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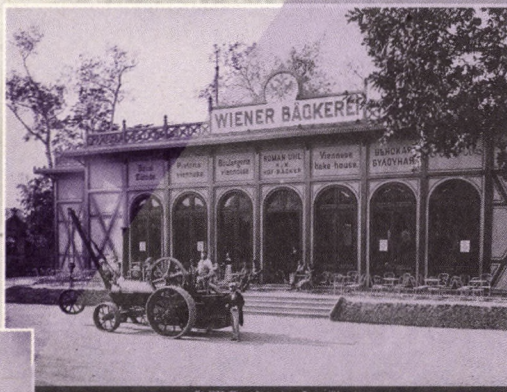
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*The Economics of Culture
or the Culture of Economics*

A Proud Hungarian

*The Photographer
György Klösz (1844-1913)*

A City in Photographs

Minority Self-Governments

Our Century

*The Yellow House
at Eszterháza*

The Hungarian Quarterly

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Magda Szabó

The Witnesses of Summer

(Short story)

No one envied them, which was unusual in the general poverty following the lost war, for the Perthrényis were not simply old-style rich, but kept up a private empire in the area known as the Great Wood, and managed a household with a proper staff amidst the scenery of their improbable life. They had a cook, a housemaid, a coachman who later served as footman promoted to the post of chauffeur, the idol of our young hearts, with masses of gold braid; they had a gardener too, who lived in a detached cottage in the kitchen garden, while the other servants lived in the bright, tiled basement, in rooms of their own; the little kitchen maid was housed in an alcove off the huge pantry, to safeguard her from wordly temptations.

Mrs Perthrényi was not only wealthy, but also kind-hearted, a good woman, who felt responsible not only for her pack of dogs and the army of cats wandering about the house, but also for the young servant girl. She brought up her only daughter with the assistance of her old nursery governess; Solange had remained with her former pupil after she was married, and shared the work with Mrs Perthrényi's brother, Father Fülöp, who, being practically crippled with arthritis, had the archbishop's permission to reside with his sister, and so could act as master of the house. After her husband's death, Mrs Perthrényi considered her life as a woman ended, she never thought of replacing the dead man, nor of endangering with affairs the memory of her happy marriage or her daughter's formative years: Mrs Perthrényi had loved Ákos Perthrényi, and when the tragic accident took him from her, she dedicated herself to the raising and education of her child, which was completed at a convent of the Daughters of Mount Sion; she

Magda Szabó

was born in 1917. First published as a poet, she is best known as a novelist and a short story writer. Highly popular and widely translated, her essays and plays have also been well received.

renounced the world, had no social life, surrounded herself with small circles of women recruited mostly for the purpose of doing good works. When she looked at her daughter she felt that there was something that helped her to endure her unforgotten loss: her growing child was a constant source of happiness.

What distinguished the mother was an unobtrusive but constant benevolence; though in her mode of life she was a strict Catholic, she had practised the idea of ecumenism even before the establishment of Taizé; at times her solicitor had to gently chide the widow, who was always prepared to listen and to help, but whenever he hinted that she must be careful not to overstep the invisible barrier if she did not wish to endanger nor squander her child's fortune, she always curbed her natural propensity for openhandedness, for the centre of the universe was of course her daughter, and just to attend school with her was ecstasy for any child. Cincu was as naturally kind-hearted as her mother, and Solange, who in the beginning brought her in from the Great Wood by carriage, later by car, and beside Cincu's lunch basket, always packed a huge box of things to nibble on for her classmates—delicacies like rolls filled with ham appeared out of the box, and every now and then, as a mark of courtesy towards the headmistress and the teaching staff, bottles of wine, poultry or half a porker would also arrive; and every May Mrs Perthrényi would invite the whole school to their estate at Gut, for her delight in the pleasure of others was as sincere as the humility with which she had accepted her husband's death, and the self-evidence with which she had refused suitors after the year of mourning had passed. She considered Perthrényi's death a punishment for her sin of wilfulness; Sarolt had been granted permission to marry her own first cousin by ecclesiastical authority, following family disputes that ill befitted people of their position, the sober adults pleaded genetic reasons against the marriage, but the young people's love would not be swayed by refusal of permission. After her husband's death, Mrs Perthrényi perceived her loss as a sign of God's displeasure, while Solange and Father Fülöp saw this manifested in Cincu's delicate health. The child's natural resistance was weak—at the time, immune deficiency was not a household word—during the years of adolescence, Cincu's heart-beat was sometimes arrhythmic, she was not allowed to do every exercise during physical education class, but the symptoms ceased, and the susceptibility to catch almost every contagious disease was conquered by time, and as a young girl Cincu was a beautiful and amiable creature, as eager to please others as her mother Sarolt. She spoke often of her father, which grieved her Uncle Fülöp, who felt this lament for her lost father was impolite, as he had moulded her himself, so she should not feel deprived, and if she did, it was not justified, but the Father was wise, and though he feared the moment when the child he had reared would become aware of her femininity, he coloured the galloping hero of the girl's imagination, the never understood, but well-loved brother-in-law, Ákos Perthrényi, with monastic humility. Then Satan found the classical gap in his defences, and brought a new Perthrényi

into Cincu's life on the night of the officers' ball, a Perthrényi so distantly related that he could not really be counted as kin at all, but, as a lieutenant of hussars, and in appearance so very similar to Sarolt, to the girl, to the poor dead Ákos, he walked into Cincu's life as is prescribed in the most banal novels, those that convey fundamental precepts on the deepest level.

The hussar and the girl caught sight of each other, and Solange and Sarolt—the Father had not dragged his decrepit body to the ballroom—knew at once that here was the first suitor, and from the way they looked at each other, he might well be the last, those who could be refused had come forward long before, but Cincu's bodyguards had successfully warded them off. The hussar greeted Sarolt as a relative, first he kissed her hand, then her face, he did no more than glance at Cincu, but in such a way that it would have been less dangerous if he had kissed her too. Mrs Perthrényi dreaded the thought of her daughter being taken away from her, but having learned from the reports of the solicitor and the lieutenant's regiment that the officer was well-to-do, had no debts, and had sown only as many wild oats as his position in society demanded, having also discovered that the general expected much of his intelligence and character, and as her daughter was reeling under the unaccustomed storm of emotion, Mrs Perthrényi knew that it would be hazardous to say no, for she had no reason or justification to do so. Her daughter was, thank God, healthy, Huttra, who had been treating her since her birth, saw no cause for anxiety, no reason against their building a family in the time to come, so Mrs Perthrényi permitted the young man to propose to the girl. The betrothal took place after high mass, and was restricted to the family circle, Father Fülöp blessed the diamond engagement ring; beside Sarolt and her household, only the groom's also widowed mother was present at the engagement dinner, the young lovers were so radiant that Sarolt could not help but stare at her daughter, slave to an emotion she had not felt for a long time. The mother was disciplined, but she was not blind, nor foolish, and, though she had resigned herself to what she had no choice but to accept, she realized that now would come the time of true loneliness, and she could show no sign that life had robbed her again, that Cincu too would be taken from her. Of course she curbed her selfishness, nothing counted except her child's happiness.

My parents and the Perthrényis belonged to the same social circle, my mother and Sarolt had played tennis together as young girls. Sarolt had married when my mother married her first husband, Cincu was born at the same time as my half-sister, I, child of the second marriage, was ten years younger than the Perthrényi girl, whose original name was Geneviève, though no one ever called her by that name. After the father's riding accident and death, the ties that bound the families together loosened, then were broken off; until Cincu reached the age to attend balls, the Perthrényis did not seek the company of their old circle, and by the time they would have sought it, they had no reason

to do so, Cincu had finished with balls on her very first night as a debutante, they were busy making preparations for the wedding that was to be delayed a little, my father just left his card at the residence, P.f., after the engagement announcement arrived.

The family asked the lieutenant for a year's waiting time until the day of the wedding, it was during this period that I officially became acquainted with Cincu, we often met at the lido, she always sat in the shade, bathed very little, and when she lay in the deckchair to dry off, she allowed the circle of gaping children to approach her with the natural charm of the very kind. Cincu as a fiancée was just what she had been born and brought up to be, as soon as she noticed the eager faces of the little ones around her, distorted by longing and looking almost old as they stared at her left hand, at her engagement ring—next to which, in church, the gold wedding band would be slipped, and which, as propriety demanded, was an antique family diamond, because a lady should not wear cut diamonds even when she was married, not if she was a real lady—she would smile a beautiful smile at us as she said something in French to Solange, who hurried over to the ice-cream vendor, also standing in the shade waiting for customers, and asked him to come over to Cincu's deckchair, and give an ice-cream to any of the circle of children who wanted one. Once he had served them all, he was to bring the bill to her, she would pay him in Miss Perthrényi's place.

That summer I used to go swimming with my favourite cousin Tiger; we went for ice cream together too—for which I got a good scolding when I reached home and boasted of it; I was told that I should not have accepted the offer, it was not fitting, "it wasn't what I'd been taught", and Tiger too got her share of scolding at home from my aunt Piroska. I did not understand what was wrong about Cincu's standing us all an ice cream, Tiger—who was an oddity even in our family, famous for producing extraordinary individuals, Tiger who was a time-bomb set for an unspecified time—understood even less. Tiger did not shy at any obstacle, never waited for an opportune moment, never deliberated, never gave in, and jumped even if she knew she was going to hurt herself. We had so many relations we could have peopled an entire village, almost all of them have been dispersed from around me by the wind, but Tiger's memory has become fixed in my mind, I still feel her loss. When she died, it was not pain I felt at first, but indignation. How did she dare leave me?

That summer, we suffered the waiting period imposed on the betrothed together with Cincu, founded a new religion, with Cincu as its goddess. We dared not engage her in conversation, dared not even address her, at the time, to approach someone without an invitation was much more strictly restricted even within the family circle, we just followed her around and watched her, and sometimes spoke her name out loud to each other. The whispering of her name was part of the cult, for us she was not Cincu—Cincu could have been anybody—but Geneviève, the bride, whose wedding-day was slowly approaching.

We spied on her before her cabin, in the water, as she lay in the sun to dry, it was a wonder that she bore it so patiently, I think we were both in love with Cincu. We were not jealous of the hussar bridegroom, he was part and parcel of the magic of that extraordinary summer, a special relationship developed between us, as we realized, Tiger and I, that, strictly speaking, the man was one of us as well. Cincu is the bride, but she cannot take a step without us, her royal pages, we shall probably be her bridesmaids at the wedding, who could be more worthy than us, and we day-dreamed that we might be allowed to throw rose-petals as well. Cincu's trousseau, following the custom of those times, was displayed to the public in the shop window of the successor to our family's former store, indeed, by favour of the senior manager, we were allowed to touch her gossamer nightgowns after closing. What we associated with the flimsy clothing was improper, hardly known, not at all understood, in any case wrong, and brought us both in thought at least into physical contact with the hussar. The groom hardly looked at us, he was a polite man, he showed no sign of what he must have felt, that he was tired of and inconvenienced by our constant shadowing, and that he wanted us to leave them in peace. He was kind-hearted, would offer us sweets from time to time as well. One time Tiger—I have said she had no inhibitions—offered home-baked cherry pie in return, which she had brought to the lido in a box. Cincu thanked her very prettily, but refused, pleading her diet as an excuse, the hussar politely ate a slice.

We had an untroubled, beautiful two weeks during that summer, when the groom disappeared, on manoeuvres as it turned out, which we did not know, but they took the hussar from our midst, and at last Geneviève was ours only. By this time, emboldened and defiant, we had taken to sitting beside the unfortunate girl, of course Solange was always there too, so we could not approach her in a truly confidential way. Solange, the heartless, the cunning, sent the ice cream vendor to a distant corner, we were continually forced to make a choice, let it be said to our credit that we did not forsake the object of our worship for worldly pleasures, we did not want the ice cream, we stayed beside Cincu. Our presence did not bother the girl, we too were somehow part of the wonderful turn her life had taken. The swarm of children had disappeared from around her, Tiger—who had been prone to kick and bite even as a very young child when she felt someone was a nuisance to her—had driven them away. Solange knew she could read in the shade quite safely, the bodyguards, those two crazy children, would keep watch; as time passed, Cincu became even more friendly and kind, we were the protective screen between herself and the townfolk, to approach a girl freshly betrothed in the absence of her fiancé would have been improper even in the presence of the governess, but she would still have been hounded by the curious if we had not been there to shield her. Solange, when she was flustered, always forgot her Hungarian, and Cincu had no wish to make acquaintances, nor to declare her sentiments, and she was utterly incapable of offending or refusing anyone.

If Sarolt had not bought her daughter a sixth swimsuit beside the five she already owned, this extraordinary summer would have remained in my memory as a time of harmony and of presexual, or if not that, then sacred, foolish puppy love. Cincu was ours, we were hers, the sun magical, fiery, the pool could not cool us, Cincu did, yet what we felt for her was not gentle blue like the water, but bright red, like the face of someone with fever.

Sarolt felt that time was running out, her daughter, her only source of joy, would be taken from her in the autumn, and she tried to assuage her impotent pain by adding yet another piece to her trousseau, that is how we came to see the new, sixth swimsuit, which seemed like fairyland itself to our child's eyes, it was in this suit that Cincu truly became Geneviève. The soft brown tones of the suit made her fairness even more dazzling, the material was decorated with little Chinese men jumping off tiny bridges into small pools, and each little Chinese was watched by another from a height. A coolie hat completed the outfit, and a parasol made of the same material as the suit. On this day Tiger behaved like one deranged, especially when she saw the parasol, she asked to have it to play with, Cincu gave it to her, but when she asked to have it back, Tiger shut it and sat on it. Tiger's eyes were beautiful, of all my cousins she was the only one who had inherited my mother's green mermaid eyes. She stared, almost hostilely, like Alberich, and stretched herself out on the parasol. Cincu must give it to her—she said—to her, and for keeps, because she cannot live without it. Cincu laughed, in the bright summer sunlight the words sounded comical, a ten-year-old child who cannot and will not live without something, and that that something should happen to be, of all things, a brown parasol with a Chinese pattern. Solange said something not very pleasant in French, I pretended I had not understood, Tiger didn't.

"Drop dead!" Tiger cried. "Don't you talk against us! I want the parasol!"

Solange now began talking very rapidly, Cincu tried to calm her, but this time she too held out against Tiger. She was a little more solemn than normally, she did not like discord.

"That was not very nice of you, Ibolyka," she said, pronouncing Tiger's official name, "please beg Miss Solange's pardon, as you have offended her, and it is very bad manners to demand things."

"I want the parasol!" The mermaid's eyes were fixed on her like a sea creature's eyes from below the depths of some mysterious sea. It was not a pleasant gaze, rather frightening. Cincu stood up, straightened her beautiful body, pulled out the parasol from beneath Tiger, and started to walk away with Solange. Tiger stared after them with the same gaze. After a couple of steps Cincu called back that the parasol was worth nothing without the hat and the suit, she would give it to her if she could, but she can't, as the suit would be incomplete without it. If she dies, Tiger can have it, she will leave it to her as a keepsake.

She hadn't taken twenty steps towards the exit when Tiger rushed after her. It was the first time in her life that she touched her, she hugged her, pressed her

body against her, and cried, cried so hard that all the people at the lido stopped in their tracks, and the swimmers too in the nearby pool could hear, could not help hearing that a frantic child was screaming, don't die, don't ever die, don't die.

"*C'est dégoûtant,*" said Solange, who gave a sharp tug at the child, without even trying to be gentle. She had to practically tear off Tiger's thin arms from Cincu's waist.

"*Mais non,*" I heard her reply. "*C'est drôle et tragique.*"

Of course it was *tragique*, I was close to crying myself then, what were they tormenting poor Tiger for, what was her great crime, and how come it never entered their heads that if our Aunt Gizella gave French lessons, we would naturally be made to attend them as well, so she should earn a little more money, Tiger understood, just as I did, that they said she was disgusting. Understood? She understood so well that she collapsed in a heap upon hearing those words, she lay there on the ground, pressing her face against the sand and gravel, like one killed. Incidentally, it was the first and only public humiliation of her life that went unavenged, my walk of life led uphill and down dale, hers, from that moment, always led her higher and higher, even death could not down her without a struggle. I knelt down beside her, brushed off her face so the gravel would not graze her, even so her forehead was scraped raw. She let me help her to her feet, by then Solange had put Cincu in the car. I hoped she at least would look back, but she didn't. What Tiger got for this scene at home it's best to forget, her parents, especially her father, a school principal, knew no mercy when he felt that it was his own child who had brought shame upon his head. Some kind soul had already dropped in on them by the time the trembling, unaccountably limping Tiger got home, the parents knew everything, when she walked in through the gate her bags were already packed and they set off with her straight away to her paternal grandmother's at Haláp, she was not allowed to return until school began. Without her I did not go to the lido either, I did not see Cincu again until her wedding, only her hussar, whom I ran into just the once on the promenade, I tried to slip past him but he recognized me and stopped me. There was something new about his face, something unfamiliar, I did not know it was the face of a man who is pleased with life, who is loved.

"And where's the other guardian angel?" he asked. "Where's the little monster? I heard what she did."

I was silent. What could I have said, I was a child, but a child who had been taught her manners. I knew I could not reply to an officer of the hussars in the way Solange had disposed of us, I could not tell him that to accost me and ask about Tiger was *dégoûtant*.

"Would you not like something of Cincu's too?" he continued. "You almost loved her to distraction, you silly little fools. Well, never mind, I'm not really angry, because who wouldn't always want to be where Cincu was?"

Will you come into the tea-shop with me? The ice cream is better here than at the lido."

He was trying to make peace, make amends for Solange, but I would have none of it. I found the only polite insult that even an officer had no choice but to swallow. I felt as Caesar must have felt after occupying Gaul. My hands were steady, but in this we had always differed with Tiger, she always struck at once, I bided my time, waited for the best opportunity. And it had come.

