is already clear that, in the suc-

cessor states of the Soviet Union, the operation of the economy and the administration, as well as law and order, collapsed under the burden. The population are on the edge of the abyss, barely subsisting. "Transition" is no longer the right word. The alternatives appear to be further dissolution and growing chaos, or else an open dictatorship. It is unlikely, however, that even the latter would produce a real improvement in living conditions within a foreseeable future.

There are at least two things other countries undergoing a change of system should learn from this sad eventuality.

■ When the living conditions of the population are changed, the "past" cannot, and should not, be wiped out. What is needed in this respect is not a radical break but gradual reforms that maintain continuity. Acute social differentiation in a society where average incomes are low and egalitarianism is the accepted attitude will cause unbearable tension and stress, and will marginalize a great many people, who will lose all hope. The figures allow one to discern an interesting paradox. There is no famine in Russia or the Ukraine, nor is there open unemployment. Public utilities operate after a fashion, so do transport and commerce, teaching continues in schools and universities, doctors and nurses care for people, public health authorities exercise control. Yet, people perish at a rate reminiscent of times of war. Quite obviously this must be due either to the nature or the rate of the changes.

An alien social or economic pattern must not be forced on people, if, within the foreseeable future, the change implies sensitive disadvantages or losses for the

majority. If this is so, the changes cannot be carried out democratically. The Russian example shows that both democracy and the success of the changes suffered as a result.\*

■ The other Central and Eastern European states—with the possible exception of Bulgaria—did not pay as high a price for the changes, and they live in the hope that the "transition" will indeed end in an improved situation. Their position differs. The figures show that the Czech Republic and Slovakia to some degree were able to get away with the changes at relatively low social costs. Hungary, on the other hand, starting earlier and from a better position, paid a higher price, although there is little difference between the three countries when it comes to economic or cultural standards, or geography. The reasons must surely be sought in the strategies of change and economic policies of the three countries.

As regards the triad of unemployment, poverty and living conditions, both the Czech Republic and Hungary differ from the other countries in one respect. Between 1990 and 1994 the number of those in employment declined least in the Czech Republic (9.6 per cent) and most in Hungary (25.7 per cent; See Table 1). In my opinion this was of cardinal importance when determining differences of development in the two countries.

In Hungary the slogan was: "let the rotten apples fall." Around 1.4 million jobs—by an odd coincidence exactly the same number as were created in the previous forty years, between 1950 and 1990—were abolished by the nationalist-conservative government coalition, in agreement with

■ This remains true although the experts propagating an alien pattern—and the foreign governments financing the activities of these advisors—do not dare to admit failure, but deny falling standards of living in Central Eastern Europe like Sachs, (1995), who goes as far as describing Russia as a success story (Aslund, 1994). On the character of alien patterns, see Szamuely (1995).

the liberal parties in opposition. These, naturally, included the several hundred thousand jobs sacrificed in agriculture in the politically motivated destruction of large-scale agricultural production. Without going into details, such as tax losses and the drop in social security contributions which this implied, or the payments that had to be made to the unemployed and the newly retired, or the contribution all this made to budgetary equilibrium problems, the huge direct role played by this ill-considered shock therapy in growing pauperization, and what this involves in morale is obvious. There have also been other economic effects, such as the abolishing of domestic supply and export capacities.

The economic policy of the Czech Republic on the other hand tries to delay structural changes in large enterprises for as long as possible, on the principle of "time gained, lives saved". Voucher privatization to all appearances spread the ownership of state firms amongst the population as a whole. In fact, control over most of the coupons was acquired by investment funds organized by state banks. In this way it became possible to subsidize large firms through the state-owned banks, without burdening the exchequer. This is the "secret" of the low rate of unemployment in the Czech Republic, of budgetary equilibrium and, last but not least, of the fact that the Czech Republic is the only country in Central or Eastern Europe where the overwhelming majority of the population approves the new economic system.

Of all the administrations, the conservative Klaus government, in spite of its monetarist and free-marketier phraseology, proved itself to be the socially most sensitive. Thanks to this, the various social costs of the changes are the smallest in the region, and the legitimization of the new regime and the social support it enjoys, the greatest.

As the creditable household panel studies and household statistical surveys discussed above show, in Hungary as well as in Russia, the very young, i.e., infants as well as adolescents, are amongst the poorest. At the same time mortality rates amongst the under 14 year olds has fallen (except in Russia, the Ukraine and Bulgaria) even in countries where the crude mortality rate has risen.

UNICEF experts presume that what may seem a contradiction is due to the fact that these countries were able to maintain state public health, mother, infant and child care institutions and state health and family support. The UNICEF (1994) report stresses as something highly favourable that, in 1990–1992 according to their calculations (p. 71), two countries, the Czech Republic and Hungary, were able to maintain the real value of public health expenditure. Hungary is mentioned specially as the only country (pp. 6–8) where there were no cuts in state care for children—in spite of the reduction in crèche places—thanks to allowances making it possible for mothers of young children to stay at home. In 1990–1993 Hungary was the only country where the proportion of children in kindergartens grew.

This showed that, wherever they continued to be maintained, health and social services created earlier significantly alleviated the destructive effects of transformation. It is also apparent that the international reputation of a country depends not only on its skill in managing—the monetary base—but also on falling prenatal and infant mortality rates at a time of economic hardships and impoverishment.

It is also clear that major unfavourable structural processes (mass unemployment, pauperization) are not at an end yet, and that people do not regard them as being so. I mentioned above that people general-

ly still dispose over the infrastructural (material and moral) conditions needed by a civilized life-style. If economic policies do not exploit the not so-long period of time available as a moratorium to mobilize these capacities and options, social marginalization—as apparent in the CIS coun-

tries—will assume proportions that will create dissatisfaction, apathy, violence and crime on a scale that can no longer be handled. What may then well happen is that the democratic political order itself will become one of the costs or sacrifices of the transformation. ■

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Júlia Szalai

## Why the Poor Are Poor

**A**fter the euphoria and high expectations of the late 1980s, all the societies of the former Soviet bloc have had to live through the painful social and economic constraints their adjustment to the world market has entailed. The first half of the 1990s has brought about a steady increase of poverty in all the Central European countries concerned. Although it is difficult to estimate the actual size of the social groups which have been so hit, even the most radical protagonists of rapid marketization acknowledge the socio-psychological shock that the remarkable leap in the number of those living in unbearable conditions has generated.

Despite the shock and frustration, the poverty explosion has not been accorded a place on the list of the most urgent socio-political issues in any of the countries

concerned. For Hungary, literally from the moment the new democratic order came into being, the poverty issue actually vanished from the political agenda. The tone adopted in press reports on the growing number of those living below subsistence level hardly differs from that of the long-term weather forecasts—the constant increase has rapidly become a “customary” and “fatal” fact of everyday life that not too much can be done about.

The rapid depoliticization of the poverty issue is new: the demonstration of the fact that poverty did exist under socialism was one of the key points in the social critiques of the communist system which, for its part, regarded the whole subject as taboo right up to its collapse. The taboo was so strong that using the term “poverty” was regarded as a dissident activity. There were a number of ideological reasons for this, but paramount was the fear that the historical mission of socialist modernization to provide general well-being was being questioned.

Forced industrialization promised general security through the legal obligation to work: in this sense, the complete and permanent elimination of pre-war poverty was intended to justify the grandiose communist programme of an all-round social transformation driven and controlled exclusively by the central organs of the CP.

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A close examination of the processes, however, led to the conclusion that with the demand for labour created by the quantitative growth in production, poverty had, at best, moved within the gates of the factories. The poor simply had been converted from a deprived agrarian proletariat into faceless masses of underpaid unskilled workers without even the minimum of political rights to control the conditions of their daily life.

Demonstrations of existing poverty and what it entailed threatened to undermine what was the historical justification of the communist agenda; this however would not have been sufficient in itself to keep the taboo alive if, paradoxically, the voice of power had not achieved a broad social support through the spread of the second economy, the chief institution symbolising liberalization in communist policy after the defeat of the 1956 revolution.

The innovation and the key to the popularity of the way the CP ruled from the mid-sixties to the collapse of the regime (called, after its leader, the Kádár era) lay in that fragile compromise between the Communist Party and the defeated society. The essence of this compromise was a tacit acceptance, even a gradual expansion, of the space for individual autonomy, based on the "rehabilitation" of the one and only institution which was legitimately independent of direct political control, the family. Nobody could foresee the extent of change that the apparently minor political concessions to a limited private autonomy brought to everyday life. The regained "freedom" for privacy, in exchange for unreserved fulfilment of one's duties in the socialist domain, released a tremendous energy. The actual modernization of Hungary and, with it, the increased material well-being of large sectors of society was made possible by the family-based small "enterprises" that have evolved on

the basis of this tacit compromise. The manifestation of the compromise was in the rapid spread of a life strategy based on participation in both economies—the first, "official," and the second, "informal"—in other words, a way of life underpinned by two pillars.

Through the widening participation in the second (informal) economy, it became possible, however, to "admit" that income disparities existed and, in time, even to favour them, although within limits. "Falling behind" now appeared to be attributable solely to the fault of individuals and families themselves. It became a general guiding principle that people were free to work in their own homes, of their own choice—provided they recognized the socialist rules—and their prosperity depended only on their diligence and skills. If an individual did not prosper, there was something "wrong" with him, and behaviour deviating from that of the majority was certainly not a cause that society as a whole should support.

With the collapse of socialism, it suddenly became clear, however that inherited poverty cannot be explained within the conceptual framework of income inequalities. The integrating hoop of socialist organizational membership disappeared and, when the hoop fell away, Hungarian society found itself split into two parts. The dividing line between the two can be found precisely in the earlier attachment to the second economy and to the informal social relations organized around it or, conversely, in the practically complete absence of these attachments. Although the transition and the long-lasting economic crisis accompanying it has brought about a decline in the standard of living for many, still, the features of impoverishment (leading to however painful but transitory losses in financial terms without affecting other aspects of the actual social position

of individuals and families) can easily be distinguished from the re-appearance of old poverty, the latter being a consequence of a lasting dependence solely on the "socialist pillar" of life that vanished quickly after the collapse of the regime. The "old poor" are those who always were on the fringes of state-employment, who were kept within the institutional schemes mainly by compulsion, who always lacked protection against oppression from above, and for whom there had always been little access to material, cultural and contact capital.

### The re-emerging fault lines of pre-war society

The amazingly rapid growth of the second economy and the central role it very soon came to play in shaping everyday life rested on the aspirations for a lower middle-class way of living of a great many Hungarians, aspirations that had been forcibly pent up for decades after the communist take-over in the late 1940s. The roots of these aspirations reach back to before the Second World War when even smallholders developed in both their production technology and in their aspirations and attitudes a willingness to radically change the organization of their lives as soon as the opportunity arose, to move from the strict bondages and routines towards a form of accumulation based on flexible adaptation of the family work organization and the self-exploitative considerable increase of their labour input. The distribution of the large estates in 1945 would have given an added impetus but was cut short by forced collectivization practically eradicating private farming.

In contrast to peasants and smallholders, the agrarian-proletariat had been forced onto the fringe of society. These people, providing the labour force of large

estates, had for generations lived determined by direct dependency on, and patriarchal subordination to, large church and secular estates.

This was the basis of socialist modernization. The poverty-stricken masses of the latifundia were the main targets of the historical mission of communism. For them, the status of wage labour in industry in fact meant modernization: it involved a shift from direct patriarchal dependency to more impersonal conditions and thus also brought the chance of escape from their bonds. The communists could count on their high degree of mobility (since they were not tied by ownership of land or the institutional system of the village), on their unfamiliarity with the money economy or modern capitalist market and on the absence of any aspirations to accumulate wealth (for, since time immemorial, they had received their sustenance in kind; compared to this, impossibly low wages in industry did not mean a sharp drop for them, all the more so since many of their needs continued to be supplied in kind). The regime could also count on them smoothly interiorizing the system of rewards and sanctions of socialist distribution, in keeping with principles acquired within the system of patriarchal relations. In this sense, their herding into socialist large-scale industry was accomplished as the simple continuation of earlier forms. At the most, innovations were technical, there was nothing new in the essence of their subordinated situation.

The institutions of socialist distribution copied this same "serf" anthropology. Undifferentiated mass education, health services that strove for quantitative performances and campaign-type results, housing for workers that recalled the housing provided for serfs on the large estates, a social security system that paid impossibly low pensions, even the canteen meals and

the shabby institutions providing day care for children, were all based on traditionalism, not on the modern notion of the citizen. These forms of provision created a buffer around the lives of the penniless agrarian proletariat, but did not change their subordination and defencelessness. In this way, the patriarchal relations of the large estates could be transformed smoothly into the socialist hierarchies of communist guidance. Sharp changes in ideology used to justify the hierarchical order did not change its deeply-rooted practices, which now faithfully served the campaign-type organization of society, but took its model from the world of serfdom. Thus, in the final analysis, the model of administration remained unchanged, even if the new method of exercising it became the clear distinguishing feature of the everyday operation of the socialist system.

**T**hese uniform institutional practices successfully and lastingly disguised the fact that the deep fault lines of interwar society had at the most been condemned to an enforced sleep but had not been eliminated. Later, a heavy price had to be paid (and is still being paid) for this. On the other hand, the new structure did, in fact, open up certain paths for advancement for the poorest: their partial links with towns and large industrial plants, however weak and one-sided, in theory opened the door to a modern industrial division of labour and to modern social relations based on it. This, in turn, added a new facet to the illusion of overcoming poverty for ever. It was not possible to foresee in the early years that this "entry" was in fact a trap that created the conditions for their, and later, for their descendants' exclusion.

With the appearance of the second economy, courses separated in a permanent and increasingly striking way, reproducing, even if in a changed form, the his-

toric social fault lines. This inherited disadvantage can be interpreted in terms of the preconditions that were needed to create a successful way of life based on the two economies, and the extent to which the different social groups disposed of these conditions which was, in turn, related to the position they occupied within society.

The first of the preconditions was the character of the informal second economy and its gearing into the formal economy. The former could exist only if it was inseparably intertwined with the first economy under full communist control. Those with only a loose or peripheral link with the first economy had very little chance of participation in the second economy from the start, having no access either to independent capital or to time (the most important resource for the operation of the second economy) or to connections if their positions within the structure of socialist production was not stable. With a compulsory eight-hour-day, the "free" time available for production in the second economy could be used in practice by those enjoying the benefits of one of the social security schemes. Disability or old-age pensions, sick-pay, job-protected child-care allowance for young parents all required regular employment over a longer period. In the absence of market credit and private banks, with the given low wage level, the only way that funds could be obtained was through loans provided by the employer or the National Savings Bank, and these loans were given only to reliable employees loyal to their place of employment. But not only funds and time were linked to secure employment, since the necessary acquaintances and the actual material "capital" had to come from there, too. Only those who had sufficiently secure and recognized positions in the first economy were able to find their way to the relatively independent

second one. Seasonal workers in industry, the unskilled labourers who temporarily interrupted their employment in industry in the hope of finding better earnings when there was seasonal work in agriculture, the Gypsies who could easily find themselves without a job because of even minor disciplinary infringements, the truck loaders and drivers' assistants (known as "birds of passage") frequently changing jobs, never belonged in this category.

In their case, it was just as uncertain that they would meet the second condition. A successful rise into the lower middle-class required a smoothly co-operating family work organization capable of responding to changing roles and tasks with a flexible internal division of labour. This co-operation above all required spatial proximity for the family to be able to organize building their homes, working on the household plot or taking produce to the market. However, those members of the family who stayed at home could not count on the labour of those who returned home only at the weekends from their distant job, or had moved to a distant point in the country in the hope of better wages. If there was no flexible, co-operating work organization, then there was no reliable basis for substituting an exchange of labour for missing funds, and thus, there was no possibility of accumulating capital or undertaking longer-term ventures requiring larger investment.

The third condition was integration in a community beyond the family. Whether this was the workplace or place of residence, integration in the community obviously required a regular contribution to and a constant participation in its informal network. This contribution needed a prolonged, or at least predictable, presence. In reality, perhaps because of the latter feature, this condition could not be regarded as separate from the former, if a

whole cluster of ghetto communities had not been created through the forced mobilization imposed by socialism, which drastically magnified the country's traditional regional inequalities and collectively excluded communities from all possibility of participation in the second economy. In time, internal relations of these backwater settlements became so distorted and stunted that their skewed social structure acted as a separate factor, in itself preventing any system of mutual help. In the absence of an informal network, the basic conditions for any kind of attempt to move upwards were absent. Those trapped in these distorted communities were so to speak automatically condemned to marginalization and thus to their further falling behind. This latter, community fate, became a breeding ground for impoverishment of a great number of village Gypsies and of villages and cluster settlements in which the average age was rapidly rising.

One has to note that the significance of the second economy was not only in supplementing sources of income, though this was certainly very important. Its true essence lay, however, in the cultural aspects of belonging.

**W**ith the creation of informal networks around informal production, the institutional system was effectively doubled and an alternative world was created. Thus, those forced out of the second economy were in fact excluded from the possibility of participation in another realm. The informal economy built up a whole range of new occupations and services, and its participants automatically acquired new knowledge and skills that in practice could not be learned in any official institution. Such skills have developed in all the major fields of informal production: in labour-intensive market-gardening, in modern construction techniques, in a wide range of

repair-services, computer-work, agency services, etc. As soon as the opportunities occurred, all this knowledge and skill was quickly turned to business use. The rapidly expanding service-sector (currently embracing some 80 per cent of one-man businesses) testifies that people have been able to utilize within a very short time what they had learned in the decades of informality about management, administration, financing, economizing with money, time and scarce resources. In this sense, those who had not been participants were excluded from a vast learning process, and no formal schooling or training programme could give them hope to make up for this. At the same time, their exclusion from a quasi-market also meant that they remained outside the networks of contacts through which mobility occurred, the exchange of labour, the loans and mutual help of the informal world. These networks—or the capital that informal relations and acquaintance embodied—proved to be even more important than capital for successful entry into the market when small businesses began to be organized on a suddenly proliferating scale. Thus, the lack of contacts with the informal world has resulted in those trapped in socialism completely falling behind the main body of society. They have no access to the market and the ties linking them to the state have been broken by the state itself, which hastily reinterpreted its functions with the change of regime.

The most acute and spectacular consequences of this can perhaps be seen in the field of labour.

To a considerable extent, it is exclusion from the network of market relations which, for the broad masses, means that the loss of a job in the old socialist sector now involves not only unemployment but also drastic marginalization. Unemployment here is not of a temporary, frictional

nature—as is the case during periods of structural adjustment in developed market economies—but long-term and very likely permanent. As the years pass, it is becoming increasingly clear that the reserve army of several hundred thousand unskilled factory workers no longer have any chance of finding regular employment. The daily constraint of earning a livelihood forces the more dynamic among them into the black economy. The more distressed end up in the ghettos of charity and soup kitchens. But in the long term, the course is similar even for the more agile. Experience shows that there is no way out of the vicious circle of the black economy. Those who are forced out of the official labour market, drift from one insecure and underpaid job to another, and as time passes, they have less and less hope of finding their way back into the world of ordinary people. In the absence of forms of registration that confirm their position, they sooner or later lose their welfare entitlements: they cannot count on a pension, sick pay, credit, health care or any other basic services that society provides for its ordinary members. With the expiry of unemployment benefit—which hypocritically regards the situation as temporary—society abandons even the appearance of these unfortunates belonging to the official world. The only institutional footholds left to them are the welfare offices of local governments and charitable organizations. By the very nature of means-tested discretionary welfare, these institutions are empowered to the extreme: after all, they are the ones who make the decision on whether any responsibility for the existence of the poor will be accepted at all. In the absence of unconditional general rights and entitlements, support is dependent on arbitrary considerations: on the behaviour of the recipients and on the readiness they show to acknowledge that

these offices have direct control over their entire lives. In other words, the marginalized poor sink back into the defencelessness of personal patriarchal relations, into another social order where the rights and laws of the civil world do not apply.

No form of link exists today between the two worlds. This deprivation of social rights is taking place legally and there is no forum where the law can provide protection against arbitrarily decided exclusion and humiliation. The short-term interest is linked to maintaining, rather than eliminating, this second order underneath normal society. Upcoming businesses struggling to cope with a lack of capital are being financed to a considerable extent by the existence of this second order. Maintaining control over state resources is in the interest of both new private capital and of the increasingly impoverished middle classes which are more successful in avoiding pauperization than the real poor.

### New traps in the withdrawal of the state

**T**he conflicts of the past five years have shown that while aspirations for autonomy embodied in the second economy urge a reduction in the political power of the state and its scope for intervention, a bitter struggle is being waged to preserve state sources and institutional channels that represent the economic backing for the private sphere. While the drive to decentralize is unstoppable, competition for the state's centralized funds continues unabated. An endless stream of pressure groups besiege the lobbies of policymakers to claim special treatment and support from an increasingly indebted exchequer. Despite all the efforts at rationalization and cautious reform steps, there has been no easing of the battle for benefits provided under social security which are the sin-

gle largest item in the state budget. Strikes and demonstrations signal the resistance shown against the closure and privatization of the larger state firms, and each day brings news of petitions emphasizing the obligation of the state to compensate various sections of society for inflation. It would appear that current transitional Hungarian society wants a state weak in political power but stronger in economic power than ever before. Developments quite clearly indicate that the time for decentralization has arrived, but the time for total decentralization has not yet come about in this country.

The economic motives for ambivalence towards the presence of the state are obvious. Independent economic activity entirely separated from the state requires a stable capital backing and a well established market, and neither of these conditions were created in recent years. Moreover, restructuring of production has also begun to erode even market relations that had hitherto been regarded as more or less stable. The privatization of state firms has disrupted state orders once thought to be secure, while the collapse of Comecon and the Eastern markets has confused and endangered the established export trade. All this greatly increases the risk in full independence and increases social pressure for the buffer role of the state.

Paradoxically, liberation from the political power of the state entails a boomerang effect. The various corporate bodies and interest groups which clung to state distribution policy out of fear and defencelessness, now make angry claims on it. Behind the conflicting principles of privatization, which is aimed at regulating the plundering of public assets, demands for compensation can be detected, competing strenuously with each other. Interest groups covering a wide range consider that the time has come for the state to compensate

them for their historical grievances and injuries and for the decades of lagging behind, to openly assist them in the advancement they think they deserve but have never achieved; they outbid each other in submitting claims for compensation that are all legitimate when considered individually. Getting these claims accepted and embodied in legislation is a question of crude political strength; privatization and the creation of a middle class is thus a direct function of the latent bargaining positions established over recent years.

**O**ther arenas of economic life even more clearly show the ambivalences towards the state and bureaucratic integration. The large number of civil societies, associations and foundations now being organized are model examples of the simultaneous demand for self-organization and for bureaucratic recognition. In this, the traditions of the second economy are being faithfully continued—now within an institutionalized framework; these demanded undisturbed autonomy in formulating needs and support from above. The situation in the acquisition and regulation of income is similar: corporate managers and trade union activists are unanimous in protesting against all forms of central restriction on wage bargaining (interpreting even the attempt to reach uniform agreements as a sign of intervention). At the same time and with the same momentum, they also depend heavily on that very same central state, they all use the old and proven channels in obtaining individual treatment to win compensation for themselves against inflation they regard as some kind of unavoidable fatality. There is little sign of the middle class virtue of self-restraint. It is in the name of the traditional “they” and “we” dichotomy that the separate actors in the economy and politics enter a competition where the stakes

still tend to be minimizing personal risk rather than the hope of real gains. In itself the desire to minimize risks gives these actors a tendency to formulate advantages for themselves over others in the guise of various “exceptions” and “concessions” and in other forms of bureaucratic protection. The still excessive presence of the state in the economy, as well as the understandable open aspiration of the state bureaucracy to strengthen its position at the most help only in the recognition that the creation of a private market in the Western sense is a “foreign” prescription and there could exist a “Hungarian way” for embourgeoisement.

The poor are victims of this tacit new compromise that is gradually taking shape. In the first place, they have been eliminated from the competition for the carving up of state property and are being excluded by legal means from all the benefits to which the slowly emerging propertied classes are entitled. They do not enjoy the tax benefits linked to property, they do not receive the loans requiring property as collateral and they are thus unable to take part in the social procedures which now help the majority to preserve and slowly improve their standard of living. In short, they behave “differently” from the rest of society, and we are gradually reaching the stage where it is this obvious otherness that distinguishes the poor rather than their distressed material state. In contrast with the majority, it is they who depend in practice only on incomes derived from official sources for their livelihood—hence the appearance that they are being supported by the public purse. The uniformity of their sources then creates the false impression that in reality it is they who are using up the thin trickle of dwindling state resources. The majority are in agreement on reducing state expenditure on support of the poor: all initiatives for cuts in this

area aimed at reducing waste are given the green light.

But it is not only their exclusion from the carving up of property that pushes them into some kind of segregated second order. The process is also aided by the struggle to maintain a strong state while redefining the meaning of its strength: the expropriation of the sources of the state, now with the aim of privatization, in the hope of rapidly creating a middle class that will save the nation. A new principle of legitimation has triumphed in this major process. Those who contributed through their efforts to maintaining public resources acquire the right to a share of them. This private contribution presumes either the existence of surplus sources, or membership in the inner circle of institutions that are classified overnight as private with state-bureaucratic assistance. In this way, all those—the poor—whose poverty is due precisely to their loose and currently separating links to the bureaucracy, find themselves prematurely outside all forms of the institutional net and are being legally marginalized. The largest of these groups—the steadily growing army of the long-term unemployed—has already been mentioned. The ranks of the excluded are also being swollen by those who live in small villages that have now become social backwaters, the elderly former agricultural co-operative members who have been left without any form of livelihood as a result of the privatization of agriculture, the former long-distance commuters who have been left without a roof over their heads now that the workers' hostels have been closed, and, above all, the Gypsies. The official formulation of their classification in the second order is being left to the discretion of local authority officials with the rapid creation of a policy on poverty, following the logic of the 18th-century

English Poor Law, which provides assistance on an individual "worthiness" basis, in the lack of any legally guaranteed entitlement. The law of the second order is the acknowledgement of this system of direct patriarchal dependency, more precisely, renunciation of the right to autonomy in the interest of a meagre livelihood. In other words, the law of the order of the poor will thus be their practical deprivation of the main personal and political rights they have only just gained—in the interest of expanding the rights of the majority. And this, as we have seen, is the unanimous interest not only of the bureaucrats who distribute this patronage and thus have their power and indispensability strengthened day by day, but also of all those wishing to restrict competition for state resources.

However, institutionalization of this dual law is not without peril. Where this dual law exists, it is only a matter of time and occasion before someone, on some grounds, steps across the invisible border separating them. Where there are people not protected by the law—and in Hungary today the law does not protect the poor—the law is not the law and defencelessness tacitly threatens everyone. Today's silent harsh command over the minority could tomorrow become open harsh authoritarianism over the majority.

This is why it is not professional shortsightedness or the limited view of the sociologist dealing with social policy but simply my concern as a private individual and citizen that leads me to express doubt over the view that poverty in Hungary today is simply the unavoidable concomitant of the economic difficulties and the transformation. For my part, I see something wider and far more serious in the fact: I see one of the most fundamental political dangers threatening a democracy that has barely institutionalized. •

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# Portrait of a Tyrant

Árpád Pünkösti: *Rákosi a hatalomért* (Rákosi Fighting for Power). Európa, 1992, 368 pp.; *Rákosi a csúcson* (Rákosi at the Top). Európa, 1996, 572 pp.

On November 3rd 1956, the day before sixteen Soviet divisions began their attack on Budapest, a brief news item appeared in *Magyar Világ*—an independent daily paper founded a few days earlier. The Hungarian government intended to ask for the extradition from the Soviet Union of Mátyás Rákosi, the General Secretary of the Hungarian CP, who had been dismissed that July. What had to be cleared up was whether Rákosi once again found himself in the Soviet Union after receiving asylum there, or because he had made his escape: It was in the Soviet Union that, twelve years earlier, he had been commissioned to take over step by step a Hungary which had been liberated from Nazi occupation.

The news that Rákosi would be asked to account for his deeds—one of the demands of the 1956 Revolution—was somewhat premature. Soviet armour crushed the revolt, and the Soviet Union appointed János Kádár, a new dictator, to lead the country "from the repression through 'consolidation' to 'collective suppression'," to quote a

1996 monograph, *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956* (Longman, p. 148).

The present judgement on Mátyás Rákosi is clear and unambiguous. His name stands for Communist rule by terror. Stalin's best Hungarian disciple was his sobriquet. A comparison with the leaders of the other so-called socialist countries suggests that it could justifiably be extended geographically.

Could the Hungarian path the Soviet Union dictated have been less bloody and less tragic? "What would have happened if" is not just a moot question, in Rákosi's case even an answer to why things happened as they did has not been attempted yet. No major biography of Mátyás Rákosi exists and, as far as I am aware, none is in preparation, even though no history of the period can be complete without it.

Not counting the fairly ridiculous encomia which appeared in his lifetime, works on Rákosi only began to appear on the eve of the end of communism in Hungary. The first, in 1988, was a subjective memoir by a disillusioned Rákosi supporter, János Nemes, who had, for many years, edited a German-language propaganda weekly published in Budapest. In the fifties, he had been in charge of political broadcasts by Hungarian Radio. He called his work a biographical sketch, but it appears to be more interested in his own Communist or-

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thodoxy and the kind of thinking he stood for rather than in Rákosi's real story. The Kádár soft dictatorship looked back in anger to the personality cult and terror of the times of Rákosi—when Kádár himself had been imprisoned and tortured—but the subject was nevertheless not open to research, not least because the post-1956 political élite, including Kádár himself, was a product of the Rákosi era. These people were not merely hesitant, they did all they could to hinder any sort of political or moral confrontation.

István Feitl's *A bukott Rákosi* (The Fall of Rákosi) thus did not appear until 1993. It permitted historical perspective and a proper survey and criticism of the sources. Feitl is best on that running and hopeless fight that Rákosi—showing characteristic staying power—had with his successor, Kádár, for the right to return home once again from Soviet exile. The book is less about Rákosi than about the political machinations of the Kádár age, about Kádár's "war on two fronts", that is, carrying out an anti-Rákosi policy but maintaining what Rákosi had achieved, all the time relying on apparatchiks who were Rákosi supporters in their hearts.