"Thank you very much, but my parents taught me never to accept sweets from a stranger."

The blow struck home. He did not say another word, but turned and hurried away, the redness of his face indicating that he had understood me very well. He an old lecher, he a stranger! I skipped all the way home, I wasn't allowed to write to Tiger, and later I did not want to tell her about the meeting.

Naturally, only those who had received an invitation were to attend the wedding, and Mrs Perthrényi had invited parents without their children. The nephews and nieces of the handsome hussar carried the bride's train and scattered rose-petals. There was of course a very large crowd in Saint Anne Street, we stood opposite the church, Mrs Ilka, our cook, clutching me firmly by the arm, a great many people came to gape because Cincu counted as a society lady even in the capital, had been written up in the society columns even though she had attended just the one ball in her life, and that in the country. We stared at the wedding guests, I in particular at my father, it was the first time I had seen him in a morning coat and top hat, which made him for once as tall as his much taller wife. Geneviève was preceded by her mother-in-law and mother, behind them came Solange pushing the Father's wheelchair. It is only now that I realize what a sad procession it must have been, that radiant life between the two widows, behind them the crippled priest and the spinster. At the time I thought it as beautiful as a fairy-tale. The whole town was there in the church and out on the steps, those who were not in morning coats were wearing the ceremonial attire of Hungarian noblemen, there were a great many officers there as well, and after the ceremony Geneviève, now a married woman, descended the steps between their ranks, and at last we got to see her face, which until then had been covered with a veil, as propriety demanded. Geneviève's bridal dress was made of old lace, worth more than diamonds, my mother whispered with awe. It was a long wedding, the mayor had stopped the traffic on the main street for the duration. The Perthrényis had restored or placed orders for several buildings as a way of supporting the undertakings of the town council.

Tiger of course was not allowed to attend, my aunt was afraid she would sneak out after them, so she was locked up in the nursery school among the butterfly wings. The crêpe paper accessories for the butterfly dance were stored in the lumber-room, Tiger spent Cincu's big day huddled among dead paper butterflies. We were sitting down to luncheon when the liveried attendant of the county

arrived with the news, Geneviève had stepped out of the carriage on the arm of her husband, and had got as far as the hall before collapsing at the foot of the stairs, by the time the hussar leaned over her, she was dead. No one knew the details, but this much was enough for us to forgo lunch. An hour later my aunt Piroska was at our house, looking for Tiger, who had disappeared. When she heard the sad news they greeted her with as they unlocked the door of the wing room, when she learned what had happened to Cincu, she had rushed out of the house and no one had seen her since. Piroska had hoped she would come to us, but as she had not, she would go on looking for her. She has no friends apart from me, well, no one else can suffer her terrible temper. She is not above running away, that one, or hanging herself, my aunt cried. To fall in love with a girl, it's absurd. For if this is not love, then she's no teacher. And Piroska cried and cried.

In the afternoon now this, now that member of the family dropped in, my aunt telephoned, the child had not been found, they had been to the parsonage to ask permission to take a look in the sacristy and the church, perhaps she had hidden there, had gone to take a belated look at what she had not been allowed to see, all the flowers were still there untouched on the altar. The county clerk reported that Mr Bauer, the coffin maker had succeeded in helping the heart-struck Mrs Perthényi, beside herself with grief, Father Fülöp and Solange out of the carriage, and had taken them up into the house with his assistant. The situation at the residence was impossible, the mother would not allow them to take Cincu from her arms, she is sitting there on the floor holding Cincu and keeps saying that she will come to in a moment, Mr Bauer just happens to have a white sample coffin on hand, in principle, Cincu, poor soul, could already be resting there, but her mother will not allow anyone to even come near her, Mrs Perthényi demanded that Cincu's vanity case be brought to her, painted her daughter's face pink and her lips dark red. I was too young to fully digest all that I felt at the time, the image of Mrs Perthényi sitting on the floor like the statues and paintings of the Virgin Mary struck me so intensely that I could barely grasp that more important than the esthetic experience was the fact that Geneviève was no more. That is, I did grasp it, but assessed it in different way: I wished the same for myself. Who could have imagined a more beautiful death than to step out into life with a bouquet of tuberoses in one's hand on the arm of a beloved person, and, in the most significant moment, have that life cease abruptly, before having to suffer a single disappointment. When my thoughts took a more personal turn I realized with a shock that poor Tiger was in hiding somewhere, and my body reacted to the double blow with tears and trembling. My mother pulled off my dress and stuck me under the shower and opened the cold water faucet. While she was rubbing me she called out to my father from behind the closed door of the bathroom if he thought they should call to offer their condolences the following day, or would it be enough to leave a card. My father decided on leaving a card. It is strange, but I felt no aversion at the thought of Mrs

Perthrényi sitting on the floor with the dead Cincu in her arms, just inescapable sorrow that beauty and goodness had departed from us. I would so much have liked to see Cincu once more! I offered to take the cards myself, I hoped I might be allowed into the house and could see her for one last time. My parents gave no reason, but denied me the possibility of the visit. In the meanwhile, the chief of police telephoned that they had searched the church, but had found no trace of the little girl though they had looked for her even in the crypt, they had scoured the wood, but she was not there either, a policeman would be sent to the child's grandmother, to the farm where the parents sometimes sent her to stay, she may have decided to go there alone in her sorrow, they are searching for her all along the main road, are going to ask after her at the stops of the narrow-gauge railway as well. The police chief was a friend of my father's, not of Tiger's parents', so it was my mother who called Piroska with the news to have no fear, her daughter would be found; Sanyi Tóth, her former dance partner, was taking particular care over the search. Piroska just cried, because the day which was meant to be a sensation, a day of pure joy for the whole town, had darkened, the poor little bride who should be lying in her nuptial bed was lying in a coffin instead, that is, if only she could be lying there, but Mrs Perthrényi will not let go of the corpse, the situation at the residence was unchanged, the papal nuncio told the husband, who was practically beside himself, that he must help convince the mother, together with Father Fülöp, to lay her daughter in the coffin, the Father was unequal to the task alone, and the mother would not listen to him either. Huttra and the nerve-specialist called in for a medical consultation both declared that there was nothing to do but to wait until she grew tired enough for them to steal the unfortunate Cincu out of her arms.

The telephones did not stop shrilling until the evening, in the evening the police reported that the girl had not gone to her grandmother's, no one had seen Tiger. I was very angry with the Lord, and whenever I was angry with him I did not say my evening prayers as a punishment, I did not even speak to Him because I knew He would not be pleased to hear what I would say. Of course sleep did not come easy, would not come at all, I thought that if they had allowed Tiger to watch from beside Mrs Ilka what every curious passer-by had seen, she would not have run away. My aunt was kind to every child, she was only cruel to her own, how could she have had the heart to lock her up in a lumber-room where she could not even open the window.

My thoughts stopped there. Well, of course she is there, if she is nowhere else. She did not go away, she went back, to the only place where she could be sure no one would think to look for her. Children do not come to Aunt Piroska's nursery school on Saturdays and Sundays, and we had always been able to sneak out and back whenever we wanted by stepping on the door-knob of the small door opening onto Szepességi Street, holding onto a branch of the mulberry tree.

Should I tell someone? Who, and how?

Really, who should I tell, and how to say it? It is the middle of the night, Tiger is alone in the wing room, and apart from me, no one has the slightest inkling that she is there, she can grieve hungrier and thirsting for Cincu, whom she did not see walk into church as I did, how could she dare come out, she'd just be beaten again, but she cannot come out, there is a special lock, high up on the lumber-room door because of the inquisitive kindergarteners, it is easy to get in, but once it has slammed behind you, you cannot get out. This time, it was she who imprisoned herself, she cannot escape, though what a long time has passed since she last ate and drank, there isn't even a loo in the lumber-room. What to do?

I could not think of anything. I tossed and turned but had no brainwave, nor could I sleep. Then I thought God must be angry with me because I hadn't prayed, so I asked Him to forget what I had said about him, I would take it back, and would He please help, because there was big trouble, so big that I did not even have the time to be sad or to grieve properly. At last I fell asleep, and in the morning they greeted me with the news that Mrs Perthrényi had let go of Cincu, and she had been laid out; Mrs Perthrényi had fainted beside her, and that was how they had been able to take the dead bride from her arms. The question that remained was what was to be done about the mother, who still refused to let the dead girl out of the house; the husband, who had so quickly become a widow, was sitting beside the bier receiving the condolers, the papal nuncio was making arrangements for the funeral in Father Fülöp's place, but Doctor Huttra, who had not left the residence either, said that if they could not shake Mrs Perthrényi out of her grief it would be the end of her too, for she would surely lose her mind. If only her despair could be directed into some normal channel, but who could do it, and how?

We were sitting at breakfast, my father was an early riser and my mother had trained the entire household to conform to his habits from the beginning, at half past seven, every one was sitting at the big table, ready for work. I was hardly able to swallow my coffee when I heard that they had searched the outskirts of the town for Tiger, but to no avail, so now they were setting up a country-wide search.

"Eat, dear," my mother said. "You're not going to solve anything by not eating. School starts in a week, these are your last free days. Eat."

I asked permission to go over to Piroska's. First I had to drink my coffee, then I could go, my hankering for the nursery school caused no surprise, when I was born, my mother was seriously ill for almost two years, she could barely lift me, let alone feed me, it was Piroska who helped my father keep his daughter alive. I went at a trot to get there all the quicker, there were few people in the streets, but those few must have had their doubts about me, because I did not ring the bell at the front, but went round to the side entrance in Szepességi Street, clambered up on to the door-knob and climbed over the wall, once I was over the wall getting down was easy with the help of the mulberry tree, the nursery

school building was placed at right angles to the apartment so there was no clear view of it. The door of the lumber-room was shut tight, I rapped on it.

We had a signal, ti-ti-ti-ta-ti, Iboly I'm waiting. If I was not mistaken, then Tiger was in there, she'd recognize the signal and answer me. And of course she did know it was me. And she did answer, she beat on the door with her fists. She must be very hungry, I thought as I unbolted the door.

I hardly recognized her, she had changed so much. There were dark circles around her eyes, her lips were blue. A clear picture of the wash-tub standing on trestles in the courtyard came to me then, with clothes floating in it, and drying soap suds on the wide outer rim. They've been washing here today, and early at that, and it is Auntie Julinkó and Mrs Bakonyi who do the washing. In the town of my birth, washing served instead of a local paper, the washerwomen always knew everything there was to know about everyone, dirty laundry is a good witness, by now, Tiger must know all the details about Cincu's death. When they let her out, she ran away and then concealed herself in the one place where no sane person would ever think of looking for her, the place she had escaped from.

She did not even glance at the house, she did not ask for food or water, she did not even want to go to the loo, as if she had dried out, become desiccated, like the shell of a fly's body left as a memory in the spider's web. She started running and began to climb over the wall in the same place where I had come in, I begged her to leave by the main gate, they'd beat her again, but she'd bear that, this way she'd just get into bigger trouble if Mr Tóth keeps up the search for her. She did not give a rational answer, but asked me whether I had any money. How could I have had money on me, I did not even have a pinafore on, it was only the first week of September.

"Then we'll ride without a ticket," said Tiger, and throughout the long journey, as we rode out on the tram to the Perthrényi's residence, she did not say a word, there were no tears in her peculiar, ocean-deep eyes, the shock had been so great that nothing could have eased it yet. What she wanted there, where we would not be allowed to enter, I could not imagine, but I accompanied her faithfully, and kept a lookout for a ticket inspector, but none came; when I was a child, people did not cheat on public conveyances, except perhaps for students, and they did it for a little excitement.

There were black drapes on the Perthrényi's front door, the curtains were tied up with bouquets of myrtle. A footman stood guard at the door, I saw a couple of people standing about in front of the house, no one I knew, it was too early to leave cards, as I had learned from my mother. Tiger wanted to go in, the footman politely headed her off, she tried again, the footman's refusal was sharper in tone this time, but then something disrupted the order of sentry duty, for the shouting from within was loud enough to reach the open French windows. I recognized the voices of Doctor Huttra and Solange, but not the third, I later learned that it was the handsome hussar who had shouted, and then another

woman, the nurse, and another man, that was the nerve specialist, but all this I learned later, much later, for the events took their toll on me too. The footman's attention turned from without to within, he rushed into the house at the noise, and Tiger and I followed him. The cause of the shouting was at once apparent: on the stairs, clutching the banisters, in a pose I have since then often encountered in Shakespeare plays, stood Mrs Perthényi, looking down silently, straight at the coffin, and there was the dead Geneviève before me.

I had thought that when I saw her I would feel the same way as when I saw the picture of Snow White in her glass coffin in my story-book, but I was wrong. It was a terrible sight. I did not know that a dead person was so very dead. Tiger stood one step ahead of me, Mrs Perthényi's eyes fixed upon us, Solange screamed. She said something like *les enfants d'été*. Then she changed over to Hungarian, and reprimanded the footman, and told us to get out of there. *Dépêchez!*

I left—left? I rushed out so as not to see that white something in place of the fairy princess Cincu, that stage set, the large coffin in the great hall enveloped in the dense, cloying fragrance of flowers. The handsome hussar was standing at Cincu's unrecognizable head, which all the make-up in the world could not have made to look alive. I waited for a long time at the tram stop, trembling, shuddering in horror, my stomach churning, watching for Tiger to get there at last, but something else happened. She did not come.

She's run away again, I thought. But where has she gone this time? She can't have stayed there, that's impossible. I went home without her, and because I did not want to cheat with the ticket again, I walked home, all the way from the Pallag to Saint Anne Street, and if the exalted Piroska had not telephoned in the meanwhile to relate all that happened during my silent and increasingly exhausting walk through the wood and along the endless Simonyi Road, I would never have guessed what had happened. I tried to imagine what each of them did after Tiger appeared beside the coffin, but my imagination proved inadequate. I thought she would be thrown out, the door closed behind her; that Mr Tóth would stop the search for her, and she'd be beaten again, and would get no pocket-money either. I thought the way logics dictated, I did not yet know how subtle and ironic life could be. When Doctor Huttra told my mother the true story, the authentic one, not the one Piroska had rounded out to substantiate her daughter's greatness, I felt as if a dark breath of wind from the netherworld had brushed my face. The perfect roundness of life was spoiled, became dented, peaks rose or chasms opened up on its surface.

"It was all a question of whether Sarolt would ever be able to speak again, her sanity hung in the balance," Doctor Huttra explained to my mother. "It was Solange who first caught her attention, because Solange had once told her about Cincu's summer admirers, so when two little girls suddenly appeared before her, she realized that these must have been the children Solange spoke of as Cincu's bodyguards. Solange shouted at them infuriated to get away from there at

once, Magdolna ran out immediately, but Iboly stayed, she stared fixedly at Mrs Perthrényi, jerked herself out of Solange's hands, who wanted to lead her out of the house, she went over to Sarolt and told her that she wanted all the accessories of the swimsuit, the brown parasol included. Sarolt stared at her in alarm, like one who has just realized that she had not only lost all that she held dear on this day, but had obviously also lost her senses, for how else could a strange little girl be standing by her child's coffin with such an absurd demand.

"The parasol," repeated Tiger, "she promised I could have the parasol if she died, well, she's dead now, so could I please have the parasol. The entire suit. She left it to me. For keeps."

The situation was so absurd that the widow stirred on the stairs and carefully began to descend, her son-in-law jumped to her side to assist her; at last Sarolt was standing beside the coffin, and for the first time since the tragedy happened her eyelids began to quiver. The hussar grabbed Tiger's arm and tried to throw her out, Sarolt shook her head, signalling that the child must not be harmed, and in a grating voice, as if it were issuing from a deep pit filled with daggers, as if every sound were cutting her mouth, she at last began to speak.

"Let go of her at once!"

Mrs Perthrényi turned to Solange, who was crying beside the coffin.

"There were two of them with her, that's what you always said," said Sarolt to Solange. "The other's gone, but this one, the faithful one, she stayed. One of the witnesses of the summer. *Le témoin d'été.*"

"And then my heart was set at rest, I knew she would not lose her mind," related Doctor Huttra. The nerve specialist's opinion, his hope was that if she began to speak, once she spoke, she would be saved. Sarolt behaved almost normally, she hugged her daughter, wiped off the make-up with her veil, then told Solange to give the strange child the suit that her daughter had promised her. Solange responded dumbfounded, it took a long time before she found the swimsuit at the bottom of the orphaned suitcase, packed in preparation for the honeymoon, Tiger put the coolie hat on her head, tucked the swimsuit under her left arm, and opened the parasol. Little Chinese men danced among the little bridges on the opened parasol, the son-in-law tore it out of her hand and snapped it shut, the sound was like a pistol shot in that great silence. Solange gestured to Tiger—she would not speak to her—that she had got what she wanted, it was time she went. Tiger walked over to the coffin, took a good look at Cincu, then turned straight to Sarolt and told her, in a very loud voice, not to cry, that thing lying there was not Cincu, it was just something. Cincu is here, in the parasol. Couldn't she see?

At last they managed to hustle her out of the house, Sarolt began to cry, Father Fülöp began to tell his beads, there was the sound of crying, the mumble of prayer, Cincu slept in the coffin, and the hussar was no less pale than his wife.

That was the story that Huttra told, I scarcely figured in it, most likely I did not even know Cincu, did not release Tiger from the wing room—I did not do anything, I went away as I was ordered to from the coffin, Magdolna the obedient—and the disobedient, bad Iboly became the pride of the town. This play was a great play, but no part had been written for me, I was not even allowed to play the role of soubrette. I thought this was an oversight, a mistake. I did not know then that things do not happen by chance.

In my family the dead and the dying are mine. Tiger filled an important position in life, Piroška, Piroška's husband, Tiger's husband, Tiger herself died for me. When she looked up for the last time with her mysterious sea-creature's eyes, clouded by the infinite water that had by then completely engulfed her life, her lips were trembling. The doctor was there, and the nurse, and they looked at us, cousins, one dying, the other mad, putting pencil and paper by the hand of the dying, who could no longer say anything, but obviously wanted to. She reached for the paper, her hand moved with great effort, a couple of lines was all she had the strength for.

"Do you understand what she is trying to say?" asked the doctor.

I shook my head. The mermaid looked at me again, her lids growing heavy. She was annoyed that I could not understand what was so clear to her. She gathered all her strength and stabbed a finger at the paper.

"For you," she breathed.

"What, dearest? What? What is it?"

"That."

"She's drawing some kind of object," said the doctor. The nurse thought she saw spokes of some kind, two sticks and a melon, I saw nothing but her.

She died and I could tell by her glance that she thought I had let her down and she did not know why.

I did not go home by car from the hospital, I took a tram. By then the tram line had been extended and ran before the former residence of the Perthrényis. We had long passed the lido by the time I realized what she had wanted to say with those sticks, the sphere and the spokes, what I should have recognized. Of course. We two, the witnesses. *Les enfants d'été!* The witnesses of summer. That is, she was the one true witness, because Magdolna had run away. Magdolna had not recognized her signals till it was too late, did not realize that in the frame of a long perished parasol, and their childhood pictures, she had been left that summer. It was the sun she had drawn, two little girls and the ribs of the parasol. •

Tamás Bácskai

The Economics of Culture and the Culture of Economics

When political change arrived in the early 90s, the Soviet bloc countries differed considerably in their socio-economic systems and in the degree of political elbow-room they afforded to the public expression of ideas and opinions within the limits the party-states had set. In Hungary's "soft" dictatorship, the government's grip on economic processes had been gradually slackening since 1968, with the state's influence concentrating on investment. Consequently, publishers, museums, concert halls, art galleries, theatres, cinemas, and latterly the electronic media presented a great variety of schools of thought, philosophies and styles in a range that went well beyond the officially approved "socialist realism". Indeed, the definition of the latter changed over the last two decades of the system, while still remaining vague. According to official cultural policy guidelines, works of art in the latter category enjoyed government support, cultural products not considered hostile to socialism were tolerated, whilst those deemed inimical to socialism were banned. Over the years the distinction between the first two became increasingly blurred. Apart from overtly anti-socialist and anti-Soviet works such as Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984*, Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* or similar books produced by authors in Hungary, the third category included works which didn't meet the prudish, petty bourgeois tastes and moral convictions of the ruling elite. Nevertheless, with generational and educational changes, even this third category was gradually reduced in size.

Censorship was part and parcel of the editorial work in publishing houses. (There was no formal Board of Censors as such; guidelines were issued and writers, editors and publishers engaged in a form of self-censorship.) In exchange, the Hungarian government, just as those of the other Soviet bloc states, offered economic security, indeed well-being to "workers in the cultural field".

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Organized into state-sponsored and controlled associations, such as the Writers' Association, and into Funds, such as the Literature Fund, a system of advances on future contracts, prizes, publishing opportunities, retirement pension schemes, health insurance regimes, subsidized housing and hire-purchase credits, summer resort homes, mandatory percentages of state investments set aside to purchase objects of art, free foreign travel and secured market and financing all provided security for even mediocre talent that toed the party line. Punishment for non-observance took the form of withdrawing some or all of the above benefits for a shorter or longer period, or in forcing the "heretic" into having to earn a living from non-creative work. However, it should be said that, to a minor extent, some alternatives to state support emerged in the form of independent sponsors, of which the Soros Foundation is the best known. These started operating in the final stage of the party-state and fostered what the state only tolerated; however, they did not provide regular financial support for what the authorities prohibited.

Outstanding talent, especially if it was acknowledged in the West or had a strong following at home, was lavishly remunerated and enjoyed a high degree of tolerance by the authorities, in whose terms of reference such talent expressed unorthodox views and methods.

Let me add that in the lean years of socialism, from 1979 to its collapse, the real value of subsidies to culture gradually declined and sociological studies started to point out that subsidies such as cheap opera, concert and theatre tickets helped the well-to-do and the target-group of the working class, lower white-collar workers or farmers did not take advantage of these benefits: the fact that supply is inexpensive does not alter the target-group's preferences for operetta and musicals instead of opera, Agatha Christie instead of Tolstoy, and so forth.

The collapse in the early nineties of firms supplying the Soviet and related markets reduced GDP by almost 30 per cent and sharply reduced tax-revenues, producing inflation that at one point touched 30 per cent, and also devalued existing benefits. It led to a reduction of the cover provided for the financing of cultural activities and, last but not least, of the subsidies that made books, cinemas, opera and theatre cheap; the result was that the bulk of the public, affected by unemployment and stagnating incomes, drastically reduced its demand for cultural goods. A new public and magnanimous sponsors emerged, among them the big multinational companies, as well as *nouveaux riches* with mostly unsophisticated tastes, and they were immediately besieged by a host of prospective clients.

In other words, the fear of a return to the conditions of the 1930s was felt, this being a decade which, though paradoxically now thought of as a golden age for the arts, and especially literature, was also a time when the majority of those engaged in the arts in Hungary was pauperized and exposed to the political exigencies of the government and prize-granting foundations. The government

dispensed jobs, mainly in the teaching professions, state and municipal commissions and access to broadcasting, and all of this in accordance with the loyalty of the artists concerned. The idea of making use of writers and other creative artists was developed by one of the regime's more able statesman, a minister of the interior (and, at another period, chairman of the Hungarian Broadcasting Corporation) Miklós Kozma, who himself was the son of a good poet, Andor Kozma. An attempt was made by anti-German and by Anglophile as well as Francophile circles led by a lady of high intellectual capacities and influence in high society, a gifted film and stage-designer, Klára Tüdős. The liberal, to a significant extent Jewish, bourgeoisie supported the literary periodical *Nyugat*; the more radical elements among them supported the short-lived *Szép Szó*. One of the most influential foundations, the Baumgarten, whose prizes and stipends were both financially and artistically important for poets and writers, reflected the orientation of the non-extremist, highly educated, liberal neo-Catholic middle class and it showed a certain bias against those whose politics were left of centre. Other foundations, restricted in number, were for the most part affiliated to religious and political groups, and in most cases the priorities, tastes and views of the members of their awarding bodies were crucial. Attempts to organize mutual help by outstanding writers such as the novelist Zsigmond Móricz (in the form of the Economic Association of Writers) had neither a major nor a lasting impact.

The fear of a reversion to the 30s raised a great hue and cry, primarily on the part of artists hoping to see the restoration of former governmental sponsorship in order to avoid a total collapse in Hungarian cultural life, arguing the absence of a new public, new sponsors or new, non-state-subsidized publishing houses, theatres, exhibitions. Yet the last couple of years has shown that such fears have no real foundation: there have never been as many publishing houses, theatres, journals, book titles published, or as high auction prices for objects of art as in these last three years of the nineties. (One unique phenomenon is a quarterly, *Parnasszus*, devoted solely to poetry and criticism, which is wholly supported by a businessman of not over-extensive means.)

Nevertheless, the proper resources and means for financing artistic creation have to be reexamined under the new social and political conditions now pertaining.

Clearly there is today only a narrow, though growing, base of wealthy patrons of art, and patronage is not yet seen as a status symbol for the *nouveaux riches*. Certain multinationals, MATÁV, the telecommunications giant for one, take pride in being the main support for Radio Bartók, the mainstay of serious music broadcasting. Some major banks also use patronage or sponsorship in their image-building. A small circle of investors are venturing into financing film-making or musicals. Nonetheless, only government and municipalities financing the creative and performing arts ensure that new and modern initia-

tives, which do not conform to the tastes of the mainstream public, get a start. There is as yet no effective demand for certain types of arts and performing services products, especially in capital-intensive branches such as theatre and film.

There have been attempts to approach the financing of culture from the viewpoint of economics, but without serious results. In the field of "high" art, there is no guidance from economics for individual artefacts, only a global sum can be allocated, based on the political will and the public consensus on subsidies for the arts. For "everyday" art, which in many cases is not distinguishable from "high" art—thus Haydn and Handel created many of their masterpieces for entertainment—the market should be the ultimate judge.

Yet it is not sufficient to recognize the need for public subsidization and for convincing policy makers and their voters to earmark funds for this purpose. How subsidies are distributed is not indifferent from the point of view of freedom of expression. Hence, subsidies should primarily be indirect, mainly through tax reliefs and refunds for individuals and corporations spending on and/or sponsoring objects, ensembles or performances. This would include such things as purchasing paintings and sculptures to make them accessible to the general public or donating or lending them to public collections, or contributing to the maintenance of opera, ballet and concert ensembles, or venues for performances, as well as public libraries or publishers. This *modus operandi* on the part of state agencies should avoid dependence on bodies which may present political demands in exchange for funds, and it should eschew a monopoly or oligopoly of tastes, even of select groups of experts or so called experts. Contributions towards a series of performances (and not a permanent ensemble) may be treated as venture capital, with the tax advantages that generally apply to the latter.

As to the sums spent by the authorities, and determining the allotment of a certain percentage from the budget or the GDP, economics can provide no measuring device: it is a question of political will and the cultural standard of voters, as art is a matter of quality; economics, especially macroeconomics and cost-benefit analysis, its main tool here, is concerned with the quantitative. Economics cannot help in deciding how to distribute governmental funds among the different arts, as this depends on both the relative interest-asserting capacities of the arts themselves and on the mood of the general public. Outstanding individuals, a Jack Laing, a Mitterand, may significantly influence public opinion in favour of cultural expenditure.

Microeconomics may provide a certain amount of help in the matter of culture in the Anglo-Saxon sense, that is in areas where it is very difficult to set a borderline between entertainment and culture in the continental European sense, and in the running of permanent or occasional ensembles. Permanent ensembles may establish a mix of market-led and value-led programmes, the former financing losses made by the latter. This is important so as to avoid an overproduction of artefacts and performances aimed solely at "insider" colleagues

and high-brow circles. Public money should not encourage such practices. At the same time, it is difficult to pass judgement where such attitudes end and artistic experiment begins.

In certain cases, directly subsidizing customers may be advisable: I have in mind free performances of drama and music, free guided tours in museums for schoolchildren and for the disabled.

All of this does not mean that creative or performing artists should be exempt from maintaining themselves before establishing themselves. Many a major writer or artist has worked as a school teacher, a musician or such before becoming famous.

Private sponsoring versus government subsidy

The erosion of the welfare state and the rise of neo-liberal ideology reduced the budgetary funds available for cultural purposes, and the doubts about the very wisdom of subsidizing the creative and performing arts undermined the economic foundations of certain cultural institutions; this is especially true of Europe, which has traditionally had a relatively high level of governmental, municipal and communal subsidies to cultural activities.

The problems thus created are, indeed, European since in the USA there is a large number of well-to-do individuals and institutions sponsoring cultural activities, primarily in the musical performing arts: opera houses, orchestras, ballet companies and performing arts schools. Thus, it is not audiences who have to bear the whole burden of the costs of these performances, and funds from the performing ensembles flow back, in the form of commissions or royalties, to composers, librettists, music publishing houses.

In the film industry, the English-speaking countries have a competitive edge, namely the enormous size of the market. That same factor of language also makes possible a market for valuable fiction and poetry. The film and publishing industries of small countries must be subsidized, both internationally and nationally. The international treatment should be based on the same principle as national subsidization of small enterprises, replacing the absent economies to scale. The form should be the fostering of translations into world languages.

Purchases and endowments by the rich to museums and art collections, partly via spending on acquisitions from living artists, contribute to the maintenance of painters and sculptors as well as to collections accessible to the general public.

In Europe at present there is no stratum of patrons comparable to the USA, particularly in Eastern Europe with its newly wealthy bourgeoisie. Although, for instance, the insurance company AB-Aegon started a programme in 1997 for promoting contemporary Hungarian painters, this, together with its funding of a monthly periodical, aid to two major libraries and to theatrical performances,

Financing Culture

Cultural institutions and functions are financed by sources of three different kinds: state, local government and private. The budget of just about every government department includes cultural items, since they maintain their own cultural establishments. Thus the Ministry of Health spends an annual 71 million forints on the Semmelweis Museum of the History of Medicine and the Ministry of Agriculture 400 million on the Agricultural Museum.

Culture figures prominently in the budget of two ministries, that of the Interior and that of the National Cultural Heritage. The 635 forints per head of population which local government authorities received from central funds for cultural purposes in 1999 figured in the budget of the Ministry of the Interior, a total of 10 billion forints, of which, however, according to some estimates, 10 per cent are lost to culture. There are close to a thousand villages which are so small that they lack any kind of institution on which such moneys could be spent. The 5.4 billion forints paid in subsidies to local theatres also figure in the Ministry of the Interior budget. Two billion within this sum is allotted proportionate to the subsidies which these theatres receive from their own local authority. The 300 million forints given to ten of the larger local orchestras also financed from the Ministry of the Interior budget. Metropolitan and county establishments receive an extra 53 million per county and 210 forints per head of population.

It is extremely difficult to estimate how much local government authorities spend on culture, it is certain, however, that it is much less than what is provided by the state. The Ministry of the National Cultural Heritage looks after twenty-four major national institutions (the Opera, the National Széchényi Library & c.) to which the Ministry allots an annual 9.1 billion forints in its budget. The Ministry also disposes over several billion forints which are allotted on application, to be spent on data bases, the maintenance of ancient monuments, millenary celebrations & c. The department also supervises the National Cultural Basic Programme, which is financed by cultural dues collected as taxes. This year 3.5 billion forints thus obtained are available for distribution by sub-committees for particular fields.

Private moneys are most active in two cultural fields, in publishing and the cinema. In these the state has only an auxiliary role, providing e.g. one million forints per title for each of the hundred and fifty titles that make up the millenary series of Hungarian classics.

István Riba

(thus the March 1998 Budapest production of Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*) is only a drop in the ocean. The role once played by papal, royal and imperial courts *vis-à-vis* the Michelangelos, Molières, Mozarts, or by aristocrats like Esterházy for a Haydn, is now played by governments, municipalities and private sponsors.

This has the disadvantage of dependence upon a single or an oligopolystic centre, which again is exposed to changing political and social ideologies, ideas, trends and fashions. The dependence, in such a way, is centred around a single

focus of interests and tastes as well as exposing cultural institutions and the arts to the typical bureaucratic behaviour of avoiding responsibility. Even in democratic societies, governments, central or local, ask for loyalty in exchange for subsidies. There is always the danger also of asking for kickbacks. Apart from this, a crisis in the political field may be transferred to the arts, as is the case now with the Blair administration and the financing of the Covent Garden Opera. Another disadvantage is that budgetary bargaining every year makes long-term artistic planning difficult or impossible.

Relying heavily on the body politic carries the "danger of reducing artistic activity to a social function", a warning voiced by a well-known historian of contemporary art, Jean-François Chevrier, in *Le Monde*, March 10, 1998.

Economics applied to the arts makes use of the analytical tools and operative instruments of financing. It may happen that private sponsors try to put pressure on authors, as a recent scandal concerning a book of memoirs by Chris Patten, the former governor of Hong Kong shows, where the (commissioned) manuscript was rejected by Harper Collins, a publisher owned by Rupert Murdoch. It was first alleged that it was not up to professional standards, then that it was "too boring"; Patten won a court-case against Harper Collins and had the book published by another house. The scandal highlighted the impact of ulterior business interests, in the given case Murdoch's satellite television interests in China, on publishing. But as long as there is a monopoly in the media and publishing, books and such will continue to be sponsored by companies in competition with one another.

In some of the arts, considerations of economics can be valid, particularly those concerned with the efficiency of inputs in terms of output and vice versa; they can be applied to those workshops of the entertainment industry which occasionally produce art, such as film studios or the musical theatre. They resemble factories in organization and technology to a smaller or greater degree (film) or big manufactures (opera, theatre), and use modern commercial techniques such as franchising (e.g. Lloyd Webber's musicals). These economic considerations may be applied to a certain degree to major workshops in painting and sculpture. The second generation of the Brueghel family used division of labour through specialization in portrait, flower and landscape painting, Rodin employed hand and foot and other experts; thus elements of an Adam Smith division of labour at the manufacture level are not alien to painting, architecture or sculpture.

Economics may approach this competition from the demand side using the instrument of marginal utility, especially of the law of diminishing utility. This law states that, after some point, successive equal increments of a good yield smaller and smaller increases in utility, directing demand into other fields of satisfaction. But what is the objective yardstick with which to measure utility? Especially where the creative and performing arts are concerned?

It is better, perhaps, to turn to Edgeworthian indifference analysis, an analysis of consumer demand based on the notion of ordinal utility. The consumer is perceived as having a finite amount of money to spend and as being confronted with given prices for all the goods and services he may consume. He will then decide on some set of quantities of goods and services, given his tastes, the money available and the prices. In an international context, the theory of competitive advantage may be utilized. Welfare economics would welcome governmental redistribution in subsidizing culture, supply-side economics would insist on funding by consumers plus sponsors, neo-Keynesians would approve of increasing demand by governmental expenditure and so forth. Different schools of economics would suggest contradictory courses for legislation and funding.

Yet, even if economics had a uniform attitude towards art, I should emphasize that such generally accepted theories as David Ricardo's on competitive advantage cannot be applied, even *in extremis*. Thus, a calculation in the '80s showed that Hungarian agriculture had a competitive advantage only in the production of tomatoes. Nevertheless, nobody in their right mind, not even diehard politicians, would have concentrated all Hungarian human and physical capital on the production of tomatoes. Likewise, if only the USA, China, Japan, Spain and Russia have, languagewise, a large enough market for film production, does that mean that smaller language groups should abandon the making of movies?

This again does not necessarily entail budgetary subsidies. In the '30s, Hungarian films were prepared in more than one version (usually German, but also in Serbo-Croat and others). In the sixties, when the Czech and the Hungarian "new wave" produced excellent films, they were shown, dubbed or with subtitles, in the West. The absence of commercial success and the limited audience of film connoisseurs was not due to the limitations imposed by language, but by the fact that these products were not demand driven.