The book under review is once again a journalist's work. Árpád Pümkösti is on the staff of *Népszabadság*, the former CP daily, now in private hands, which underwent self-privatization and later ideological "transformation" as well, to remain the most widely read among the daily papers. He started to research his book in the eighties, when all archives, including CP archives, still carefully guarded their secrets. Making the best of things, Pümkösti plumped for an oral history methodology of sorts, questioning innumerable witnesses in the hope of tiny morsels of the truth. Those of Rákosi's former associates who were still alive mainly closed ranks and held their tongue. Pümkösti therefore had

to obtain the stones of memory for his mosaic from politicians of the third or fourth rank. Such a grassroots perspective is not without interest, but do these entertaining and often absurd stories carry out Pümkösti's original intention—stated in the preface to the first volume which appeared in 1992—to show through Rákosi's biography that the Rákosi and Kádár system, which appear so totally different, are nevertheless essentially the same?

In my opinion this tenet is neither borne out by an analysis nor is it made explicit by the so far incomplete trilogy. (The second volume, published in 1996, brings us to 1953, at the time of Rákosi's first, not yet final, failure.) Indeed, it seldom offers more than what we can glean from the already published memoirs and reminiscences of contemporaries associated with Rákosi. To be fair, Pümkösti nowhere promises a scholarly discussion, and consequently it is scarcely proper to draw attention to its absence. The fact is, however, that there is an obvious disproportion between the energy invested in the book and the result, bearing in mind the options which opened up after 1990, when much previously secret material became accessible. It is thus the more the pity that Pümkösti showed himself incapable of switching methodologies. Crucial documents often merely put in a walk-on appearance as footnotes to history, but pages on end are filled by the retrospection of cooks and drivers.

These volumes therefore are jumping off points for a future authoritative biography—not that such a work appears to be in the pipeline. Pümkösti nevertheless has the merit of trying to unravel fact and legend which, in Rákosi's case, were hopelessly intertwined in the imaginations of the valet-historians as they were in the mind of their protagonist. Such desires to magnify the past turn Rákosi, Deputy

People's Commissar for Commerce in 1919, into the leading figure in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, replacing Béla Kun, who was liquidated by Stalin in 1937. Thus Rákosi, arrested and imprisoned, is turned into a paradigm of heroism and Rákosi, the pot-bellied, bald dictator looking like a minor bookkeeper, into the Leader of Workers and Peasants, the Father of Hungarian Cotton, and Father of Hungarian Steel. That list could be continued, almost *ad infinitum*.

Let us look at the facts. Mátyás Rákosi was born on March 9th 1892 in Ada, a village in County Bács, as the fourth son of a petty trader, a Jew. His mother was to give birth to seven more children. The boy soon gave evidence of a keen mind, and a talent for languages. Following studies at the Commercial Academy, scholarships took him to Hamburg and London. As an officer of the reserve, he served in the Great War, the end of which found him a prisoner of war in Russia. It was said that at this time he—along with many others—showed himself receptive to socialism, the century's new ideal. He came back to Hungary as a militant of Bolshevik propaganda and held office in the Hungarian Soviet Republic. His career truly took wing in the 1920s, as a Comintern organizer and agitator in Italy, Germany and Czechoslovakia.

All these were still years of preparation. Bitter internecine struggles were part of the history of Hungarian communism throughout. Rákosi sided with the Béla Kun faction, the leader of the 1919 Hungarian Soviet Republic, an association he later denied for tactical reasons. Kun secured Rákosi's rise in the Party hierarchy. By August 1925, he already headed the Hungarian secretariat. Rákosi was of stocky build, physically unattractive, balding, with idiosyncratic speech, all features

that rendered him highly unsuitable for undercover activity. A number of historians have suggested that they were mindful of this in Moscow, that the aim was that Rákosi should come to the attention of the Hungarian authorities as soon as possible, and that their reaction should then be exploited for propaganda purposes. After the excesses of the 1919 Soviet Republic, the courts in Hungary, dreading communism, sentenced Rákosi first to eight years of imprisonment and then, in 1935, to life. This excessively harsh sentence was used by Bolshevik propagandists to build up the image of Rákosi, the future leader.

In this, the truth mattered the least, or what Rákosi himself wanted. Pünkösti is probably right to note that Rákosi owed his life to being imprisoned in Hungary. His patron, Béla Kun, and just about all his associates, the entire Kun faction of the Hungarian CP, were liquidated by Stalin in Moscow in the late thirties. Rákosi thus escaped liquidation, and "that great militant of the international working class movement", was exchanged for some flags in 1940, and thus saved from "Hungarian Fascist prisons" by the Soviet Union.

Posterity differs in its judgement on how Rákosi stood up to his prison years. Some attribute his pliant conformism to them, others again trace back his implacable thirst for revenge to that time. Either way, the fact is that these sixteen years served in prison were rewarded with the leadership of a Hungarian Communist Party directed from Moscow. When, late in 1944 and early in 1945, the CP leadership was exported to Hungary, their first duty was to set things right amongst those Communist factions in Hungary who dared to question Moscow suzerainty.

Communists in Hungary between the wars, few in number, were far from united. The first victims of the first "internal" purge were Pál Demény, along with three

to four thousand followers, a number of times greater than the handful of members of the Moscow directed Communist Party. Rákosi, of course, after 1945, never relied on the masses but on Soviet tanks, removing possible competitors as they emerged, through use of his ever successful "salami tactics".

There is a story that Gábor Péter, who later headed the State Security Office, which did so much to make his and Rákosi's name a byword for fear and terror, sentimentally had Pál Demény, an old comrade from the undercover days, fetched up from his cell on the 1st of May 1945, saying: "I could not let it happen, Comrade Demény, that you of all people should not witness the first free May Day."

With the intensifying of the class war on Moscow's order, such sentimentality soon vanished from the political stage. In three years, backed by Soviet bayonets, and employing methods most foul, Rákosi liquidated the limited multi-party people's democracy.

How Rákosi, after his return in 1945, managed so quickly to create an aura of confidence around his person, how he could persuade people that he had a mind to take democracy seriously and that he meant to abide by its rules, is a conundrum historians have not addressed yet. That he had credibility is backed by the evidence of contemporaries and by numerous memoirs. Rákosi, totally lacking public charisma or rhetorical skills, was able to create a much better impression in private. He regularly surprised those whom he negotiated with by the thoroughness with which he had done his homework. Casually dropped remarks about the life and circumstances of those he talked to created the impression that every little detail mattered to him (as it did, there could be no secret withheld from him).

When, in 1947, the leaders of the East European Communist parties were given the signal to further harden their regimes, Rákosi, as if everything that had happened before had just been preparation for this, tackled the new task, which was much more to his taste—with great élan.

The August 1947 parliamentary elections, the "blue-ticket elections", were a turning point. At that time the CP, exploiting a provision of the electoral law, provided many thousands of ballot papers for absentee voters. These were then used by gangs of their own men, travelling from village to village on the backs of trucks. No one so far has been able to establish the precise scale of the fraud. Some maintain that the CP owed its place at the head of the polls to it, others claim that it added only one to two per cent at the most. It is certain, however, that the concentration of power into one pair of hands considerably accelerated after this electoral manipulation, directed by László Rajk, member of the Political Committee and Minister of the Interior, who later became one of Rákosi's victims. Rákosi's actions included having Béla Kovács, one of the steadfast leaders of the only serious rivals of the CP, the Independent Smallholders' Party, arrested by a Soviet State Security unit, "legitimately stationed in Hungary" on the basis of an international agreement. This, on the one hand, again created anxiety, on the other, as Rákosi cynically put it, "it strengthened the Smallholders' Party's readiness to cooperate." Another ploy of Rákosi and his team, Rajk, Gábor Péter, Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas, and József Révai, was to place their own men in the other parties, or else to work on suitable members of their leadership, threatening, cajoling, blackmailing, or using more refined methods. In the middle of 1948, they succeeded in amalgamating with, or rather absorbing, the Social Democratic Party, whose traditions and

membership commanded respect, and nothing stood in the way of bringing into being what posterity—and indeed contemporaries—called the Rákosi regime.

All this went hand in hand with the Cold War, with “the escalation of the international class struggle”. The years 1948 to 1953 were the time of permanent vigilance and liquidation. It was part of the essence of the dictatorship that literally nobody should feel secure. The show trials were not the sole manifestations of this atmosphere. People there arraigned included members of the old coalition parties, the class enemy (clerics, owners of estates, the *ci-devant* aristocracy) as well as Social Democrats forced into close cooperation with the Communist Party, not to mention the inner-party opposition accused of “undermining” it. The trial of Cardinal József Mindszenty, Prince Primate of Hungary, was headline news in the international press. (See the excerpt from the book under review on pp. 86–98). A confession was literally beaten out of him, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment in open court. The confession László Rajk made and obtained by brutal torture (for some time he had been reckoned to be the second man in the Party hierarchy), was also used by Rákosi to enforce vigilance. That trial was conceived in the conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. When Rajk the “Trotskyist Yugoslav and American spy” was hanged, Rákosi’s only possible potential rival within the Party was out of the way.

Over and beyond these trials, the ever more bloody dictatorship made itself felt through internment camps, forced domicile, deprivation of rights, kulak lists, brutally enforced delivery of produce by the peasantry. There could not have been many families in Hungary that were not affected. All this was accompanied by surre-

alistically idiotic propaganda, which pretended to the world that what was being done in the supposed interests of socialism, was the will of the people and not just that of the dictator and his associates. Even food rationing was boasted about as “a serious blow to the imperialists”.

The era of the “personality cult” in Hungary was the cult of Mátyás Rákosi’s personality. A highly grotesque demonstration of it was the celebration of Rákosi’s 60th birthday in March 1952, which as a public event was only exceeded in Hungary by Stalin’s 70th birthday. On that March 9, the Party daily *Szabad Nép* devoted all its pages, from the first to the last, to Rákosi. Rákosi’s life was on display in an area of several hundred square meters of palatial splendour in the Museum of the Working Class, housed in what had been the building of the Curia, the supreme court of the Kingdom of Hungary. Even more space was given to all the gifts which “the most loyal son of the Hungarian people,” who was simultaneously its “wise teacher” had obtained on the occasion. The purpose of the exhibition—visited by 50,000 on the day it opened—not all of whom were there entirely of their own free will—was to demonstrate how “unquenchable” was the love and gratitude the Hungarian people felt for their “father” and “teacher”.

Light years separated the show and reality. What you could find in the country was not a repeatedly stressed prosperity and happiness, but fear and trembling to which Rákosi, unattractive in appearance as he was—short, fat and as bald as a billiard ball—contributed more than his fair share. Memoirs dealing with those times tell of numerous cases when Rákosi visited the chosen victims on the day before their arrest, playing cat and mouse with those—high-ranking Party apparatchiks—who had earlier executed his orders. He would smile jovially, put his arm around them

and assure them of his complete support—on the way to execution.

Rákosi did not only know how to make people fear him, he not only had a penchant for sadistic theatricality, he could also charm people. His memory was excellent, and he was a workaholic, needing no more than a few brief hours of rest.

Pünkösti devotes much space to an event probably unique in the biography of a politician in Hungary, a psychogramme to which Rákosi submitted in 1947, early on in his ascendancy. Flóra Kozmutza, the psychologist wife of Gyula Illyés, the poet, gave him a Rorschach test. This was evaluated many years later by another psychologist who was not told who the subject of the test had been, and although we may suspect that her judgement may have been influenced by knowing when the test was given, there is much of interest in the report. This man "cannot give but wants to win and obtain. He is petty and stubborn. He incorporates and magnifies whatever favours him and presents this favourable image of himself to the world. He knows how to persuade and enjoys influencing people. He pretends to a sense of humour but is, in fact, incapable of handling ambiguities."

**W**hen Stalin died, the Soviet leadership, trying to step out of the shadow of the late dictator, relieved his most loyal Hungarian disciple of the post of Prime Minister, replacing him by Imre Nagy, who had "a more human face". Rákosi, however, continued as General Secretary of the CP. The whole country heaved an almost audible sigh. Imre Nagy, at that time, enjoyed the full confidence of the Soviet leadership. His policy declaration of June 1953 lessened many burdens but launched a spectacular and palpable renewal of internal strife within the Communist Party. Rákosi himself, at that very time, gave evi-

dence of his high Machiavellian skills. Within no more than eighteen months, he was able to regain power, true enough, not for long; nor was he strong enough to liquidate Imre Nagy, his competitor, whom he was nevertheless able to remove from office. What really weakened him were the anti-Stalinist changes in the Soviet Union. They may have been limited, but they snowballed. At the 20th Congress of the CP of the Soviet Union in February 1956, Nikita Khrushchev, by then in sole charge, in a—let it be noted, secret—speech attacked Stalinist practices and proclaimed a policy that repudiated the personality cult, primarily in theory but also in practice.

The secret speech was soon leaked and though it was not widely known in Hungary, news of its contents were bruited about. The inner-party opposition, which considered Imre Nagy—who had been deprived of all his offices by 1955—its spiritual leader, took considerable risks when initiating a frontal attack at the end of that year. At first the fight took place behind closed doors, excluding non-members. A wider public became involved thanks to accounts in the press of debates arranged by the Petöfi Circle. In response to a June 1956 debate that concerned the press itself, in which some of those who spoke came close to ignoring the limits which the Party set to such activities, Rákosi prepared a major counterattack. Khrushchev, however, stopped him. Anastas Mikoyan, a member of the Soviet Politbureau, was sent to Budapest on July 18, to give Rákosi his marching orders. Rákosi was replaced by Ernő Gerő, his own *eminence grise*, as responsible as he was for all the injustices and the personality cult. That proved to be very much of a mistaken move, which helped to trigger off the October uprising. Reasons of health were given for Rákosi's removal, and he was ordered to the Soviet Union for "treatment". That was the begin-

ning of fifteen years of what Rákosi himself called exile.

For eleven years, between 1945 and 1956, Rákosi's name had stood for fear and horror. The truly alarming nature of his dictatorship was characterized by the poet Gyula Illyés: "in tyranny's domain / you are the link in the chain."<sup>1</sup> His spirit haunted those in power for many years after his death.

According to István Feitl,<sup>2</sup> the Soviet leadership persuaded János Kádár, who had himself spent years in Rákosi's prisons, to act as hangman and undertaker to the 1956 Revolution, telling him that if he refused the job, Rákosi would be recalled. János M. Rainer denies this, citing

Khrushchev's unpublished memoirs.<sup>3</sup> The documentary evidence makes it quite clear that the Soviet leadership never seriously considered such an alternative. Holding Rákosi in reserve was a mere tactical ploy. No wonder then that Rákosi, whom they kept on the move, ever eastwards, identified Kádár as his chief enemy. In a succession of *aides mémoire* with which he bombarded the Soviet leadership, he evoked a horrifying vision of Kádár betraying socialism. Rákosi died on February 5, 1971. Kádár made sure that the urn containing his ashes and brought to Budapest by Rákosi's family, was buried in absolute secrecy. There could be no better proof of how much he still feared his late boss.<sup>4</sup> ■

1 ■ From Gyula Illyés' poem, "A Sentence About Tyranny". See *The HQ* 1995, No. 139 for George Szirtes's translation.

2 ■ István Feitl: *A bukott Rákosi* (The Fall of Rákosi). Kossuth, 1993.

3 ■ János M. Rainer: "The Road to Budapest, 1956." Part 2. *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 1996/3, pp. 16-31.

4 ■ Gábor Murányi: "The Plotter's Field." *The Hungarian Quarterly*, 1996/1, pp. 100-103.

Árpád Pünkösti

## "You Are Not a Primate Here"

The Mindszenty Trial

Rákosi concentrated much of his attention on Cardinal József Mindszenty, who was born not only in the same year, but under the same sign of the zodiac. The Cardinal was a formidable opponent, noted for the asceticism of his life and cast of mind.

Rákosi regarded him almost as a personal enemy because, having recognized the Communists' long-term plans early on, the Cardinal had criticized nearly every move they made. He was appointed Prince Primate on 16 August 1945 by Pope Pius XII who, one and a half years earlier, had made him Bishop of Veszprém against the opposition of Regent Miklós Horthy and Cardinal Primate Jusztinián Serédi. (Horthy and his circle objected to Mindszenty's Habsburg legitimist views, while Serédi refused to support his appointment on account of "his lack of education, intolerance and coldness" and because he lacked the flexibility required to govern a diocese.) Had they been asked, Rákosi and his associates would probably also have said that they had no use for a prelate who never played along with them, not even in the matter of land reform in 1945, which he simply called "robbery". The Pope may also have been led by political considerations in appointing anti-Communist, and possibly also anti-Nazi, prelates to high positions in the hierarchy in Eastern Europe.

Once appointed, Mindszenty regarded himself as *homo regius*, that is, an official bearing his king's commission, and he declared his loyalty to Archduke Otto of Austria. "Hereby I offer my deepest respect to our inherited King as Archbishop of Esztergom, graciously appointed by the Holy Father, as the Primate of the country and thereby as the holder of the highest constitutional office of a country without a *de facto* head of state," he wrote to Otto on 22 September 1945. In his pastoral letter of 18 October, dealing with the elections, he committed himself to Christian Democracy, declaring that a Christian voter cannot cast his vote for any political course which desires to rule by force. A month later, on the day Béla Imrédy of the extreme right, prime minister in 1938-1939, was sentenced to death, Mindszenty wrote to Prime Minister Zoltán Tildy, protesting against the sentences being handed down by the People's Tribunals. The Communist-dominated Department, later Office, of State Security (ÁVO, later ÁVH) "replied" by launching an investigation into why the then Bishop had been arrested towards the end of the war by the Arrow-Cross, the Hungarian Nazi organization. The reason, they found out, was that he had prevented Arrow-Cross men, in flight from the Red Army, from being billeted in the Episcopal Palace in

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**M**átyás Rákosi (1892–1971) returned to Hungary from Moscow in the tracks of the Red Army, flanked by Ernő Gerő, Mihály Farkas and József Révai, to become the leader of the Hungarian Communist Party (HCP) in 1945. At Stalin's instructions, their first manoeuvre was to destroy their coalition partners, the Smallholders' Party, which had won an absolute majority in the elections. As the next slice in their so called "salami tactics", in 1948 the HCP absorbed the Social Democratic Party. Under Rákosi's leadership, the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP) had done away with the multi-party system by August 1949, when the new Soviet-type constitution was declared. The takeover was made complete by the imprisonment of Cardinal József Mindszenty, the Prince Primate of Hungary, and the breaking of the backbone of the Catholic Church.

What follows is an excerpt from Árpád Pünkösti's *Rákosi a csúcson 1948–1953* (Rákosi on the Top, 1948–1953, 1996), which the author calls a "reader". (See Gábor Murányi's review on pp. 79–85 of this issue) By letting the sources speak, Pünkösti creates the portrait—a minor Stalin with a poker-face—of the Chief Secretary and Prime Minister at the height of the Communist dictatorship, in the period of show-trials, amid the deportations, the robbing of the farmers and the general terror wrought on the population.

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Veszprém. From his internment in Sopron, on March 19, 1945, he wrote to the Speaker of the pro-Nazi "Parliament": "I must refer to the decades-long struggle I have conducted, both in my capacity as a writer and a preacher, against the godless and nation-murdering activities of Bolshevism."

On December 20, 1945, he protested against the proclamation of the Republic "on the grounds of the office he held which, under constitutional law, went back more than 900 years." After the republic had been proclaimed, only the Bench of Bishops prevented him from publicly condemning the change.

On December 16, 1945, he wrote to the American Minister, Arthur Schoenfeld: "In Hungary there is no democracy but there exists a Marxist police, a Marxist press, and prisons and concentration camps. The Hungarian people are ruled by Soviet citizens (Rákosi, Rajk, Gerő, Révai), who use courts as the Party's instruments. I ask for the help of Britain and the USA, the de-

fenders of freedom and justice, so that this horrible oppression may end and the poor Hungarian nation may remain a member of the family of nations brought up on a Christian-European culture."

**S**choenfeld passed on these bitter lines to Washington, adding that, aside from the danger Cardinal Mindszenty exposed himself to by writing these letters, they are telling proof of his ignorance of the rules of international diplomacy and that his courageous stand is based upon the firm belief that war between the Soviet Union and the Western powers would break out in the near future.

In the spring of 1947, in a pastoral letter, Mindszenty called on the faithful to protest against making religious education optional. The call was heeded by many. Before the elections of 1947, he instructed the clergy in a confidential circular to vote for the opposition parties. According to Church historians, "Far overestimating our power and within it that of

his own person, he believed that the global struggle between Christianity and Bolshevism would be decided in Hungary". That was his justification for "raising his voice instead of acquiescence and compromise".

**November 8, 1947:** The Political Committee (PC) of the HCP instructed Minister of the Interior László Rajk to investigate "in what way the Catholic weekly *Új Ember* could be banned and a new Catholic paper launched, headed by a Communist." It was not only the Catholic paper that Rákosi and his associates thought might go through a metamorphosis of that kind. After the Mindszenty Trial, Rákosi declared to the Christian Democratic Party leader István Barankovics: "A growing number of people are demanding that I permit and support the organization of a new Catholic Church, independent of Rome".

**January 9, 1948:** Rákosi wrote to a member of the party's leading "Troika", that the Church is now beginning to be driven into a corner: "At tomorrow's Party conference they will be delivered a heavy blow." (In cruder terms, he put this as: "We are going to grab the Church by the balls. And squeeze them hard!") There were some who suggested that, since Mindszenty was unwilling to recognize the new Hungarian form of government, "would it not be possible... with all the respect due to his high office, to simply put him across the border?" The idea of a "less painful" solution appealed to Rákosi. But then, he also had second thoughts about it. He said more than once: "He (Mindszenty) wants to be a martyr at all cost, but I'm not going to do him that favour." Another time: "A morally dead man on your side is worth much more to me than a martyr."

**February 7, 1948:** The leader of the political police (ÁVO), Gábor Péter and his associates secretly recorded on tape the negotiations between Rákosi and the HCP

and a delegation of the Catholic Church ("the competition", in Rákosi's words) led by Gyula Czapik, Archbishop of Eger. Instead of discussing a variety of urgent issues, Rákosi (and chief ideologue József Révai) got stuck on the problem of the fantasy kingdom of Otto Habsburg. According to the minutes of the meeting, Rákosi expressed his displeasure to Czapik on Mindszenty having had discussions in Canada with Archduke Otto. "We know every detail, there were even photographs. We know of the letters he kept addressing to the Hungarian Royal government even after the republic had been proclaimed."

"(Czapik: Do you gentlemen really believe anybody wants to turn Hungary into a kingdom? (Laughter.) If somebody dares to talk to Otto, does that automatically mean he wants a kingdom?)"

**February 19, 1948:** Rákosi, in Moscow for the signing of the Soviet-Hungarian friendship treaty, tells Suslov: "For the time being we shall not move openly against the Church, but if they want a war against us, we will find good psychiatrists to declare Mindszenty insane."

**April 16, 1948:** Rákosi to Czapik at their secret discussions: "On March 18 Mindszenty succeeded in having the Communists and Socialists excommunicated. That is a declaration of war! He calls democracy filthocracy! (Eating, drinking, making a noise.) I always noted with some sadness that the most prominent leaders of the Church found nothing objectionable in Mindszenty going to Canada, allegedly on Church business, and using his stay there to discuss with Otto the restoration of monarchy in Hungary.

Révai: Could we not persuade you to do something to stop him spoiling everything?

Czapik: There is about as much chance of that as if you asked me to change the course of the Moon."

**May 12, 1948:** The newly established Church section within the ÁVO produced a 49-page report based on the letters of the Prince Primate. The accompanying note by Gábor Péter stated: "Comrade Rákosi, I have underscored the lines on the basis of which (when the time comes) legal proceedings can be started against Mindszenty."

George W. Herald, correspondent of the International News Service, told Mindszenty that in France Catholic schools received no state support. In Sweden, there were no Church schools, or if there were, then they were maintained by the Church itself. He stressed that the agreement with the Calvinist and the Lutheran Churches in Hungary left several schools in Church hands in Hungary. Mindszenty replied that the Catholic Church would not compromise. They did not only want the secondary schools but also elementary schools, because that was where the souls of children are shaped. "Does Your Eminence regard himself as the Hungarian outpost of Western culture?" "I cannot answer this question because I might be called a traitor even for doing so." He explained that the Catholic Church was fighting against all forms of materialism: against Nazism as well as against Communism.

**June 3, 1948:** The Pócspetri events could not have been better timed for the Party leadership. A demonstration against the nationalization of schools turned first into a scuffle, then led to a fatal accident in the village of Pócspetri. Instead of reporting the incident, on 5 June the Communist Party daily *Szabad Nép* carried an article maintaining that negotiations with the Catholic Church were being delayed by Mindszenty's refusal to recognize the Hungarian Republic, land reform and nationalization, that he was reluctant to issue declarations to that effect. Then on

June 6, the Editor-in-Chief, József Révai editorialized: "The seeds sowed by Mindszenty sprouted in Pócspetri." In the accompanying report, "on Thursday, around 9 o'clock p.m., bloody riots took place in the court of the village hall, in which one person died. Twenty-eight persons have so far been taken into custody." A headline read, "Blood On The Hands of Black Reaction," and a subheading, "At a mob demonstration incited by the parish priest at Pócspetri, Police Corporal Gábor Takács was murdered by a former ensign of the Horthyist army." In the mounting hysteria, some Catholic parish priests were made to publicly condemn the actions of their colleague in Pócspetri, and when Mindszenty said he knew nothing about the affair, *Szabad Nép* compared the Cardinal to Pilate.

**June 9, 1948:** Even before the court had handed down its sentence, a headline said: "Hungarian Society as a Whole Demands Exemplary Punishment for the Pócspetri Murderers". Another three-column headline: "Witnesses Give Evidence of Immoral Private Life, Oppressive Attitude of Parish Priest János Asztalos and on Premeditation of Murder". Subtitles: "Priest's 1200-1400 Forint Drinking Bill. Spent 8-9000 Forints Per Month on Sweets."

**June 10, 1948** (before sentencing): "I Acted on Father Asztalos's Incitement, Murderer Says." "The poor peasants of Pócspetri lived in hunger, in rags and in misery under the oppression of the parish priest owning 160 holds [227 acres] of land."

**June 11, 1948:** "Parish Priest Confesses He Incited to Murder," "Summary Trial Started in Markó Utca Court" (Of the character of the priest and the ex-ensign, the court medical experts established—whoever they were—that their basic feature was cowardice.)

**June 12, 1948:** "Killer of Policeman in Pócspetri Found Guilty and Hanged." "Parish Priest János Asztalos has been pardoned by the President of the Republic, his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment." (The two men—the one hanged and the priest—were cleared of the charges by a retrial of their case in 1990.) An Episcopal circular, issued also on June 12, threatened all those supporting the Nationalization Act by their votes or participating in its execution with excommunication.

**June 15, 1948:** A bill on the nationalization of religious schools was submitted to Parliament. It passed by 230 votes against 63. Following nationalization, the war carried on by the HCP and the ÁVO against the Cardinal and the Church gained new momentum. Articles attacking the Primate appeared in *Szabad Nép* at least every other week.

**July 25, 1948:** Mindszenty reports to the Pope in a letter on the jailing and sentencing of 225 priests and members of religious orders; 24 priests and members of religious orders were detained because of their defence of Church schools.

**July 31, 1948:** Rákosi's report at the meeting of the Central Leadership: "We have taken the denominational schools out of the hands of reaction, thereby making a serious breach in the reactionary holy trinity consisting of priest, village notary and teacher... Let us be ready for the intensification of the class war that will follow."

Newspaper headlines, reports. **August 1, 1948,** *Magyar Nemzet*: "Politician or Prelate?"

**August 2, 1948:** *Független Magyarország*: "It is not Christ who Speaks through Cardinal Mindszenty."

**August 3, 1948:** *Szabad Nép*: "An Agent of Imperialism". **August 16, 1948:** *Le Monde*: "Mindszenty was not allowed

to travel to the celebrations for the 700th anniversary of the Cathedral of Cologne."

**August 20, 1948:** The Police Chief of Budapest, Ferenc Münnich, only permitted the St Stephen's Day procession in the Castle Area instead of along its traditional route. Mindszenty countered by declaring that "on St Stephen's Day this year there will only be masses, and no procession". On the 20th of August, a hundred and sixty-five ÁVO-men made the rounds of the churches, reporting on every detail.

**August 26, 1948:** *Courrier de Genève* reported—Rákosi himself saw the article—that several members of the government had been excommunicated by the Cardinal. "The 'Star of the Puszta', as the Primate is almost universally called, has become, in reality, the uncrowned king of free Hungary."

**September 14, 1948:** An ÁVH (as the reorganized, more independent secret police was called) report on "Mindszenty's Journey to Celldömölk". The Virgin Mary Days in Celldömölk would normally be attended by some ten thousand people. That year, on the pretext of a meningitis epidemic, they were prohibited. Three hundred and eighty-five policemen were ordered to the area, trains travelling to Celldömölk were shortened, posters warning people not to leave their place of residence because of the epidemic were placed all over the country, and only people registered as residents by the police were allowed to move about in the town. In defiance of all these measures, several thousand people had arrived there by Sunday morning.

Girls complained about having been "chased and driven back by bayonets. After having delivered his sermon in the church, Mindszenty left the town. Rumours were spread by policemen and agitators that in the town hospital everybody is stripped naked and disinfected because of the

epidemic. A false rumour had it that people arriving in Celldömölk would be taken to Siberia."

**September 29, 1948:** *Szabad Nép* on the criminal trial—on trumped-up charges involving foreign currency—of a Lutheran bishop, who had rejected the nationalization of Church schools: "Tens of thousands were embezzled by Lajos Ordas who robbed the state of hundreds of thousands." The two-year sentence meted out to the bishop was meant as a message and a warning to Mindszenty.

**September 29, 1948:** "Czapik is angry for not being able to make the Communists see that the Catholic Church is different from the Protestant Church. It's Rome that decides." (ÁVH report.)

**October 7, 1948:** Agreement is reached between the government and the Churches.

**October 14, 1948:** The ÁVH reports: In Esztergom, Gyula Czapik was accused by Mindszenty of having broken the unity of the Catholic Church. (One might think that the Cardinal's palace was wiretapped. But there was no need for that: there were ÁVH agents in Mindszenty's entourage.)

**November 13, 1948:** A coded telegramme from Rome to László Rajk, then Minister of the Interior: The relationship between the Catholic Church and the state in Hungary is being watched "with great anxiety by the Vatican," which receives "many complaints over matters like the arbitrary carrying out of the land reform in certain places, the difficulties encountered by Catholic Church weeklies, the dispersion of Catholic associations, the reporting on sermons, the banning or hindering of processions and pilgrimages, for example, by denying railway fare reductions, prohibiting amplifying equipment, etc., the nationalization of schools, due to which three thousand members of religious orders have lost their jobs, and finally the re-

port that sixty priests were allegedly under arrest."

The publication of Mindszenty's pastoral letter of **November 18, 1948** was prohibited by the authorities, but one of his secretaries fled to the West and passed it to the Voice of America. On **November 19**, Dr András Zakar, Secretary to the Primate, was arrested.

Mindszenty issued his last pastoral letter, which shows full awareness of what might happen: "I do not wish that any Catholic should lose his livelihood because of me. If Catholic faithful sign letters of protest against me, they can do it in the knowledge that it is not done of their own free will. Let us pray for our beloved Church and our precious Hungary."

**November 22, 1948:** After the Primate had absolved everyone of their duty to keep secrets, András Zakar confessed that Mindszenty had asked Schoenfeld to take steps for American occupying troops to come to Hungary. To a question of Mindszenty's, American Minister Chapin replied that the outbreak of war was possible. The Prince Primate asked the American Minister not to return the Holy Crown of St Stephen but to keep it in Rome where it would be safe.

A scrap of paper: "I would like Comrade Rákosi to discuss with me in which direction I should move, and how far. November 22, Péter." (Gábor Péter, head of the ÁVH).

**November 25, 1948:** Zakar's confession: In Canada, Mindszenty told Archduke Otto that the legitimists in Hungary were organizing, and would go on organizing until their objective was achieved. Zakar said that ten thousand dollars had been received by the Hungarian Church from the Vatican in 1945 on the Pope's instructions. From their journey in 1947 in America they brought home a total of nine thousand dollars which they had received from

Cardinal Spellman and others. They got another twelve thousand dollars via the courier of the Swiss legation, which had been spent on current expenses, on helping priests under arrest, construction, etc.

**November 25, 1948:** A discussion was held in the deputy speaker's rooms in Parliament between Dr Gyula Czapik, Archbishop of Eger, Dr József Révai, M.P., and Dr István Barankovics, M.P. (The disagreement between Hungary and the Vatican "began" with a critical article in *Osservatore Romano*. Rákosi and his associates declared that they would not allow the Papal legate sent to smooth out the dispute between Church and state to enter the country until at least one positive article was published in *O.R.*) To break the deadlock, Barankovics suggested that a "gentlemen's agreement" be entered into between the Hungarian government and the Vatican: 1) The radio and the press will stop their attacks; 2) The Hungarian government will allow the Papal legate to enter; 3) The evidence against Cardinal Mindszenty collected during the investigation will be made known to the Holy See before the actual charges are laid, to allow them to take appropriate measures; 4) The *status quo* of the Hungarian Catholic Church would not be one-sidedly altered by the Hungarian government. Révai, however, refused to sign such an agreement.

**November 27, 1948:** An ÁVH report: It is emphasized by prominent Church figures that if anything should happen to the Primate (arrest, for instance) it would be unavoidable for the Bench of Bishops to issue a declaration. "The public mood can be expected to be one of shock. Nevertheless, they feel that the whole thing will not last longer than a week, leaving no trace in people, and life will go on as usual afterward."

**November 27, 1948:** Meeting of the Central Leadership of the HWP: Rákosi

speaks of a popular movement demanding in hundreds of localities that "we should change the tolerant policy we have conducted so far *vis à vis* the reactionary and Fascist leaders of the Catholic Church, primarily Mindszenty." The agreement with the Protestant Churches shows that there is no question of religious persecution. "Care must be taken that Mindszenty should not act as a representative of all Catholics, so that we do not attack him as a Catholic but as a Fascist, a re-inviter of the Habsburgs, a dollar smuggler, an American spy." Here he actually listed the charges in the trial that would come only months later: espionage, foreign currency smuggling, intent to restore the Habsburgs.

**December 11, 1948:** An ÁVH report. Three leading Hungarian intellectuals (including the composer Zoltán Kodály) visited Mindszenty in an effort to persuade him to engage in talks, and to make a compromise.

**December 14, 1948:** The Minister in Rome, László Velics was instructed to inform the competent Vatican officials: the Interior Ministry had found evidence which did not permit the lenient and tolerant policy of "wait and see" concerning Mindszenty to continue. In 1918 he had been punished for acting against democracy. "After the Liberation he was not charged; it was hoped that he might redeem his crimes. He made use of his high Church position to fight against the Hungarian Republic." During his trip to America, he "contacted reactionary Hungarian émigré politicians. He made an agreement with Archduke Otto on organizing a Hungarian legitimist movement." Mindszenty spied for foreign powers. "It has been legally established that he intervened with the Americans to the effect that one of the most valuable historic relics of the Hungarian nation, the crown of St Stephen, should not be returned."

**December 16, 1948:** Shortly before Mindszenty's arrest, George Bilainkin, special correspondent of *The Daily Mail*, conducted an interview of two and a half hours with the Cardinal, which, however, was never published. In 1973, on the basis of "a literal report", Bilainkin recalled that the Cardinal urged "immediate invasion" by British and American troops. When told that this would probably lead to a nuclear war, he replied that even that was better than Communism.

**December 24, 1948:** During a house search, a metal case was found, whose whereabouts had been disclosed by Dr András Zakar, Secretary to the Primate. Mindszenty admitted it was his but he said it contained nothing but irrelevant old letters.

Years after he had been removed from power, Rákosi discussed the Mindszenty Trial with György Aczél and Sándor Nógrádi, who had been sent by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party to see him in exile in the Soviet Union: "We saw that it was no longer possible to deal peacefully with the bastard. That much could be seen. I suggested we arrest his secretary first, and when the secretary was under arrest, I said I had a shrewd idea about this man, based on all his activities. This is a very ambitious man, I said, who has a very large number of connections. He must have a secret archive somewhere! And the investigation would inevitably find it. There were many documents. His correspondence with the American president, the Pope in Rome, many important people. That was how we found them. On my suggestion." (No such correspondence—real or fake—has ever been found.)

**December 25, 1948:** An ÁVH report: "The Primate's palace is awash with rumours in the wake of yesterday's search. Those who live there are trying to guess when Mindszenty would be placed under

arrest. The Cardinal's people were surprised when they saw how well Zakar looked, how calm he was, and that the police permitted him to take away his domestic altar.

**December 26, 1948:** the Prince Primate, Cardinal József Mindszenty is arrested in Esztergom. According to Gábor Péter, it was Rákosi who insisted on the second day of Christmas. Rákosi, reminiscing in 1962: "He kept saying 'I, Joseph, Prince Primate of Hungary', and so on. And he called us 'You, my errant children', things like that. So I said whack him twice. That would make him see the light, and realize that this thing was serious: You are no primate here! So he was slapped twice, and then he passed out."

In his memoirs, instead of slaps, Mindszenty writes of "midnight interrogations and beatings with sticks". On the man whose job it was to beat him: "He holds a rubber truncheon in one hand and a sharp knife in the other. Shouts out orders, cries out loud, and makes me gallop like a horse in a riding school. The rubber truncheon strikes my back and groins. My whole body is in his power; he chases and drives me around... I pant exhausted but I run because I am hit less often as long as I do." Others do not mention knives and being beaten while running when they recalled the torture and humiliation they suffered. They, too, remember, however, a close relative being brought in. In Mindszenty's case it was his mother. He bursts out, "Being constantly deprived of sleep is like a most merciless multiplication of dying." It must have depressed him, too, that an entire "spy ring" was active around him, that he was to be disappointed in some of his most trusted men who betrayed him—but he never complained about that.

**December 29, 1948:** A full front-page article in *Szabad Nép*: The headline:

"Mindszenty Confesses All". Subtitle: "Treason, Espionage, Legitimist Conspiracy, Dollar Black Marketeering—Police Find Mindszenty's Secret Archives". A three-column photograph in the middle of the page: "Primate's Secretary and Archivist Zakar with a Cylindrical Metal Case of 130x15 cm." A report issued by the press department of the Ministry of the Interior: "He wanted to emphasize his opposition to the republic by refusing to accept the allowance voted him by Parliament, set at three times the salary of the Prime Minister. "

A coded telegramme: "Inform Holy See. Four bishops also compromised in Mindszenty affair. They include Pétery and Schvoy whose case is especially serious. Rajk."

**December 31, 1948:** The Vatican envoy's reply: "It is not clear how it would be possible to reconcile an alleged wish to come to an agreement with the Holy See with the treatment received by a cardinal, a primate and cardinal. Treatment that offends the Holy See itself."

The HWP had "morale reports" from every town and village about the arrest of Mindszenty, of which summaries were compiled. Rákospalota: Many weeping women are about, who look on Mindszenty's arrest as a sin. Rumour: Because of the arrest, the Church would close the churches. Peasant women in Berettyóújfalu: "These Communists leave nobody alone!". Kistelek: "He ought to have been hanged a long time ago." Some people had the courage to declare, even in writing, that Mindszenty was a martyr. In Mezőkovácsháza, the National Committee held a meeting, calling on the parish priest to make a declaration against the Cardinal, otherwise he would not be allowed to stay in the village because they needed a democratic priest, at which between six and eight hundred people gathered in front of

the presbytery. Instead of making a declaration, the priest had the bell toll for an hour. The mob beat up the president of the National Committee and the three policemen who went to help him.

**Early January, 1949:** An NBHI announcement: "After the liberation, the National Bureau of Hungarian Israelites offered to cooperate with all other religious denominations. Cardinal Mindszenty refused our hand, and became the leader of racial hatred. All enemies who had prepared the Jewish tragedy lined up behind him. Hungarian Jewry received the arrest of Mindszenty with great relief." (The Catholic weekly *Új Élet* published an anti-Zionist article, because of which a nationwide protest was arranged by Jewish organizations.)

**January 9, 1949:** The confession of József Mindszenty. "I professed to be a monarchist at all times. My purpose (was) the same as that of the Hungarian monarchist movement: a federal Central European kingdom... the overthrow of the Hungarian Republic by foreign, mainly American assistance."

**After January 9, 1949:** Rákosi's blueprint (probably drafted by somebody else?) for the Mindszenty affair: "The combined record of evidence is the work of people who have absolutely no knowledge of politics and not the faintest idea about state security... The record of evidence must contain, first and foremost, Mindszenty's [sic!] aims. His objective 'a federal Central-European kingdom'... would have been possible only by overthrowing the Hungarian Republic with American help. That is why he was always at the disposal of the Americans, in every way... Next, his activity must be systematically displayed; 1) treason, activity directed at the overthrow of Hungarian democracy; 2) espionage; 3) the Holy Crown, 4) foreign currency. ... It must be established how

many press suits, libel suits and other court cases he was involved in because it shows he was a petty, quarrelsome priest... His noble descent, mentioned in his application to Magyarize his name, has to be established... To sum up: the evidence must show Mindszenty for what he is: a reactionary, bigoted, narrow-minded, cynical political adventurer. From the evidence, all Hungarians, not just workers, beneficiaries of the land reform, middle peasants and the democratically-minded petty bourgeoisie, and also foreign public opinion should be able to recognize what manner of man Mindszenty is. For that reason not only his reactionary, Fascist ways but also his stupidity, dishonesty, lies, and bigotry must be exposed."

Mindszenty calls his confession, in his own hand, a crude forgery. He mentions that he found fifty spelling mistakes in it, including some fairly obvious ones he would never have made. During his posthumous retrial, the Church also insisted on a thorough examination by handwriting experts. No evidence of forgery was found. "The lack of coordination of the handwriting, the low quality in the pen strokes allowed us to conclude that he was mentally exhausted and physically weakened," the graphologists reported.

**January 4, 1949:** The Bench of Bishops issued a declaration that the difficult situation required a visit by an Apostolic legate. They pointed out that being ready to negotiate with the government implied recognition of the republic. Rákosi noted: "Keep carefully!"

**January 12, 1949:** An ÁVH report on the Pope's letter of January 2 to the Hungarian Bench of Bishops: "Our reverend brothers, Oh, what an indignity has been suffered by our beloved son, József Mindszenty... that, on top of all the persecution he already had to bear, he has now

been deprived of his freedom and thrown into captivity, something which has deeply touched and brought great grief to our fatherly heart." The four-page letter, handwritten and lithographed, was signed in the Pope's own hand. The report mentions that in the view of the Holy See the first issue to be discussed at any negotiation must be the inseparability of Mindszenty from the Church.

**January 12, 1949:** A note (to Rákosi) on the legal position of the Pope and the cardinals. "Only the Pope of Rome and no one else can sit in judgement on a cardinal (Canon 1557). Cardinals are not subject to the criminal law. According to Canon law, sacrilege is committed by all who do external, physical violence to a cleric. It is only with the Pope's approval that cardinals can be taken to a secular court over matters bearing on their office."

**January 19, 1949:** Headlines from *Szabad Nép*: "No Government Anywhere Would Have Tolerated Mindszenty's Political Activity. Declaration Issued by Bishops of the Lutheran Church".

**January 26, 1949:** Resolution of the Secretariat of the HWP. The date set for the Mindszenty Trial would be made public on January 31. "Film cameramen and photographers must not be present, with the exception of a single man from the ÁVH."

**January 29, 1949:** Mindszenty writes a letter to the Minister of Justice. "Before the impending court trial I plead guilty of my own free will to some of the charges laid against me on the basis of the state's legal code. In the future I shall treat and judge the external and internal affairs of the Hungarian state in the light of sovereignty.

With this admission, a trial against my person does not seem absolutely inevitable... so that not even my presence should appear as an obstacle to peace... I declare, without being forced to do so, my

readiness to retire temporarily from performing my office for a time... I am making this statement in the awareness that both Church and state would only benefit from a genuine state of peace." Rákosi and his group did not accept Mindszenty's proposal, and his case proceeded. He himself later wrote that the letter had been forged or he had been persuaded to write it.

**February 3, 1949:** Headline in *Szabad Nép*: "Tonight at Eight Thirty: Mindszenty Trial Broadcast Live." In his memoirs the Cardinal writes that he confessed to all the charges in order to avoid being confronted with his priests because "that would shake the trust of the faithful in their pastors." He quotes several passages from the trial record with comments such as "false", "I cannot remember", "if this did happen at all, it was certainly not so", and alleges that even the radio broadcast was falsified.

**February 3-8, 1949:** The Trial. Mindszenty sentenced to life imprisonment.

**February 4, 1949:** A memorandum by the British government refers to the violation of the peace treaty in connection with the trial. Four days later, the U.S. Secretary of State accuses the Hungarian government of withdrawing basic human rights and liberties. President Truman declares that Hungary is a police state, and the Hungarian people are not responsible for the actions of the government.

According to the reminiscences of Father Balogh, a priest and a member of parliament, who supported the Rákosi group, Rákosi discussed events of the trial with him in a quiet corner of a parliamentary corridor. "Suddenly he asked, 'What if we sentenced Mindszenty to death? What do you think?' Outraged, I rejected that possibility, explaining to him that such a thing would do no good to anyone because the Church would raise Mindszenty to an altar as a martyr, and this would be a

source of constant anti-Communist propaganda. Rákosi then abandoned the plan, but the thought did occur to him."

Rákosi always kept in view how he might benefit most from his enemies, how "the cause" might be best promoted by their use. That was why he had favoured a "less painful solution" for some time, to "lock out" Mindszenty when the cardinal left the country. Rákosi was aware that Mindszenty must not be executed. But it may have occurred to him to have the Cardinal sentenced to death, and then to have him reprieved "generously". Neither would the Russians have approved his execution: between 1945 and 1956, Church dignitaries were not hanged in the Soviet Bloc. They were not even sentenced to death.

At the end of 1946, Tito and his comrades had sentenced Cardinal Stepinac to 16 years of forced labour. While Moscow was usually displeased with the "too rapid moves forward" of the Yugoslavs, in higher clergy matters it was allowed to follow their example. Beran in Czechoslovakia was an anti-Fascist, yet he was arrested a few days after the Communists had been excommunicated by the Pope, for reasons that included the Mindszenty affair. The Czechs simply made their highest Church leader vanish from public life for fourteen years without any hassle. There was not even a trial. It was not until 1953 that the Poles dared to intern Cardinal Wysinski, who had made a deal with the Communists.

If Rákosi did indeed mention the idea of executing Mindszenty to Father Balogh, he only did so in order to display his strength. It was not the Cardinal he meant to threaten: for that he had his own channels. In any case, frightening Mindszenty was totally needless, since by the time of the trial he was a completely broken man, ready to confess to any crime. Rákosi must

have said what he did to Father Balogh in order to appear frightening in the eyes of certain Church circles. But he may simply have been having fun.

**February 8, 1949:** In connection with Mindszenty's childish plan to escape, the Voice of America pointed out that he must be in a serious state mentally. They thought the trial was over-stage-managed. "Most of the charges and the evidence proved to be false... the Cardinal opposed the pact between the Church and the state but that was not what he was charged with; he was sentenced for treason." According to the commentator, the defendants displayed signs of madness. "...they were brought to a state of unconsciousness by physical and chemical means, their sense of judgment extinguished." "In such circumstances Mindszenty has become a martyr of Communist practices behind the Iron Curtain, who foretold his fate in his last pastoral letter."

American Minister Chapin told UP that the charges were groundless and pure fantasy. In protest against the sentence, Béla Balassa, the Hungarian Consul General in Washington, and four other diplomats resigned.

**February 25, 1949:** According to an analysis by the American Legation, Mindszenty had opposed an agreement between the state and the Church. "He would rather decide on resistance, forcing the state to detain, imprison, interrogate and sentence him. While doing so, he drew the world's attention to the essence of the conflict: the evil deeds of the Communist system."

**March 5-6, 1949:** A meeting of the Central Leadership. Rákosi's report. "Rattling its saber, American imperialism is getting ready for a Third World War. In respect to Central Europe, the blueprint includes uniting Bavaria, Austria and Hun-

gary under the leadership of the Habsburg dynasty, chased off in 1918. That is the plan of which Mindszenty was a fanatic supporter."

**May 11, 1949:** A meeting of the Secretariat. "The Soviet comrades must be asked if they would support exchanging Mindszenty for Spanish freedom fighters. The date for Mindszenty's final sentencing must be set, and his punishment lowered to 15 years."

**May 31, 1949:** A meeting of the Central Leadership. Rákosi observes that the Protestant Churches have been successfully separated from Mindszenty's united Christian front, and this policy must be continued. "We must take care that the enemy be divided, that the chaplain be against the bishop, if possible."

Vilmos Böhm, a Social Democrat politician, writes extensively about Mindszenty in his memoirs written in exile. "He is a tough, unbending, militant man ready to protect the just or supposedly real interests of his Church to the utmost, but one who, lacking political and diplomatic sense and tact, often goes too far... He would rather support any previous regime—be it Horthy or the Habsburgs—than democracy. ... I am his political opponent but I must admit he fought with conviction and courage for ideas, for a world I have struggled against all my life... Nearly every one of Mindszenty's actions played into the hands of the Communists. He took a stand not only against the Communists but against every kind of democracy. His course was completely incomprehensible and senseless. The only explanation for it may be that he fanatically insisted on medieval feudal privileges... trying to be a politician without any political or diplomatic sense."

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**January 24, 1954:** a memo written by Mindszenty in Harta: "1) On 26 December the fifth year of my life in prison passed. ... 2) I am missing confession very much. ... 4) On 6 July 1949 I was visited by General Gábor Péter who said to me 'Years from now I shall come and bring freedom.' He also explained to me why he made that statement. He said, 'because you did not misbehave either during the trial or in prison'. At his request, I settled a certain matter in Esztergom, to which he attached great importance... József Mindszenty."

The memo was passed on by Gerő to Rákosi and Imre Nagy with the comment that Mindszenty might be allowed to retire to a monastery. Imre Nagy also supported the suspension of the sentence, and that Mindszenty should go to a monastery. Rákosi, however, had reservations. "Comrade Nagy, Comrade Gerő. 1) As far as I know, Wyszinski is in jail; at least the Vatican says so. 2) Whatever we do to Mindszenty, and whatever he promises, in a few months' time he will continue where he left off. Nevertheless, the question should be investigated, although at first sight the harm may be greater than the advantage. Rákosi."

**July 16, 1955:** Despatch from the MTI National News Agency: "The Minister of Justice, at the request of Mindszenty and the Bench of Bishops, and furthermore with regard to his age and state of health, permitted the interruption of the prison term of József Mindszenty, and designated the Church building provided by

the Bench of Bishops as his place of residence." The Cardinal was freed from house arrest on 31 October 1956. By that time he had been declared a national hero by Radio Free Europe. With not little exaggeration, it went as far as suggesting that the revolution broke out in order to liberate Mindszenty.

It is characteristic of the shortsightedness and contradictory character of American policy towards the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, that the press secretary of the U.S. Information Agency declared that the U.S. government regarded Mindszenty as the person most suitable to head the government. As Gyula Borbándy, then an editor at Radio Free Europe, wrote, "Orders came from New York to 'build up' Mindszenty with the objective that the person symbolizing the Revolution should be Mindszenty rather than Imre Nagy."

After the crushing of the revolt on November 4, 1956, Mindszenty was given asylum at the American Legation in Budapest. He spent fifteen years in the Legation, later the Embassy, building in Szabadság Square. He was allowed to leave the Embassy, and go to Rome in 1971, the year of Rákosi's death in exile in the Khirgiz Soviet Republic.

Mindszenty was eventually persuaded to step down from office by the Pope. He survived Rákosi by four years. He was rehabilitated in 1990, and his ashes were brought home and reburied in 1991. The process of his beatification is underway in Rome. ❁

János Dobszay

# The Churches, Religion, and Politics after 1989

**F**or the first time since the Second World War, the Hungarian Roman Catholic Church, the largest religious denomination in the country, published a comprehensive analysis of the state of society. In the autumn of 1996, a seventy-pages long joint pastoral letter, "For a more just and fraternal world," addressed to every "man of good will," was issued by the Hungarian Catholic Episcopate. The document, embracing the history of the past forty years, was generally well received. Not only the opposition, claiming to have a Christian world-view, but even the Socialist Prime Minister, Gyula Horn said that it could have been written by his party. Whether this pleased the Church or not is open to question.

It is impossible to tell to what extent the Prime Minister's praise was politically motivated and how much of it was a genuine repudiation of crimes committed by the Communist Party—show trials, imprisonments, and dictatorial methods such as the continuous harrassment and moving

about of priests—which for forty years poisoned the life of the Church. The fact remains that the pastoral letter, amply studded with figures which are meant to offer a sociological description of Hungarian society as it is now, has met with wide approval. It should be noted, however that inasmuch as it has a sociological approach, the analysis remains at the level of generalities. (This kid-glove approach is the reason why the Hungarian Protestant denominations plan to publish a similar document.)

All reservations aside, two important questions arise. Why was this document not produced before, and why did the bishops fail to write a self-critical account of the past forty years in the Church's history? Studying the relationship between the Church and politics, or the state of religion in Hungary, warrants the raising of these questions and not only in connection with the Catholic Church.

## Pledge of allegiance to flags

**I**n multi-party democracies political forces are often organized along ideological lines. By now, however, it is rather teams of politicians which confront each other and elections are in effect a matter of deciding which of them offers a better solution for the country. (Who is to say that

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## Church and the State in Hungary after Church and the State in Hungary after 1945

**W**ith the end of the Second World War, it became clear that fundamental changes in the position of the Churches were to be expected, specifically, the separation of Church and State and restrictions on the role of the Churches in education. The Churches were aware of the necessity for these changes and expressed their willingness to comply. The Communist regime, however, perceived the Churches as political enemies it must vanquish rather than as partners.

The first step, carried out as early as March 1945 as part of the land reform, was the expropriation of Church lands. This involved 90 per cent of the land owned by the Catholic Church and 60 per cent of that owned by the Protestant Churches. (Up to 1945, the Roman Catholic Church owned 35 per cent of all arable land.) The Churches complained that they were dispossessed, without compensation, of lands held in trust for the maintenance of schools, religious orders, churches, and other institutions. In Summer 1946, László Rajk, the Minister of the Interior, disbanded all Catholic voluntary organizations, with the exception of the expressly religious ones, without justifying his step. In early 1948, Mátyás Rákosi, the head of the Communist Party, proclaimed a plan to liquidate "clerical reactionary forces". The Protestant Churches were the first victims, as their structure and democratic organization facilitated the replacement of leading clergy by Communist supported persons. This was easily accomplished in the Calvinist Church, where every bishop resigned, including the eminent bishop of Debrecen, László Ravasz. He was replaced by a person with leftist sympathies and loyal to the new regime. In the Lutheran Church, however, only two bishops were willing to resign. Bishop Lajos Ordass, who refused to surrender to the Communists, was set as an example demonstrating that they were prepared for this eventuality. The bishop was arrested and condemned for black marketeering in foreign currency. Thereafter both Protestant Churches signed the agreement violating the freedom of religion.

Twelve days after the Lutheran Church signed this agreement, the Primate Cardinal József Mindszenty was arrested (see the excerpt from Árpád Pünkösti's book on pp. 86-98). Next came the persecution of the Catholic prelates. The Catholic hierarchy made this more difficult, since the Communists had no say in the appointment of bishops or priests. To overcome this problem, they tried to break the Church by arrests, internment, and even executions.

The question of schools was resolved in 1948, before the Mindszenty trial. Except for a few secondary schools, every Catholic school was nationalized. The ultimate goal was to suppress religious activity completely and to eradicate the Churches within a foreseeable future. Thenceforth, the state set out to destroy the social basis of Churches by means of administrative measures and intimidation. They sought to keep the young away from the Churches and from religious activity; religious instruction was closely supervised and severely restricted. Teachers were forbidden to attend church services, the personal data of every student attending religious instruction, of every one who underwent confirmation or who married in church, had to be reported to state agencies.

The Mindszenty trial was the prelude to the agreement with the intimidated Catholic Church revoking the license of religious orders, and prohibiting their members from joining the secular clergy. The agreement notwithstanding, the signatory Archbishop József Grósz, similarly to Mindszenty, was given a long prison term in a show trial. However, the Catholic Church proved more difficult to control than the Protestants. Thus János Péter, who in the

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first half of the Fifties was the Calvinist Bishop in Debrecen, later appeared as an open member of the Communist Party, in time the Minister of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Central Committee during the Kádár era. Under state duress, the Catholics established the priests-for-peace movement which was intended to divide the clergy. Since it was expected to yield results only much later, most of the bishops were interned in the first half of the fifties and for a short time after 1956. Their dioceses were entrusted to reliable substitutes.

In 1956, 1945 conditions were restored in every Church and the former heads of the clergy resumed their work. But not for long. After the suppression of the revolution, the Prince-Primate Cardinal Mindszenty sought refuge in the American Legation in Budapest. The fact that he did not leave the country caused serious problems for the Communists. After 1956, collaborating bishops returned to head the Protestant Churches, and a new tactical approach was applied to the Catholic Church. Specifically, the state tried—usually successfully—to legitimize its Church policy through the clergy and thereby create long-term discord within a more or less unified Church. A case in 1961 illustrates the success of this tactic, when the episcopate issued a pastoral letter condemning its own priests and the laity awaiting trial even before the court pronounced sentence. In addition, the Hungarian state and the Vatican signed a concordat in 1964, which most of the laity resented. In effect it covered only the appointment of bishops to fill vacancies with the addition that the state had the right to veto any appointee. In response to the Church's willingness to compromise, the state, as usual, took massive legal action against Catholic priests and laity in 1965. The last of the big trials took place in 1971–1972, as part of the effort to persuade the Pope to persuade Cardinal Mindszenty to resign from his position as Archbishop of Esztergom—the seat of the head of the Hungarian Catholic Church. Usually priests and laymen, who played an active role in Catholic communities and organized youth groups, were indicted. The charge was serious: generally, they were prosecuted for conspiracy against the state.

These community movements were a challenge to the hierarchy, too, since they indicated a loss of influence over a very active part of the laity and lower clergy. When Mindszenty was allowed to leave the country, the Pope persuaded him to retire and in 1976 appointed László Lékai the new Archbishop of Esztergom. The state immediately shunted the problem of small communities onto him, thereby making the conflict, which it had settled in courts up to then, a Church affair. The case of the base communities thus became a permanent source of conflict within the Catholic Church, further aggravating internal dissent. This time, however, anticipating state intentions, the clergy strove to keep tight control, over its recalcitrant priests by banishing them to remote parishes, frequently with the result that wherever they went religious life revived. Some of the priests, however, left the Church.

Before the 1989 political changes, the Protestant Churches were led by bishops working closely together with the state, some of whom even acquired international positions. By the eighties, the Catholic Church had a traditionalist clergy isolated from modern Catholic trends and a large passive laity. Meanwhile, there was a discernible religious renaissance among professional people and the young, who took a critical view of the big politics of prelates. A very active religious life was a feature of some of the parishes with increasing participation by laymen. The revival of councils and other initiatives promised to give a new life to the Catholic Church but has failed to do so as yet—perhaps because of its virtually unchanged clergy. In the summer of 1989, the transitional reform-Communist Németh government decided to change the basis of the relationship between the Churches and the state. The all-powerful State Religious Affairs Office—which had kept the Churches on a short leash since its foundation in 1951—was abolished.

*István Riba*

Italy before 1992, with its Christian-Democratic leadership ridden with corruption, was more Christian than Socialist Spain?) In Hungary though, political differences are laden with moral baggage.