A product of art embraced by the market is not necessarily of low quality, and the converse is also true. This applies also to positive or negative judgments passed by experts or the "members of the guild". Tolstoy loathed Shakespeare, Van Gogh was unable to sell his pictures even though his family traded in art objects. The Eyre Report on the provision of opera and ballet in London is considered by some members of the panel discussing it as "one of the most important documents for the future of the art form", while "the cynics are not so sure" (Andrew Clark, Last Chance Saloon for London Opera, *Financial Times*, March 23, 1998).

The same also applies to motives. Nigel Andrews writes in the *Financial Times* recently (March 9, 1998) that "in cinema, though, as in much art, dubious motives have nothing to do with the quality of the end product. Indeed, dubious motives all too often produce masterpieces. The world's greatest feature documentary was directed by a Nazi sympathiser for a Nazi leader, *Triumph of the*

"The Task of Cultural Policy is to Create Markets"

From a speech given by the Administrative Under-Secretary in the Hungarian Ministry for Cultural Heritage at the conference "The Value and Price of National Culture in the European Union", arranged by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the monthly Beszélő this spring.

Hungary's entry into the European Union will not only have economic consequences, for entry will create a new situation for the country in virtually all fields of life, including culture. The question is how well we can predict and prepare for the new circumstances, and what changes are necessary in order to stay on track for EU-membership.

The EU does not lay down detailed rules or restrictions concerning culture. Paragraph 128 of the Maastricht Treaty states that the EU supports cultural concepts which strengthen common European awareness. The various aid and grant programmes have also been drawn up with this aim in mind. But it is not easy to conform to such broad and vague conditions. At the same time, we surely cannot be expected to guess what these general terms are supposed to mean. I would therefore be delighted if those EU programmes that are already open to us were to contain more specific criteria so that we could judge which cultural activities would qualify for EU support. But what is even more important is for us to concentrate on, and work out, our own strategy of moving culture onto the offensive.

By this I refer to an aspect of EU membership which is of considerable importance economically, despite being only indirectly related to the interests of the economy. At the end of the 20th century, the task of cultural policy must surely be to create markets for culture as well. If we look at our eventual EU membership from this perspective, then accession could mean a substantial expansion of the market for Hungarian culture. This is not to say that the spread of Hungarian culture abroad has been hindered or impeded in any way up to now. There is, however, reason for us to believe that Hungary's EU-membership will create a new attitude towards the country, not only in foreign customers for culture, but also in the general European thinking. Hungarian culture will be interpreted as part of the European heritage to a much higher degree than ever before. This is the new situation we have to prepare for.

At this point we come to the question of financing culture. I am aware that here any kind of centralization is bound to be unpopular. Nevertheless, I should like to appeal not only to your goodwill, but also to your common sense. My arguments are the following.

At the beginning of the 1990s it was obvious that a centralized cultural policy would have to be abandoned and that decisions would, as far as possible, have to be taken at lower levels. This was an attractive concept, at the dawn of the change in the system of government it was necessary for cultural resources to be allocated according to the principle of "let all the flowers bloom", within a much broader

system of decision making. But today, on the verge of joining the EU, if we say we need a deliberate cultural strategy, and we continue taking important decisions at low levels, then who will take these steps, on the basis of which decisions and financed from what sources?

For markets for culture to be created, especially abroad, within the framework of the EU, changes are necessary in the system of financing. A substantial part of cultural life will still have to be financed in keeping with decisions taken at low levels, so the current system will continue to operate. At the same time, however, the proportion of these will have to be reduced in favour of centralized decisions. It is an absurd and unacceptable situation that, on the one hand, we maintain cultural institutions using Hungarian taxpayers' money, we pay their electricity bills, the salaries of their employees, and so on, and on the other, we say to them: apply for money so that you can realize your projects, we can't give enough to you to carry out the functions we support you in.

It is true that the system of financing based on cultural surcharges which took shape in the 1990s was of profound importance. But how does that fit in with the need to work out a new cultural strategy, and how does it conform to new objectives such as changing the country's image or creating new markets? What I have just said about our cultural institutions, such as the Múcsarnok (Kunsthalle) in Budapest is equally true of Hungarian cultural institutions abroad, which we will need to use as bridge-heads in our cultural offensive. Only if we finance these institutions adequately will our concept of creating markets and spreading Hungarian culture all over the world be realized on a national, government scale. It is my conviction that the proportions of the system of financing culture have to be altered to achieve this. Of course, this will leave such important values as those represented by the National Cultural Basic Programme untouched.

Finally, one more footnote on EU matters, which is especially timely during the current German EU presidency. It is fortunate that Germany and France have managed to agree on a mutual programme of protection for European cultural values. Both countries are taking significant steps to achieve this, primarily, of course, in areas with notable economic repercussions, such as films or sound recordings. The aim is to serve common European interests as well, besides serving the interests of their individual countries. This programme is likely to benefit Hungary, notably our film industry. I am not saying this prompted by anti-American sentiments. It is a fact that European films are grossly underrepresented in Hungary, compared to their quality. American films, on the other hand, have swamped the cinemas, thanks to steam-roller marketing strategies and the vastness of available resources. This is another area where EU membership may bring improvement.

My brief was to talk about the practical aspects of financing culture on the road towards the European Union. It is clear, however, that our strategy must include other things as well. Culture, which is an important factor in shaping identity, may help us in strengthening our collective national identity by rooting it in a common European consciousness. The presentation of European culture in Hungary and the starting of a Hungarian cultural offensive on European markets will help us in realizing this goal. At the same time, they will also create a cultural milieu that is in harmony with our long-term economic interests. ■

Will. And the greatest silent feature film, Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin* was made by, for and about Soviet Russia."

Advice from or the power of decision by "professional artists", "members of the guild" is not a good solution if public funds are at stake. Within the guilds there are as many different schools of thought, cliques, unprincipled alliances, petty jealousies and intrigues as everywhere. In the 60s, in the Hungarian Academy of Art the prevailing ideological dictum was that "Picasso was a spoiler of art". Meanwhile, the canon began to change worldwide, and uncertainty reigned. Juries priced sketches by János Kass not noticing that drawings by his five-year-old daughter had accidentally found their way into the package. Powerful films like István Szabó's Oscar-winning *Mephisto* or the same director's *Meeting with Venus* clearly demonstrate the atmosphere in which artists had to work. This doesn't mean that the advice of professionals shouldn't be taken, it only means that there shouldn't be a single centre with its small number of juries and jury members passing judgement.

Mixed funding with indirect state subsidies

In order to provide ample scope to different trends, tastes, and to preserve the independence of art, wherever possible, governments should encourage private sponsorship through tax exemptions, reductions and deferments. Sponsors, individuals or companies, using their own judgement or that of their hand-picked advisers should be encouraged to purchase, finance art and donate single pieces or collections to public or private museums. The outcome will not be inferior to the operations of state authorities. There are ample examples here of positive outcomes: the Impressionists, now treasured by the Pushkin Museum and by the world, were collected by Russian merchants at a time when their work was rejected by the prevailing Academic taste; a Hungarian physician bought pictures by Csontváry Kosztka which would have been sold as canvas-covers for horse-drawn carts.

The government's role should be concentrated on erecting the necessary buildings and contributing to the maintenance of collections, concert halls and opera houses, and in a "no strings attached" funding to experimental efforts in the arts.

László Lator

Poems

Translated by David Hill

the yellow dress

A sárga ruha

*where and what outer darkness were you thrown to
great summer's colour and love's colour yellow
that strolled-away long day my thoughts still roam to
that dress that hugged you to the waist then billowed
your eyes flax flowers in a summer meadow
your thin hands' skin that i could see blue veins through
your throaty voice your cool touch and your warmth too
great summer's colour and love's colour yellow
but where to is it goat-hill that we'll go to
or up three-borders-hill your beating belly
your flesh hills hilly hips your sapling waist
already yielding waist your mouth your face
speckled in summertime that your hair fell on
in torrents of heat-lightning yes from mellow
and opaque light of day outside we ventured
into half-darkness semi-luminescent*

László Lator

*has been writing and publishing poetry since 1947. His collected poems appeared in 1997.
He has also translated many German, French, Italian, Russian and other poets.*

David Hill's

*first collection, Angels and Astronauts, was published earlier this year by the National
Poetry Foundation (U.K.).*

our first time at ürömi street house seven
first time on that cool couch with upright-pillows
then for the first time it was only us two
i watched you undress i did not undress you
you were a divorcee but still what shyness
even though it was summer with what whiteness
the big forms of your body shone at me
my twenty-seven years your twenty-three
were burning with a single smokeless flame
your shyness fled it left you though you didn't
hoist up your knees like all the other women
i knew that in your violent female smell
that there was where my sweet salvation dwelt
there then the long-awaited blaze enveloped
my charred-black years it crackled and it swelled
and perspiration soaked my trembling frame
great summer's colour and love's colour yellow

There in the clinic

A klinikán még egyszer

There in the clinic i was forced to see
how much you'd changed in only a few days
how your stripped bosom rose then sank again
thirstily gulping air through a machine
and as i slowly stroked your bruised and withered
forearm beyond my pain and irritation
beyond the wall of your complete oblivion
somewhere i still could sense that youthful maiden
and with an awful passion i desired you

Perhaps within you something still remained
a soul or something like that what do i know
because although the blood had left your skull
your stubborn cheated heart had not yet failed
and on the bleeping monitor it traced
a living zigzag i might say a pulse
why stay alive to tread that jagged line though
the road was closed to me it seemed a blind road

*Of course the way you walked i'd noticed long since
was getting how it must get getting oldish
and this detail or that was coming loose
and yet i still loved your still-lovely wholeness
beautiful blameless even well past youth
whatever could whatever still can happen
and in the way you felt and smelt and tasted
your figure never to be imitated
i knew there still remained some nest of passion
unreachable in which your sweet wild juice
did not decay and when i saw you naked
there in the clinic ravenous desire
stirred up my body with that same old call
to intercourse's inexplicable
rapture that in the details is entire*

Because i keep on pining and despairing

Mert szomjúhozva mert kétségbeesve

*Because i keep on pining and despairing
because each night each evening I keep waiting
while my decaying day prepares to slide
into the empty woven nothing
the dirty hair-sack of my grudging
and unappealing dreams because i pine
against all odds for wild waves to come breaking
inanely hoping no it didn't happen
and toss onto the bank that i still stand on
that fleshless Rambler my flesh feels inside
for us to both stand here each other facing
because i keep on pining and despairing
to learn what i should think and do while i'm
still on this side of death still here alive
so finally it came and though it didn't
look my way still i recognized that spirit
made whole made physical my eyes skin mouth
knew it although no detail was explicit*

*it was naked except that wrapped about
its lower body were some bands of cloth
and it advanced like passive apparitions
spirits evoked against their own volition
returning to the scene of their misfortunes
some god thrust it into my separate time
to that place where my childhood's river steps
down to the plain from high among moss-covered
hills in the east and at szirma turns southward
in a huge curve that stretches out to sásvár
it dived into the river and those bands
billowed out in the water all around
the unimaginably white bare corpse
awful and yet still beautiful it seemed
the way its head too weighty weighed it down
it floated slowly sank it never breathed
and then i grabbed it gripped it tight against me
and felt a series of soft spasms gently
go through the little body as i held it
and i still pined and i was still despairing
wanting to feel that weak weak body shaking
loose from the bonds of my body's embracing*

Tibor Scitovsky

A Proud Hungarian

Excerpts from a Memoir. Part 1

I was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1910. Hungary was still a poor, agricultural, semi-feudal country at the time. Only in the mid-nineteenth century were serfs freed, feudalism abolished, and entailed land rendered saleable, which, by making mortgage credit available, should have encouraged landowners to invest in modern farming methods and raise farm productivity. That, however, would also have required an entrepreneurial spirit and the will to do it, which were largely missing in the feudal nobility who owned most of the land. They were good at spending money but disdained the business of making it, and looked down on new-fangled methods of farming almost as much as they did upon such mercenary occupations as industry, trade and banking. Economic necessity seldom forced them to reform the management of their estates. Some mortgaged their land and used the proceeds for high living until impoverishment forced them to sell it; the more sober ones just sold the land and took up their other traditional occupation, government service, which in the Hungary of my childhood was still largely the gentry's preserve.

My father's family is a good illustration of that latter behaviour. His great-great-grandfather was a school teacher in a poor Slovak village in Northern Hungary, whose younger son managed to climb the only social ladder then available, the Catholic clergy. He was bright enough to be taken on as a free boarder in a Catholic school, graduated from there with a fellowship to a seminary, where he was ordained priest, earned doctorates in philosophy and theology and became professor of those subjects, until he was appointed bishop. At that stage, the emperor elevated him and his family to nobility and with it bestowed on him a piece of land called Nagykér. Later still, he

Tibor Scitovsky

is a distinguished Hungarian-born American economist whose autobiography—from which the above is taken—has recently been published in Hungarian. For a summary of his life and career, see the review of his memoir by András Nagy on p. 107 of this issue.

became archbishop and finally the prince primate of Hungary and cardinal of Rome.

His father, the village teacher, was supposedly the son of one of the agents a Polish bank sent to Hungary's free cities to supervise the management of their tax revenues, a part of which the then ruler of Hungary designated for servicing the loan he obtained from the bank. It goes without saying that the inhabitants of those cities resented and hated those Polish agents settled in their midst with the right to take part of their cities' revenues away; when they massacred one of those agents with his family, only his small boy survived, hidden by one of his playmates' parents; and that boy became our school teacher ancestor.

That was father's explanation of our Polish name. One of my uncles, however, ashamed perhaps of so plebeian an origin, hired a genealogist to trace the family's origins; and he, needless to say, traced it to some important Polish noble family of the seventeenth century. Father never believed a word of that, nor did I, especially not after my discovery that the manufacturing of fake genealogies was a flourishing occupation, and not only in the United States.

To commemorate the Cardinal's attendance of the 1853 Vatican Council, his name is engraved in huge letters in St Peter's Basilica on the marble wall to the right of the main altar, as I discovered to my great surprise on a visit to Rome. He must have used that occasion for quite a sightseeing tour of Italy, to judge by all the rubber stamps of the many Italian principalities of the time I found in his huge, impressive diplomatic passport.

Rising from poverty to the highest position of Hungary's wealthy Catholic Church, he—like many of the newly rich—became a spendthrift, even to the extent that the emperor reprimanded him for squandering the Church's wealth. He certainly built innumerable churches, including a basilica at his seat in Esztergom; founded many primary and secondary schools, two convent schools for girls, a seminary and a teachers' college; established and funded pension funds for school teachers and the lower clergy; built a poorhouse and organized the free distribution of food, clothing and books to school children in poor villages; generously contributed to founding Hungary's Academy of Sciences and to every charitable, scientific and artistic cause; commissioned masses from Liszt and paintings from several Hungarian and Austrian painters; subsidized the Zsolnay pottery and revived the then moribund and now world-famous porcelain factory of Herend. Some of that was very advanced for the mid-nineteenth century, especially in that part of Europe.

He was also a good patriot. During Hungary's unsuccessful revolution against Habsburg rule and the country's suppression during the following absolutism, his name headed the secret list of subversives kept by Austria's chief of police as the most ardent and dangerous protector of the Hungarian rebels, who saved many Hungarians from the Austrian hangman's noose.

His own family he helped by financing and supervising the education of his nephews and their children, who were also helped, of course, by their elevation to the nobility and ended up as judges and county officials. Since Esztergom, his new official seat as Hungary's primate, was far from his original bishopric where his estate was situated, he sold that and bought Nótincs, a similar piece of land much nearer to Esztergom, and entrusted its management to his favourite nephew, my great-grandfather, who later also inherited it from him.

Feudal ownership of land usually went with administrative duties in the county where it was located; and my great-grandfather held high county offices there. Those, I suspect, were more honorific than onerous but gave him an excuse for leaving most of the estate's management to his wife. She, according to family lore, was an excellent manager, who aged the wines the estate produced until they fetched a good price in the market, and she always made the farm hands sing while they harvested the grapes and other fruit to keep them from eating too much of the crop. She was also known to have rushed to the deathbed of the Prince Primate, her husband's uncle, to bid him a tearful good-bye and use the occasion when the whole clergy was assembled around the dying Cardinal's bed for crating up all the silver plate and cutlery she could lay hands on at his residence and drive home with it.

My grandfather, who inherited the estate, had one daughter and four surviving sons. His daughter, aunt Lola, must have been a lovely young woman to judge by her beautiful 1908 photograph that still adorns a wall in our house. She was married by a rich landowner and landlord, a bearded, pipe-smoking, ultra-conservative, old-fashioned male chauvinist who spent most of his time reading Hungarian history and literature in his smoke-filled study, stuck to traditional, inefficient farming methods, treated Aunt Lola more as a servant than as a wife and even kept her from having a telephone installed in their Budapest apartment, which forced her to come and make her weekly telephone calls from our house on Monday afternoons.

Yet he was supposed to have been a gay ladies' man in his youth, who put on a white tie and tails already before getting onto the night train from Budapest to Paris to attend performances of the ballet. Unfortunately, he contracted syphilis at some such or similar occasion, which was incurable at the time, and it led to two of his children, my favourite cousins, to end their lives in a lunatic asylum and his one healthy daughter's son to be born lame and spend his life in a wheelchair. Since all his grandparents' property was confiscated under the communist régime, he earns his living by giving German lessons; and these days, when English has replaced German as Hungary's most popular foreign language, also relying on a modest bi-monthly check from me.