With the restoration of a multi-party system in Hungary in 1989, three kinds of parties came into being: Christian-National (Hungarian Democratic Forum, Christian-Democratic People's Party, Independent Smallholders' Party), liberal (Alliance of Free Democrats, Federation of Young Democrats), and Socialist/Social-Democratic (Hungarian Socialist Party). One of the reasons for the increasing roughness of Hungarian political life was that arguments on facts and sober considerations were replaced by pledges of allegiance to various political flags, by motivation based on a belief that the party or fraction they stood for embodied the true faith. Those who vote for another party are enemies of my faith. As a result, during the parliamentary term 1990–1994 it was often impossible to resolve practical questions without debates on ideology.

The Churches, too, contributed their own ideological, moral, and religious imprint on party differences. Seemingly, they were above conflict among the parties—for instance, the Catholic Church, in line with Vatican instructions, forbade priests to participate in politics—but their activities in fact added considerably to the escalation of passions. Pastoral letters and exhortations from the pulpit during parliamentary and municipal elections in 1990 and 1994 did not, or only seldom, contain an overt call for support for any specific party; however, they did obliquely express that it was the duty of the faithful to vote for Christian parties. Church representatives frequently disregarded the fact that the reference to Christianity, or religious faith in party platforms usually meant no more than respect for European humanist

values which all parties claimed to share. (Several leaders of the Christian parties openly admitted that they were not churchgoers and for them Christianity was not a faith but a set of humanist ideals rooted in the history of Christianity.)

Propaganda in churches even took the form of leaflets accidentally left in the pews, or the form of well-meaning though unwarranted guidance by priests appealing to the conscience of the uninformed faithful. Church members who did not sympathize with Christian parties were made to feel second-class Church members and not good Christians.

### Collusion and its dangers

**P**arties claiming Christian ideological principles won the first free elections in 1990. This seemed to guarantee that politics would, in a manner of speaking, favour the much suffered Churches: it also signalled new types of dangers. The Jesuit theologian Francois Varillon describes one such danger in a book, also published in Hungarian, as follows:

Any regime in power—be it a monarchy, democracy, or dictatorship—endeavouring to survive and fearing changes, is incapable of subjugating the conscience of the people. It enacts a law but cannot itself as a political power use the force of conscience to compel obedience to the said law. Its power does not extend to what is known as the inner judgment, one's conscience. Therefore, it turns to priests for help, who usually assist willingly in order to protect stability in a given period, by making compliance with state legislation an obligation for conscience. Thus, priests become natural assistants in preserving the political status quo. This explains the perpetual temptation of every clerical body to revert to a kind of pagan priesthood. What religion demands in the name of God, the

regime in power can only demand in the name of the law.

In a number of cases the Antall government turned for moral support to the three largest Hungarian Churches, the Catholic, the Calvinist, and the Lutheran.

In 1991, Act XXXII settling the legal position of Church property became a law. It did not stipulate total compensation, but promised the return of a number of properties within a period of ten years. (According to the law, the Churches could claim only those properties that were nationalized without compensation after 1948, and only if they were to be used for educational, cultural, health, or religious purposes.) At the same time, they regularly received state support for religious activity and maintenance of their infrastructure. (Four organizations, labelled as "destructive sects" by Parliament, were temporarily denied subsidies in 1993. These were Jehovah's Witnesses, followers of Krishna, the Hungarian representatives of the Church of Unification—the "Moonies"—and Scientologists.)

Return of Church property came to a standstill while the Christian coalition government was still in office. Of the 7127 claims submitted, in only about 1500 cases was property actually transferred before 1994, when the Socialist government took

office. Approximately the same number of claims were withdrawn by the Churches or rejected by competent government agencies as falling outside the law. Nor did budget subsidies keep pace with an annual inflation of over 20 per cent. Yet the policy towards the Churches of the government led by József Antall (and, after his death, by Péter Boross) was rated as favourable by the Churches and the government in general was only cautiously criticized. This is a possible—if not the main—explanation why this comprehensive analytical pastoral letter was issued only in 1996.

### Self-examination omitted

According to public opinion polls, the reputation of the Churches did not diminish over the years (Table 1), although many have urged them to undertake self-examination. The well-known political commentator, László Lengyel, for instance, was highly critical, and in 1990 reproached clerical dignitaries for accepting seats in the fraudulently elected parliaments of the Communist era, for voting in compliance with the expectations of the Communist government, for always agreeing or, if they did not, for not dissociating themselves by resigning.

**Table 1. Satisfaction with social institutions**

Totally or highly satisfied with...	1985	1989 March	1989 Nov.	1991	1994
government	86	50	45	56	52
Parliament	81	49	48	60	53
Parties in government (the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party up to March 1989)	66	19	—	57	53
opposition parties (alternative groups up to March 1989)	—	21	27	62	61
trade unions (National Council of Trade Unions before 1991)	49	24	21	54	53
municipal governments (councils before 1991)	52	30	26	—	62
the Churches	53	54	61	72	61

**Source:** 1985–1989: László Bruszt and János Simon: *A lecsendesített többség* (The Silenced Majority); 1991: Hungarian Public Opinion Poll: *Vallás, hitoktatás, iskola* (Religion, Religious Instruction, Schools); 1994: Educational Research Institute and Gallup Hungary: *Felekezetkutatás* (Research of Religious Denominations).

The fact that the Churches gave no, or only a partial accounting of their recent past—and possibly behind closed doors—was probably highly damaging. No doubt, similarly harsh charges could have been laid against every body or institution of several decades standing. Yet, in the Church, as in all long-standing institutions—for instance, in the judiciary or in the courts—there were people who wisely or daringly, radically or with well-meaning compromises, cunningly or by risking their lives, protected what they were entrusted with. (The clergymen who were arrested or transferred every six months to different posts, the prelates and members of religious orders imprisoned on false charges and sometimes brutally tortured come to mind.)

Concerning accountability, the same rules must be applied to the Church as to any other institution when facing up to the past decades. It may be argued that since Church ideology imposes a strict moral standard on the clergy, they should have been stricter. The real mistake, however, does not lie in a submission that facilitates the triumph of tyranny, but in the failure to realize that submission can also be destructive, and this, to some extent, seems to have been the case with the clergy. In some cases more than in others.

What could anyone criticizing the Church rightly expect then and expect now on the basis of God's law or human morality? First and foremost, that representatives of whatever religion, be they clergy or lay, harm no one, nor be party to causing harm. The fact that the hierarchy did not raise its voice against the Slovak-Hungarian barrage construction on the Danube is forgiveable, but the fact that it did not come forward to defend its unjustly persecuted priests is less excusable.

What Church leaders can really be accused of is passivity in their own affairs, a failure to carry out even their very own du-

ties. The Bulányi affair exemplifies this situation in the Catholic Church. György Bulányi, a priest whom the Church did not readmit for political reasons after his release from prison, began to publish in the Seventies his critical works on the Church hierarchy and on Paul's epistles. He organized his followers in so-called base communities which were condemned by the Vatican. He called the public's attention to himself by encouraging conscientious objection to military service.

The episcopate did nothing to examine the compatibility of Bulányi's views with the official teachings of the Church until the Piarist father happened to tread on the State's toes by encouraging young men to refuse military service. Belatedly, the Church hierarchy took urgent steps to institute proceedings, which proved self-defeating due to Bulányi's growing popularity as a well-known dissident. Hence the justified theological objections to his teachings lost credibility.

The way heresies are handled is not the sole criterion by which a Church is judged. The Bulányi affair is important primarily because it is symptomatic of the reciprocity between enervation and political conformism. This affair is, together with a number of similar unresolved ones, a burden the Catholic Church, like the other major denominations, carries over to the new era.

Another case was that of Géza Németh's, a Calvinist pastor, who was stopped from ministering to his flock because his activity in support of Hungarians in Transylvania was regarded as contrary to official foreign policy.

With the political rehabilitation of clergymen who were persecuted and imprisoned, many of whom are no longer alive—they were acquitted by courts reviewing the show trials which decided that there was no case to answer—justice was served by a secular authority which seems to have

satisfied Church leaders in many cases. A quiet rehabilitation took place within the Churches: they readmitted those clergy—some of whom are bishops today—who had been forced into taking secular jobs (in factories, for example) for long years, but the Churches never admitted their earlier errors to the public and seldom to themselves. Presumably, this is one of the reasons why many of the faithful choose to satisfy their transcendental needs outside the churches.

### Changes in religiousness

**M**uch research in the sociology of religion in recent years fails to give an exact answer to the question whether people have become more religious since the changeover in 1989, whether more dare—or perhaps find it fashionable—to admit to a belief in the existence of some Superior Being, which would explain a result showing an increase in religiousness. According to the representative survey by the Educational Research Institute (1994), 62 per cent of the respondents claim to be religious in their own way as opposed to the 46.7 per cent in the 1990 survey of the Hungarian Public Opinion Research Institute. (In recent years the percentage of respondents claiming to be non-religious has declined from 32.9 to 18.) Indicative of the quality of religiousness is the only slight increase in the number of those who describe themselves as “religious according to church teaching”: 15 in 1992 and 19 in 1995 out of 100 respondents.

Collating the data of surveys conducted in the 1970s and 1980s with those conducted in the 1990s, which show the changes in the number of christenings and registrations in religious communities, we find a strengthening of earlier tendencies: the ratio of Roman Catholics among the denominations rose from two-thirds to

nearly three-fourths, while that of the Calvinists and the Lutherans among the denominations remained close to one-fifth and one-third, respectively, and that of Jews declined from 1 to 0.5 per cent. The ratio of non-denominational respondents increased significantly (in 1972 every 20th, in 1992 every 16th respondent). The ratio of believers in other religions, statistically insignificant only two decades ago, is more than 1 per cent today. The explanation for this growth lies in the gaining of ground of newly created and imported faiths—mostly from the Orient.

The Free Churches (Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist, Methodist) have about 30,000 members, newly founded Christian sects have nearly 35,000. (Adherents of the Faith Congregation and the reinstated Jehovah's Witnesses constitute 80 per cent of the latter.) Non-Christians—which include five Buddhist communities, one Muslim and one Krishna community according to researchers—number fewer than 1500 members altogether. But, characteristically, these small sects attract three times as many sympathizers as the number of their registered membership. According to a 1993 survey by the Gallup Institute, religious communities—like the followers of Krishna and Jehovah's Witnesses—in the cross fire of sectarian strife are better-known today than small old established churches, such as the Pentecostals, which also maintain educational institutions.

The trends suggested by recently published statistics covering the entire adult population may be misleading if the significant deviations in denominational structure according to age groups are disregarded. The younger a cohort, the higher the ratio of non-denominational individuals. In 1995, the ratio of non-denominational 18–24-year-olds equaled the ratio of members of the Calvinist Church, the second largest denomination, in the same age

group. At the same time, the most religious section of the population, the elderly, declines the most rapidly. This means that the current ratio among the denominations can be expected to go through significant changes in the near future.

The various social strata show significant differences in religious practice. Professionals constitute the most heterogeneous group, most of whom belong to one of the two opposite poles—those who attend church regularly and the atheists. The ratio of Jews and Lutherans is highest among the highly educated, and the ratio of adherents of some other religion is also highest in this group. The overwhelming majority of Catholics have general or secondary school education, while the ratio of Calvinists is relatively high among those with unfinished general school education (less than eight grades) and somewhat higher than average among the highly educated.

### Ascending

Church activity, restrained for decades, has become vigorous in recent years. Only about 300 churches were built in Hungary in the forty-five years between 1945 and 1990 and somewhat over 200 between 1990 and 1996 (Table 2). In many villages the rebuilding of churches destroyed during the Second World War did not start until more than forty years after the war. The social background of urban church construction shows a somewhat different picture. In recent years, church construction began in several former "socialist" cities (such as Dunaújváros, or Leninváros, called Tiszaújváros today) and new districts (the Avas housing project in Miskolc) where there were none before. A number of churches and auxiliary facilities also function as community houses with halls for worship, charity offices, religious instruction and play rooms, child-care centres, mothers' clubs, and so on.

**Table 2**  
**Churches, chapels, permanent places of worship of a few Churches and denominations**

Denomination	Total number operating	Constructed or under construction since 1990*
Catholic	4104	107
Calvinist	1402	37
Lutheran	493	19
Jewish	39	0
Baptist	370	17
Pentecostal	122	23
Methodist	20	6
Hungarian Orthodox	10	0
Serbian Orthodox	40	0
Unitarian	8	2

\* Not including the houses of worship returned to the churches

Source: National and regional centres of the denominations

### New basis

Contrary to some fears, the socialist-liberal Horn coalition government, which took office in 1994, did not play tit for tat with the churches for the 1990–1994 period, nor did it curry favour with any of the denominations. There is little to show that the government intends to take substantive steps, for instance, in changing the financing of Churches, in spite of the fact that the present system of subsidies in the form of an annual distribution of money sustains the harmful and unbalanced relationship between the state and the Church. Thus, every year the Budget Bill is the subject of renewed disputes about how much the state should allot to the Churches, and there are always some who consider the amount too high, others too little (Table 3).

**Table 3. Subsidies to Churches (in million forints)\***

Title	1994	1995	1996	1997 (estimate)
For public collections	165.5	165.5	165.5	265.5
For operation of basic institutions	2050.6	2050.0	2050.0	2350.0
For educational institutions	820.0	900.0	1340.0	2340.0
For repair of welfare institutions	–	140.0	140.0	180.0
For payment of contributions	–	260.0	260.0	no datum
For retirement funds	–	120.0	170.0	no datum
<b>Total</b>	<b>3036.1</b>	<b>3635.5</b>	<b>4125.5</b>	<b>5135.0</b>

\*Not including subsidies set aside exclusively for the reconstruction of Church properties of special historical-cultural importance.

Source: Budget Act

The coalition parties outlined essentially the same ideas for financing the Churches in their election campaigns. The authors of the programmes of both the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats recommended that the Churches should become financially independent of the state within a few years and receive a normative subsidy on the basis of their work in education, health care, and welfare. Both parties say that financial independence should be achieved in several stages.

According to new notions of financing as promised by the government programme, taxpayers could designate a given part, 1 per cent of their income tax every year to some Church institution or to some other non-profit civil organization. One of the reasons why consensus has not yet been reached is the argument put forth by Church leaders that a considerable portion of churchgoers are pensioners and children. There are some versions whereby complementary correctional mechanisms could be used. That is, initially, the state would supplement subsidies from citizens so that total Church incomes would not diminish.

The government showed greater determination in changing the rules for return-

ing Church property. It seems, Prime Minister Gyula Horn recognized the growing insecurity of the Churches, when in 1995 he asked the leaders of the Catholic, the Calvinist and the Lutheran Churches and the Jewish community which have the greatest interest in property settlement, to moderate their demands "in view of the economic situation of the country". He persuaded them to promise to reconsider, that is, moderate their lists of property to be reclaimed as it was compiled in 1991 and to agree to the proposed modification of Act XXXII of 1991. This law, which is still in force, urges the return of original properties—or their equivalent exchange property—and suggests reimbursement only if there is no other way: for instance, if the Church in question cannot reach an agreement with the current owners or users of the buildings, or the moving of the institution would cost more than its restitution to the Church. What Horn proposes to do is the direct opposite, with the added suggestion that the former owners reclaim only such buildings in kind as are indispensable for their operation, since as it is they still do not have enough clergy to man the schools and other institutions which are theirs. He further suggests that

the Churches accept reimbursement for their other properties, which they could then rationally use for expansion.

The government has also proposed to extend the deadline from ten to twenty years for settlement of the proprietary right of Church properties alienated without compensation. Accordingly, only restitution in kind would be completed by year 2001, the original deadline specified by the law, when redemption in money payments for buildings would begin, giving, in effect, the budget a partial moratorium until 2011.

Surprisingly, Church representatives agreed to the Prime Minister's proposals without objection, all the more so because of the earlier manifest signs of lack of confidence in Horn within Church circles and because he did not—and could not—give any guarantees that the state will be able to allocate funds for reimbursement after the year 2000. There seem to be several reasons for this acquiescence. Aside from acknowledging the need for self-restraint, the acceptance of the decision to postpone settlement also had practical reasons. Namely, current users of the properties in-

cluded in the list, compiled in 1991, spend very little if anything on maintenance, which means that the later these buildings are returned, the more dilapidated they will be. Therefore, it is in the interests of the Churches to reduce the number of property claims in kind and accept reimbursement, which they can then use for the construction of new buildings.

### Vatican praise

Although the return of Church properties has been on hold since 1994 and the subsidy to churches is not inflation-indexed, the Vatican, allegedly, commended the Hungarian government which, in the words of Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Prime-Minister of the Vatican, makes efforts to assist the activity of the Churches. Nevertheless, Pope John Paul II, on his visit to Hungary in September 1996, asked Gyula Horn to ensure that the financial conditions of Hungarian Churches improve, that their educational institutions are not discriminated against and that they receive the same subsidies as state institutions, contrary to current practice. ■

Miklós Blahó

# "The Most Interesting Hungarian Abroad" — Andor C. Klay

OBITUARY

"I'm seriously ill," Andor C. Klay (Sziklay) said some two weeks before he died in early October 1996. Frail but tough in body, he was seemingly indestructible. He had survived the war and made it through the Cold War without developing an ulcer. At 84 he never thought of death; he was working on books and planning new ones. He was taken in a critical condition to Georgetown University Hospital and was gone a few days later.

"I'm a megalomaniac and schizophrenic," he once said to me. "In support of the first, let me bring up my claim of being the most interesting Hungarian living abroad. Not the best, not the most clever or talented or amiable—the most interesting. I am the oldest bilingual writer at work." This may have been the origin of a touch of schizophrenia; his Hungarian name, Sziklay, became legally and credibly American, with no change in pronunciation, through the witty invention of C. Klay.

His memoirs shed light on this odd double allegiance through a quotation. "As an American who is Hungarian in his spare

time, I am like Kipling's Kim who expressed his Anglo-Indian duality like this:

*Something I owe to the soil that grew—  
More to the life that fed—  
But most to Allah Who gave me two  
Separate sides to my head.*

*I would go without shirts or shoes,  
Friends, tobacco or bread  
Sooner than for an instant lose  
Either side of my head."*

We met and talked frequently in the past three years. Some of these conversations with the diplomat, author, historian, lawyer, and teacher full of vitality, seemingly immortal and extraordinarily erudite, are on tape. It is not growing old, he would say in Maugham's words, that is burdensome, it is the burden of memories weighing one down.

The spacious house in a historic part of Washington DC, in which he and his wife lived, was a museum. (With the Vice President's residence two blocks away and embassies all around, it was under police protection day and night.) On entering it, the visitor saw autographed photographs of seven American presidents, received in acknowledgment of assignments completed for the White House. An eighth he did not accept, Nixon's, because "he brought shame on us". There was a library on each

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**Miklós Blahó**

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floor, a piano in the sitting-room as well as a separate music room in the house. Andor Sziklay was a conservatory trained violinist. His wife Gerda, a music teacher, was the daughter of Otto Herz, who used to be Bartók's and Kodály's colleague and later became director of the New York College of Music. The presidential photographs were flanked by photographs of famous musicians, all personal acquaintances.

**G**randfather Sziklay emigrated to the United States in 1866, "in the belief that even the streets were paved with gold, but then he quickly realized he had to do the paving." This branch of the family was Catholic and of noble descent. The other grandfather, however, was porter no. 14 in Kassa, of "uncertain denomination". His father became a wholesaler in the US, and could hardly speak a word or two in Hungarian when he met and married a teacher in pre-Great War Budapest. They had two sons, Andor and György. Since the father travelled extensively, the boys stayed with their mother and were educated in Hungary.

In the early 30s, Andor Sziklay graduated in law in Budapest. During his university years he wrote for newspapers and studied the violin, taking the conservatorium examination as a private pupil. Being a U.S. citizen through his father, he then returned to the States. His stint at journalism while a student in Budapest came in useful, lending him a job with a Hungarian paper at the Cleveland office of Consolidated Press. Meanwhile, he continued his studies, taking a Ph.D. in 19th-century diplomatic history. He spoke four languages, German and Italian in addition to Hungarian and English, which explains why after the outbreak of the Second World War he found a post in the censor's office at the Department of Defense, thus exempting him from military service. Displeased, he used political connections

to have the exemption cancelled and, in his brother's footsteps, joined the Army Air Force. He was posted to the OSS, predecessor to the CIA. "I thought I might be sent to Hungary, but I only flew over Budapest once. A sorry sight, the city was in flames," he said. Serving in North Africa and at the Italian and German fronts, he did not have much to do with things Hungarian although he once interrogated the Regent, Miklós Horthy, and Colonel Pajtás, Keeper of the Crown.

He returned to Washington at Christmas 1945 and joined the State Department in the New Year. He was an expert first on Western European, then Soviet and Eastern European intelligence. He was a civil servant when, in early 1956, President Eisenhower appointed him to the diplomatic corps. He followed the events of the 1956 October Revolution as head of the section on Hungarian intelligence in the State Department. "In the dangerous days of the Suez crisis and shortly before the presidential election no one ever considered intervention as a serious option," he wrote.

His career as a diplomat was on the ascendant. He served in Belgrade first as consul and then as first secretary (1958-61); in Frankfurt he held a political post (1962-67); and he was counsellor in West Berlin (1967-70). For two years after this, he acted as diplomatic counsellor at the department of international law of the State Department. He retired when he was offered the post of ambassador in a minor African country. "I couldn't have taken my music teacher wife with me," he once explained. He carried on as a historian and writer afterwards, and continued to act as consultant to the State Department and the CIA. He was a professor at the Foreign Service Institute, published articles in the Hungarian-language American weeklies *Szabadság* and *Népszava*, gave lectures and translated and wrote books. ABC

Television made a film based on his *Daring Diplomacy: The First American Ultimatum* (Oxford University Press, 1957), which is to be published in Hungarian soon. He became a member of the Academy of Sciences in South Carolina and the Hungarian Writers' Association. He received several American and Hungarian awards, the last of them being the Officer's Cross of the Order of the Hungarian Republic.

**B**ilingual, Sziklay was a colourful personality. He was well versed not only in diplomacy, history, law and literature—his especial vantage point allowing him to see Hungarian culture as an American and American culture as a Hungarian; he also had an extensive interest in music, given his education and his wife's profession and family background. During his diplomatic career and in Washington he played in string quartets and enjoyed the friendship of such musicians as Wilhelm Backhaus and Henryk Szeryng, friendships that went back to his years in Germany. That with Szeryng was especially close. Once in Frankfurt he invited him to his home for supper after a concert, without any special preparations. It was a Sunday, with no shops open. The violinist arrived with other friends, and the Sziklays could only offer *krumplipaprikás*, a traditional Hungarian peasant meal of potatoes seasoned with paprika. Szeryng said he had not eaten anything as delicious since he was a child. When the Washington National Symphonic Orchestra was conducted by Antal Doráti, Szeryng was frequently a guest performer, and the Sziklays would give receptions for him attended by the leading lights and music lovers of the capital—and paprika potatoes was always on offer. Doráti himself was also among their circle of friends, as was the cellist János Starker. Through his father-in-law Ottó Herz, Sziklay had also met

Béla Bartók and later published articles and gave lectures on the composer.

His career in diplomacy and intelligence afforded him some extraordinary encounters. After the Second World War, he met Mátyás Rákosi, then a member of a Hungarian governmental delegation visiting Washington, who was to live out his Stalinist dictatorial inclinations a few years later. Sziklay knew the whole of the Hungarian emigré community and had a great respect for former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy. He knew who was taken seriously in official circles, who was sneered at and whose letters were thrown into the wastepaper basket with an annoyed grin. While in government service he could watch from close by the work of various Secretaries of State and Presidents. George Kennan, the Mr X of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, was his boss in Belgrade. During his years in Germany he befriended Helmut Kohl, then a promising young hopeful of the Christian Democrats. When visiting in Washington, the Chancellor never failed to contact Sziklay, at least on the phone if tight schedules barred a meeting.

Sziklay was active up to the last minute. At the end of September, he gave a lecture in the Hungarian Club founded by former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy on the 1956 Revolution as seen from the State Department. With a blood clot in his coronary arteries, pulmonary oedema and failing kidneys, he still received the papers and never for a moment lost his interest in the world. He was a man who never stopped studying. He did not drive and used long bus rides to translate verse. His knowledge was impressive, but he used to say that knowledge was there for the asking, you only had to have persistence to acquire it. He would not tolerate prevarication, blunders and misquotations. He could list the names of Egyptian pharaohs as easily as he could expound on German

literature or American foreign policy. As an American he relished Hungarian poets, especially János Arany and Dániel Berzsenyi, and did research on Lajos Kossuth, leader of the 1848–49 Revolution. He gave interviews to the Hungarian daily *Magyar Nemzet* on subjects as different as the Washington reception of the 1956 uprising and Kossuth's visit to America in the 1850s. He published an autobiography, *Kanyargós utakon* (On Winding Paths) or "workography" as he called it, giving its separate volumes the titles of *Kémszervezetből diplomáciába* (From Intelligence to Diplomatic Service), *Amerikai kormányszolgálatban* (In American Government Service). He also compiled a volume of entertaining and instructive stories on American Hungarians under the title *Magyar lábnyomok* (Hungarian Footprints). He translated Omar Khayyam into Hungarian. In *The Holy Crown of Hungary*, he described for the White House the historical background of the Hungarian regalia that were returned to Hungary in 1978. In *The Visitor Speaks, 1800–1950*, he compiled speeches given by foreigners invited to address the Houses of Congress, among them those of Kossuth and Albert Apponyi. His volume on American-Hungarian cultural ties, *Second Generation*, was published in Cleveland by Consolidated Press in 1938–39.

Andor Sziklay was a curious mixture of the hard-working, inquisitive teacher with an unflinching memory, and the circumspect diplomat. He generously made his vast knowledge and experience available to his successors and readers. He was at the same time an important cog in a huge machine and the professor who took a perspective view of world events he had helped shape as a civil servant. He understood what was going on in politics both on-stage and be-

hind the scenes while attending to the routines of diplomacy and intelligence, and never forgot that even in the chilliest Cold War years the tensions were in human relationships, which is why he had known his way around on both sides of the Berlin Wall. When the Wall came down, his appraisal of the situation was that of the experienced diplomat and well-connected Washington pundit. As a correspondent in the American capital, I frequently benefited from his explanations as to when yes meant no and vice versa and how statements were to be interpreted. His insight into the Pentagon unimpaired, he had serious doubts about NATO's expansion, saying that acceptance of new members was a matter of confidence and strategy, with no evidence available of the former and no interest contributing to the latter, since the former Soviet allies were not threatened from any quarter, nor was the West jeopardized. He regularly wrote on this subject for *Amerikai Magyar Népszava* and *Szabadság*, while taking good care not to inflict damage on the Budapest efforts.

In his wisdom he knew what was at stake in the East-West confrontation: he understood human fallibility, and tried to make an objective judgment—a rarity in the morass of mutual prejudice. He recounted the events he had witnessed and his personal experience with humour. He devoted his years of retirement to disseminate Hungarian and American culture and thinking in both America and Hungary. When he called on the phone, he would often say, "This week I can be a Hungarian for a day only." But his two natures faded into one in a way that they also retained their marked difference. That made him a man you could not but appreciate, love, listen to—and not forget. •

János Makkay

# The Sarmatian Connection

Stories of the Arthurian Cycle and Legends and Miracles of Ladislas,  
King and Saint

The Arthurian legends, the *Nibelungenlied*, the *Roman de Roland* centred on Charlemagne's Iberian adventures, and other French legends make up the core of the Western mediaeval literary tradition. To this day, the scholarly consensus has it that both the Arthurian legends and the *Nibelungenlied* have ancient local roots, Celtic in the case of the Arthurian legends and Germanic as regards the *Nibelungenlied*. This view has been somewhat revised in recent years, particularly with reference to the Arthurian legends. Some American folklorists have argued that the defining elements are not Celtic but specifically Iranian. It proved possible to identify these origins in the East and to trace the route they took all the way from the Carpathian Basin to Britain. It would appear that the early *Ur-Nibelungenlied*—the *Waltharius manu fortis* also has certain key features of a specifically Iranian character. One may well resume that these are not due to

particular 10th and 11th century currents but to a joint, much earlier source. This presumed earlier source was very likely already present among the Iranian tribes of the Carpathian basin in the Age of the Huns (4th to 5th century) but at the latest that of the Avars in the 7th to 9th centuries. Evidence that favours such a hypothesis includes certain undoubtedly Iranian characteristics of the Saint Ladislas Legend. (Saint Ladislas, King of Hungary of the House of Árpád.) i.e. its closing scene, the rest, and the sixth miracle of the 1192 canonization, that of the miraculous cup. Both have clearly identifiable parallels in the Arthurian legends as a whole and in the *Walthariuslied*, the earliest known version of the *Nibelungenlied*.

The article which follows provides a brief resumé of questions that have suffered neglect in the past, whose existence, indeed, has barely been recognised.

In A.D. 43, nearly a hundred years after Caesar's brief excursions to Britain, four Roman legions and auxiliary troops landed in Kent. So began the Roman occupation of Britain, an occupation that was to last for more than three hundred years.<sup>1</sup> As the limits of the new province were pushed northwards, forts were built in the wake of the advancing army. In the second half of the first century the Romans started on the

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(*The Prehistory of the Indoeuropean  
Peoples, Budapest, 1991*).

building of a fortress on the river Dee, which they called Deva, a name derived from the Celtic for the river. The Legio II Adiutrix (i.e., the Second Auxiliary Legion) was sent from Lincoln to construct the new legionary fortress at Chester. In about A.D. 87 this Legio was moved to the continent, and by 114 it was permanently stationed at Aquincum, in what is now Budapest, and never returned to Britain. Newly recruited barbarian forces were sent to Britannia from the Pannonian battlefields as replacements. Under the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161–180) the Roman Army campaigned for eight years in Pannonia Barbarica (i.e., in the central and northern parts of the Carpathian Basin, north and east of the Roman *limes* along the Danube) against the Quadi, a German tribe, and Sarmatians and Alans, Iranian speaking barbarians who came from east of the Carpathians, from the south Russian steppe and from the Lower Danube Plains near the Black Sea. After hard but victorious battles, 5,500 Sarmatian/Alanian heavy cavalry (called *cataphractarii*, i.e., clothed fully in scale armour) consisting of prisoners taken in war were posted to Britain in 175. Marcus Aurelius sent these warriors to Britannia not only to keep them out of trouble in Pannonia Barbarica but also to deploy them beyond Hadrian's Wall.<sup>2</sup> These Sarmatians are known to have been stationed in permanent camps outside the Roman forts at Ribchester in Lancashire, Chester, and elsewhere. The Sarmatian enclaves—especially the one at Ribchester, a Lancashire site known in ancient times as *Bremetennacum veteranorum*—survived until the end of the Roman era in the late 4th century A.D.

The tombstone fragments of a Sarmatian/Alanian standard bearer were found at Chester (Deva) in 1890. This is unique evidence of the presence of heavily armoured Sarmatian cavalry from the earliest third

century A.D. The two fragments of the tombstone (now in the Grosvenor Museum in Chester) show a horseman wearing a cloak and turning to the right. He holds aloft, with both hands, a dragon standard of the Sarmatian/Alanian type, and his conical helmet, with a vertical metal frame, is of the same pattern. A sword hangs at his right. Both man and horse are shown clad in tightly fitting scale armour. This attire for man and mount was characteristic of Sarmatian/ Alanian heavy cavalry.

The original dragon standard shown on the tombstone had a metal head and a cloth body designed like a windsock so that the animal appeared to come alive in the wind. It has been suggested that these standards may have indicated the position of the given Iranian troops and their command posts during the battle and also the wind direction for the Sarmatian/Alanian archers. The best description of this characteristic Iranian tactic and symbolism is in the *Tactica* of Arrian of Bithynia (2nd century A.D.) who defeated the Alanian invasion of 134. He must have had exact knowledge of how the Iranian peoples conducted themselves in war.<sup>3</sup> We know that the military symbol of the kings of the Parthians (as for instance of Mithridates I. in 139 B.C.) was a dragon standard made of textile or leather.<sup>4</sup> There is no indication, however of the use of similar standards in Achaemenid times.

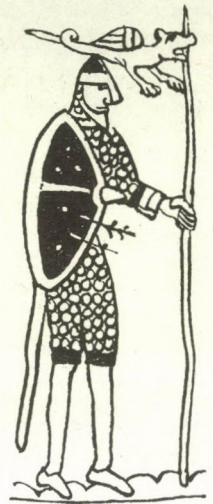


Fig. 1. King Harald's standard bearer at the Battle of Hastings (1066). Detail from the Bayeux Tapestry.

The closed society of Sarmatian *cata-phractarii* in Britain was able to maintain its ethnic features during the Late Roman period and afterwards. One reason is that their troops, called *cuneus Sarmatorum*, *equitum Sarmatorum Bremetennacensium Gordianorum* were not part of any military organization in active service. Consequently, after the withdrawal of the Roman army, they continued to live on their accustomed sites (Chester, Ribchester, etc.). They were still called Sarmatians after 250 years. A semi-historic Arthur lived about A.D. 500. He was very probably a descendant of those Alan horsemen, a battle leader of the Romanized Celts and Britons against the Anglo-Saxons, who invaded Britain after the Roman army had withdrawn. Arthur and his military leaders could therefore manage to train the natives as armoured horseman after Iranian patterns against the attacks of Angles and Saxons fighting on feet until their victory at Badon Hill.

Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* contains detailed accounts of the traditional Roman military tactics used

by the army of Arthur in his legendary wars against the Romans.<sup>5</sup> He also mentions the dragon standard of the Arthurian army which was set up at a suitable and easily defensible place to show exhausted and wounded warriors where they could find drinking water and have their wounds dressed.<sup>6</sup> His own golden helmet was decorated with a dragon, probably the same dragon which appeared to him in a dream while crossing the Channel. Sir Thomas Malory recounted the story as follows:

And as the kyng laye in his caban in the shyp, he fyll in a slomerynge and dremed a merueyllous dreme. Hymn semed that a dredeful dragon dyd drowne moche of his peple, ans he cam fleyng oute of the West, and his hede was enameled with asure, and his sholders shone as gold, his bely lyke maylles of a merueyllous hewe, his taylle ful of tatters, his feet ful of fyne sable, and his clawes lyke fine gold, and an hydous flamme of fyre flewe oute of his mouthe, lyke as the londe and water had flammed all of fyre.<sup>7</sup>

What Geoffrey of Monmouth and Malory describe is the peculiar features and use of the military dragon standard by the Iranian peoples and, later, by the Roman army. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, on the triumphal procession of Constantius II in Rome in 357 the Emperor sat alone upon a golden chariot "... and was surrounded by dragons, woven out of purple thread and bound to the golden and jewelled tops of spears, with wide mouths open to the breeze and hence hissing as if roused by anger, and leaving their tails winding in the wind."<sup>8</sup>

**T**he dragon standard on the Chester tombstone (a metal head and a cloth body) closely corresponds to two unique archaeological finds, both made of metal and representing the heads of dragon standards. One of them is of bronze and



Fig. 2. King Arthur in battle holding the dragon standard. Drawing from a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (cca 1300).



Fig. 3. Silver heart of a dragon standard. Sassanian, 7th century, in the Hermitage.



Fig. 4. Achaemenid Persian standard bearer (reconstruction).

was found in the *canabae* area of the Roman *castellum* at Niederbieber, Nordrhein-Westfalen. It dates from the first part of the 3rd century A.D. It has a length of 30 cm, is gilded on its upper part while the lower part is silvered (see the description in Malory). It shows an open-mouthed dragon head with sharp teeth and has a widening rim at its back end with perforations for fastening textile stripes, while a wide vertical perforation across the body served to fit the head to the top of a spear, lance or simple pole.

The other piece is in the Hermitage in St Petersburg. It is made of silver and comes from the Government of Perm in Russia. This Sassanian piece of the 7th century A.D. shows a dragon-like head of hybrid (dog- or wolf-shaped) character with an open mouth and chased embossed decoration. It also has a vertical perforation for a pole.<sup>9</sup>

These two pieces in fact have a third parallel. It is a gold dragon standard head found in the Sargetia valley, Transylvania, around 1543, which once belonged to the royal treasures of the Dacian king Decebalus and was hidden in the early autumn of 106 A.D., at the end of Trajan's second Dacian war.<sup>10</sup> Descriptions of the circumstances under which the discovery was made by Trajan in A.D. 106 and then in 1543 of these large treasure troves reveal many details of a belief in a dragon-guardian—as the *Beowulf* calls it: *hordweard*.

The two gold and silver hoards consisted of precious vessels, many gold and silver coins and plates. A golden standard in the shape of a dragon was found on top in 1543. A dragon standard of the Iranian type must therefore have been a typical military and power symbol for the Dacians. During the centuries of the Roman wars against the Iranian (Sarmatian/Alanian and Parthian) and Germanic barbarians, the

dragon standard had also become a symbol of the Roman Army. Dragon standards shown on Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius's columns in Rome perfectly correspond to those mentioned and to other sources and finds: a dragon head (in fact, sometimes very similarly to the Hermitage piece, wolf-like) seems to have been made of metal while other parts of the body have the shape of a snake or fish and were of some light organic material, namely textiles and/or leather. The importance of the Dacian dragon lies in the fact that so far the dragon standard on Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius's columns has been believed by historians to be exclusively characteristic of Sarmatian/Alanian auxiliaries of the Dacians against Rome during the Dacian wars of Trajan in 101–106 A.D.

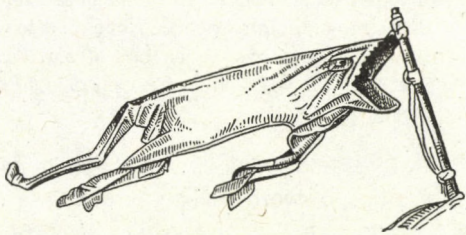
Given the strength of these similarities, it seems to me that they could not be fortuitous. The simplest hypothesis that springs to mind is that of a historical connection between Middle and Late Iranian (Sarmatian/Alanian) and Turkic tribes (Huns, Avars, the Onogurs and the conquering Hungarians) of the steppe during the whole of the 1st millennium A.D., and especially after 375 A.D., when the European Huns crossed the Volga. The westernmost bodies of the Northwestern Indo-Iranians on the South Russian steppe were the Scythians, and later their genetic successors, the Sarmatians/Alanians who

had remained in southern Russia until the pressure of escaping Germanic (Goths) and invading Turkic tribes—first the Huns of Attila—forced the Alanians to move westward from the early 4th century on. One part of the late Sarmatians/Alanians, the Old-Ossetians penetrated no further than the Northern Caucasus and their culture has flourished there ever since. Sarmatian/Alanian tribes, however, (Jazygians and Roxolans) were settled in the central part of the Carpathian Basin (i.e., Pannonia Barbarica) by the Roman Empire during the first, and again the third century A.D.

**T**he main theme of cultural connections centered around the belief in the divine magic sword and related rituals, especially burnt funeral offerings, the ritual deposition of swords at sacral places, and the use and veneration of a magic bowl or cup. During the Migration Period the same basic forms of such sacrifices of Iranian origin were performed by the Huns, Khazars, Avars, Onogurs and other Turkic tribes, and also by surviving Sarmatians/Alans.<sup>11</sup>

Recently, in a series of publications, Helmut Nickel and C. Scott Littleton argued that the roots of the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, as well as those concerned with the Holy Grail, are not to be found in the indigenous Celtic traditions of the British Isles, as most Arthurian scholars hold, but rather in a "Scythian tradition"<sup>12</sup> that seems to have originated from the religious beliefs of Iranian Sarmatians/Alans of the Hungarian Plain of the 2nd century A.D.

These beliefs centre around the divine sword, the sacred cup of heavenly splendour, the dragon standard as military symbol, and early literary traditions connected with them. The resemblances are not limited to mythology. In some cases artefacts (as for example scale armour and stan-



*Fig. 5. The original dragon standard of the Iranians. Reconstruction by Mrs Ruquiah Behzadi, Tehran.*

dards) or representations, strongly related to mythological-religious matters were also similar. Now, our whole story starts with such one material connection, with the golden serpentine dragon symbol of the Dacians.

The most intriguing parallel of the triple combination of dragon standards, heavy Iranian cavalry and scale armour appears in recently excavated finds in Uzbekistan. In the cemetery of Orlat two bone plates were discovered in kurgan grave 2, measuring 13.5 x 10.5 cms.<sup>13</sup> They are decorated with finely engraved motifs, and one of them represents eight heavily armed men in individual combat. Five are horsemen while three are fighting on foot. Their weapons are swords, long spears, bows and in one case, a battle axe. All of them wear scale armour. One of the horsemen with a very long spear holds a dragon standard which closely resembles the lower (textile) part of the above discussed standards in every detail (see Fig. 6). The plate dates from between the 2nd century B.C. and the end of the 1st century A.D., and the warriors can be identified as Central Asian Alans.

The Iranian Alans were a powerful nomad tribe in the Eurasian steppe and Central Asia in the 1st century B.C. and the cemetery of Orlat lies on their tribal territory. At the beginning of the 1st century A.D. they advanced to the west, in 49 A.D. moved to the Don and Dniester interfluvium, joined other Iranian speaking Sarmatian tribes of the Aorses, Siracs, Roxolans, and moved on further to the west, partly into the Carpathian Basin. They very probably introduced the knowledge and use of dragon standards and scale armour of the Iranian type to Europe. This is the simplest way of interpreting the presence of dragon standards and full-size scale armor of Central Asiatic/Iranian origin in the Dacian wars of Trajan, the

Sarmatian/Alanian wars of Marcus Aurelius and, much later, in the heavily armoured army of Arthur.

**A** number of further questions emerges concerning the presence of dragon standards and Iranian armoured horsemen, *cataphractarii*, in Central and Western Europe. The most fascinating one concerns some critical details of the Arthurian heritage and their "Scythian background and Sarmatian connections" in what are myths and legends underpinning archaeological evidence. The first indications came from the late 1960s when scholars referred to similarities between motifs of the Nart sagas of the Ossetes (a contemporary North-Caucasian people who are directly descended from the ancient Alan—Old Ossetian—tribes) and the Arthurian tradition.<sup>14</sup> These include

a) the motif of the sword thrown into the water and the death scenes of Arthur and Batraz/Batradz, the heroic leader of the Old Ossetians.<sup>15</sup>

b) The manner in which the heroes obtain their magical swords: how Arthur acquires Excalibur<sup>16</sup>, and Batraz his magical weapon. Book I of Malory's *Morte Darthur* writes as follows:

Arthur and Merlin rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in the hand. With that they saw a damosel going upon the lake. ... Well! said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you, and I will ask my gift when I see my time.

c) Rites and religious customs relating to the magic sword which go back to ancient Iranian beliefs and sacrificial—mostly funeral—customs.<sup>17</sup>

d) The presence of a wondrous cup or small sacrificial cauldron in both cycles:



Fig. 6. Alanian warrior in scale armour with bow, lance and the dragon standard. Detail from the Orlat bone plaque.

the Holy Grail and the Ossetian Nartya-monga, "the sacred cup of the Narts". This belief did not originally belong to the Celtic tradition, nor was it always Christian. It grew from two very different traditions. One is the ancient Near Eastern (probably Sumerian and Semitic) heritage, a part of which was the Iranian belief in a magical—golden—cup representing the creative forces of the Sun and the heavenly origin of the Iranian kings, both Achaemenids and Sassanians. The most representative expression of this Iranian belief is the Chosroë cup from the 5th century A.D. (an exquisite piece of Sassanian art, once part of the treasure of Sassanian kings) now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. It had allegedly been presented to Charlemagne by the khalif Harun al Rashid, but very probably came into the hands of Charlemagne in 795–796, from the Avar booty. During the Frankish-Avar wars, Eric of Friaul, and later Pippin the son of Charlemagne ransacked the treasury of the Avarian khagan somewhere in the Danube–Tisza interfluvium in the Hungarian Plain, south of Budapest. In the "Conte de Graal" of Chrétien de

Troyes "A beautiful and comely maiden held a grail in her hands. ... The grail was worked with fine gold, and there were in the grail many precious stones, the finest and most costly in the world."<sup>18</sup> These lines almost perfectly describe the Chosroë cup in Paris.

The other source is the New Testament where the cup or dish was used at the Last Supper. Tradition says that Joseph of Arimathea filled it with blood drawn from the side of Christ at the Crucifixion after his being taken down from the cross, and he or his family brought it to Britain when he came to christianize that land. Later, as times grew more pagan, the Holy Grail suddenly vanished, it was hidden from all but a few and it became an object of a quest by Bors, Perceval, and Galahad the pure, all knights of the Round Table. Lancelot, however, the central hero of three medieval Arthurian romances, came to recognize his guilt because of his love for, and affair with, Guinevere, King Arthur's Queen and did penance for it. He also was rewarded by being able to reach the Grail castle and participate in its mysteries but was denied the supreme vision: he could no more see the Grail unveiled "than a blind man should see a bright sword". This grace was reserved for his son Galahad and for his companions Perceval and Bors/Bohort.<sup>19</sup> When Lancelot came to the door of the chamber where the Grail was,

The door opened and he had a glimpse of the holy vessel, covered with red samite, and many angels about it, but when he tried to enter, in spite of a voice that forbade him, a breath like fire smote him and therewith he fell to the earth, and had no power to arise ... and lost the power of his body, and his hearing, and his seeing. Then felt he many hands about him, which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door, without any amending of his swoon, and left him there, seeming dead to all people.<sup>20</sup>

This story is one of the main themes of the romances in the Arthurian legends. The Sacred Bowl or Cup in each tradition (Arthurian and Ossetian) presents itself to the bravest and purest members of the Knights of the Round Table or the warrior band of the Ossetian legends.<sup>21</sup> One very important capacity of the Holy Grail and the Nartyamonga is its power to know Good from Evil, White from Black, Honest from Dishonest, Untrue from Truthful. There are, of course, fundamental differences between the Ossetic and European traditions of the Sacred Cup since the Holy Grail is, in its medieval form a Christian symbol, while the Nartyamonga cup remains a pagan talisman. On the other hand, however, the roots of the Holy Grail lie deep in a pre-Christian belief system, since early Welsh texts speak about Arthur and a magical cauldron, the enameled and bead decorated rim of which calls to mind the polychrome style of the Black Sea Iranians. As Littleton pointed out, the immediate prototype of what eventually became the account of the Holy Grail is to be found in the tradition of the ancient Sarmatians/Alans, a tradition that, thanks to the Romans, was introduced to Britain in the second century A.D. as a manifestation of the Sarmatian connection.<sup>22</sup> The golden bowl of the Sassanian king Chosroe II (590–628 A.D.) or more probably of Peroz (457–484 A.D.) can be brought into direct relationship with the Holy Grail, and its legend can be a part of epic stories of Iranian origin centering around the magic bowl of the Iranians.

e) Structural similarities can be seen between Sir Kay and Sir Bedivere, Arthur's staunchest palladins, and the Ossetic pair Urysmag and Soslan.

f) Other parallels are linguistic, as for example several Arthurian names, among them Bedivere, Kay, and Uther Pendragon, show Iranian affinities. The name of Perceval, for instance, is a derivation of the Persian *Parsival*, Persian hero.

On the basis of these and other parallels, it is possible to conclude that the two traditions, despite their wide separation in time and space, were somehow connected. The Sarmatian connections therefore simply are the heritage of the 5,500 Sarmatian heavy *cataphractarii* who were moved to Britain by Marcus Aurelius in 175 A.D.<sup>23</sup> and introduced what later became the core of the Arthurian legends. Since the late 1970s, other arguments have been found to add further important details to the list of the Sarmatian connections.

g) The legendary father of Arthur, Uther Pendragon, had two red gilded dragon standards prepared. He presented one to the Cathedral of Winchester while the other was his military symbol in the field because of which he was called by Geoffrey of Monmouth *Caput Draconis* "Dragon-head". Later the dragon standard also became the military symbol of the Anglo-Saxons, as the Bayeux tapestry shows, where the signifier of King Harald in the Battle of Hastings holds aloft a dragon standard.

I propose to go on and discuss connections with the St Ladislav legend.

Helmut Nickel added one further motif to the eastern, Iranian connections of the Arthurian legends in their wider context. That is the figure of a woman and a warrior (and his groom) who are sitting under a tree. The woman holds the head of the sleeping warrior in her lap. Similar details are quite common in later variants of the Arthurian story. Merlin fell asleep with his head in Nimue's lap in a bush where they sat in the shadow. The dying Arthur laid his head in the lap of one of the Three Queens. Tennyson's "The Passing of Arthur" is closely based on the relevant sections in Malory on the last voyage to Avalon:

Then murmur'd Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"  
 So to the barge they came. There those three queens  
 Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.  
 But she that rose the tallest of them all  
 And fairest laid his head upon her lap,  
 And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,  
 And call'd him by his name, complaining loud.

In the story of Tristan and Iseult the unicorn lays his head in a maiden's lap while a hunter strikes him at the fountain. Later the lovers arrive at the forest of Morrois followed by the faithful squire, who appears again holding the two horses while Tristan and Iseult enjoy a meal spread upon a rock.<sup>24</sup> The earliest known prototype of all these scenes is in the oldest preserved epic of the Nibelungen cycle, the *Waltharius legend* composed by Eckardt, a monk of Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, around 930 A.D.<sup>25</sup> It tells the adventures of Hildegund, a Burgundian princess, Walther of Aquitaine, a Visigothic prince, and Hagen, a nobleman of the royal house of the Rhenish Franks, German hostages in the royal court of King Etzel of the Huns, (according to the legend, the Attila of history but in fact the Avar khagan). First Hagen manages to flee, Walther and Hildegund escape soon afterward. They cross the Rhine and shelter in the forest of the Vosges. The Frankish king, Gunther, decides to waylay the strangers and confiscate the treasures they surely carry from the treasure of Attila. Walther decides to get some sleep at last and he asks Hildegund to hold his head in her lap, and to wake him only gently if she sees dust rising in the distance, as if stirred up by horsemen.<sup>26</sup>

Nickel relates this scene to the well-known representation on a gold plaque of Iranian character from the Siberian collection of Peter the Great dated around 300 B.C. (See Fig. 7.)<sup>27</sup> The plaque shows a woman seated under a tree, holding a

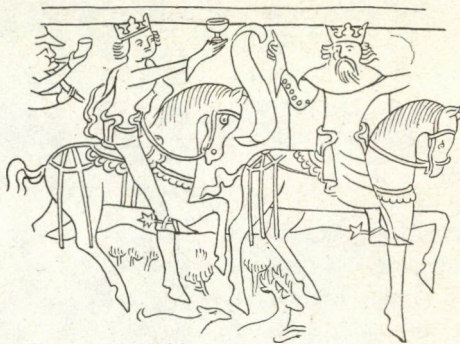


Fig. 7. Scene representing the foundation of a church. King Ladislas pursues the white stag while a crowned prince offers him the wondrous cup. Wall painting in the church of Velemér by John Aquila, 14th c. (reconstruction).

sleeping man's head in her lap, and a pair of horses, held by a groom, standing by. The weapons of the warrior, bow and quiver, hang in the branches of a tree. It is not difficult to recognize the scene of Walther's sleep before the fight in the representation on the plaque.

The same scene of repose, however, is well-known from early medieval Hungarian wall paintings centering around Ladislas, King and Saint (1077–1095). As Gyula László has shown in a masterful book, the story goes back to eastern, Iranian (or Iranized Turkic) elements, before the Hungarians were christianized after 1000 A.D. onward.<sup>28</sup> His research, and that of others, also showed that this motif from the 13–14th century is central in the still extant Hungarian folk ballads *Molnár Anna* and *Kerekes Izsák* from Transylvania. In the Saint Ladislas legend a Hungarian princess is abducted by a warrior of the Turkish Kumans. As represented on the wall paintings of the Bántornya medieval church, while they are resting under a shady tree, the warrior asks the princess to take his head in her lap. When he falls

asleep, the pursuing knightly saint catches up with them and after a heavy fight with the abductor he liberates the princess. Another and more common variant of the story is when the king kills the Cumanian raider with the help of the girl after a heavy duel and becomes himself wounded.<sup>29</sup>

We have an interesting complex of additional elements

connecting these and further details of the Arthurian story, the Nibelungen cycle, the Saint Ladislas Legend and Hungarian folk ballads: the nine branches of the tree, the escape of the lady into a cleft (or in a cavity of a tree), murder (usually beheading) of the girl with a sword, hanging of the head in the tree, hanging of the weapons and helmet of the warrior in the branches of a tree, the gentle fondling of the warrior's hair by the girl, and finally, when Hildegund dresses the wounds of Walther and Hagen, and offers them a drink in a golden bowl.

The original story of the sleeping maiden-abductor (or occasionally of the escorting knight) under a tree seems to have originated in Central Asia and has ancient Middle Iranian sources. The scene was probably a central part of a myth from a by now forgotten Central Asian heroic epic. Nobody has tried to show so far that this Hungarian legend may be a result of Iranian influence on early Hungarian folklore and related somehow to a local "Sarmatian tradition" surviving in the Carpathian Basin. The surviving Sarmatian/Alan population of the Great Hungarian Plain

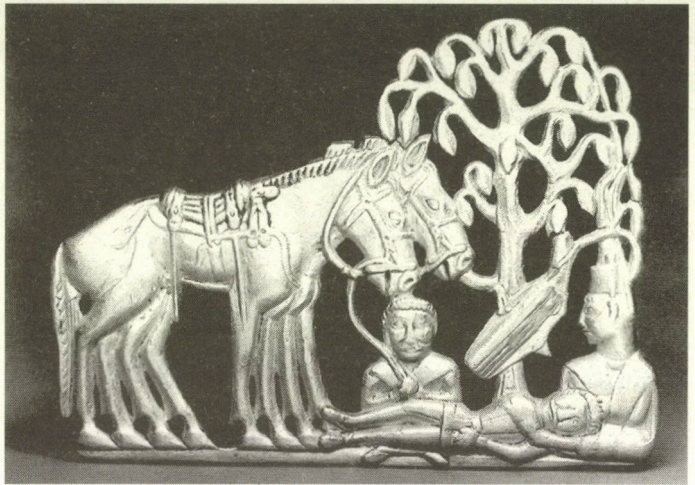


Fig. 8. Siberian gold plaque from the 4-3th centuries B.C.

(from the fifth century A.D. to the coming of the Magyars) would be the medium. These Iranian (Sarmatian/Alan) tribes of the great Hungarian Plain were to be linguistically absorbed by the Magyars. The above motifs in Hungarian legends and folklore have their parallels in the Arthurian legends and the Nibelungen cycle and—in this view—go back to the same source, namely the influence of Iranian Alans. First to those 5,500 warriors who were sent to Britain by Marcus Aurelius, and later, in the second half of the fourth century A.D. when Alan tribes fled from the invading Huns and established themselves in Italy, in Gallia Transalpina and in the Rhine valley. A great many Sarmatian and Alan warriors also served in the Roman army in the fourth century A.D. The Sarmatian/Alan connection as traced in Hungarian medieval legends appears further to confirm what was suggested about the Eastern, Iranian, connections and origin of the Arthurian legends and its related details including the motif of the Holy Grail.

Another important detail of the Arthurian story also has a very close paral-



Fig. 9. Details from the Vatican *Legendary of the Angevin kings*. The girl cuts off the head of a Cumanian raider; King Ladislav sleeps in the lap of the girl.

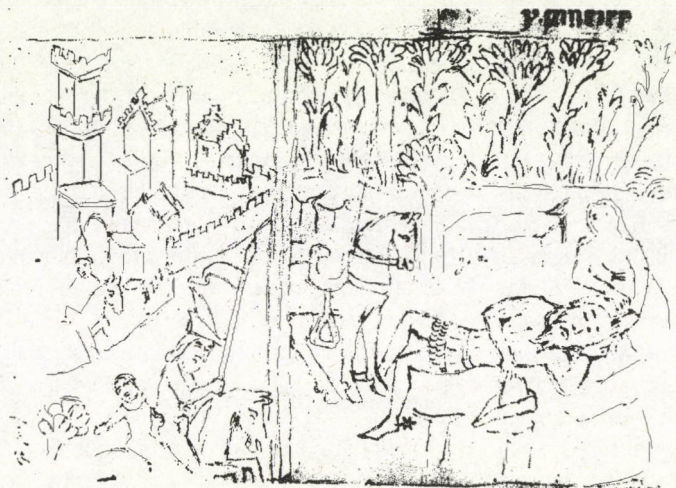


Fig. 10. A Cumanian raider sleeps in the lap of a girl. *Bántornya/Turnišče, Slovenia*. Wall painting by John Aquila, 14th c. Drawing by Ferenc Storno, 1863.

lel in the legend of Saint Ladislav. Amongst the six miracles which took place before his canonization in 1192, one involves the story of the mysterious silver bowl called *scutella*. It had been presented by King Ladislav himself to one of his un-

daunted warriors and it was passed on by him to his son. It happened that the son was short of money and pledged it against a loan from a rich bailiff. When he wanted to pay back the money, the bailiff refused to conclude their bargain and said that the bowl had always been his property. The king (Stephanus II, rex Hungariae, 1116–1131) ordered an investigation of the case and Waltherus, Waradiensis episcopus [1119/1124–1138], bishop of Várad (the Basilica of Várad was the final burial place of St Ladislav) found a simple solution: the silver bowl was placed on the altar above the grave of St Ladislav and the debaters had to try to carry off the bowl. The bailiff tried first, and the original Latin text repeats almost word for word what had been written about Lancelot before the Holy Grail by Malory:

Quidam itaque miles, urgente necessitate scutellam argenteam, quam patri suo pius rex donaverat, cuidam comiti venalem exposuit, sed eam idem comes, ardore cupiditatis illeceus, a se furtim sublatam esse confixit. Rex itaque Stephanus, Colomanni filius hanc causam Walthero, Waradiensis episcopo legitti-

mo fine terminandam commisit, qui de meritis beati regis certissime confidens, per sententiam iudiciariam decrevit, quod eadem scutella super sepulchrum sancti regis Ladislai poneretur, ut comprobaret dominus, quis illorum eam iuste deberat habere. Comes ergo nimium de se presumendo scutellam accepturus ad sepulchrum accessit, statimque cecidit, velud mortuus et vehementer attonitus neque scutellam meminit accipere neque de terra otuit resurgere. Pauper vero miles ad sepulchrum humiliter accedens, quod suum erat, deo gratias accepit.

The bailiff himself came to the holy grave with much hope that he would take the *scutella*: but he suddenly fell down almost dead, and in his deep daze he could not grasp the bowl, and had no power to get up. The poor soldier, however, approached the grave and took his bowl praising God.<sup>30</sup> Comparing these lines to the vision of Lancelot we can say that the silver bowl once owned by St Ladislav had the miraculous power of the Holy Grail. It should be remarked that silver bowls are rare and precious archeological finds in the heritage of the early Magyars of the 10th century, and a beautiful gold cup decorated with admirably engraved gems and crystals—a fine parallel of the Chosroe cup—was once among the royal treasure of the House of Árpád. The best parallel of the Chosroe cup—and also of the mentioned descriptions—is the golden cup from the Szeged-Nagyszéksós treasure, the burnt remains of the funeral sacrifice of a Hun king, possibly Attila himself.

As mentioned above, one very important feature of the Holy Grail and the Nartya-monga is their power to know Good from Evil, White from Black, Honest from Dishonest, Untrue and Truthful. Late Medieval legends describe St Ladislav, the Knight of the Holy Virgin as possessing super-natural powers allowing how to know Good from Evil and Veracity from Falsehood.