My grandfather's estate would have been inherited by his sons; but given the farming methods then used in Hungary, 4,000 acres of farm land would not have been enough to provide my father's and three uncles' families with a comfort-

able middle-class standard of living; and since none had the drive and enterprise to engage in innovating farming, they all went into Government service. The eldest took up soldiering, became a captain of the hussars and was killed at the very beginning of the First World War as he led his company with swords drawn to attack Russian foot soldiers, whose rifle fire mowed down most of them. My father and his youngest brother became civil servants, he in the Ministry of Commerce, his brother in the Ministry of Agriculture, where he became the expert on stud farms; and the fourth brother stood for parliament and soon became the very popular speaker of the Lower House—his popularity due, as father told me, to his not having been clever enough merely to fake the impartiality that his office demanded in a country trying to pass for democracy (elections were by secret ballot only in the large cities), so he became a genuinely fair and impartial speaker. He lost popularity later when, as Minister of the Interior, his only memorable accomplishments were to pass three unenforceable and unenforced ordinances: prohibiting swearing and spitting in public places and closing down brothels.

After grandfather's death, the estate was managed first by his widow, then by my father during his weekends and summer vacations; but it was sold just before the end of the First World War. Until then, however, we and all my uncles, aunts and cousins spent all our summer vacations there.

My earliest childhood recollection, however, is a short vacation I spent at mother's parents' place in Zombor in Southern Hungary (now Sombor in Yugoslavia). It was then a market place and an overgrown village, whose lively country inn was owned and managed by grandfather. The villagers came there for a glass of wine in the evening and peasants from neighbouring villages stayed there when they came to market their produce, buy and sell animals, and shop for other merchandise. I mainly remember the large enclosed courtyard where the chickens and ducks were given free rein, and I too was free to watch the comings and goings of the peasants and servant girls. That was also the only time I met my mother's brother, a hog merchant, fat, jovial, red-faced and completely bald.

My other early recollection is of my German governess taking me on daily walks in a large park of trees, hills, lawns, a lake, a playground with playmates, and a lot of grownups, many of whom, including once a resplendent officer on horseback, stopped and talked to me. The park was Berlin's Tiergarten, the time 1914–15, the officer Kaiser Wilhelm, to whose question "What are you?" I replied "*Ich bin ein stolzer Ungar*" (I am a proud Hungarian). What aroused his and the other men's interest, however, was not me at all but my exceptionally pretty Fräulein.

Summer vacations at the estate

Much clearer are my later recollections of the long summers my parents, I and most of my uncles, aunts and cousins spent on grandmother's estate in Nőtincs. It was hardly 40 miles from Budapest but seemed cut off from civiliza-

tion, with no newspapers, no telephone, no trains, only very dusty roads and a small village nearby that housed the farmworkers, had a church and a baroque statue of St Christopher, but no post office, not even a general store at that time.

The house was a simple, empire-style, low-slung yellow building, whose thick walls kept it deliciously cool during the dry summer heat. The large entrance hall and the dining room, big enough to seat 30 people, served as living quarters, where I and my cousin János raced each other around the huge dining table on our tricycles and toy automobiles. A smallish "salon" or "clean room" for receiving important guests always had its doors locked, windows shuttered and the furniture covered with sheets to keep the dust off, because it never was used—presumably because important guests never came. There were more than enough bedrooms to sleep grandmother and her five surviving children with their families and a couple of guests in addition, considering that a family with merely a couple of children rated only one bedroom in those days and only father's sister had three children. There was no bathroom and the only rather smelly toilet was at the end of a dark, spooky corridor. We children were given a bath every other week in the wooden tubs brought out of the wash-house into the sun for the occasion, with all the grownups watching the event; but they took no baths, having to make do with the washbasin in each bedroom. The wash-house and servants' quarters were in a separate building, and separate also was the underground ice-house, which stored enough winter ice to last through the summer.

There was no running water and no electricity while we lived there, except in the cowshed, where a gasoline engine pumped water from a deep well into the water-troughs for the 80 cows and also powered an electric generator to provide lighting. I was allegedly the first person, at age 6, to ask why the electricity was not also brought into the house—a question which made a great impression on the grown-ups but was never answered, let alone acted upon. The huge dining room, however, where all of us congregated after dark, was well lit with as many petroleum lamps on the table as the number of bedrooms used, so that at bedtime each family would have one to carry back to its bedroom.

There were lots of people working in the cowshed, pigsties, stables and coach-house. In and around the house itself, the permanent fixtures were Mari, the cook, and old Uncle Miklós, who used to be the male nanny to my father, his sister and brothers, and who now was a kind of butler, ordering around all the young peasant girls in their many colourful skirts who did all the work. (Hungarian peasant women and girls in those days were supposed to wear as many underskirts as their age. I never found out at what age they stopped adding to them.) They lived in the village with their parents and the number who came each day varied with the number of people staying in grandmother's house.

They had a lot of work to do, because just heating water and carrying it to all the bedrooms for a dozen or more people and then carrying the dirty water out

again must have been quite a chore, so was the daily cleaning and refilling of a half dozen or more petroleum lamps, as were such kitchen duties as feeding the poultry, forcefeeding the geese, cleaning the chicken coops, catching, killing and plucking barnyard birds for the day's meals, picking the day's supply of fruit and vegetables, churning the butter and mixing some of it with honey for the delicious spread we put on the moist peasant bread and pancakes at breakfast.

Most of the girls probably worked for no or negligible pay, just for the good and plentiful food and occasional hand-me-down clothing they received. I am guessing that, because even 12 years later, by which time I had developed a social conscience, I was shocked to discover that the two kitchen maids in our luxurious Budapest house worked only for their bed and board and the chance to learn cooking and city manners. It was one of my rare victories over my formidable mother that I persuaded her to pay them at least a token wage.

The garden consisted mainly of trees, shrubs and shady walkways, with some geometrically laid out flower beds facing the front of the house. An elegantly curving tree-lined carriageway led from the entrance gate to the geometric, formal flower garden in front of the house; a dozen or more tall pines near the gate formed a tiny forest with deep shade and a soft, thick carpet of pine needles, which along with the thicket around the family crypt was our favorite playground, although the whole garden had that eerie, overgrown, half-neglected quality that children love. Yet, the two gardeners, old Bacsó and deaf-and-dumb Jóska, were always busy, because in those hot, dry summers, watering a large garden with watering cans dipped in a cistern left them barely enough time for the daily raking of the gravelled walkways.

Those were wonderful summer vacations for a lonely, excessively sheltered city child, who, in the country with no motorized vehicles and hardly ever a slow-moving farm-cart on the dusty road, was given the run of the place. Even the strict city rule against snacks between meals remained unenforced. Every morning I woke to the creaking of a cart drawn by a pair of white oxen with huge horns, bringing water in an enormous wooden barrel for replenishing the water container by the kitchen and the cistern at the end of the garden, in which the gardeners dipped their watering cans and we children floated our boats.

I had a cousin, János, of the same age to play with. Occasionally we played with the barefoot peasant children, usually at our defense and their storming of the garden gate which we pretended to be a fort. But there were also plenty of other things to do, watching the feeding of chickens, the forcefeeding of geese, the churning of butter, the making of jams and preserves, the distilling of brandy; and visiting cowsheds, pigsties, stables, the carriage house and harness room.

The exciting events, however, were the major farm operations. The threshing machine and the steam engine that powered it were enough of a novelty to be watched with awe for a long time; and besides, harvesting, gathering the fruit of a year's labour, was the most important event of every farm community and

a cause of celebration. The Feast of Saint Peter and Paul (June 29), the official beginning of the wheat harvest, was a national holiday and a festive occasion when all the peasants dressed up in their picturesque Sunday-best, which today can only be seen in museums; and there was much dancing and singing, eating and drinking.

Even more gay and colourful was the grape harvest, when even we children were free to drink our fill of the sweet, lukewarm must. At one of those occasions, the must had started fermenting in the hot sun and, for the only time in my life, I got so drunk that I lost my shyness and started singing and dancing. I must have been six or seven at the time.

Another of my vivid memories of those days had to do with the death of an old pig. The estate was as self-sufficient in meat as in other eatables and drinkables; and pork was the favoured and most important meat—as it still is in today's Hungary. One night, just before the scheduled slaughtering of a huge sow, it died a natural death. Since health regulations prohibited using the meat of naturally died animals for human consumption, father gave orders to have the pig turned into laundry soap instead of the hoped-for pork, bacon, hams and delicious blood and liver sausages.

A deputation, however, from the Russian prisoners of war assigned to the estate (the date is 1916) came to see him and asked to let them have the carcass, arguing that in Russia they had no fancy regulations against eating it. My father, though not the man lightly to break any law or ordinance, gave in, because the vet thought that the huge animal had died of a heart attack, while the Hungarian workers suspected the Russians of having helped nature to save her from slaughter.

The POWs spent the rest of the day preparing for their big feast, gathering firewood and fashioning a spit big enough to roast the animal whole. Father donated a barrel of wine for the occasion, and by nightfall we all stood around the bonfire to watch them feasting and listen to their singing which went on into all hours of the night. It must have been the unfamiliar, haunting quality of the Russian folk tunes that etched the event so sharply into my memory.

All of us attended such and similar occasions; but apart from that, the grown-ups seemed not to have much fun. Grandmother played patience on the dining-room table with a well-worn pack of tiny cards most of the time; mother liked to watch and help the cook; father attended to the estate (grandfather died before I was born), making the rounds of the stables and farm operations and talking to the estate managers; his brothers accompanied him or joined the ladies who, apart from a little sewing and darning, just sat around most of the time with little or nothing to do.

I have no recollection of ever seeing anyone read a book; and there was no tennis court, no riding, no shooting, no hunting, no outings, no walking—even beyond the garden and the church of the small village adjoining our garden—

because there was nowhere to go, no town, no water, not even a clump of trees anywhere nearby, because in that part of Hungary every bit of land was cultivated, leaving few trees standing other than the ubiquitous mulberries bordering the dusty roads—reminders of an early reformer's unsuccessful attempt to establish a Hungarian silk industry. Every time I see a Chekhov play, it makes me think of those summers, because they depict that atmosphere of lazy boredom where people are too bored to enjoy their laziness and too lazy to rouse themselves to do something enjoyable.

The grownups' main diversions were the occasional visits we received from and paid to neighbours and nearby relatives. The slowness of horse-drawn carriages made such visits whole-day affairs; and with no telephone and very slow mails, such visits were mostly unannounced and had to be whole-day affairs also, because the hosts had to be given enough time to prepare a huge and festive midday meal, and all of us needed time afterwards to rest and recover from it.

The first sight of the convoy of two, three, or even more carriages glimpsed between the trees of the entrance driveway caused excited guessing as to the identity and number of the guests; and it was followed by feverish activity, because chickens or geese had to be caught, killed and plucked, fruit and vegetables picked, cream whipped, wines brought up from the cellar, and a sumptuous meal prepared. The only ready food was the emergency supply of meringues, stored in the dining-room cupboard and rendered edible by the addition of large quantities of berries and whipped cream. We were seldom less than two dozen around the table at those occasions, because all our neighbours had extended families just as we did; and those with marriageable daughters usually had an eligible young man or two as houseguests in addition, whom, of course, they brought along. I was considered a miser and teased for years, because once, when I learned of the unexpected arrival of some distant relatives, I was supposed to have asked in an anxious voice: "All the sixteen of them?" Needless to add, a parallel, somewhat less festive meal with plenty of wine was also laid out in the servants' quarters to entertain the guests' coachmen and the extra peasant girls fetched from the village to help out with preparing and serving the festive meal.

I no longer remember who the visitors were, with the single exception of Aunt Richardis, whose unusual name still sticks in my memory. Richard Wagner was her godfather, which accounts for her name. Her father, related to the Scitovskys, was Hans Richter, the Hungarian musician who was Wagner's friend, assistant, conductor of Bayreuth's opera house in Wagner's time and, according to Aunt Richardis, the real composer of *Die Meistersinger*, whose character is indeed quite different from Wagner's other operas. She was a nice lady whom we occasionally visited in later years.

Those beautiful summer vacations came to an end when the family estate was sold. That was a bad time to sell, because it preceded the postwar inflation; and I suspect that apart from my uncle Béla, who immediately used his share of

the proceeds to buy a rather unattractive country house, his brothers and my grandmother must have lost much of their shares, because inflation in those days was an unknown thing in that part of the world and I do not think that any member of my family knew of better ways of storing money than hiding it under the mattress or putting it into a savings account.

The estate had to be sold, because my father never recovered fully from his initial lung trouble, and managing the estate during weekends after his week's work in the Ministry became too strenuous for him, yet none of his brothers was willing to take over its management or even share it with him.

When the estate was sold, the new owners consented to our retaining ownership of the small hidden corner of the garden which contained our family crypt; but it was too far from Budapest for us ever to visit it, except on the occasion of my grandmother's funeral.

My memory of Nótincs was kept alive nevertheless, because father, who must have been very fond of uncle Miklós, the old butler, drove to Nótincs village every year during the many years the old man was still alive to pay him a visit and press into his protesting hands a generous annual pension, though—to judge by appearances—he was far from being badly off. Father always took mother and me along at those occasions. The old man had a large house and innumerable children, grandchildren and other relatives living in the village, all of whom assembled to receive us with much happy shouting and handshaking and immediately started to prepare for us and the entire large crowd a tremendous, gay and very lively feast, the preparing and consuming of which took up much of the day. I always enjoyed those occasions, because they brought back to me the happy Summer vacations in Nótincs of my early childhood.

My mother

But let me now return to my early childhood and say something also about the less happy times that those beautiful vacations were a relief from: my life in our Budapest apartment, under my mother's iron discipline. She was a complex person: charming but masterful, generous but demanding, kind and polite but short-tempered, superior and ambitious, secretive and prying, strong willed and not very choosy about the means to get her will. She was elegant, exquisitely dressed, a gracious hostess whose Thursday afternoon "at homes" soon became a meeting place of Budapest's high society. She had the commanding presence, self assurance and generosity of a great lady and looked every inch of it, but in some respects was no lady at all.

For one thing, she was not very truthful. She once assured me that she never told a lie unless it was necessary; if so, necessity was a hard taskmaster to her. Also, she was no respecter of other people's privacy. I repeatedly caught her eavesdropping at keyholes; and even today, three-quarters of a century later I

still feel hurt when I remember discovering that she had intercepted, opened and read my letter to a friend, the first I ever wrote. She was a devoted wife who adored her husband, guarded his delicate health and did everything to protect him and ease his life; but she kept everybody else around under her thumb and was not easy to take by a small child tied to her apron strings.

She ran her household with the military discipline of a sergeant major. She saw to it that the soup was on the table the moment father arrived home, she checked daily to see that everything was dusted and every ashtray and knick-knack cleaned and replaced in the exact position where it belonged.

Her sense of order demanded that all my toys be neatly put away in their proper places every night and before every meal; and a trifling infraction of that rule, like the door of my toy cabinet left ajar during lunchtime, could make her lose her temper and start shouting, hurling half my toys against the wall and ending up in a faint on the floor, with me running for help to bring her back to life. She had many such terrifying episodes, brought on by her displeasure at something I or a maid did or did not do. Years later she was successfully treated against her temper tantrums but had occasional fainting fits throughout her life; and one never knew when they were genuine and when contrived, because she was not above faking a faint when it served her purpose.

Nor, unfortunately, did the treatment moderate her passion to dominate. I abided by many of her rules, from the prohibition against snacking between meals to the number of hours of piano-playing practice, but chafed under the many absurd restrictions on when not to drink water.

My mother's servants not only endured her tempers and conformed to her exacting standards but were genuinely devoted to her. The reasons, probably, were her normally friendly manner, treating servants, workmen and the postman as equals; her unladylike habit of working alongside with them when the need arose, even at the dirtiest job and just as hard as they did; and her extreme generosity. She gave them generous Christmas and Easter presents, a dowry when they got married, had them treated when sick by our family physician, Dr Karczag, arranged and paid for the illegal abortion of a newly married ex-maid with a weak heart and, during the inflation of the '20s, tried to preserve her servants' savings by collecting and lending them out on a week-to-week basis at high weekly interest together with her own savings. Also, when Budapest had a food shortage during that same inflation, my mother packed two suitcases with excess table and bed linen, blankets, and other saleable items every ten days or so, took a train to a neighbouring village and went from house to house like a travelling salesman, exchanging her belongings for chickens, eggs, vegetables and fruit, enough to keep all of us well fed at all times.

Mother was generous not only with money but also with her time and influence. Hungary was then (and perhaps still is) a country where people who knew anybody would not think of simply going out to look for a job however humble

or try to settle official business, however trifling, without securing pull and mobilizing whatever connections they had. My father disliked the system and tried to wash his hands of it; but my mother, always more ready to accept the facts of life than he, enjoyed playing the all-powerful godmother and became the protector of many people who managed to get her ear. In a country with no social security, pensionable jobs in government and banks were everybody's dream and my mother often managed to make such dreams come true.

The postman would ask for a good word to help his brother-in-law get a janitor's job in father's bank, the fiancé of one of the kitchen maids would only marry her if he got a job in one of the ministries, and one of the craftsmen who worked on our house had an accident that incapacitated him for any work more strenuous than that of a doorman. Mother would consent to see the man concerned, look him over, question him, and, if she liked him, would phone the official dispensing the job, or, if necessary, make an appointment to go and see him, turn on the charm and, more often than not, get her protégé his job. She overruled my father's occasional objections to those activities by arguing that the job would in any case go, not to the best man, but the one who mobilized the most pull and she at least talked to and looked over the people she recommended.

Later, when we became affluent, she extended her generosity to an even wider circle, including sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, dozens of godchildren, and the 30-odd inmates of a disabled veterans' home, whom she treated to Christmas and Easter presents and supplied with pastries, cigarettes and warm sweaters over many years.

Her generosity to herself took the form of never buying just a single item of anything, which is why she became known to salespeople in Budapest's elegant shops as the lady who buys everything by the dozen.

To me, my mother's generosity took the unfortunate form of never letting me go to school, arguing that two hours of private tutoring accomplishes as much as five hours of school, making the time so saved available for individual lessons in French, English, German, fencing, dancing and piano playing. She may have been right in that; but she must also have had the ulterior motive of keeping me tied to her apron strings for many years longer, which I greatly resented. A further cost of private tutoring and the language skills it gave me was my lack of contact with others of my age, which I badly missed and which set back by many years my learning the social skills, the facts of life, and the art of fending for myself.