The idea and motif of this story of St Ladislav is similar to that of the Arthurian legends, as is the theme of the repose scene. I am quite sure that these similarities are not necessarily evidence that the poetry of chivalry, lyric or epic, took root in Hungary under West European literary influences in the 13–14th centuries, since the relevant part of the St Ladislav legend on the silver bowl was formulated around the end of the twelfth century, when the knightly King was raised to the altars of the church. Quite the contrary, this story, together with the repose scene is part of the lost epic poetry of the ancient Hungarians. Elements of this pagan, originally Iranian heroic poetry was taken over by the Magyars from surviving Iranian populations of the 1st–5th centuries on the Plain and in Transdanubia. These Iranian peoples, Sarmatians/Alans survived the hostile arrival and oppressive domination of Turkic and Germanic chiefdoms in the Carpathian Basin during the 5th–9th centuries, and were assimilated here by the early Magyars from around the end of the 7th century A.D. onwards. Elements of this lost pagan Iranian heroic epic later passed into legends of St Ladislav and into Hungarian folklore (especially into ballads). The person and successful reign of King Ladislav formed the basis of many literary works and church wall paintings from the 14th century onwards. As a result, similar details in his legends and in different stories of the Arthurian cycle can be seen as diverging developments of what was originally the same tradition: that of the Middle Iranian—Sarmatian/Alan—heavily armoured warriors coming into Central and Western Europe with their dragon standards, in several waves, from the 1st century A.D. onwards. ❧

## Notes

- 1 ■ For the relevant and detailed sources referred here see my comprehensive study in the millectenary number of *Századok*, vol. 130, 1996.
- 2 ■ I. A. Richmond: "The Sarmatae, Brementenacum Veteranorum, and the Regio Brementennacensis". *Journal of Roman Studies* 35, 1945, pp. 16–29. I express my thanks for help and advice to Tom Strickland, Chéster.
- 3 ■ Arriani Nicomediensis: *Tactica*, 35, 1–5. For other ancient sources see Vegetius: *Epitoma rei militaris*, ii, 13.; Sidonius Apollinaris: *Panegyricus Maioriani, Carmina* v, 402.; Nemesianus: *Cynegetica*, 82.—Trebellius Pollio in *Historia Augusta, Gallienus*, 8.; Codex Iustinianus, 1, 27.; Lucianus Sophista: *Quomodo historia conscribenda sit*, 29.—[Flavius Vopiscus Syracusius]: *Historia Augusta, Divus Aurelianus*, xxxi.; Ammianus Marcellinus, xvi, 12, 38–39 and also xv, 5, 16.
- 4 ■ János Harmatta in *Antik Tanulmányok* 28, 1981, pp. 111 and 129–131.
- 5 ■ Book IX, 1, 3, 4, 11, X, 3, 6, 9, 11, esp. Book X, I, and also XI, 2.
- 6 ■ Book X, 6. The dead body of Sir Bedivere was also brought to the same place: Book X, 9.
- 7 ■ *Caxton's Malory. A New Edition of Sir Thomas Malory's Le Morte Darthur*, ed. by James W. Spisak, (referred as Morte Darthur). Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1983, p. 124, i2 recto, 4, Book v. 4.—*Historia Regum Britanniae*, Book X, 2.
- 8 ■ Ammianus Marcellinus xvi, 10, 6–7. Loeb Classical Library.
- 9 ■ K.V. Trever: *Un étendard Sassanide*. Musée de l'Ermitage, Travaux du Département Oriental, tome III, Léningrad, 1940, pp. 167–78, Pls. I–II.
- 10 ■ For a detailed account see János Makkay: "Decebal kincsei" (The Treasures of Decebalus). *Századok*, 129, 1995, pp. 967–1032, and by the same author: "The Treasures of Decebalus." *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 14:3, 1995, pp. 333–43, with further literature.
- 11 ■ János Makkay: *Attila kardja—Árpád kardja* (Attila's Sword—Árpád's Sword). Szeged, 1995, passim.
- 12 ■ C. Scott Littleton—A.C. Thomas: "The Sarmatian Connection: New Light on the Origin of the Arthurian and Holy Grail Legends." *Journal of American Folklore* 91, 1978, pp. 512–27.; C. Scott Littleton: "The Holy Grail, the Cauldron of Annwn, and the Nartymonga. A Further Note on the Sarmatian Connection". *Journal of American Folklore* 92: 365, 1979, pp. 326–33. C. Scott Littleton: *The New Comparative Mythology*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1982.; C. Scott Littleton: "From Swords in the Earth to the Sword in the Stone: A Possible Reflection of an Alano-Sarmatian Rite of Passage in the Arthurian Tradition" In *Homage to G. Dumézil*. Washington, 1983, pp. 53–67.; C. Scott Littleton—Linda A. Malcor: *From Scythia to Camelot. A Radical Reassessment of the Legends of King Arthur, the Knights of the Round Table and the Holy Grail*. New York–London, 1994; Helmut Nickel: "Wer waren König Artus' Ritter? Über die geschichtliche Grundlage der Artussagen." *Waffen- und Kostümkunde* 17: 1, 1975, pp. 1–28.; Also by the same author: "About the Sword of the Huns and the 'Urepos' of the Steppes." *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 7, 1963, pp. 131–42.
- 13 ■ G. A. Pugatsenkova: *Iz khudozestvennoi sokrovishnitsy Srednevo Vostoka*. (Ancient Art Treasures of Central Asia). Tashkent, 1987, pp. 56–65 and unnumbered figs.
- 14 ■ J. Grisward: "Le motif d'épée jetée au lac: la mort d'Artur et la mort de batraz." *Romania* 9, 1969, pp. 289–340.
- 15 ■ *Morte Darthur*, Book xxi, 5.
- 16 ■ *Morte Darthur*, Book i, 3–5 and 24–25.
- 17 ■ János Makkay: *The Sword of Attila*, op.cit. 1995, passim.
- 18 ■ *The Arthurian Encyclopaedia*, New York, 1986, p. 258, lines 322–27.
- 19 ■ *Ibid.*, pp. 324–25.
- 20 ■ Margaret R. Scherer: *About the Round Table. King Arthur in Art and Literature*. New York, 1945/1974, p. 68 and p. 79, *Morte Darthur*, Book xvii, 15.
- 21 ■ Scott Littleton, op. cit. 1982, pp. 262–263.
- 22 ■ Scott Littleton, op. cit. 1979, p. 332.
- 23 ■ Dio Cassius: *Romaiké istoria*, 71. 16. 6.
- 24 ■ M. R. Scherer, op. cit. 1945/1974, pp. 20, 22, 32, 34, 42, 43.
- 25 ■ Curiously enough, Ekkehard/Eckardt first decided to write the Waltharius story when he returned to the monastery of St Gallen after the occupation if it by Magyar raiders in 926 A.D.
- 26 ■ Nickel, op. cit. 1973, pp. 137–138.
- 27 ■ Nickel, op. cit. 1975, pp. 4–5, and Fig. 3.
- 28 ■ Gyula László: *A Szent László-legendája középkori falképei* (The Legend of Saint Ladislav and its Representations on Medieval Wall Paintings). Budapest, 1993, pp. 24–56.
- 29 ■ The well-known story told by our medieval chronicles is connected with the victory of the king—then a royal prince—against the Cumans at Kerlés, Transylvania, in 1068.
- 30 ■ For the Latin text of the legend see E. Szentpétery: *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum*, I–II. Budapest, 1937–1938. Vol. II, 1938, p. 524–25, *Legenda S. Ladislai regis*, c. 10.; Bonfini: *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades* 2. 4. pp. 295–99.

Imre Takács

## Pannonhalma Abbey

Imre Takács–Kornél Szovák–Martina Monostori: *Mons Sacer 996–1996. Pannonhalma ezer éve I–III.* (Mons Sacer 996–1996: Thousand years of Pannonhalma). Pannonhalma, 1996, 1340 pp.

**T**o paraphrase János Thuróczy, the late 15th-century chronicler, who was writing about Pannonhalma Abbey, the Benedictine monastery which has recently celebrated its thousandth anniversary: "The house on Mons Sacer Pannoniae is the most distinguished, in which the first scholarly institution was founded in Hungary from which issued as from a divine stock farm prelates fit to govern the Church, in which apostles were trained, martyrs were bred, teachers were trained, saints lived, a place which waxes day by day in numbers, scholarship and virtue."

Mons Sacer Pannoniae has only been called Pannonhalma in Hungarian since the early 19th century. It is the only toponym in Hungary which documents the continuous survival of the name of the Roman province of Pannonia. The name of the hill may well be derived from the cult of Silvanus of the ancient Pannonians, who was identified with Pan by the Romans. Medieval authors talked not only of the

mount as sacred, but thought of the spring at its foot as sacred, as well, from which rose the Pannosa brook, whose name also has an ancient ring to it. According to the Benedictine tradition Saint Martin, later Bishop of Tours, was born in the village of Sabaria Sicca at the foot of the hill. He is the patron saint of the abbey. The tradition, which goes back to the 11th century, is based on the vitae of Saint Martin which speak of Sabaria in Pannonia as his birthplace. That, however, is hardly likely to have been the small Sabaria Sicca and was presumably the provincial capital Sabaria on the site of the present town of Szombathely. The 12th-century chronicler, whose name is not known and who has hence come down to us as Anonymus, writes of the invading Magyars camping at the foot of Saint Martin's Hill late in the 10th century, drinking the waters of the Sabaria spring and watering their cattle there. When they climbed the hill they delighted in the view of the lands of Pannonia. Around a hundred years after that event, very likely in 996, monks expelled from Prague (Saint Adalbert) settled there on Mons Sacer Pannoniae, which the heathen prince Géza chose as their domicile towards the end of his reign.

King Stephen, Géza's son, who christianized the country and who was canonized in the century in which he lived, made

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### **Imre Takács**

*is on the staff of the Hungarian National Gallery and was one of the curators of its exhibition Pannonia Regia (1994) and a co-author of its catalogue.*

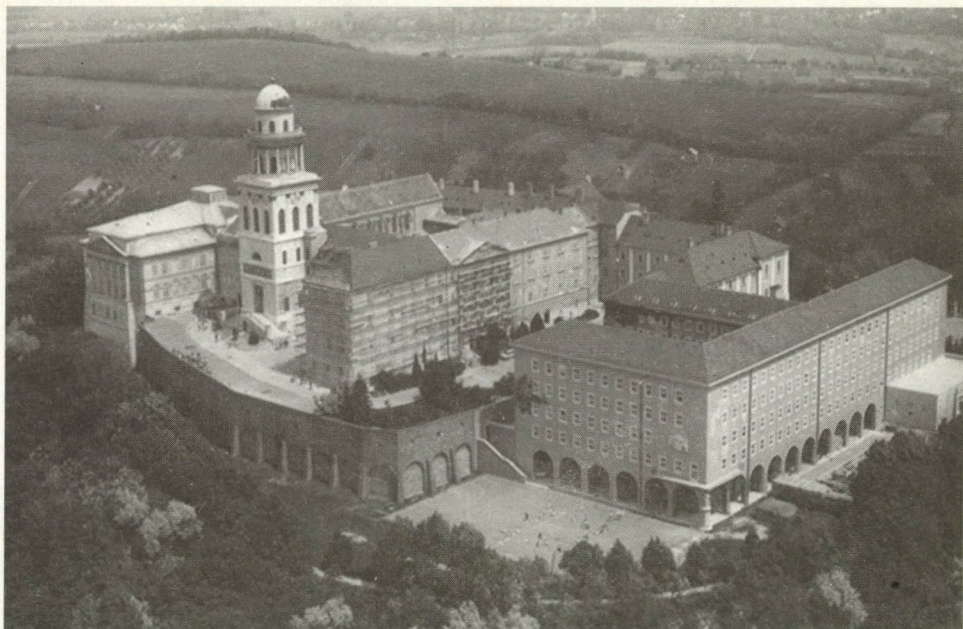


Photo Szabolcs Hármor, MTT

View of Pannonhalma

Mons Sacer Pannoniae his base in his crucial campaign against his rebellious heathen kinsman Koppány. After the battle, Stephen donated the title of Koppány's lands to the abbey and also accorded it the *nullius* privilege, extraordinary at the time, which placed the abbey, like Montecassino itself, under direct papal jurisdiction. So the Charter of Privileges dated 1002, the first Hungarian document, tells us.

A late 11th-century library inventory is evidence of the role which the Abbey was already playing in nurturing traditions of scholarship. It lists eighty volumes, mostly liturgical or theological works but there is also a volume each by Cicero and Lucanus. A few decades after this inventory, the Venetian Cerbanus managed to obtain a copy of the works of Maximus the Confessor through the help of the abbot, and he began his Latin translation of the Greek text with a eulogy of the library: "The monastery of Saint Martin is amply supplied with hagiographies of the Fathers of

the Church, their teachings, and exegeses of Holy Writ." It is certain that this was the site of the first monastic school, where Maurus, later abbot, and later still Bishop of Pécs, was taught. He is the author of the Legend of Saints Zoerard and Benedict, the first literary work produced in Hungary. Surviving evidence of the legal and literary work of the monks include the formularies of the *locus credibilis* which operated there in the Middle Ages, and a 15th-century MS of a sermon, which is reckoned a rarity. Pál Forgách, a 16th-century monk produced the Forgách Codex, a richly illustrated *Evangelistarium* and *Benedictionale*.

Only wall-fragments survive of the first, double-sanctuary church which was built around the year 1000. The above mentioned 11th-century inventory lists its furnishings. A royal palace was built in the vicinity of the Abbey, King Coloman Beauclerc (1095–1116) there received Geoffroi de Bouillon, leading the First Crusade, when he passed through Hun-



*The East Crypt of the Abbey Church, ante 1224.*



*Chameleon on the Spur of a Pillar Base in the Abbey Church, ante 1224.*

gary. A Royal Decree of 1137 speaks of the rebuilding, renovation and extension of the church. The church, which still stands today, renovated for the second time, was consecrated in 1224, in the presence of King Andrew II (1205–1235). It is the work of Abbot Urias (1207–1247), one of the best preserved works of architecture of the House of Árpád period. Abbot Urias spent a lifetime defending the wealth and standing of the Abbey. He visited the Papal Court on five occasions, accompanied his king on the 1217 Crusade, and finally, successfully confronted the Tatar host in 1242.

Mid-14th-century abbots played a major role in the efforts to reform the Benedictine Order. Abbot Gulielmus Hammer took part in the 1342 meeting of the chapter of the order which was held in Visegrád. His successor, between 1355 and 1362, was Abbot Sigfried who restored the monastery in a worthy manner. Abbot Siegfried had earlier travelled to England on a diplomatic mission on behalf of King Louis the Great.

The late Gothic ambulatory was completed in 1486 under King Matthias Corvinus. On the eve of the Reformation, his successor Vladislav II was responsible for an organizational reform of the Abbey, and with it the

Benedictine Province of Hungary. Abbot Máté Tolnai (1500–1535), who had earlier been a chancery official, created a union of all abbeys that were royal foundations and did much to restore monastic discipline and the religious way of life.

Following the disastrous defeat at Mohács (1526), much of Hungary was occupied by the Ottoman host. There was much fighting in the area and the monastery was often the site for the marshalling and the billeting of troops. In 1586 the



*Justus van der Nypoort: A View of Pannonhalma, 1686.*



*Friedrich Krepp: The Western Prospect of Pannonhalma, 1869.*



*Pannonhalma, the Library Interior, 1824–1835.*

monks left and the buildings on the hill were then used as a frontier outpost, now by the Hungarians, now by the Turks. The monastery was finally ravaged in 1683 by the Ottoman host under the Grand Vizier Kara Mustapha on its way to besiege Vienna. In 1701, however, this, the first Benedictine Abbey in Hungary, was able to celebrate its first seven hundred years in a time of peace. Abbot Benedek Sajghó (1722–1786) erected the Baroque cloister which still stands, including the refectory, with frescoes by David Antonio Fossati. His

successor Dániel Somogyi (1768–1801) planned the reconstruction of the whole ensemble, but his plans were aborted because of the dissolution of the monasteries under Joseph II (1786).

The Benedictines were able to resume educational duties in 1802. Up to the mid-20th century they founded secondary grammar schools (*gimnázium*) in Győr, Sopron, Pápa, Nagyszombat (Trnava), Esztergom, Komárom (Kormarno), Pozsony (Presporek, later renamed Bratislava), Kőszeg, Budapest, Pannonhalma and Csepel. Benedictine scholar or scientist teachers in the 19th century included Gergely Czuczor, the poet, Ányos Jedlik, the physicist who invented the dynamo in 1861, and Flóris Rómer, the

medievalist and archeologist. Under the arbitrary action taken by the Communist state, the number of Benedictine schools in Hungary was reduced to two (Pannonhalma, Győr). Members of the Province of Hungary of the Benedictine Order are at present active in Pannonhalma, Győr, Tihany, Budapest, Tiszaújfalú, Komárom in Slovakia and Saõ Paolo in Brazil.

**A**n exhibition of the history and art of Pannonhalma was held between March 21 and November 1996. The 1250 pages of

the three-volume catalogue included several hundred black and white and colour illustrations, as well as scholarly articles.

As the millenary celebrations approached, the order concentrated its attention not only on restoration work, which had been going on since 1986, but also on an interdisciplinary approach to the history of the Abbey, calling on a collaboration of historians, textual critics, art historians and museologists. The exhibition and its catalogue had to be worthy of the anniversary and the place, as well as satisfying international standards. In December 1996, Pannonhalma was declared a World Heritage Site, the fourth in Hungary.

Unfortunately, little has come down to us from the Golden Age of the Abbey, from the 11th to 13th centuries. Thus we know what titles the library contained, but not a single volume has survived. The same goes for the treasury as described in the inventory. Documents are the only exception. Pannonhalma is one of the most important repositories of medieval Hungarian diplomatics. Twelfth-century private deeds of donation stand out. It is of scant consolation that this applies to much of Hungarian medieval art and historical objects. Objects of use, church furnishings, works of art, reminders of scholarship, science and education in much their greatest part are from the last two centuries. A balance of sorts is restored in the exhibition by the *scriptorium* items and



Joseph Franz Engel–Johann Baptist Packh:  
*The Library and Church Spire at Pannonhalma, 1824–1835*

by medieval fragments in the lapidary. Presenting genuine historical centres of gravity, a true reconstruction was, however, a purely intellectual task, one which could only be undertaken by contributors to the catalogue.

The museological trick that could be employed to create a visual correlation to scholarship was to exhibit the most valuable items of the 19th-century scholarly and art collections, the archaeological and natural history collections, the library and the picture gallery. All this was supplemented by a selection of archival material of non-local origin. This includes the seldom shown Deed of Foundation of Tihany Abbey (1055),

at present in Pannonhalma, albeit not of local his-torical relevance, and the first surviving Hungarian (indeed Finno-Ugric) text.

The most sensational findings of recent years of Hungarian medieval archeology could not be exhibited. They are too gigantic, and could not be moved. It was discovered that the oddly shaped western part of the church, dismantled in the course of 19th century reconstructions, was not completely destroyed. The wall of the crypt below the western sanctuary, 2 meters high in places, survived below the neo-Classic steeple, in the material used to shore it up. Traces suggest that the anti-sanctuary façade was joined by a steeple or a pair of steeples. This feature of Carolingian and Ottonian architecture could not really have been built later than 1000 in that place. The side walls of the present church may well have been part of that early building or else of its 12th-century successor. What was established only recently is that they are earlier than the 13th century. Two walled up doors on the north front were found, one of them was also part of the early building. Wall paintings of different dates were found on the outside of the church wall which faced the monastery, among them a late 14th-century copy of the Volto Santo in Lucca. Accounts of this research are found in Volume One of the Catalogue, but it must be said that those are hypotheses which will long engage the attention of scholars and not questions which have been satisfactorily answered. What will also serve future research is a somewhat unusual architectural survey of the ensemble as part of the preparations for the exhibition. Much that earlier had seemed architecturally "unsound" thus found an explanation. The Catalogue includes numerous details supplementing the ground plan and cross sections of the church.

The parts of the exhibition dealing with the more recent history of the Abbey, and Volume Two of the catalogue tell of plans of a great Baroque cloister on the Austrian model (Melk, Sankt Florian) which were aborted by both the strength and persistence of local traditions and Joseph II's secularization. It seems that early in the 18th century the local Benedictines thought of their own past in much the same terms as modern historians—the Golden Age was over, as were the Middle Ages. As Boniface Lancsics wrote at the end of the 17th century in connection with the rebuilding of the Abbey damaged in the Turkish wars, this had to be based on the deepest possible layers, *ad formam antiquam*.

It would seem, however, that what the monks taking up residence again nevertheless had in mind were Baroque ideas, when they, early in the 19th century, commissioned Ferenc Engel and János Packh to design, and partially execute, their expression in neo-Classic terms. This anachronistic modernization resulting in effective façades and a structured mass of the buildings was followed by Ferenc Storno's Romantic and Historicist reconstruction in the 1860s and 1870s, once again with the support of a community reflecting on its own past.

The collections were exhibited in the great halls of the Classicist library and in the northern closets that had originally been meant to house a picture gallery. The basic principle of a historic reconstruction is here asserted in the sense that parts of collections established as a museum in the Age of Reform refound each other in their original home in the library, once also built to be a museum.

According to present plans, a permanent exhibition will be opened in the spring of 1997 on the site of the historical display, in brand new space specially created to accommodate it.

Miklós Györffy

## Literature at Any Price?

Sándor Tar: *Szürke galamb* (Grey Pigeon). Magvető, 1996, 289 pp. • Ferenc Temesi: *Pest. Seneca*, 1996, 343 pp. • Szilárd Podmaniczky: *Megyek egy kört az alvázon* (I'll Do a Lap on the Chassis). Pesti Szalon, 1996, 174 pp.

Sándor Tar has apparently had enough of being called the best documentarist of Hungarian reality. His previous volume of short stories, *A mi utcánk* (Our Street), tried to break the mould he had himself encased in through his careful and systematic work. Although that cycle of short stories combined intricate apocalyptic perspectives with a morbid humour let loose, he retained and even improved further on his virtues as a documentarist. His new book, *Grey Pigeon*, targets crime fiction rather than reality.

By no means a conventional piece of crime fiction, *Grey Pigeon* is an odd book in many respects. The plot, as it emerges vaguely from minute scenes and mosaics, is concerned with a major criminal act. In spite of all the literary diversions, Tar sticks to the conventions—mysterious deaths and murders, the threads of the story are gradually disentangled, and the closing pages reveal the identity of the murderer.

By this stage, the reader has the feeling that there is more than one villain in the background to account for the multiplying accidents and criminal acts. There is the

"Man with the Pigeon", who has a criminal record and is an expert on toxic substances, medicinal and poisonous plants. Concealing his identity and past, he is caretaker of a tenement house in a town in Hungary, unnamed but clearly Debrecen. The old poisoner, who had once tried out his deadly experiments on his small daughter, lives alone and unnoticed and is an exemplary caretaker. He more or less unintentionally poisons some pigeons who display symptoms similar to rabies, turn predator and mercilessly hunt down their fellow pigeons. This might have gone unnoticed by the locals, had it not been that some of them were infected by the pigeons, started vomiting blood and died within a short time. Thus the novel opens.

Then there is "Harelip", another loner, who wishes to lay hands on the old man's concoctions, in the meantime committing murders in cold blood. There are a few other shady characters, a few other crimes committed too, and "finally there is a townful of disturbed populace; some of them have lost their unstable human selves under the shock and the panic and in the presence of sin, testing their inherent murderous instincts after the pattern of suicidal epidemics."

That, at least, is how the state of affairs is summed up at the police headquarters, much to the reader's benefit, who by this

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**Miklós Györffy**

*is our regular reviewer of new fiction.*

stage is pretty much lost in the tangle of intricate details. The real protagonist of the novel turns out to be the police themselves, for the book combines a crime story with a police procedural story. Tar is convincing on the workings of the police and the current conditions a Hungarian town police force works under. The patterns, however, are American. The minor figures—a colonel still with courage and canniness in old age and who dies a hero's death, the hard drinking Lieutenant Molnár, on half-pay, a lone wolf, and Sergeant Malvin, the woman who out-smarts men—and the minor characters all fit the clichés of American crime movies to a degree that raises suspicions of parody. The relationships between the police characters are also conspicuously *déjà vu*—especially the romance which inevitably blossoms between Lieutenant Molnár, hardened and maladjusted, but really looking for hearth and home and Sergeant Malvin. Their union is finally brightened by the abandoned children who reach a safe haven due to their good offices.

The culprit is eventually found within the ranks of the police. In the book's climax, straight out of an action movie, Harelip turns out to be none other than a Major Csiszár, who sticks an artificial harelip under his nose whenever he turns from policeman into criminal. Lieutenant Molnár recognizes the unforgettable pair of eyes he saw under a balaclava when he and eleven others unknown to him were undergoing special drill as members of a police commando unit called the Apostles. The town's police come into contact with mysterious organizations, which although not explicitly described as such are clearly the terrorists of an international communist secret service, still together in their conspirative ways and prepared to do away with anyone who makes trouble for them. The "Firm" has set Ukrainian gang-

sters and oil-maffia godfathers on Csiszár, but the intrepid Harelip stays ahead of them and eliminates them in cold blood, until he himself makes a mistake.

*Grey Pigeon* is a thriller in which Tar presumably wants to do justice to the genre as well as turn out a spoof. His protagonists play cops and robbers, he plays it with the genre. Whenever the reader starts taking the crime story seriously, he finds himself entrapped—ashamed?, taken over?, lectured to? If not, it is all the worse.

Irony and spoof are uneven, appearing most convincingly in the morbid motifs—such as the hemorrhaging epidemic, the select horror of murders and executions devised by cunning minds, which, given the kind of writer Tar is, must be taken from real life.

There is also an anecdotal, jovial, journalistic humour, at times close to stand-up comedy and ill-adapted to surreal morbidity. *Grey Pigeon* is full of the absurd details of everyday life in the street, in bars, in the police force; these are padding rather than closely related to the plot. After absurd and ironic excesses, morbidity and literary stylizations, we have the impression that the story is again for real, occasionally lapsing into sentimentality.

Finally, an odd duality runs through the structure of the novel as well. Tar tries to compose his novel from an order of scenes and episodes intended to be inconsequential and arbitrary. This does not work, since even in their fragmented state they conform to the clichés and conventions of the genre. The capricious alternation of texts and tones merely give the clumsy appearance of (postmodern?) playfulness, meanwhile the stunted cloven hoof of straightforward, unified, realistic narrative is showing.

The kind of realistic crime story Tar is capable of writing, on, say, the survival and power-grabbing techniques of the

"Firm", remains unwritten. What has been written is, deplorably, full of unsuccessful literary artfulness but which never for a moment allows us to forget Tar's brilliant documentarist works.

Ferenc Temesi's two-volume novel *Dust* was highly acclaimed when it first appeared ten years ago. In it he recalls 150 years of the history of the town of Szeged and the ups and downs of the years he spent there in his youth in the form of alphabetic encyclopedic entries. The entries were selected by the author at will and are anecdotes, sketches and short stories, producing an impressive, courageous and ingenious attempt at achieving a synthesis of the parochialism and contingency of life in a country town. He tried to put the dusty world of the Great Hungarian Plain at an ironic-critical distance, and to make a myth of its self-contained world. Many doubted the success of his undertaking. Now Temesi has published a new novel, *Pest*, which is closely related to *Dust*.

*Pest* begins where *Dust* ends, in 1973, when the author leaves Porlód, (i.e. Szeged) and moves to Pest. In this sense *Pest* is a sequel to *Dust*, yet is also a preliminary to it: it ends when he starts writing *Dust*. (The last word of *Pest* is the first word of *Dust*.) *Pest* then is apparently about the writer and his life in Pest until he works out the plan of his first novel in which he relates his life before moving to Budapest. Apparently, I said, for things turn out not quite like that, even though the author wants to make us see them in such favourable light.

Like *Dust*, which the author, in defiance of other interpretations and with no small pride, called the first genuinely post-modern Hungarian novel, *Pest* is an eclectic work, a mixture of texts of various kinds. One is a narrative of the author's life in Budapest in the form of random

notes, sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third. He gives a telling name to his alter ego, Zoltán Tengődi ("drifter"), wallowing in the literary and artistic subculture of the young opposition intellectuals of Pest. He has neither family and home nor work, only temporary and transitional engagements and connections. He spends his time mainly drinking with his cronies. (Apart from that, he beds women at will.) Well-known figures in the artistic underground of the 70s Pest crop up, and even the official and intellectual establishment is represented. (Those who have since died figure under their own names, those still alive under slightly distorted pseudonyms. When the book appeared the rumour spread that some people were getting their come-uppance.) Temesi is blusterer indeed, ready to shoot off his mouth, and in *Pest* he cockily shows off his outspokenness. His youthful self harbours no doubts of his own excellence and originality and of others' insignificance and worthlessness. This is all right if one can hit a credible literary tone, but the trouble is that it is much rather the bitterness and anger of a bias that comes out. His contemporaries will hardly recognize the particular age through the escapades of the boozing young hopefuls, and those who did not have first-hand experience of the city in those years cannot make much of the inbreeding culture around Tengődi.

There is yet another stylistic layer in the novel which is more interesting and at the same time more problematic as regards discourse or morals and manners. It is in fact a second fill-up or simply the waste of *Dust*. More than half of *Pest* is made up of anecdotes from Szeged, scattered around while Tengődi's ups and downs are depicted with increasingly rigorous monotony. There is an excuse though—a priest from Szeged, who enter-

tained literary ambitions all his life, sends Tengódi a collection of anecdotes from his death-bed with the idea that at least he should make use of them, if the priest himself was unable to. We read through the stories with Tengódi one by one, some of which are real gems; in doing so we are to all purposes and intents expected to see how under their influence, and of course while drifting on in Pest, the great work slowly matures in Tengódi. But this does not happen, for the anecdotes are no more than left-overs from *Dust*.

The author's claim that the form of *Pest* follows the code of the thirty-six secret stratagems of the Chinese art of war—accordingly, words and texts written in Chinese pictograms are scattered throughout the novel—is not really worth mentioning. How it is to be interpreted and what it has to do with the above, remains utterly vague. The main problem with *Pest* is, as I see it, that Temesi has given up the ambition of making a synthesis which even in its imperfect execution still informed *Dust*. He wants to make us believe the opposite with tricks easily seen through.