An early example of my lack of social skills was my asking a Marquis Pallavicini when introduced to him at one of my mother's "at homes" whether he descended from the Italian professional poisoner who received his Hungarian nobility for poisoning Friar George, the grey eminence behind the throne of Sigismund, a 15th century King of Hungary and also Holy Roman Emperor. (Mother skilfully diverted him before he could give me his affirmative answer.)

My resentment of possessive mother-love and isolation from contemporaries affected me for life. The former sensitized me to the implications of one person's power over others in whatever form and context, which may explain my later attempt to bring market power to the center stage of economic theory by introducing the price-maker, price-taker relationships; the latter made me a bookish, lonely, aloof person, almost as inhibited from showing affection and making friends as my father was, despite the great differences in our upbringing.

My father

My father, as well as all his brothers, was brought up in the Austrian boarding school, Kalksburg, near Vienna, run by Jesuits, who discouraged close friendships among the boys and moved them into separate dormitories whenever they noticed two of them becoming too friendly. That must have been aimed at discouraging homosexuality, but perhaps also at suppressing the youngsters' natural feeling of affection for another person, thereby to sublimate it into an all-encompassing love of God and humanity. He also accepted the Jesuits' teaching that inequalities in society are unavoidable and must be tempered by those on top leading an exemplary life of selflessness and concern for the general good. Not for nothing was that school considered one of the best training grounds of the Habsburg Empire's famous incorruptible civil service; and my father, who alone among the Scitovsky boys could take the Jesuits' iron discipline for the full ten years, must have been one of its prize products. He was conservative, compassionate, honest, fair, invariably polite and kind, but also lonely, remote and unapproachable. He had no intimate friends, never sat gossiping in a Budapest café, that cradle of coffee-house culture, never went near the many clubs to which he felt duty-bound to belong; and he knew not how to show love and affection, though one could occasionally tell that behind his reserved manner he felt them.

I greatly admired and respected my father, because his generosity, compassion, correctness and polite behaviour towards everybody made him utterly different from most people around him. For Hungary at that time had not yet outgrown its feudal heritage. The gentry, descendants of the old nobility, still ruled the country and manned its civil service, making their superiority felt by the way they treated and talked to those they considered their inferiors. I disliked that insolent swagger, adopted in some measure by all civil servants down to ordinary policemen; and my resentment of their uncivil, masterful behaviour, which belied their very name, may have been the origin of my lifelong leftist sympathies.

To return to my mother, she shared her husband's fairness, kindness, generosity, and politeness to everybody but did not match his, by Hungarian standards, incredible honesty. He would not have smuggled a pack of cigarettes through customs; but she had no such scruples. Indeed, of the four quarrels

supposed to have disturbed their exceptionally harmonious marriage, two had to do with smuggling. Once she persuaded a close friend, Countess Kuen-Héderváry, wife of the Hungarian ambassador to Paris, to send a package of hers by diplomatic pouch to Budapest. A customs official opened the diplomatic pouch by mistake and found yards of French silk my mother and her other close friend, Countess Bethlen, the prime minister's wife, needed for their new evening dresses.

At another occasion, mother asked yet another friend, Ann Steger, whose husband owned a coal mine and the barges on which his coal was shipped up the Danube to Austria, to bring back from Vienna a few boxes of hers as ballast on a barge's return trip to Hungary. The few boxes turned out to be dozens of crates, big and heavy enough to attract the customs official's attention. They found them containing the carefully packed disassembled parts of three 18th-century baroque tile stoves my mother had bought in Vienna. Those beautiful white-and-gold stoves became showpieces of our newly built house, but the incident was most embarrassing for father who was just then about to be appointed minister for foreign affairs and knew nothing, of course, about his wife's smuggling. Of the other two quarrels between my parents, one occurred when he caught her powdering her nose, which he then considered only slightly less immoral than using rouge or lipstick, the other when she cut her long hair short, leading the new fashion rather than following it.

Philippe de Laszlo painted the portraits of my parents. Mother left them to me when she died; but since they were far too big to display in our Stanford professor's modest house with only an 8-foot ceiling, and far too beautiful to stack away in the attic, I donated them to the Hungarian Benedictine monks' nearby boarding school, whose then director, Father Egon Jávör, was my parents' old friend, who not only visited them often but flew down to Los Angeles to officiate at both their funerals.

The paintings were hung in the school's library, which seemed a suitable place to display them and where, I had hoped, they would stay. Sixteen years later, however, a friend asked me if I knew that Sotheby's Los Angeles branch had sold my parents' beautiful paintings at an auction for \$13,000. That was a complete and unpleasant surprise for me. I later learned that the Woodside Priory School got into financial difficulties and Father Egon, instead of asking me to buy back my parents' portraits, which I would have been glad to do, sold them for \$6,000 to a Hungarian acquaintance of his, who died soon after, when his widow had them auctioned off for more than twice the sum.

Sotheby's, adhering to its tradition, refused to let me know the buyer's name but offered to forward to him/her a letter. I worded that letter very carefully to give its recipient no possible cause to want to keep his identity from me; but to no avail. My letter remained unanswered and I concluded that the portraits' new owner must have bought not only two beautiful paintings but impressive ancestors as well.

The Treaty of Trianon

In 1920, when the counter-revolutionaries led by Admiral Horthy took over, my father became the economic expert of the Hungarian delegation sent to Trianon to receive the peace treaty. I was nine at the time, and only had a vague inkling of the painful nature of his mission. He sent me a picture postcard of the building in Trianon where he stayed, marking his room's window and writing that the French treated them as internees, confined to the building and its vicinity, not allowed even a single visit to Paris.

The terms of the treaty, however, were even harsher than the delegates' treatment, depriving Hungary of 72 percent of its territory and 63 percent of its population, all in the name of national self-determination, although the population transferred to ex-enemy countries included one third of the ethnic Hungarian population.

Hungarians were stunned, indignant and deeply hurt by what they considered our much harsher treatment than what the treaties of Versailles and Saint Germain imposed on Germany and Austria. I share, of course, that shocked reaction to the treaty's extreme terms; only a quarter century later, on reading E.H. Carr's, the British historian's scathing critique of it, did I realize its much broader implications for the world as a whole.

For Carr recognized the greater danger of rising nationalism, the fragmentation of countries into ethnic units in the name of national self-determination, with complete disregard of those units' economic and military viability. He argued that "there can be no absolute right of [national] self-determination any more than there can be an absolute right to do as one pleases in a democracy." (*The Future of Nations*. Kegan Paul, 1941, p. 23), and blamed the Versailles treaties for acting on that erroneous Wilsonian belief. To quote a prophetic passage from his 1945 book: "National self-determination became a standing invitation to secession. The movement which dismembered Austria-Hungary and created Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia was bound to be succeeded by movements for the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia." (*Nationalism and After*. Macmillan 1945, p. 24).

Protests and demonstrations continued during the winter of 1920-21, with thousands of posters everywhere, saying three-times nay (tria non) to the Treaty of Trianon. I was in the midst of all that, because Father's lung trouble having flared up again, my parents went back to the TB sanitarium in the Tatra mountains and parked me in grandmother's apartment, which was in the centre of downtown Budapest.

Father's married sister lived within a block of grandmother's apartment, and Steve, her 14-year old son, kept me company, taking me out to watch some demonstrations but more often to take me to the Corso, the fashionable promenade by the Danube, where young women and young and not-so-young men

promenaded up and down or sat in rented armchairs to watch and be watched by those walking by.

One more attraction of staying at grandmother's was her phone-news, the forerunner of radio. Thomas Edison's Hungarian assistant, Theodor Puskás, founded a company in Budapest, which for a monthly fee wired one's home to a service that provided news programmes, weather forecasts and performances of one of Budapest's two operas or its two dozen theaters. There was no choice of programmes but different ones every day; and one received two pairs of headphones, since loudspeakers and amplifiers had not yet been invented and even telephones were a rare novelty. In Budapest, where live performances were excellent, plentiful and cheap, that was not very popular but invaluable for the aged and I doubt if it existed anywhere else.

But to return to Father, he was one of the only two delegates to sign for receiving the peace treaty. The others, including Count Albert Apponyi, the delegation's leader, refused to put their signature on it, for fear that having their name however remotely connected with that harsh treaty would hurt their political careers. Those fears proved groundless, because it soon became known that the victorious powers ignored the delegation's every protest, comment, request for modification and suggestion of a plebiscite; and father's signature on that hated document did not keep him from soon becoming Hungary's best-known representative abroad and ranking member, later leader, of all Hungarian delegations to every international conference for years to come. The experience and contacts he gained in those conferences added to his imposing presence and perfect command of languages and also explained his sudden rise to great affluence.

The 1920's were the period of the defeated countries' heavy foreign borrowing and great economic development. Foreign loans in those days were negotiated between the lending and the borrowing countries' banks, with the latter re-lending them to industry. Actually, in those days of slow and difficult communications, New York banks lent to London and Paris banks on a short-term, day-to-day basis and they relented those loans, also on short term to German, Austrian and Hungarian banks, which they in their turn used to buy controlling stock in, or lend long to, their country's growing industries. That may look like a prescription for disaster by modern standards, but we only learned that lesson later, when the 1929 New York stock exchange crash led to the great world depression of the 1930s.

My father at the Hungarian General Credit Bank

In Hungary, the country's largest bank, the Hungarian General Credit Bank, was the one most heavily involved in that business, which is why it wanted my father to represent it in such negotiations with London and Paris banks, and offered him the post of executive vice president.

The salary offered must have been very much higher than his salary as Permanent Under-secretary of Commerce and later of Foreign Affairs; I suspect, however, that he also needed Mother's nudging to accept the offer and leave the civil service, which fitted his temperament and personality much better. But a couple of years later he was back in government, this time as Minister for Foreign Affairs, though on a temporary basis, on leave of absence from the bank to which he returned less than a year later to become its president and chief executive officer. At the same time, he also became a lifelong member of parliament's upper house.

His bank, like most large banks in that part of Europe, combined deposit with investment banking and had controlling interests in much of Hungarian industry, with that control exercised by the banks' executive officers who sat on the supervisory boards of those industrial companies as chairmen or members. Their pay for those capacities, added to their bank salaries, gave them a pretty high income; and father's name soon began to appear on the list of Hungary's top twelve taxpayers published annually by the Tax Office—though Mother maintained that that was largely due to his exceptional honesty and refusal to cheat on his tax return.

We spent many vacations in Switzerland, because altitude was good for father's lung trouble. One summer we spent on the Rigi, where Nijinsky's two daughters, accompanying Romola, his Hungarian wife, became my playmates; but most often we went to the Engadin and especially to Sils, because Father became great friends with Fritz Kreisler, the violinist, who spent most summers there and they often coordinated their summer vacations.

Since that was the time when I first became aware of the strange tricks the economy can play, let me also mention here one of our trips to Munich, in the fall of 1923, at the tail-end of Germany's hyperinflation. It was one of father's business trips to which Mother and I came along, and what I still remember is my visiting a restaurant all by myself for the first time, because my parents attended a banquet. Father told me what prices to expect, gave me enough money to make all my pockets bulge, and told me not to forget to leave a 10 to 12 percent tip but not more than 200 billion (milliard in German) marks.

The house in Fillér Street

In Budapest, my parents built themselves a house and a year later we moved from our comfortable but modest 6-room apartment, with a maid and a cook, to the new house, whose more than 18,000 sq.ft. floorspace accommodated the three of us, our chauffeur, the gardener and his wife, the cook, two kitchen maids, three, later two housemaids, two butlers, my mother's personal maid, and very occasionally two or three guests. It was so luxuriously appointed that even the servants' oval dining room with its antique cupboard and the early Hungarian peasant pottery was occasionally shown to guests.

Today I realize that to build such a house in the 20th century and furnish it with the luxury of 18th-century France was an anachronism; but it was my parents' lifelong shared passion, their main interest in life, and the answer to my father's rhetorical question he occasionally addressed to Mother: "How come that out of our high income we never save a penny?"

I think it was literally true that they had negligible savings. After all, father was brought up in the feudal nobility's pre-capitalist tradition, according to which money was there to be spent, not saved—it being taken for granted that the family's landed estate will take care of the future. Mother wholeheartedly adopted and conformed to her husband's life-style and life philosophy. Most of their income went into accumulating their beautiful antique objects and erecting the building worthy to house and display them; and much of what remained financed their exceptionally great generosity to just about everybody around them. They not only enjoyed the splendour of the house but loved every object and every piece of furniture individually, for its history, its graceful design and its exquisite craftsmanship.

It struck me that no one in my parents' circle shared their interest in art, architecture and art objects. Only much later did I guess that Father must have acquired those interests in Paris when, studying at the Sorbonne in the 1890s, Mme Munkácsy, the wealthy French wife of the celebrated Hungarian painter living in Paris, took him under her wing and made him a member of her brilliant circle and a permanent guest at the weekly receptions in her beautiful salon, where he met artists, men of letters and France's high society. By fortunate accident, Zsigmond Justh, a young Hungarian, who a few years earlier was also a protégé of Mrs Munkácsy, published his Paris diary, which could have been written by my father, so well does it explain and fit in with his artistic tastes.

The diary paints a dazzling picture of French society life and taste, describing in detail not only the people, their dress, elegance, conversation and interests, but also and in great detail the contents and decoration of their homes, most of them in the Louis XIV, XV and XVI styles. Father's coming upon that same scene after his ten years of seclusion in a spartan Jesuit boarding school amply explains his lifelong artistic interests, which his wife soon took over.

Unfortunately, Munkácsy was a conservative, academic painter who hated the Impressionists who had no entry to his wife's weekly receptions, which may also account for my father's very belated appreciation of them.

My teacher, Lord Robbins, when he became chairman of the board of London's National Gallery, used to take his friends and distinguished visitors around the Gallery, commenting on the pictures in his loud, lecturing voice as if he owned them and owned the place, with complete disregard of the ordinary museum visitors around him.

My parents did the reverse, in so far that they treated their house more as a museum than as a home. When he came home from the office, Father would of-

ten walk from room to room for hours, admiring some detail, now in a Regency console table, now in one of his several cartell clocks, or one of the vases.

As a child, dragged along to innumerable antique shops, picture galleries and museums of decorative arts in Paris, Munich, Nürnberg, Dresden, etc., I was bored at first but then became interested and quite knowledgeable about French and other European artistic styles. I retained an interest in antique furniture and interior decoration to this day.

When my parents decided to build a home worthy of housing the antiques they were accumulating, I became interested in their passionate study of French, Austrian and Bavarian baroque architecture, their successful attempt to merge them, and their supervising the building of the house and garden that emerged from months of discussions and planning. That occupied all their free time for well over a year; and I quite enjoyed my involvement in it. That also included my interpreting for the French craftsmen who came from Paris to paint the faux marble of the grand staircase and decorate the ceilings and walls of the reception rooms and taking messages and drawings to the sculptor who carved the wood panels of the smoking room and to the blacksmith who made the wrought-iron balustrade of the staircase and the balconies' railings.

We moved into the house just before Father became Foreign Minister; and that immediately led to Mother's feverish activities in preparing magnificent dinner parties and resplendent receptions for the diplomatic corps, visiting statesmen, and the Budapest conference of the PEN Club. We had an excellent Paris-trained cook at the time, who later became the head chef of Gundel's (Hungary's best) restaurant; and many of those dinner parties were preceded by concerts given by Louis Kentner, then a student at the music academy, who later became an internationally known concert pianist.

I only peeked from a distance at the dinner parties around the huge table, with five wine glasses glittering at each table-setting, but was allowed to attend the concerts and admitted to the PEN reception, where I was introduced to John Galsworthy, Thomas Mann, Paul Valéry, Madariaga, among others, and was fascinated by Colette, who was exotically dressed, talked amusingly, and involved me in a long conversation, which I conceitedly attributed to my conversational prowess. I discovered a more plausible reason half a century later when I learned that my distinguished friend, Bertrand de Jouvenel, had at age sixteen and half become Colette's stepson and soon thereafter also her lover, with the scandal of their long joint vacation away from the husband-father breaking up the latter's short second marriage.

Those glittering, hectic parties came to an end when Father resigned from his post as Minister for Foreign Affairs and my parents' social life settled down to a more modest and leisurely pace. Mother, of course, had a much larger house and a big garden to take care of and embellish, and a whole platoon of servants to keep busy and order about; but that still left her with plenty of excess energy,

which made her, who had so much fun planning and supervising the decoration of our huge house, to continue planning, decorating and furnishing whatever interiors she could lay her hands on.

She began by redecorating the large and the small guest rooms on the mansard floor, which remained overly plain and thereafter she offered to help with, or more correctly take over, the decoration of friends' homes. The friends and relatives, who succumbed to the temptation of having my mother decorate their apartments, got a good deal if their tastes coincided with hers; if not, they had to put up with the inconvenience that the workmen my mother brought to the job followed her instructions to the letter, but simply ignored the owner's preferences if they differed from hers and if he or she dared to express them.

Her main scope for decorating, however, remained her own house for quite a while. After the main rooms were completed, she started redecorating the servants' quarters. Their oval-shaped dining hall with its display of peasant pottery and antique copper utensils (of which I still own a few), and my mother's pantry with its specially designed wrought-iron chandeliers became showpieces. Next came the servants' bedrooms, with colourfully painted wood panellings, chintzy curtains and furniture to match.

The only trouble was that she judged those magnificently refurbished rooms too good for their previous occupants, so she tried to keep them empty by squeezing the domestic staff into the remaining not-yet decorated rooms. For example, she discovered that our young second butler was sleeping with our not-so-young cook. So she lectured him on sexual morality and managed, by promising a dowry and applying a little pressure, to make him marry and move in with the cook, thereby vacating his room.

Another example was the replacement of one of the maids and our ancient, alcoholic and increasingly forgetful first butler with a butler-and-maid couple, who of course shared a room. Months later, as we were coming home, a woman stopped us before we could enter, introducing herself as our new butler's lawful wife, accusing him of living in adultery and demanding that we fire the adulterous couple. Father and I were stunned, both by what she said and by Mother's cool reply that she knew about it all along but had made them pose as husband and wife in order to spare her family's and the other servants' sensibilities.

My mother's strong personality and imposing presence were quite exceptional. In 1938, for example, when the Vatican chose to hold the 34th Eucharistic World Congress in Budapest, Regent Horthy decided to treat members of the Congress as guests of the Hungarian state, which involved a number of receptions, banquets, lunches and meetings in the Royal Palace. Not being a Catholic, however, he felt somewhat out of place and was also embarrassed by his wife's knowing no languages other than Hungarian. So my mother, a Catholic and accustomed to move in diplomatic circles, was asked to play the role of official hostess at the Congress. Her command of languages, exquisite manners, im-

pressive appearance and organizing ability made her a great success, not only by sitting at the head of the table at all the social events, with Cardinal Pacelli, the later Pope Pius XII at her right, but also by taking an active part in selecting menus, ordering flower arrangements and arranging a concert.

Let me also recount a much later incident, which shows that she retained her ability to impress people even in very old age. At the end of the Second World War, when Hungary's inclusion in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence made the coming of a Communist régime inevitable, my parents decided to join me in California. Unable to part with their beloved house and its furnishings, they merely rented it to the British Government for use as their ambassador's official residence, hoping to live on its rent in the interim and to return home some day. In 1952, however, Hungary's Communist government expropriated the house and promptly "privatized" it, by selling it to the British Government, which is still using it as their ambassador's official residence.

The furnishings of the house, however, including my parents' beautiful beloved antiques were not expropriated, and the British continued to pay rent on them until 1965. Then, Britain's Ministry of Public Buildings and Works wrote that they want to stop renting the furniture and buy it instead, offering to pay £6,000 for it, which, they said, was fair value, considering its wear and tear and the 20-years' rental they had paid for it already.

Father was dead by then and Mother was outraged at being offered so little for her beloved antiques. Yet, she had little choice, because antiques were unsaleable in Communist Hungary and their export prohibited. She wrote an indignant letter to Queen Elizabeth, complaining of her Government's unethical behaviour in trying to exploit helpless, innocent victims of Communism; but it only resulted in a curt acknowledgment of receipt. So my mother, aged 81 at the time, took the first flight to Budapest, asked for and obtained an appointment with the Ambassador, told him in no uncertain terms what she thought of his Government's shameful offer of a paltry £6,000 for her valuable antiques; but then offered, as a special concession, to sell them for \$70,000—the equivalent of \$300,000 in today's money and approximately seven to eight times the British £6,000 offer.

The Ambassador promised to transmit her offer to the Ministry in London; but warned her that given the administrative complexities of such a transaction, it might take months to get a reply. My mother, however, not used to being trifled with, replied that she must have a check for \$70,000 within a week, otherwise she would send moving vans the Monday following to take all the furniture away. With those words she stood up, indicating that the audience was over and walked out, leaving the Ambassador speechless.

Her threat was an empty one, of course, as she well knew. One could not possibly hire large moving vans so easily and promptly at all in Communist Hungary; and even if one could have, it would have been quite impossible to find a warehouse able and willing to store all the furniture of a house with 18,000

square feet floorspace. The Ambassador must have known that too, having been long enough at his post to be familiar with local conditions; but a couple of days later, my mother received a phone call from the embassy, asking when she could come to see the Ambassador at his residence to receive the \$70,000 check.

The British may have discovered the true worth of our valuables and I also heard much later that Prince Philip was scheduled for an unofficial visit to Budapest, where he was to be staying at the Ambassador's residence, which would have been awkward had it been emptied of its contents. Even so, the Ambassador would hardly have fallen for my mother's palpably empty threat had it not been for her impressive presence, aplomb and self-assurance, which had often before given credence to her unrealistic threats and promises.

The present British Ambassador to Hungary*, who in his student days attended a course of my lectures in California, is in love with his magnificent official home, almost in the literal sense of the word. He uses a painter's rendering of its garden façade for his Christmas cards, just as my parents used a similar one for their *ex libris*. He asked me for negatives of all my 58 early photographs of the garden, the inside and outside of the house in its full glory as well as at various stages of its construction and of some of the more remarkable pieces of antique furniture, in order to have enlargements made, which he planned to frame and display on the walls of one of the corridors. He invited us for tea every time he learned that we were in Budapest and always asked me in an anxious voice how its present appearance compared to its original glory. I never had the heart to disappoint him with a true answer.

Even so, I suspect that aesthetically it must be one of the most beautiful and most beautifully furnished British embassies; although the British Foreign Office (to the Ambassador's great displeasure) had some of the most precious antiques transferred to more important embassies, on the ground that they were too good for Hungary.

Let me just add here that after the fall of Communism, I applied for compensation to the new Hungarian Government for the expropriation of the house and received inconvertible papers worth at best \$5,000—a fraction of one percent of the value of the house. ■

(To be continued)

* Sir John Birch at the time of writing.

George Szirtes

The Yellow House at Eszterháza

1

*You find it suddenly, opening up, then
quickly closing like the entrance to any estate.
The car zips by and it's gone. You've passed the gate
before you know it. You double back and when
you take stock properly a kind of gladness
moves you to admit it, just as you are admitted
into history or heritage, something perfectly fitted
to bring about the light and giddy madness
the peasant must have felt on seeing it
finished; that life like this is an extension
of the limits of the known world, beyond mention,
incomprehensible, almost infinite,
as if it were not the chains he had to wear
but something utterly sprightly, made of air.*

2

*Today, a room stuffed full of faience stoves
so white you'd think you were in a dove cot
and the doves ready to fly. Putti like tiny cloves
protruding from stucco, part of a lost plot
in which even seasons defer to the family name.
Tendrils gilded and twining, frescoes, glass
reflecting more glass, the great room's twists of flamé
turned into icing. Before, ordinary grass,
ordinary shrubs, conducting a geometric
dance, the fountain dancing, the dwarf trees*

George Szirtes'

*latest volume of poems was Portrait of My Father in an English Landscape,
Oxford University Press, 1998.*

*marking time, but also dancing in parodies
of local custom, then performing a vanishing trick
into dusk, and Joseph Haydn, asleep
in the music room, thirty fathom deep.*

3

*The age of elegance is short. The broad
welcome in the curving wings, enlightened
stables, kitchens, the gentle patronizing of awed
visitors, the courtesy shown to the frightened
soldier make just one generation. Then the show
moves on. The Chinese hangings swell
into dust. There are no fountains to overflow
the curling brim. No major domo rings the bell
for supper. Things easy come are easy gone.
So the opera house goes all to blazes.
A machine gun strafes the precious vases.
The puppet theatre turns grain store. No-one
is going to be too bothered by any of this.
Let it remain in a state of decorous paralysis.*

4

*And then a miracle. A vehicle in the drive
has grown rococo horns as living proof
of loyalty. Meanwhile, the dead arrive
on a child's bike carried on the car roof.
Like all the punning dead they want their freedom.
Enormous faience doves have taken wing
and filled the room. Where have they come from?
How could I possibly offer them anything
but some notion of elegance, of what is humane,
enlightened, thirsted for, ridiculous?
Joseph Haydn in gentle Hungarian rain,
snuffing candles out for a good purpose,
releasing an orchestra. A molehill. A piece
of metal like a cartridge case under the trellis.*

László Lugosi Lugo

The Photographer György Klösz (1844–1913)

György Klösz stands out amongst nineteenth-century Hungarian photography with an oeuvre that is great both in quantity and quality. His works can be divided into long series centering around broad themes, but all are characterized by his utmost precision.

Although the photographs we now see everywhere are printed, the foundations of modern printing were only laid during the 1890s, and for the greater part of the last century, photographs had to be published without recourse to the printing technology then available. The only way of reproducing them was to make single copies of them. The picture was first taken on a glass plate negative. The plate was then pressed against photographic paper by means of a special compression frame, and this was then put out into the sun. The picture appeared on the paper gradually, as a result of the ultraviolet rays hitting it.

Using this technique, it was possible at best to make twelve prints a day. Bright sunshine was a fundamental requirement. If there was no sunshine, the process could not take place. Thus it is understandable that even in subsequent times, pictures made in this way were held in much higher esteem than ones which were reproduced in large numbers using printing. Because these old-fashioned pictures were rare, their price was also high.

We have all seen nineteenth-century photographs mounted on cardboard. The reason for mounting them on such thick paper was not only to enhance them, it was because paper used for printed pictures was very thin and something thicker was required to keep the photographs from curling up. Klösz always made and sold his pictures this way. In those days, photographs were still goods to be sold one by one.

László Lugosi Lugo

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Photography itself was no easy business in the nineteenth century. When Klösz began, there was only one process available to photographers, the wet collodion technique. In those days, one could not simply buy a roll of film in a corner shop. Photographers had to make the light-sensitive material themselves. The process was named after its greatest drawback; if the emulsion dried, it lost its light sensitivity. Thus the photographer had about ten minutes to make the plate, and expose and develop the picture. To make matters worse, the process involved the use of explosives and poisonous materials. Nor should we forget that the photographer had to work with cumbersome glass plates, not with the light and flexible film of today.

The first thing to be done was to clean the plate in nitric acid, then coat it with collodion. Collodion consisted of gun cotton dissolved in a mixture of alcohol and ether, both highly flammable, with the addition of silver iodide. From this point on, things had to be done in the dark. The coated glass plate was sensitized in a solution of silver nitrate and placed in the plate holder. The plate was exposed inside the camera and afterwards development began, once again in the dark. The developed plate was then fixed in a potassium cyanide solution. Despite being a highly poisonous substance, this chemical agent was common in the nineteenth century in photographers' studios for thirty years. Now the plate was ready and the prints could be made.

Despite all its apparent dangers, this complex procedure could take place in a photographer's studio relatively easily. The reason was that a studio included a darkroom, for those occasions when the photographer wanted to make portraits of his clients. But photographers also worked outside. In the history of Hungarian photography, György Klösz was among the first to supplement photography with pictures taken in the open air. On those occasions, however, he had to take the darkroom with him. He overcame this difficulty by planting the darkroom in a horse-drawn wagon which he could take with him on his journeys in the city and the countryside. This was standard procedure at the time. Photographers who were engaged in taking landscape photographs usually used a tent for this purpose. Samuel Bourne, the great nineteenth-century English photographer, was accompanied by a caravan of some forty men when he took his beautiful pictures of the Himalayas. Not only did he have to take the large and heavy glass plates and the camera, but also the tripod, the chemicals and the tent, as well as an abundance of food and other supplies. (It was rumoured that one porter was needed to carry the whisky.) Thus it is no exaggeration to say that nineteenth-century photographers who were bold enough to work outside were indeed pioneers.

So far the primary accomplishment attributed to György Klösz in the history of Hungarian photography has been the fact that he took photography out of the studio. Thus it is no surprise that his most famous pictures are those of Budapest, which were believed to have been lost for decades. They appeared for

the first time in an album *Budapest Anno...*, published by Corvina Press in several editions since 1979. The rest of his pictures, however, were almost completely unknown to the general public. There was a huge number of these, dealing with virtually all the subjects that were of importance in the closing decades of the last century. Klösz photographed landscapes, floods, the construction and demolition of important buildings, factories, trains, machines, schools, national costumes, works of art and exhibitions, as well as making numerous portraits and group photos. His photographs enable us to picture the age exactly.

György Klösz was born in the city of Darmstadt in Germany, in 1844. In his birth certificate his name is given as Johann Georg Justus Kloess. His father was the secretary of the Chief Inspector of Schools in Hessen, working in Darmstadt. His mother was the daughter of a court paperhanger employed by the court of Hessen. Georg had eight brothers, several of whom became artisans, one going on to become the manager of the Heissische Ludwigs-Bahn, another was killed in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71, yet another emigrated to the United States. Georg went to school in Darmstadt, then moved to Lorsch to continue his studies in pharmacy. This, however, is not exceptional as the photographers of the time often started out as pharmacists, goldsmiths, painters or even as showmen.

It was only after finishing his pharmaceutical studies that Klösz started to become interested in photography. He moved to Vienna, where by chance it came to his knowledge that a local photographer, a certain Dr Heid, was looking for a partner to start up a studio in Pest. Heid was also born in Darmstadt, ten years before Klösz, so it is possible that he invited Klösz to Vienna in the first place. What is certain is that Klösz signed on as his partner—or, more likely, as his apprentice or assistant—and they left for Pest together. They also had a third companion, one F. Ronninger, another photographer from Vienna. At that time what later became Budapest was still three separate towns; Pest and Buda facing each other on both sides of the Danube, and Óbuda a little higher up on the right bank. Perhaps the three photographers left Vienna to escape competition. What we do know is that there were around forty photographic studios at that time in Pest.

Dr Heid and his team arrived in Pest in 1866 or 1867 and rented a portrait studio on the two upper floors of a three-story building in the inner city. The studio, on the corner of Korona Street and Úri Street, was well-known and had been rented by several photographers before. The first portraits were taken by Dr Heid and Ronninger, including one of Karolina Zeller, Klösz's future wife. It appears, however, that Heid and Ronninger soon returned to Vienna and from that time on, the studio ran under the name of György Klösz. His decision to stay in Pest was probably influenced by his relationship with Karolina Zeller. They married in 1870. Of their eight children, only three survived into adulthood.

Klösz continued his work in the studio. It seems that he was successful as the

serial numbers on his pictures climb into the tens of thousands in a matter of a few years. It was at this time that enterprising photographers like him took the bold step of leaving the studio, despite the obvious dangers and complications posed by the wet-collodion process. Klösz purchased a horse-drawn wagon to house his darkroom. Unfortunately, no picture of the wagon itself survives, but a small part of it is visible on one of his earliest townscapes, bearing the inscription *Georg Klösz, Fotograf*. Exactly when he started taking pictures outside the studio is uncertain, but it must have been sometime at the start of the 1870s.

This was the time when Klösz began his ever-expanding series on Budapest, which provide us with an accurate idea of the city at that time. The three towns were unified to form the capital city of Budapest in 1873. The construction of huge buildings began. This gave Klösz a wonderful opportunity: he photographed the old and the new buildings alike. All in all, he took around 260 pictures of Budapest during the 1870s. In order to make prints of these, Klösz needed more space, and so he moved to a new and larger studio in 1872.

In the same year as Budapest was unified, another significant event took place in Klösz's life. He was invited to Vienna to photograph the World Exhibition, a major undertaking organized by the Association of Viennese Photographers. During the six months of the exhibition, they had nearly three thousand photographs taken that were printed in one and a half million copies. They were taken by Klösz and five Viennese photographers. The association employed a team of fifty assistants, bookbinders and mounters to help them. The final work was done in several different sizes of negatives since the size of the glass plate used for contact printing varied with the size of the picture.

For Klösz, this was an excellent opportunity to learn some more tricks of the trade, such as the simultaneous use of various sizes of glass plates, the operation of the leasing system, the advantages of team spirit and of working with a large number of assistants. This may have strengthened his resolve that in addition to making portraits, he should also deal with printing and publishing his townscapes and landscapes on a large scale. The Kiscelli Museum houses a first-class collection of these pictures, on whose rear the inscriptions attest to the fact that all 108 were taken during the 1870s.

Klösz also ventured outside Budapest to photograph surrounding villages such as Gödöllő or Zsámbék. The pictures he took of the latter are special because of their large size: 30 cm by 40 cm. This shows that even at this relatively early time in his career, Klösz was already making large-size plates. Few such pictures survive, which shows that they must have been an expensive rarity in those days.

Klösz even travelled as far a field as Hévíz, Zólyom, Selmecbánya, Sümeg and Salgótarján. He produced a separate series about the Danube Bend, called *A Glimpse of Visegrád and its Surroundings*. All in all, he took pictures in more than twenty locations in the country, most of them being of the relatively small stereo size.

In 1876 Klösz started working as a photographer of art works. An exhibition of objects from collections by various aristocrats was assembled in Budapest in aid of flood victims. Klösz took about 360 photographs of the objects, which ranged from weapons and suits of armour through brooches and watches to statues. In the same year the single-story house in which Klösz worked was pulled down and a four-story house was erected in its place in the space of one year. The new building housed shops, restaurants and flats, as well as, of course, Klösz's new studio. If we look up to the top of the house behind the Franciscan Church in Kossuth Street, we can see the remains of the studio, which occupied the top two floors. There are apartments there today.

For Klösz, this was another great step forward. He had a significantly larger, new studio with state-of-the-art technology at his disposal, without even having to change his address. Customers were carried to the reception room on the third floor in thirty seconds using a hydraulic lift.

Not only did Klösz continue taking portraits and his Budapest series at this time, his commissions also started to pick up. Between 1875 and 1877 he was commissioned to photograph the construction of the Western Railway Terminal, designed by Eiffel Associates, as a series of fine pictures. He had the date carved into almost every glass plate, so even today we can follow the different stages of construction almost day to day. Another order he received was to photograph the horse-drawn trams of Budapest, which he did in an equally wonderful series.

The pictures he took of floods in the 1870s also form a significant ensemble; all in all, he photographed five floods; in Buda and Pest in 1875 and 1876, in Miskolc and Eger in 1878 and in Szeged in 1879. Floods and other natural disasters were tragic but common occurrences in those days, and they were considered worth photographing. The same was true of serious accidents. Thus, Klösz was called on to photograph a railway accident at Stubnya. Of the flood pictures, those taken in Szeged are the most interesting. They survive in several different formats and sizes. On this occasion, Klösz set up the tent housing his darkroom in a small boat. It is apparent from the photographs that the camera was always set up on the ruins of houses. A relatively long time, two or three seconds, was required to expose the plates. The people photographed often moved within this time, causing the image to be blurred. We can also observe that whenever Klösz photographed boats, he always had them tied up to try and stop them from moving.