**T**hirty-three-year-old Szilárd Podmaniczky's *I'll Do a Lap on the Chassis* is his second book, following *Haggyatok lóuszülésben* (Let me Sit on in the Lotus Position) of three years ago. Both are unusual, challenging titles, both are narrated in the first person and are a sentence of soliloquy each, making up the two books. *I'll Do a Lap* contains thirty texts, each six to seven pages long. Someone speaks in each in the first person singular. This somebody is not an identifiable person; in any case, based on the content, the supposition that it might be the same person throughout, i.e., a narrator or the narrator, cannot be substantiated. In subject, the individual pieces do not belong together, but there is something common in the tone, manner,

style and intonation of this first person—so much so that the pieces can be thought to be the nonsensical gabble of the same person. For Podmaniczky does not tell stories, he prattles on without rhyme or reason. At times something resembling a story, a situation or a message emerges, but mostly it is just meaningless, absurd drivel.

That particular voice gabbling away could actually be the author's. In the first text, entitled "Axioms, Theorems and Exercises from the Circle of the Plump Prose-writer", the voice is in the name of the "plump prose-writer": "Of the picture that shall be named The Prose-writer, many will think as showing a soft-bodied man with hanging jowls, possibly a hirsute face, against a dark background. A big body like that lends one tremendous calm; it makes the reader feel secure, you might think, who can hide behind him in case shots are fired or in the scorching sun; on the other hand, if he produces poor and shoddy prose you can spare telling him off for his work, it will be enough to whisper a stupid little ditty in his ear." The text then goes on about the differences between plump and thin prose-writers, with special regard to their behaviour on the beach with girls in bathing-suits.

I do not know Szilárd Podmaniczky, but I do picture him a big, soft-bodied man with hanging jowls, unshaven, who takes a childish joy in giving voice to his trivial private perceptions. He prattles on to himself. "I have three pairs of summer trousers. Two of them are identical. One is different. Of the three I wear one or the other at any time. I keep keys, a handkerchief or money in a pocket. I leave my hip pocket empty because I sit a lot. Occasionally I pour something on one or another of my trousers." Of his previous book, one critic wrote, under the heading "Poor Little Boy": "The tone of Szilárd Podmaniczky's book is that of a comically

suffering 'I' preoccupied by his own necessities and bodily fluids and trying to tame the world with puerile and obstinate word magic. The most emphatic feature of the text is infantilism of some sort—not innocent childishness, on the contrary: the kind of aggressiveness generated in children by the discrepancy between their own narrow range of action and the possibilities they already grasp."

This more or less describes the author's second volume as well, with the difference that we get more self-irony. The statement "I'll Do a Lap on the Chassis" and other similar statements are to be understood in themselves: they mean no more and no less than their own irrelevance. A few silly gags, a few mixed metaphors and corrupted idioms are scattered around the texts. All these are indicative of the keenness with which the author presents himself as a "prose-

writer", but he has neither the stories nor the linguistic capability to go with it. What he has is this grotesque, self-ironic, meaningless voice naively rattling on about the loss of language and literature from text to text. There is nothing left to write about, except this very fact, in order to maintain a life-saving appearance of speech and meaning. (This is not just Podmaniczky's "theme", it is also that of his generation and some of their predecessors, such as Dezső Tandori, to whom the title-piece is dedicated.) It has been a long time in Hungarian literature that the ars poetica of a generation was so uniform—if indeed this self-mutilating, self-negating style can be called literature at all. Lajos Parti Nagy, László Garaczi, Endre Kukorelly, László Darvasi all make variations on the same theme for better or worse. Podmaniczky's uncouth prose is a close kin to theirs. ■



Photo Péter Korniss

Julian Schopflin

## A Traveller in Times Past

Patrick Leigh-Fermor: *A Time of Gifts; Between the Woods and the Water*.  
London, John Murray, 1977, 1986, 248 pp. and 291 pp.

**P**atrick Leigh-Fermor's two books on his youthful walk are a culmination of a long and varicoloured life in letters (not a crowning—that sounds a bit final—for we expect many more enjoyable books from his distinguished pen, particularly the third volume on that legendary walk across Europe). Nine years have passed between the publication of these two volumes, but there is a sustained continuity, as if they were written in the same breath.

For those who, perchance, have not read these books: the 18-year old Paddy, or rather Michael, as he was known for some years at the time, finding himself at a loose end after a somewhat turbulent adolescence, decided in 1933 to walk (how else?) from the Hook of Holland to Constantinople. The first volume describes his wintry peregrination along the Rhine

and through Bavaria. He slept in barns and hayricks, consorting "only with peasants and tramps." Then, by a stroke of luck, he fell in with Austrian aristocrats who handed him from castle to castle as an outlandish guest, all along the Danube. The book ends with his arrival at Esztergom in Hungary.

The second volume—of particular interest to Anglo-Hungarian (or should I say "Hunglish?") readers—is a wondrous tale of wanderings; he travelled on horseback (!) all across the great Hungarian Plain, thanks to his new-found aristocratic Hungarian friends; he was cosseted by noblemen for weeks on end, enjoying an almost feudal hospitality. He experienced the same welcome in Transylvania, all along the network of aristocrats (impoverished but steadfast under Romanian rule). Intertwined with his flitting from manor houses to castles is an evocation of a featherweight love affair. The book ends with Leigh-Fermor's entry in the Regat of Romania through the—now vanished—Iron Gates.

What characterizes these two books is, first and foremost, the writer's enchanting style. His earlier writings had earned the accolade of most critics and reviewers ("beautiful," "a carol of Rococo joys" were some of the adjectives extolling a previous book of his). "Irresistible," "a brilliant and

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### **Julian Schopflin**

*worked in publishing and radio before becoming Hungarian envoy to Sweden and Norway in 1949. Fearing he might become involved in the political show trials, he left his post and fled to England where he has been living ever since.*

*While still in Hungary, he published two volumes of fiction in the 1940s.*

richly satisfying work," "the greatest of living travel writers" were some of the praises heaped upon Leigh-Fermor by the most respected reviewers. "... The English language is still a superb instrument in the hands of a writer who has a virtuoso skill with words," wrote an enthusiastic critic. Leigh-Fermor's style indeed keeps the reader engrossed by the brilliance of a sometimes sharp, at other times well-rounded pinpointing of a memorable time or place. He is blessed with an astonishing visual and tactile memory (his recollections reveal a strikingly keen sense of smell and the memory thereof): his descriptions and evocations of a particular scent, mood or atmosphere are uniquely memorable. He is a master of the felicitous phrase, e.g., he calls the raids of nomadic Magyar riders into the West—from the south of Italy to Andalusia—"a spirited havoc."

Behind his captivating style there stands a cleverly built-up structure: the books speak in two voices interwoven in a most subtle manner. On the one hand, we hear the light-hearted rapture of an 18-year old, the joys of a square meal or a cosy sleep, then about his carefree dalliance with the *jeunesse doré* in Budapest, his unthinking acceptance of gracious hospitalities, all innocently taken for granted: on the other, we have the fascinating disquisitions of a later, mature writer—of immense curiosity and immense learning—who is always excited about new discoveries. In these, he is never boring, whether he talks about South German Baroque shading into Austrian Rococo (we may also notice a subtle change in his style from Baroque fullness into "a carol of Rococo", then to a more earthy one on the plains of Hungary), or about the cursed entanglements of Central European politics, the chequered—and mostly tragic—histories of these lands.

An interesting question is how these two books affected Hungarian readers living in England; and what impressions they left on the English-speaking reader?

We, exiled Hungarians, read them with initial wonderment, marvelling at the empathy with which the author—with astonishing recall, aided by a miraculously recovered diary and several recent trips to these lands—evoked the Hungarian landscape, the vistas, smells and sounds of a "deep" Hungary, the sweet birdsong following him like a heavenly chorus, the clapping of storks, the sonorous croakings of millions of frogs, the flowering bounty of high summer in Hungary and Transylvania, the poetic description of enchanted nights. We could almost smell the scent of newly-mown hay in our nostrils... All this awakened from its slumber the hidden nostalgia lurking in most of us. Here was a book that expressed an unequivocal sympathy with Hungary; understandably, a very warm feeling swept over us. We smiled at the author's struggle with the Magyar language: he tried, very earnestly, to render Magyar words with all their weird accents and suffixes, not always with complete success. We welcomed his acute comment that Magyar was a "dactylic" language.

Then, thinking about the message of these books, a more complex response arose, at several levels. Beyond the peerless evocation of mood and serenity, did it give a true picture of what was, and is, an unchanging essence of Hungarian-ness?

Hungary had a rather bad press in Britain, in the twenties and thirties. The legacy of the propaganda of Henry Wickham Steed and R.W. Seton-Watson (Scotus Viator) lingered on; the "White Terror" in the first years under Horthy reinforced this bad taste. There seemed to be little that merited praise to emerge from this country sidling up to Mussolini and

Hitler. This sourness persisted after the Second World War as well. Hungarian exiles in the early fifties were not terribly welcome.

It required the incandescent shooting star of the 1956 Revolution to restore the good name of Hungary. There was a tremendously warm response in Britain to the misfortunes of the Magyar nation, fuelled by admiration and, to some extent, a feeling of guilt. (Besides, the British love a gallant loser.) Now a presumption of benevolence prevailed towards things Hungarian, and this coloured reports in the press even towards the—originally murderous—Kádár regime.

On deeper reflection, we had an uneasy feeling of slight doubt about Leigh-Fermor's joyous traverse of sunny Hungary. We had, of course, to make some allowance, but still, we felt there was something that was missing and something that was not quite right.

After all, Hungary in the 'thirties was the country of "three million beggars" (the landless agricultural labourers) and the hundreds of thousands of acres owned by the aristocracy or the Catholic Church (this latter holding was hypocritically called "the patrimony of the poor"). There was not much awareness of all this in the book. We could not blame him for having been blissfully unaware of this darker side of Hungary, seeing as he was expropriated by a socially blind coterie. Still, we expected a certain balance, perhaps unjustly so.

Another aspect worth mentioning was the very special position of the very rare English visitors to Hungary. There was a selective snobbery towards foreigners, a subtle gradation of behaviour; Dutchmen or Swedes were treated with some seriousness; Frenchmen with respectful acceptance; but to be an Englishman (or woman) was a privilege in itself. It is difficult, nowadays, to imagine the reverence,

with which an Englishman or woman—of whatever background—was received by all and sundry. All those involved desperately tried to make a good impression on him or her. I suspect this prevailed throughout East Central Europe. (An amusing effect of the same snobbery was a similar accolade given to more exotic visitors: the odd black boxing champion had a devastating success among the dizzy girls of the upper classes.)

In this context, what we found was not quite right in the book was the unconscious celebration by him of the Hungarian aristocracy. Again, the same allowance has to be made for him: he was a flattered guest, a prize to be boasted of. So it was no wonder: even though he may have been a penniless wayfarer, dinner jackets and horses were lent to him freely, and he was a welcome guest in noble mansions throughout the country.

That part of Hungarian society was little liked by most of us. Aristocrats, in our eyes, were like the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. "When they were good, they were very, very good, but when they were bad, they were horrid." Some were widely respected, like the scholar and statesman Count Pál Teleki of later tragic destiny (one of Leigh-Fermor's mentors), but the majority of them were despised, sometimes hated and often ridiculed. We considered them a burden on the country, somehow supernumerary to poor little shrunken Hungary. We had no time for this world of the Almanac of Gotha, antique furniture and antlered halls.

The Hungarian aristocracy largely kept themselves to themselves, like aristocrats all over the world. Except when some scandal erupted: a notorious case was when the then Prince of Wales—later Edward VIII with his aristocratic Hungarian cronies, climbed on the roof of the

Arizona nightclub in Budapest, following a heavy drinking session, and started shooting—luckily at random—creating no small disturbance. The police were too embarrassed to intervene (again that exaggerated reverence for Englishness), the press less so. This was the talk of the town for weeks on end.

Some individual aristocrats proved to be shining examples of bravery and selflessness during the German and Russian occupations, in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*. But as a class, they were completely swept away during the post-war regime. Interestingly, the communists did not persecute them as a class—it was enough to uproot them by taking away (without compensation) their mainstay, the land. A large number of them emigrated; those who stayed were subjected to forced relocation; some withdrew into a self-imposed internal exile and so survived the following forty years, and some faced the brave new world with courage and spirit. An example is Péter Esterházy, a writer of genuine originality, a real Esterházy, albeit a mere count and not a prince.

An interesting aspect, we found, was the impression given by Leigh-Fermor of the relative tolerance of the Romanian authorities shown to the remnants of Hungarian aristocracy. There was a subtle difference between Magyar nobles in Hungary proper and their brethren in Transylvania. The latter owned smaller estates and were nearer, and more intimate with working peasants, be they Magyars or Romanians. Perhaps one could say that they were more “democratic,” in a tradition somewhat different in Transylvanian history. Things willy-nilly settled down in the thirties, after the shock of the historic changeover in 1919, when Transylvania had been torn off the living body of the Magyar nation. It was not easy to be a Magyar subject of Romanian rule, but the contrast of what

went on then and the creeping, brutal oppression in the post-war years is, sadly, striking. Then, the estates of the aristocracy were expropriated, of course, but they were left with smaller domains—castles or manors with their environs—untouched, and their lives (always slightly more modest than those in Hungary proper) less interfered with. Communications between Hungary and Romania—physical and cultural—were relaxed in those days. That, at least, comes out indirectly from Leigh-Fermor’s tale of his easy wanderings throughout Transylvania.

A trickier question is that of the picture of far-off lands offered to English readers. They no doubt got hold of these books with the delicious anticipation of a good read, granted that they were already devotees of Leigh-Fermor’s scintillating style. They (we suppose) expected also something exotic, after earlier tales of the Caribbean and of his beloved Greece. They were not disappointed in this. Certainly they must have sensed with admiration the intuitive empathy emanating from his loving descriptions of a strange world. He dazzlingly emerged as the equal to legendary English travellers like Charles Kingsley, Richard Burton or Robert Byron. Readers surely admired the perfect recall of a 19-year old young man, eager for more and more knowledge and experience in fabulous lands. What could be more alien-sounding than his throwaway comment. “The Gypsies were settling down to their evening hedgehog”...!

Those of a more serious bent doubtless followed his learned explanations of Central European history, art and society with appreciation, perhaps with admiration, although they may have been puzzled by the hopeless complexity of these matters.

Our query is, how realistic was this picture of Hungary between the wars? As far as the physical, “earthly” Hungary is con-

cerned—all that endures—the answer is yes. But as far as the Hungary of the living is concerned, Leigh-Fermor presents something like a fairyland, a strange lifestyle encased in amber. The esteemed reader is, perhaps, aware of the recent history of Hungary (thanks to 1956), but it is doubtful if they perceive that this is, indeed, history: that carefree and lighthearted existence has been utterly swept away.

Or has it? It is the bitter-sweet irony of history (maybe more bitter than sweet) that certain things repeat themselves in a twisted way. Grand shoots and exotic equestrian holidays were being offered to moneyed visitors in Kádár's Hungary of the sixties and seventies. (It was well known that communist bigwigs indulged their snobbery in large-scale shooting parties.) And—surprise, surprise—members of the old aristocracy surfaced thanks to their age-old skills in the field sports, to manage these ventures.

I have had the good fortune of personally experiencing the palpable effect Leigh-Fermor's enchanting tales had on a reader. A friend of mine—a country doctor—was so enamoured by these descriptions that

in his enthusiasm he decided to travel to Transylvania with us and follow in Leigh-Fermor's footsteps in his trusty Range Rover. A few caveats were issued by us about the venture, but nothing shook his determination. A joyous journey ensued, during which our friend could be seen with the book in his hand, trying to conjure up the mood of serenity radiating from its pages. Transylvania proved not to be the black hole we had feared: the whole journey was a trip of more-or-less unalloyed pleasure. Except that we found it astounding that hardly anything in the physical state of the land had changed in sixty-three years. (Many other things have drastically changed in Transylvania—but that's another story.)

In sum, the Hungarian people should be grateful to Patrick Leigh-Fermor. Grateful for recreating for us times past; grateful for his noble humanity. The final chord of his book is what he confesses about Magyars and Romanians: "I am the only person I know who has feelings of equal warmth for both these embattled claimants and I wish with fervour they could become friends".

We can say "Amen" to that. ♣

Tamás Koltai

# Intellectual Impulses

József Katona: *Bánk bán* • György Spiró: *Dobardan; Vircsaft* • Shakespeare: *Measure for Measure* • Georg Kaiser: *David und Goliath* • Friedrich Dürrenmatt: *Der Mitmacher*

Theatre sensitive to historical changes is turning its attention in two directions these days. One is rediscovering the kitchen sink, registering with some dismay that for most people in the post-socialist countries the return of human rights has not been accompanied by an improvement in their standard of living—indeed, quite its reverse for a great many. The other is an effort to take stock of the factors which have shaped, and still shape, the destiny of Hungary in the heart of Europe. The year 1996, proclaimed the Year of the Millecentenary, the eleven hundredth anniversary of the conquest of the Carpathian Basin by the Magyars, offers the occasion for that kind of looking backwards.

On such commemorative occasions it is self-evident that the most famous of all Hungarian classics, *Bánk bán*, should be revived. The play, unsuccessful for some time after its first production, was written in 1814 by a country lawyer, József Katona. A few decades later, during the 1848

Revolution, it already had an emblematic role for the young Hungarian intelligentsia. On the day the uprising broke out, the crowd interrupted the play's performance by the National Theatre, and set out to free the political prisoners. In the play itself, set in the thirteenth century, events lead to a rebellion. It is against the foreign Queen, Gertrudis, representing oppression, that an otherwise loyal group rebels. The rebellion takes place while the king and the highly respected Bánk, the *bán*, the man second in rank to him, is abroad. Returning home at last because he is asked to, Bánk intends to calm the disgruntled, and would indeed do so if his statesmanlike prudence and calm were not upset by the seduction of his young wife. The seducer is the lecherous younger brother of the Queen. She, exploiting every opportunity to humiliate the Hungarians, poses no objection to her brother's lechery. Bánk, repelled by violence and with a dignity worthy of a true *Realpolitiker*, demands an explanation from the Queen, and when she attacks him with a dagger, he wrests it from her, and kills her. The King, returning precipitately from a campaign, finds civil war and an utterly broken Bánk, whose wife has meanwhile gone mad and died. At the King's return, the civil war abates but he cannot and dare not punish. Acknowledging the

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The Hungarian Quarterly's regular  
theatre reviewer.

truth of all parties, standing by his wife lying in state, he appeals for peace to the nation.

József Ruszt directed the Budapest Chamber Theatre production. The title—*Bánk bán '96*—indicates that an unhistorical reckoning can be expected. The set itself is unusual: instead of the traditional theatrical space, the action takes place in a large room. As the audience takes its seats, Beethoven's *Egmont* Overture is played, a piece that reminds anyone above a certain age in Hungary of the 1956 Revolution. On October 24, 1956, it was played by Hungarian Radio all day, again and again, almost without a break. Here, right before the Coda, the music abruptly shifts into a Johann Strauss waltz: in the opening scene formally dressed ladies and gentlemen are dancing at a royal ball. The action of a play set in the 13th century and reflecting the cast of mind of the 19th, tries to find a way to touch a 20th-century audience. This sardonic, self-ironical approach persists throughout. The leader of the "malcontents", the group of rebellious feudal lords—who represents traditional national pathos—is the prototype of today's eternally grumbling nationalist. Repeating his demagogic slogans over and over again, he eats frankfurters with mustard from a paper plate, just as Communist leaders "close to the people" used to do at mass meetings. In the scene when the "revolt" breaks out, traditional Hungarian costumes suddenly appear. A poor peasant, who saved the life of Bánk in battle long ago, puts on the uniform of a common soldier so he won't be taken for a thief in rags. True, he has come to the palace to steal, but in the end he cannot bring himself to. Now, munching leftovers, he practically belches out the famous soliloquy on the wealth of the foreign oppressors and the misery of the Hungarian people.

The play has been "rewritten" somewhat by the political changes. In today's Hungary, there is no more feeling of "allusions" when foreign oppressors are being mentioned. But Bánk's assumption that some people may hate others only "because different men wear different clothes," remains as valid as ever. We are a long way from the stage where we are able to treat people of other nationality, religion, skin colour, political conviction or party sympathy with tolerance. The kind of "malcontent" that is the main driving force behind the action in *Bánk bán* does not necessarily require a queen of foreign descent (or a Big Brother, for that matter). One of the messages of the production is that we are fully capable of fuelling discontent among ourselves—that our inner oppressive apparatus is fully active even when there is freedom.

The play closes with the funeral of the Queen. Funerals are often political rites in this part of the world, attempts at large-scale nation-wide reconciliation. It is also frequent, though, that burials or reburials are ultimately followed by revolutions, as happened when László Rajk was reburied in 1956. The funeral scene in *Bánk bán* evokes the latter just as it does the funerals (or reburials) of Imre Nagy, János Kádár, József Antall or Miklós Horthy. Torches, candelabra, the grim sound of clods of earth falling on a coffin, somber Hungarian funeral music. The King, in a black suit, having taken a furtive look at his watch, reads his single, diplomatically balanced appeasing sentence from a piece of paper fished out of his pocket. Meanwhile, we hear the aria "My Country, My Country..." from Ferenc Erkel's opera of the same title, a symbol of the holy national cause. The closing scene is moving and ironic at the same time, very much a precise expression of the "Hungarian national ritual" that the director wanted to portray.

**B**ánk bán is, in fact, a drama of the inner conflict of the moralist individual and the statesman immersed in the unclean ordinary days of politics. In other words, that of the frustration of the intellectual. A modern variant of the same angry feeling of frustration is present in the new plays by György Spiró. Spiró is a major contemporary novelist and playwright, several of whose plays have been staged in Hungary and abroad. Two of his plays were performed recently, one, *Dobardan* by the Vígsház, the other, *Vircsaft*, by the József Attila Theatre. At first sight they differ sharply. In tone, dramaturgy and style they are indeed very different but their spiritual background, mentality and underlying experience is very much the same. *Dobardan* is an impassioned "ego drama", if a drama at all, not the rambling reflections of an agitated intellect to the insults suffered by *homo sapiens* in recent years: to Bosnia, the new Holocaust, to modern racism, the waves of violence created by ethnic and national conflicts, the Balkanization of the less fortunate half of the uniting Europe, and so on and so forth. *Vircsaft*, on the other hand, steps out of the ego, dissolves the inner pain with hearty laughter, and observes the wild offshoots of our own parochial, bazaar capitalism—primitivism, gangsterism, the money-lifting techniques of local Mafias and local politicians and the sell-out of all values—from outside and with deep irony. *Dobardan*, Good Day! in Serbian, is, in fact, an expression of the indignation of an overcharged mind over the absurdity of the state of affairs of the world, or more closely, of the part called Europe. The topic is the war in former Yugoslavia. The play, though, is not about Bosnia nor even about the attempts of a Hungarian intellectual to adopt an orphaned child from there, which all fail because of bureaucratic hurdles. All that is merely the plot. The war in Bosnia will long

be taught in history classes but the kind of thinking that blames power politics for all the consequences, for the flare-up of nationalistic passions, and the divisions between peoples and nationalities—for genocide—will still be valid. The "inserts," about the ridiculous diplomatic efforts taking place during the war, about the sameness and differences between languages or about the mentality of the big powers pulsate through the play. In a way, the whole play consists of such inserts. Spiró divides the productions of his agitated mind between the characters, at times driving them to frightening logical extremes. In the meantime, he is even able to motivate the self-angering logic and maniacal adoption of compulsion of the protagonist by marked neurosis and by the frustrations of his private life. Nevertheless, as a text, *Dobardan* is unlikely to become a classic. Its significance lies in the unconditional acceptance of what the author regards as a categorical imperative.

The director of this studio production, István Horvai, had the audience sit inside the living space of the characters. This is provoking work, even if at times he is too theatrical, which runs against the grain of the text. The back-projected scenes of war, the documents strewn about in a theatrical manner, or the scene when the protagonist, rendered impotent and left finally to himself, sits down to play Tetris on his computer in his empty apartment are all the director's redundant comments attached to the author's sparse and direct manner. In the refugee camp scene the director separates the characters from the audience with bars but there are bars also behind the audience: we ourselves are captive to the situation, too.

**V**ircsaft is a satirical *Zeitstück*. The German original of the term *Wirtschaft* simply means the economy, the Hungarian

slang term derived from it means the economy—or many other things—in a corrupt, incompetent mess. It is about the things people are talking about in the streets today. It treats it all as farce, making use of the entire inventory of the genre, the classical stereotypes combined with the vocabulary of our own day. With Feydau adulterous couples, in Spiró's play the would-be victims of debt collectors are being mistaken for others. The comical prototype of our times in Hungary is not the narrow-minded bourgeois, but the gorilla employed by security companies. Muscle-bound and pea-brained, he watches Tom and Jerry in his leisure, otherwise he is harmless. They are played for laughs by actors with outsize shoulder pads. The play is full of similar social types all too familiar in the recent past and the present. The name of Mayakovsky rings a bell to the ex-policeman turned small businessman who, otherwise, is so used to quoting six-digit figures all over the place that he calls a million (Hungarian forints) by its form "mila". The Mafia chief is elegant, unctuous and merciless, and is called "Padre" by everyone. Profit-making, as the great unifying force, does away with all kinds of ethnic or national conflict: a Gypsy politician runs a successful business, East and West take an equal share in privatization, and the well-bred English gentleman and a former Soviet Party secretary, at present a Ukrainian Godfather "stationed temporarily in Hungary", embrace as old friends.

The main subject of the play is corruption, a particularly lurid example of which was blazoned from the headlines just when it was premiered. Everybody is corrupt in Spiró's play: the mayor, the manager of the factory about to be privatized and the barkeeper in whose establishment the corrupt deals are concluded. Only one man is untouched by corruption: a secondary

school teacher who is mistaken for somebody else and beaten up. The only loser in the play is the intellectual unwilling to turn from a student of Pushkin into a Mafia interpreter and a businessman, unlike the young linguist in the play.

The director, Pál Mácsai, did an outstanding job. Social comedies are rarely taken so seriously. The acting has an extraordinary attention to detail and abounds in profound humour. The music linking the scenes, distorted from folk and national motifs, operettas and operas, provides a perfect background to the "small Hungarian muddle" in which the play is set.

**P**aradoxically, Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* at the Katona József Theatre seems as if it were a sequel to Spiró's *Vircsajt*. When the director, Gábor Máté, starts the play with scenes of blackmarketeering, Mafia-type business deals and promiscuity, he is motivated by a publicistic passion which, though unsubtle as pure theatre, seems to be turning increasingly into a moral standard for today's responsible artists. There are eras whose characteristics must be written across their foreheads. The period portrayed by Shakespeare in *Measure for Measure* is an age of uninhibited freedom and uninhibited licentiousness. An age when the usurpers of power have not the slightest intention to legislate or restrict their powers, consequently the world turns into a free-for-all where cynical immorality is given freedom at every level, from the most secret circles of the economic elite down to the lowest forum of public life, the street. Shakespeare's unbridled fairy-tale Vienna (17th-century London in reality) is very much like the world we live in today. The kind of *hors de loi* state of affairs, deriving from the suspension of laws, which leads to general depravity, moral decline and complaining, calls loudly for Law and Order

and especially for a Restorer of Order. Such fertile ground for uninhibited orators and demagogues is all too familiar. Shakespeare's restorer of order is Prince Vincentio. His role has been boosted in the productions of the past two or three decades. The Prince, disappearing for the time of the action and emerging as a saviour after the purges carried out by his second in command have been completed, plots *Measure for Measure* from beginning to end from the background; in fact, he is the one directing events from behind. One Hungarian production of the play portrayed the Prince as a smiling manipulator, and the subjects directed by him as impotent figures on the chessboard of the power game.

On the Katona Theatre's stage the Prince is a jovial populist, and Angelo, his assistant, a clerk tortured by bad digestion. A single movement made by the senior official Escalus indicates that nothing good can be expected from the takeover by Angelo. But the first scenes suggest, in fact, that the same holds true for all three. All of them are incompetent. Escalus investigates an insignificant affair with ridiculous clumsiness, Angelo's official activity consists in having his chair taken from right to left (the most important gesture of all political takeovers), and Prince Vincentio is the kind of politician who emphasizes his closeness to the people by going to them (that would be seen in the last scene). In black-marketeering, Mafia-ruled Vienna, the law is publicly ridiculed. The policeman's dropped gun is handed back to him by the detainee. "We have let sleep" the "biting laws", the Prince complains. Attempts to reactivate those laws are being made here by a bunch of incompetents.

The first scene where a decision has to be taken is between Isabella and Angelo. Isabella, a novice living in obedience to the moral maxims, comes to beg for the life of her brother Claudio, condemned to death

for begetting an "illegitimate" child. The production is reliably articulated by the two encounters, exceptionally rich in possibilities of interpretation even by Shakespearean standards. An inexperienced politician meets a clumsy "temptress". Angelo conceals behind a poker face the embarrassment of a puritan, finding himself in a position of power, who has been charmed by natural innocence. The figure of Isabella is not ironical at all; she guards her virtue as an absolute value. Within the system of symbols of the production, that innocence is probably the only stable point, the only moral standard in a world without morals, therefore its gravity and significance take on an "infinite" value. When Isabella falls to the ground, clumsily trying to embrace Angelo's legs, she is the very picture of desperate effort, creating the appearance of surrender without the promise of the act of surrender. She is torn between her moral maxims and the responses, or more exactly, compromises, which might cope with certain momentary situations, and which are therefore acceptable from a human viewpoint. This is plainly visible from her tortured self-justifications when explaining her decision to Claudio. In the end she is destroyed by the series of manipulations which, up to the last minute, gave her the illusion that she might be able to avoid tragedy, certain to occur if she refused to give up her moral maxims.

All the other characters stay out of the moral dilemma. True, on one occasion the Prince appears to seriously face up to the moral emptying of the world—during his soliloquy, a coloured still illustrates the specimens of mankind taken from the five continents—but it is all the more cynical that on his own garbage heap he uses the same promiscuous Mariana who is his own mistress as well to restore "the rule of law". In this sleazy world it is natural that the executioner is as unprofessional as the

judge, that impotent policemen drop their guns, that the Provost, as an honest prison guard, is totally at a loss, or that neither Mistress Overdone, the Madam, or the various rascals in the play are any worse than the others; in fact, Pompey, a pederast, and Lúcio, the rumourmonger and loud-mouth, even manage to acquire some kind of vulgar philosophy.

In the last scene, when Isabella is made by the Prince to beg mercy for the man thought to be her brother's murderer, the girl, left unattended for a moment, commits suicide with the policeman's gun. No such thing happens in Shakespeare's play, of course. Still, the "Shakespearean gun" had to go off, just like its famous Chekhovian counterpart, according to the rules of dramaturgy, so that madness should be halted for a moment at least. Perhaps it makes us ask ourselves: "What is going on here?"

**A**t the moment, only bitter, disillusioned, almost cynical answers may be given to that question. The answer being given by those artist-intellectuals is a typically intellectual one. I mentioned the young linguist in Spíró's *Vircsaft*, who chooses dubious business instead of scholarship. In the play *David und Goliath* by the German Expressionist playwright Georg Kaiser, an honest middle-class father, who finances his daughter's piano lessons from his meagre income, tries to make it into the ranks of millionaires through a lottery fraud he stumbles onto. The scheme succeeds, although he wins not a penny. But

at the mere news that he has hit the jackpot, he and all his relatives are lavishly provided with offers, credits and loans by a multimillionaire brewery-owner and other business tycoons. The play, highly topical in today's Hungary, has been revived by the National Theatre, directed by Géza Bodolay. Friedrich Dürrenmatt goes even further than Kaiser's "solution" in his comedy *Der Mitmacher*, in which a biochemist, having lost his job, gets employed by the Mafia to decompose—that is, completely eliminate—corpses by "necrodyalisis", a process worked out by himself. Business flourishes, corpses are delivered by the score, and it becomes gradually clear that the entire administration—the mayor, the governor, the supreme judge and even the state prosecutor—is "in" on the deal. The town is consumed by corruption, and so are the characters, one by one.

According to one of the play's characters, the whole world operates like "the fatal thrasher of industrious business". The intellectual who feels "responsible for the creation of the world" finds absolution for himself in his imagined sense of guilt. Whatever high moral standards he may set for himself, he has to live—like Dürrenmatt's Doc—according to the way of the world. *Der Mitmacher* was produced by the Katona József Theatre, and directed by Andor Lukáts. In a recent interview the director said that, like several of his friends, he had just sold his car because he no longer made enough money to run it. ■

Erzsébet Bori

## Torte à la Russe

Ibolya Fekete: *Az Apokalipszis gyermekei* (Children of the Apocalypse); *Bolshe Vita* • Judit Elek: *Mondani a mondhatatlant* (To Speak About the Unspeakable) • Péter Gothár: *Hagyjállógva Vászka* (Vaska Easeoff)

This year's Film Week was remarkable for much new work on the destruction and survival of Hungarian Jews. The subject, however, is natural if we bear in mind how much there is still to be told after decades of forced silence in a country which, despite the terrible losses of the Holocaust, is home to the largest Jewish community in East Central Europe. More surprising is the appearance of Russian themes in the Hungarian cinema, even though it is clear that there is more to account for with Big Brother than the vandalized barracks the Red Army left behind in Hungary. More important is the fact that after a past of sinister memories, for the first time there is an opportunity to settle common matters between the two nations. The relationship between Hungarians and Jews, or that between Hungarians and Russians, are of more than parochial interest; the films that manage to speak about them with authenticity can therefore claim international attention.

In less than six months prizes have rained onto Péter Gothár's *Vaska Easeoff*, Ibolya Fekete's *Bolshe Vita* and Judit Elek's

documentary on Elie Wiesel, *To Speak about the Unspeakable*, at various international festivals.

Ibolya Fekete's first feature film, *Bolshe Vita*, starts with documentary shots of the revolutionary fervour in Eastern Europe in 1989: demonstrations and the repainting of street names in Budapest, confrontation with riot police or fleeing water cannons in Prague's Wenceslas Square, flowers and subversive posters, shoulder to shoulder, wall to wall, laughing into the camera. Among the tens of thousands of East Germans who swarmed across the freshly opened Hungarian-Austrian border in the summer of 1989, the hunt for Stasi agents soon started. The miraculous revolution in Romania put an end to the vilest dictatorship in the region and for a glorious moment, we believed, to centuries of Romanian-Hungarian conflict—only to be followed by tyrannicide, a riot in Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu Mureş) and bloody rear-guard action by the Securitate. The Soviet Union, that prism of nations, has disintegrated amid ethnic and religious wars; tribal war conjoined with genocide in the former Yugoslavia has come to an end more on account of the total exhaustion of the warring parties than because of any rational peace-making and diplomatic skills—but for God knows how long. The sequence ends with pictures of squalid

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is our regular film critic.

death in the Balkan war, once believed to be unimaginable in Europe.

*Bolshe Vita* is set in those three eventful years between 1989 and 1991, years of a new age of migration, once again East to West and once again across the bridge we call Hungary. In 1991 the Russians in the film recall with a bitter laugh how back in 1989 they all longed to be in Yugoslavia which, seen from the Soviet Union, then appeared as the first stage on the way to the Promised Land.

The familiar shots, the familiar story now invoke a degree of unease: only a couple of years have gone by and how difficult it is now to recall the fervent spirit and the wild hopes of the time.

That was this golden age when Ibolya Fekete made a two-part documentary, *Budapest Rendezőpályaudvar* (Budapest Shunting Yard) and *Ideiglenes megállók* (Passing Through), which were clearly the antecedents of *Bolshe Vita*, shown at the 1992 Film Week under the title of *Az Apokaliptiszis gyermekei* (Children of the Apocalypse).

In this classic documentary, in an exemplary fashion, Ibolya Fekete did not content herself with simply hitting the big story and finding the proper people to feature in it; her material, without being forced, is also organized and dramatized, making the whole a composite of reportage, descriptive sociology and portraiture.

The film tells the story of young Russians. Yura and Vadim are musicians who have come across the East-Central European frontiers as camouflage for a gang of smugglers. On the way home Yura gets off the rickety bus somewhere in Western Hungary, and comes across a village with two cemeteries, one for the Hungarian, one for the Russian soldiers killed in the Second World War. The contrast between these cemeteries, he says, compels him to take his friend and their

instruments off the bus. In a country which they know nothing about, the two stay on out of curiosity or for want of anything better. They busk, find themselves girlfriends—what else would they need?

Sergei had left home for rational reasons. As an engineer with a proper career ahead of him, he wanted to test himself somewhere else. Hungary was not his original destination—he was sent back from the Yugoslav border because he could not show the 200 dollars required for entry. So he ends up in Hungary and finds a job in the type of semi-legal street-market ironically called "Comecon markets" all over the region. These markets sprung up from the mid-60s in Hungary, originally along the southern border, where jeans and toiletries produced under Western licenses in enviable Yugoslavia could be bought; later Poles, under martial law from 1981, brought whatever they could sell or barter, mainly for food. Since 1989 Chinese, Vietnamese, Romanian and ex-Soviet traders have been selling to those who have found the road from a command economy to a free market bumpy. Leonid, an out-of-work actor, and a boy from Minsk suffering from Chernobyl, also work in the market here. He is nineteen and has no future, missing only his parents, who have been more gravely affected than him. These spend their days in the market and meet up at night in a pub called *Bolshe Vita* in a cellar of a tenement house in Pest (originally opened by a couple from West Berlin).

These individuals provide a precisely itemized list of the attributes of *Homo Sovieticus* as he evolved over seventy-odd years, while they themselves demonstrate those very same qualities—lack of information, an irrational fear of the authorities, helplessness, *Oblomovian* procrastination. These young Russians have been cut off not only from the world but also

from their roots, from themselves, from any possibility of self-development. Now is the time to set out and get moving, try out whatever comes up, for as long as you can.

Maggie from Britain and Susan from the US connect with the boys. The Iron Curtain has lifted not only for those from the east. Disillusioned with consumer society, complacency, with the turn to the right or backwards, or simply curious and adventurous, young Westerners have flocked to Central Europe in growing numbers. Some went as far as Siberia or China, most of them found in Prague or Budapest a place they felt they could live in. For some time, that is.

Maggie has married Yura, they have a child and live in Brighton. Susan has left Vadim for Pasha, whom she met on the train on his return from China. She is willing to live and scrape a living anywhere, provided it is outside America, the country the Easterners long so much for. She has settled in a country, Ukraine, whose own inhabitants want to leave. The epilogue tells us that she too has had a child and has returned to the US with her Ukrainian husband. We are not told if this is out of necessity or because she has learnt her lesson, the way Maggie has learnt to value her country and appreciate the security, tranquility and tolerance of life in Britain.

Ibolya Fekete's film is about foreigners, yet says more about Hungary and Hungarians than any investigative documentary. We look into a two-way mirror and see ourselves not just as we are seen by others but are also confronted with our shortcomings, prejudices and ignorance. We can discard the comfortable stereotypes we nurture of the Russians or for that matter of Americans or others. What shall we say when these Russians speak of us as we do of the happier half of Europe? It is embarrassing to hear them say that people here are pleasant, cheerful, laid

back and there is nothing in them of the suppressed aggression and tension that threatens to erupt at any time in Russians. No wonder, they add, since you can lead a life in Hungary fit for a person who has choices and financial security. Those who work get paid, women look like women, and men have cash in their pockets. Back home folks have no idea how pleasant it is to go to a decent local and have a pint of beer or buy whatever you want in shops where sausages are always to be had.

All of this is what the 120-minute documentary *Children of the Apocalypse* gives us, and so does *Bolshe Vita*, in which the director uses as much of the primary experience as her fiction can bear. Easy for her, one might say, for she did not have to invent a story, it was all there for her ready-made—apparently.

**B***olshe Vita* is a feature film out of the documentarist school. This hybrid aroused high expectations here to begin with; it was believed to be thought capable of combining the fiction and taut dramaturgy of the feature film with the authenticity of the documentary. The results have not met expectations; many films of the genre were didactic, loquacious and sloppy. Ibolya Fekete successfully avoids the well-known pitfalls—the only thing one feels redundant is the narrative voice-over in the documentary framework shots. *Bolshe Vita* has substance and shape, it is authentic as well as playful. More surprisingly, it is entertaining and you keep your fingers crossed for the figures in it.

The film benefits from an excellent script. In the 80s, Ibolya Fekete had worked her way up, serving her apprenticeship as consultant and a journeyman writing for work by filmmakers like György Szomjas, Ferenc Grünvalsky and Sándor Simó. She made her own first documentary, *Berlinből Berlinbe* (From Berlin to

Berlin), in 1990. Her first feature, *Bolshe Vita*, is a scriptwriter's masterpiece, a real gem.

The film makes maximum use of whatever her budget allowed, be it a face, a townscape or the sea, weaving its threads into a tight and congruous fabric. The story unfolds in images and is acted out rather than narrated. It comes to life through gestures and small moments, as for instance a scene in which the good-hearted bar-owner gives a refugee woman a moonlighting job and it turns out they already have got another refugee doing the washing up who also used to be a nursery school teacher. The shifty and apprehensive look with which she receives the newcomer expresses it all. Of the figures in the documentary only Yura and the professional actor Leonid appear in *Bolshe Vita*, who are preserved in their personalities and their own words. Just as she has preserved, for us, the spirit of those years, that crazy summer of our content.

Judit Elek's documentary, *To Speak about the Unspeakable*, takes us back further in the past and evokes far from pleasant memories. The film shows the writer Elie Wiesel at various public functions, for instance, with President Clinton at the opening of the Holocaust Museum in the US, of which he was one of the moving spirits, at the Nobel Prize award ceremony in Stockholm, and in Romania on the occasion of being made an honorary citizen of the town of his birth. Scenes of his childhood and youth, the town of Máramarossziget at the foot of the Carpathians (which was once in Hungary) and to a French chateau. In yellowed photographs we see the child Eliézer with his forelocks in a large black hat, standing in front of his father's little shop or reading the Torah with his schoolmates. The last photograph was taken at his Bar Mitzvah

at the age of fifteen. Then everything, his childhood, the world came to an end. He and his family, all the Jews from his town and from the whole of the region ended up in Auschwitz. (Only a large number of Budapest's Jewish community escaped this fate.) Very few returned. Of those from Máramarossziget, only Wiesel has survived the camp and one other man who had escaped to the mountains before the transports began.

The world of Jewish communities, villages and small towns of old in Eastern Europe is not that of the pot-bellied cigar-smoking moneybags of the anti-Semitic jokes and cartoons. It is the world of the little Jews portrayed in the novels of Sholem Alechem, Singer and Ilia Ehrenburg—hard-working peasants and craftsmen with some well-to-do merchants. This world is gone for ever, gone are its inhabitants and their way of life and they were not destroyed by modernisation. In this part of Eastern Europe, in the small villages in Transylvania or the Baltic countries shut off from the world, the traditional rural communities have survived to this day. Before the world war the multi-ethnic inhabitants, Romanians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Jews, Ruthenians, Gypsies, Armenians and God knows who else, lived here under almost archaic circumstances, together and yet separate, each preserving their tongue, faith and customs and knowing, using and accepting those of the others. Regimes and leaders came and went, re-drawing the borders, but the inhabitants remained.

Wiesel is a polyglot, he lives in the US, his spoken language is English but he writes in French and reads Hebrew, Yiddish and German; when he visits the scenes of his childhood those words of Hungarian and Romanian he knew so long ago come back to him. He harbours no hate, nor is he willing to forget. His life

and work is remembrance. When asked if he can forgive the Germans for the Holocaust, Martin Buber said: "Who am I to forgive?"

**D**OWN WITH REALITY, ALL POWER TO THE IMAGINATION!, wrote the filmmaker, artist and philosopher, Jan Svankmajer on his balcony in the Old Town of Prague during the 1989 demonstrations. His slogan was born in a world in which the everyday had turned into a drama of the absurd. This was the famous Eastern European drama of the absurd; in the East-Central region it was the one-minute grotesque variety à la István Örkény that was the rage; farther off, at the easternmost end a gigantic drama that cost millions, involved huge tonnages and entire peoples was what was being played. Mountains were razed, rivers turned back, millions decimated by fire and sword, by famine and regulations, driven off their land and resettled elsewhere. A shortcut between the ends and means, forced labour camps the size of entire cities were set up within a country that was one vast prison.

Such is the wider setting for Péter Gothár's latest film, *Vaska Easeoff*, which took the awards for best film, best director and best cameraman at the 1996 Film Week. It is a film so confident of itself, and of the power of a tale, that only its subtitle, "A Tale from the Gulag", betrays its origin. (Although an ace of trumps is played after the game is won, a sentence under *The End* announcing where the story comes from, who told it to whom, when and were.)

This closed world can now be approached from accounts by Solzhenitzin, Shalamov or József Lengyel, the Hungarian writer and a 1919 vintage communist, who spent decades in the Gulag, from quite unusual directions. Both the language and visual idiom of *Vaska Easeoff* is rooted, or

at any rate seeks its place, in urban folklore, in prison subculture.

The wish-fulfilling tales of Soviet prisoners and a Hungarian filmmaker at the end of the millennium are closer to one another than one would think. Given the minuscule funds available, Gothár too worked in the spirit of "all power to the imagination!" The film was originally shot on video and later transferred to film, and even this has been turned to advantage. The possibilities of video, sneered at by many, are put to maximum use, with shots running riot, changes of rhythm, red, tinting, archival and new footage, fused in the work of cameraman Francisco Gózon. György Orbán combines his original music with adaptations of contemporary revolutionary songs and popular Soviet tunes. The Russian cast is brilliant, led by Maxim Sergeev, Yevgeny Sidhikhin and Valya Kasianova, playing in Russian which is neither dubbed nor subtitled. Their words are interpreted, commented on, anticipated by a Hungarian narrator (Gábor Máté). It may sound a cheap solution, but more importantly, this is much better. For one, Hungarian audiences, most of whom have undergone eight to ten years of compulsory Russian at school—and thus cannot understand a word—listen to Pushkin's language as if to music. And, after all, tales are told by storytellers and spread by word of mouth. Further meaning is gained through the shift in how sight and sound relate, now synchronous, now asynchronous or contrasted, and the idea of a Hungarian film in Russian sounds much less hair-raising.

The story is set in Bolshevik Petrograd some time in the 1920s, after Lenin's death but before Stalin's reign of terror. Vaska, the "thief of the town", has struck it big but uses the proceedings to pay off the debts of a man he never even knew, just to ensure that he can rest in peace.

Quite soon Vaska and his wench Luvnya have nothing but empty vodka bottles in their apartment, but relief arrives in the person of Vanyka, the "thief of the village". With this a series of incredible adventures begins. The two retrieve the "blood-reeking sardine tin opener" from a grifferidger's nest, use it to break into the vaults of the State Bank in Petrograd and lay their hands on the entire collective wealth of the people. The police, the army and the NKVD are breathing down their necks, but Vaska and Vanyka outwit them all. When Vaska is finally caught, his friend even manages to bring him back to life. The happy ending is complete—Vaska and Luvnya swear eternal fidelity to one another, the mile-long wed-

ding table groans under bottle after bottle of vodka. However, the faithful friend has to take his leave. Vanyka, the village thief, is none other than the unknown dead man, who had come back from the grave to return Vaska's good deed.

According to the piece by László Bratka on which the script was based, this story of Vanyka and Vaska was told to one Lev Gordon by a fellow prisoner when working on the White Sea Canal. Whether that is fact or fiction is irrelevant, for *Vaska Easeoff* convinces the viewers that tales are always more true and real and are worth a thousand times more than the White Sea Canal, which did exist, or absurd, never finally completed projects. ■



Photo Péter Korniss

Alan Walker

# Liszt and the Lied

MUSIC

In 1847, when he was thirty-five years old, Franz Liszt abandoned his fabulous career as a travelling virtuoso and settled in Weimar in order to devote himself more fully to musical composition. The thirteen years he spent in the city were among the most productive of his life. It was there that he composed twelve of his symphonic poems, the "Faust" and "Dante" symphonies, the two piano concertos, and the B minor piano sonata.

Liszt also came to maturity as a Lieder composer during his Weimar years. He had already begun to write songs ten years earlier, while he was resident in Italy (the three "Petrarch Sonnets" were first sketched there), and by the time he got to Weimar he had a dozen or more Lieder in his portfolio. He now added to them, and eventually produced an impressive collection of seventy pieces in this genre.

The songs are strangely neglected today. They rarely turn up in the modern Lieder recital, and some of them are unknown even to specialists. This is surprising, for a closer acquaintance with the best

of them suggests that they represent a "missing link" between Schumann and Hugo Wolf. In fact, the history of the German Lied is incomplete without taking Liszt into account.

Such a view may seem difficult to sustain. After all, Liszt was born in Hungary, spent his formative years in France, and then travelled through so many different countries that he is often described as "cosmopolitan". Yet the evidence is there. Liszt's first language was German; and the years that he lived and worked in Weimar—the city of Goethe and Schiller—brought him into daily contact with German poets, painters, playwrights, and musicians. Some of his best settings are of such poets as Heine, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Uhland, Rellstab, and of course Goethe and Schiller themselves. And Liszt had other credentials, too. During his virtuoso years he had transcribed more than 50 Schubert songs, and 20 more by Schumann, Mendelssohn, and other composers for solo piano—arrangements which reveal an insider's knowledge of the originals. And then, when he settled in Weimar, he conducted at the court opera and worked with some of the finest singers in Germany. In short, he was very well equipped to write Lieder, and he understood the human voice as well as anybody in the 19th century. Take his setting of

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(Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, New York).*

Goethe's *Freudvoll und leidvoll*, for example. It seems to inhabit the world of Mahler,

or even of Richard Strauss, and bears out our notion of Liszt as a "missing link".

*dolce*

Freud - voll und leid - voll, ge - dan - ken-voll sein, lan - gen und

*pp*

ban - gen in schwe - ben - der Pein,

The switch from major to minor ("Freudvoll und leidvoll") and the subtle enharmonic changes (in the second phrase F-flat becomes E-natural, and E-flat becomes D-sharp) tell of a composer who was sensitive to the meaning of words, with ears tuned to the future.

It is no accident that Liszt was beguiled by the Lied during his Weimar years. He had at his disposal a number of gifted singers attached to the Court Opera, who were ready and able to do these pieces justice. Rosa Agthe was only twenty-one years old when Liszt engaged her for the Weimar Theatre. This gifted soprano, the daughter of a local orchestral player, created the role of Elsa in Wagner's *Lohengrin* and Liszt chose her to be one of his Aachen Festival soloists in 1857. She married the Russian baritone Feodor von Milde, whom Liszt had invited to Weimar as a guest singer in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; he was so warmly received that he made Weimar his home. The von

Milde could have made more lucrative careers elsewhere; but when they were asked about that Feodor gave the unanswerable reply that they stayed in Weimar simply because Liszt was there. Among the other singers who worked with Liszt were the contralto Emilie Genast and, above all, the tenor Franz Götze. All four singers had highly musical ears—which allowed Liszt to make unusual demands on them. They also had the supreme advantage of being coached and accompanied by Liszt himself, and may therefore be said to have sung his songs with authority. The Sunday afternoon "matinées" held in the large music-room of the Altenburg (Liszt's home in Weimar) provided a perfect setting for the performance of these pieces, within the charmed circle of Liszt's own admirers, and often with Liszt himself presiding at the keyboard. Historically, these "matinées" may be regarded as natural successors to the "Schubertiads" that had taken place in Vienna some thirty years earlier.

Liszt himself recognised in Franz Götze a leading exponent of his songs. This singer was one of the best lyric tenors of the day, and he eventually became a teacher of singing in Leipzig where he communicated his enthusiasm for Liszt's songs to his many pupils. This was not so easy in the 1850s, since Liszt's music was embroiled in controversy; it was the time of the War of the Romantics, and Leipzig was generally hostile. So convinced was Götze of the worth of this music, however, that he once concocted a hoax on the Leipzig public, passing off certain numbers by Liszt as posthumous songs by Schubert—and he was encored! Liszt was delighted when he heard what had happened, and he begged his friend to continue with the joke, since, as he put it, it took place "in a city which is very much set against me." When the Collected Edition of the songs appeared in 1860, Liszt asked his publisher to be sure to send a copy to Götze because his pioneer work gave him a special claim to them.

The contralto Emilie Genast likewise aroused Liszt's admiration for the way she

handled his songs—particularly *Mignon's Lied* and *Die Loreley*. She was the daughter of his stage-manager, Eduard Genast, and Liszt first engaged her for a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony which he conducted in Weimar. He was so impressed with her voice that he regularly entrusted her with recitals of his songs, particularly after he had taken charge of the Lower Rhine Music Festivals at such places as Aachen, Karlsruhe, and Cologne in the mid 1850s. It was for Emilie Genast that Liszt provided an orchestral accompaniment for his setting of Heine's *Die Loreley*. The Loreley is a steep rock that rises perpendicularly on the right bank of the Rhine. Legend has it that a beautiful siren sits on the rock and lures mariners to a watery death with her enchanted song. Liszt sailed past the Loreley many times during his hey-day as a touring virtuoso, and he found the old legend impossible to resist. The introduction contains a striking allusion to the opening bars of *Tristan*, not the first time that Liszt had stolen from the future of music.

Nicht schleppend

The orchestral setting of *Die Loreley* is one of several that Liszt made about this time. Here, if anywhere, we can talk of a conspiracy of silence. These pieces are never heard today, yet they would make ravishing adornments to any orchestral

concert. That great English Lisztian, Sir Thomas Beecham, was probably the last conductor to feature them regularly in his programmes.

Since the singers with whom Liszt worked in Weimar had been handpicked



ness—especially in some of the orchestral works. But the songs show that he could be direct, concise, and economical. All these points are nicely illustrated in his setting of Heine's *Vergiftet sind meine Lieder*, which lasts about one-and-a-half minutes, and comes across with the force of an aphorism.

When the Collected Edition of Liszt's songs appeared, Liszt described himself in the preface as "that notorious non-composer Franz Liszt". It was an ironic allusion to the judgement of his contemporaries who never quite forgave him for giving up the concert platform in favour of composing. Saint-Saëns, an early admirer, put it best of all when he declared: "The world persisted to the end in calling him the greatest pianist in order to avoid the trouble of considering his claims as one of the most remarkable of composers." Posterity has slowly come to agree with that verdict, for the songs add lustre to Liszt's reputation wherever they are sung. 🎵

SECHS GEDICHTE FÜR GESANG VON LISZT  
*Buch der Lieder, Band II.*  
*Poésies Lyriques*  
 pour une voix  
 avec l'accompagnement de Piano  
 TEXT de VICTOR HUGO | MUSIQUE de F. LISZT  
 Deutsch von Th. Kaufmann.

<p>0 quand je dors          0 wenn ich schlaf          Comment disaient-ils          Wie sieh'n sprachen sie          2. Enfant si j'étais Roi          Mein Kind wär ich König</p>	<p>1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.</p>	<p>1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.</p>	<p>4. Si est un charmant garçon          Ist ein Ort der lieblich          La fleur et la rose          Das Grab und die Rose          6. Gastibelza le fon de Tolède          Gastibelza, Belero für Dafs</p>	<p>1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.          1/2 Takt.</p>
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Pl. 2 Takt.  
 Berlin, Propriété de A. M. SCHLESINGER, 21 Linden  
 Paris, 2968-20. Trienne Nipet des Mûlles.  
 Anecdote - Imp. in l'Immerj de Liszt 1/2 Dab.

Title page of "Gastibelza", first edition, Nr. 6 in Buch der Lieder—Poésies Lyriques, containing six songs by Liszt to poems by Victor Hugo. Berlin, 1843, Schlesinger. Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music, Budapest, Research Library for Music History, LGy 40.873.

Sir,—Reviewing a book containing the work of five very different filmmakers cannot be easy, but Erzsébet Bori (“Go West: East European Filmmakers in the World,” *HQ* 142) ought to be more careful. Her statement “no other Hungarian director [than Szabó] has been the subject of a book” is simply wrong. Indeed, as your “regular film critic” she only has to peruse the back issues of *The Hungarian Quarterly* to find a review of Catherine Portuges’ excellent study of Márta Mészáros (*The Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros*. Screen Memories Series. Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 1993).

In addition, although I don’t have details I believe there are at least two studies of Miklós Jancsó published in French, not to mention full-length studies of Michael Curtiz and of the screenwriter, and joint director with Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger. Ms Bori may not consider Curtis and Pressburger as Hungarians, but these publications suggest that the field is not quite as barren as she asserts.

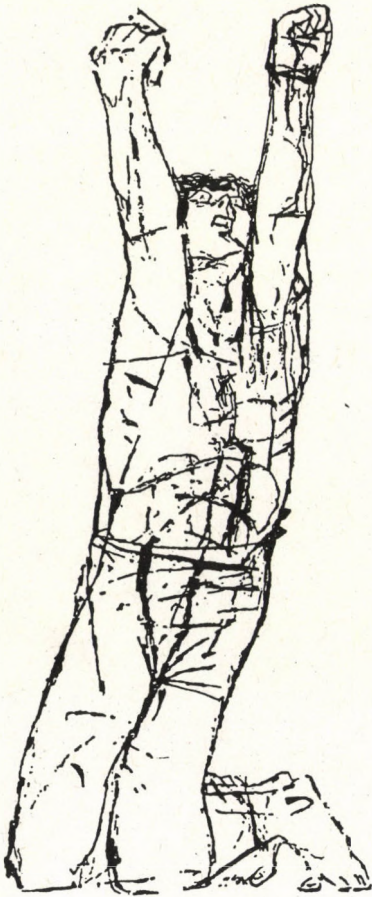
Moving on to more theoretical issues, Ms Bori’s brief discussion of Roman Polanski and the *auteur* concept is somewhat puzzling. If accepted, the argument that Polanski is not an *auteur* because “he always works from scripts or materials supplied by others” (p. 157) demands a wholesale revision of who auteurs are. Neither Howard Hawks nor Alfred Hitchcock, to take just two instances of previously recognized classic auteurs, could any longer be so categorized, for

both these directors worked mainly from scripts supplied by others. For example, Hitchcock’s *The Birds* was written by Evan Hunter from a story originally by Daphne du Maurier; Howard Hawk’s *Rio Bravo* was written by Jules Furthman and Leigh Brackett.

Ms Bori continues that an *auteur* film “refuses to be confined to the genres developed and canonized by Hollywood”. Again, I find this puzzling, as it seems to suggest that *auteurs* are to be found outside Hollywood. However, part of the original thrust of the *auteur* theory was precisely to revise dismissive Eurocentric notions of Hollywood “trash”. Hollywood directors, such as the two already mentioned, John Ford, Don Siegel, Billy Wilder, and others were, it was argued, worthy of critical consideration. All these directors, to some extent, worked within the parameters of Hollywood genres; sometimes, as with Ford’s westerns *The Searcher* or his earlier *Stagecoach*, their productions became those genres’ classic examples. It seems clear that *auteurs* can, and often do, work *within* genres as well as work against them.

It could be that the contradictions and difficulties outlined here are merely a reflection of the problems of the *auteur* theory itself. The question then arises whether it helps our understanding of Polanski (or any other director) to label them *auteurs* or not.

John Cunningham  
Pécs, Hungary



# **THE LEGACY OF THE 1956 HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION**

Five participants  
forty years later:

Andrew P. Fodor  
János Horváth  
Béla K. Király  
Károly Nagy  
László Papp

**EDITED BY KAROLY NAGY AND PETER PASTOR**

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To a considerable extent, it is exclusion from the network of market relations which, for the broad masses, means that the loss of a job in the old socialist sector now involves not only unemployment but also drastic marginalization. Unemployment here is not of a temporary, frictional nature—as is the case during periods of structural adjustment in developed market economies—but long-term and very likely permanent. As the years pass, it is becoming increasingly clear that the reserve army of several hundred thousand unskilled factory workers no longer have any chance of finding regular employment. The daily constraint of earning a livelihood forces the more dynamic among them into the black economy. The more distressed end up in the ghettos of charity and soup kitchens. But in the long term, the course is similar even for the more agile. Experience shows that there is no way out of the vicious circle of the black economy. Those who are forced out of the official labour market, drift from one insecure and underpaid job to another, and as time passes, they have less and less hope of finding their way back into the world of ordinary people.

From Júlia Szalai: *Why the Poor Are Poor*, pp. 70–78.