The year 1879 brought another milestone to Klösz that had a significant effect on his later work. Until then, he had only been engaged in photography and the publishing of his pictures—in 1879, however, he began to use the technique of photolithography. This method is related to photography because it also uses light-sensitive emulsions, but in effect it is a printing process, and as such it could still not be used to print photographs. Klösz therefore used it to print maps. This was the start of a new occupation, which was to reach its peak in the

work of his son Pál in the twentieth century. For Klösz, this step meant the creation of an ever-expanding company. It became increasingly evident that he would be unable to pursue all the various activities himself. We have no knowledge of how many workers his firm employed, but we may presume that dozens were required to work on all the different jobs.

The onset of the 1880s brought still further diversification for Klösz. It was at this time that a new technique using dry plates appeared. Thus far, photographers were forced to work with wet plates, which meant that they had to prepare the light-sensitive plate directly before exposure. But dry plates could be purchased ready-made, well in advance. What is more, they could be taken back to the darkroom after exposure to be developed. This was a huge step forward. It is understandable, however, that photographers who were used to working in the old way distrusted the new technique at first, and for a short time they took pictures using both methods.

Klösz was the first distributor of dry plates in Hungary. Manufactured by Dr Heid in Vienna, they could be ordered in Klösz's studio in Hatvani Street. Using the new technology, Klösz began a new series of photographs of the capital. From this time on, he called the first series "Pictures of Old Budapest", and the second one, which he continued well into the 1890s, "Pictures of New Budapest". This series is very interesting because the new plates were not only easier to work with, they were also much more sensitive. The photographs taken in the 1870s all seem very static; there are rarely any people in the pictures, and if there are, their image is usually blurred. Since greater sensitivity meant a shorter exposure time, we see streets bustling with people on photographs taken in the 1880s. The images are clear, even if there is movement. Street scenes such as these would have been unimaginable in the time of the old process.

The 1880s and the first half of the 1890s were times of expansion in Klösz's life. In 1882 he had an elegant villa built for himself and his family on Svábhegy. In Budapest the hills lie close to the city centre and Svábhegy was where the wealthy middle class spent their summers. In the villa, Klösz also set up a studio where he could work during the summer. Unfortunately, few of those pictures survive. They show children or families on day trips, posed in their finery in front of a painted background, with garden tools.

By the middle of the 1880s it once again became inevitable for Klösz to move to a new studio. This was necessitated by substantial orders received both for photographs and printing. Orders in the field of technical photography were becoming increasingly important. Thus, Klösz was asked to document the introduction of the first electrical trams in Budapest, built by Siemens & Halske. Among the series of pictures made for this occasion are several street scenes showing the trams amongst crowds of people, in squares or on street corners. These pictures bear testimony to the great success of the new dry-plate process.

In 1884 Klösz found the new studio he was looking for on the other side of Hatvani Street, at number 18, two hundred metres from his old studio. Once again he equipped the new location with the latest technology. He had not even finished moving when he received a major order in portrait photography. Around this time everyone was preparing for the National General Exhibition to take place in 1885. Klösz's commission was to try and take a series of portraits of the most famous people in Hungary: politicians, artists, writers and so on. The idea came from László Toldy, director of the Budapest archives at the time. Together they issued a proclamation "to our country's illustrious persons" asking them to call on Klösz's studio to have their portrait taken. They also requested a curriculum vitae from each customer for an album to be published together with the pictures. In the end, the plan fell through, partly because of the relative lack of interest in the midst of the fervent preparation for the exhibition. The other reason was that Klösz had not yet finished moving. A large sample album was prepared, however. Since the printing of photographs was still impossible at this time, it contained nine mounted portraits on each page. Together with the c.v.s, the album serves as an excellent introduction to the 63 notabilities involved. It also contains some of Klösz's finest portraits.

Despite the failure of the plan, Klösz exhibited some of the portraits at the National General Exhibition in 1885, together with a few of his photographic and printing products. Some of the pictures showed the construction of buildings, others were on forestry. A huge panorama by Klösz showing Andrassy Road, made up of 200 photographs, was of particular interest. He also exhibited photolithographs, which attracted attention because of their unusually large size and high quality. At the exhibition, Klösz won a medal of merit for his works in three fields of printing and one field of photography. This shows his company's growing orientation towards printing, though he did not deal in all kinds of printing. Thus, despite becoming the joint owner of the travel magazine called *Budapesti Látogatók Lapja* in 1890, he continued to have it printed at the printing presses of the Légrády brothers.

The journal carried a large number of Klösz's photographs, on various topics. All editions had pictures of Budapest and the countryside, and this opportunity provided Klösz with extra motivation to publish his stock of pictures, as well as to continue his series. His shots of the Siemens & Halske trams were also published, as were photographs of various statues and buildings in Budapest, such as the National Casino, the casino in the Terézváros district, the buildings in Alkotmány Street and the synagogue in Dohány Street. It is here that we see true "press photos" for the first time, for example of the Hubay Quartet, of a group of eighty people, or of an ornithological exhibition.

In the 1890s, Klösz's pictures began to appear in major Hungarian newspapers and periodicals. He and his camera were present at numerous important

events in Hungary and abroad. His photographic reports included one on Kossuth's funeral in 1894, the unveiling of a statue of a Hungarian Honvéd (1948/9 soldier) in the Buda Castle, the building of a flower promenade, the construction of the first underground railway and the completion ceremony of the new artillery barracks. He also travelled a great deal. He sent photographic reports from dozens of locations in the country and from abroad. Each one consisted of fifteen to twenty pictures showing the town or area where he was staying.

Meanwhile, Klösz also continued his series on Budapest, both in large and in small, stereo size. The start of the 1890s brought an important addition to the series. It was at this time that the building of two new bridges in Budapest, the Francis Joseph Bridge and the Elizabeth Bridge, was decided upon. This required substantial reconstruction work. A large section of the inner city in Pest and of the Tabán region in Buda had to be pulled down. With other photographers from Budapest, Klösz was commissioned in 1892 to capture the squares, streets and buildings about to be demolished. This shows what an important role photography played in preserving images in the nineteenth-century. Town planners thought that if the face of the city had to be altered, the least they could do was to immortalize the old semblance in the form of photographs. Even today Klösz's pictures are our primary source of information on the demolished districts and buildings. These are perhaps his best-known photographs.

In the same year, he had another elegant villa built for himself and his family on Castle Hill in Buda. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the huge building today. As soon as they finished moving in, he commissioned yet another construction. The house where he had his studio in Hatvani Street was also to be pulled down because of the reconstruction work, so he had an enormous new studio and an adjoining printing press occupying approximately 800 square meters built. Work began in 1894 and lasted for about a year. The building still stands at 49 Városligeti Avenue. Its impressive dimensions are an accurate reflection of the success of Klösz's firm. The grand opening coincided with the couple's silver wedding in 1895.

The opening ceremony and the silver wedding were held in the garden of the new building. The entire staff of the printing press was present, as well as Klösz's relatives from Germany, who had been invited specially for the occasion. At noon on the 2nd of August, Klösz's employees surprised the pair with ceremonious congratulations and presents. They were given some exquisite silver jewelry and a beautifully framed group photograph of the entire staff. The couple was overcome with emotion. Klösz said a warm thank you and the celebrations continued well into the night.

After the ceremony was over, work continued for Klösz and company. In 1895 and 1896 the greatest task was to prepare for the grand exhibition organized on the millennium of the Hungarian conquest. Klösz was called on to photograph

the train given to Francis Joseph as a present by the Ganz engineering works for him to travel on to the exhibition. It consisted of seven cars and Klösz photographed it using the largest possible size, the 40 by 50 cm glass plates. The pictures were then placed in a 50 by 70 cm ornamented box. Klösz also photographed the construction, the cars and the staff of the first underground line, which was opened for the millennium. This was the second underground line built in Europe after London and the first in continental Europe.

The Millennial Exhibition was open for six months in temporary pavilions in the Városliget in Pest, not far from Klösz's studio. He also photographed the erection of the group of statues depicting the most important Hungarian historical figures in Heroes' Square, as well as the construction of nearby Vajdahunyad Castle, which still stands in Városliget.

To photograph the exhibition, the best eight photographers from Budapest formed a co-operative with Klösz as president. It is interesting that while hardly any pictures by the others survive, numerous of Klösz's have. All in all, he took nearly 700 large pictures. Unfortunately, almost a hundred of these have been lost, but the vision provided by the rest is remarkable. There were hardly any details of which he did not take pictures: the exteriors and interiors of the pavilions, the individual stands of the different firms and exhibitors, Captain Godard's balloon, the newly set up Hungarian ambulance service, everything right down to the public conveniences. He also made a series in stereo size, one of them depicting the small pavilion where his firm was selling the photographs.

With the opening of his new studio and printing press and with the success and prizes won at the Millennial Exhibition, Klösz reached a peak. He was one of the best-known photographers in the country, employing forty people in his new studio. His third large villa was under construction in Balatonföldvár, and in 1898 he commissioned the building of a three-story apartment block on the section of his Budapest property reaching down to Damjanich Street. The flats were meant for his children and for renting.

Klösz's company was always kept busy with both photography and printing orders, and he himself was commissioned to undertake several more large-scale projects, but the successes of 1896 always remained as the high point. It was also at this time that Klösz received the honorary title of Imperial and Royal (k. und k.) Court Photographer.

His last great accomplishment in the nineteenth-century was to photograph the chateaux and country houses of the Hungarian aristocracy. Besides publishing it, Klösz's intention was to show this new series at the Paris World Fair in 1900.

All in all, Klösz took 430 pictures of 100 mansions owned by 65 aristocratic families. Some he photographed in detail, devoting no more than a single take to others. When he took more than one picture, he always photographed both the front and back, and in some cases the gardens and the interior as well. The sequence of pictures taken at different locations shows that he visited all the



SELF-PORTRAIT, CCA 1878, ALBUMINE, CALLING-CARD SIZE, PRIVATELY OWNED.

György Klösz (1844–1913)



THE OLD STOCK EXCHANGE, cca 1873. LOWER LEFT CORNER: THE TOP OF KLÖSZ'S CART WITH THE INSCRIPTION: RG KLÖSZ. 18,5 x 26 cm, ALBUMINE, MUNICIPAL SZABÓ ERVIN LIBRARY PHOTOARCHIVES 668.2/2.



Nr. 1638 Wiener Bäckerei von Roman Uhl

Klöss

THE VIENNA WORLD FAIR, 1873, ROMAN UHL'S BAKERY I AND II, ALBUMINE, 19 x 24 CM,
PRIVATELY OWNED (NOTE THE CHANGES OF SCENE BETWEEN THE TWO TAKES).





THE SZEGED FLOODS, 1879, A RESCUE TEAM FROM THE DONAU-DAMPFSCHIFFFAHRTS-GESELLSCHAFT, ALBUMINE, 19 x 26 CM,
MÓRA FERENC MUSEUM, SZEGED.

V. A MAGYAR ÍRÓK, TUDÓSOK, SZERKESZTŐK.



Ábrányi Emil



Decei Lajos



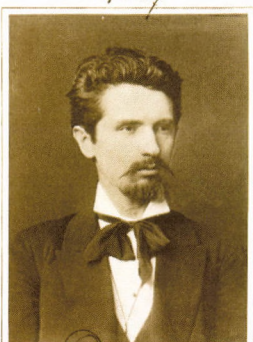
Harsányi



Altonási Balogh Sándor



Hoffmann Lajos



Jelenkötöny



Dr. Huasséi Benedek



Farkas György

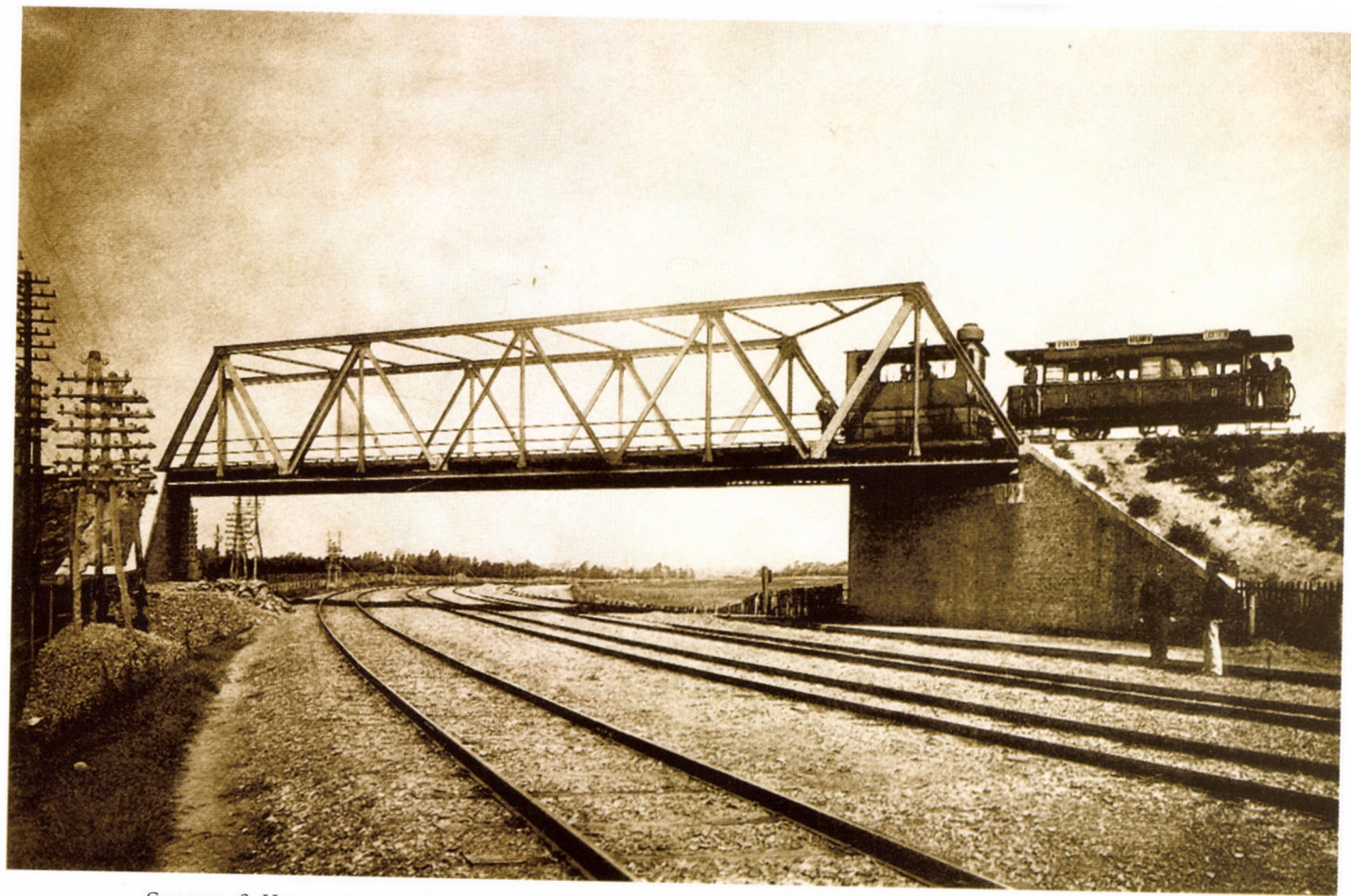


Kőrösi Pál

A PAGE FROM THE ALBUM *HAZÁNK JELESEI* (THE DISTINGUISHED OF OUR COUNTRY),
1884, NINE CABINET-SIZE COPIES, ALBUMINE,
MUNICIPAL SZABÓ ERVIN LIBRARY PHOTOARCHIVES, BJ 920/17.



THE 1885 NATIONAL UNIVERSAL EXHIBITION, CONCERT HALL, ALBUMINE, 21 x 28 CM, MUNICIPAL SZABÓ ERVIN LIBRARY PHOTOARCHIVES 64/1.



SIEMENS & HALSKE TRAM IN BUDAPEST, CEMETERY LINE, END OF 1880S, COLLOTYPE, 18 x 23 CM, MUNICIPAL SZABÓ ERVIN LIBRARY PHOTOARCHIVES 56/30.



THE 1896 MILLENNARY EXHIBITION, PARADE LEADING FROM THE FIELD OF BLOOD IN BUDA TO THE EXHIBITION SITE ON JUNE 8TH, 1896. 28 x 49 CM, CELLOIDIN, MUNICIPAL SZABÓ ERVIN LIBRARY PHOTOARCHIVES BF. 779/79.

important mansions in the country. He went to every region in the country and took pictures in more than 30 counties. It is difficult to determine how Klösz chose his locations. Some well-known and relatively unknown mansions are included, whilst some others that would have been obvious choices have been left out.

The turn of the century brought more orders for Klösz. He was commissioned to photograph schools and factories. Of these, those depicting the abbatoirs and the bakery are especially interesting, as is the series showing the building, the rooms and the courtyard of the Elizabeth School for Girls, where Klösz sent his daughter Jolán. Klösz produced one more large series towards the end of his life. Between 1901 and 1903 he photographed the new telegraph office starting with the construction of the building, the laying of the cables and the installation of the technical equipment, right until the complex was put into service. There are many pictures in the series which are not of aesthetic value, they show a bundle of cables or the stands for the incoming telephone wires on the roof. But it is exactly this simplicity and concentration on the technical aspect which makes them all the more interesting.

As he got older, Klösz gradually made way for his son Pál to succeed him as head of the firm. The first step was having the firm registered, which, strange as it may seem, was not done until 1898. This was possible because until that year, photographers were not required to possess a trade license. Anyone was free to practice the craft without as much as a master's examination. As a next step, in 1903 Klösz had the name of the firm changed to György Klösz and Son, Court Institute of Photography and Printing. Finally, in 1906 the aging Klösz retired and handed over control to Pál. With this step, the firm turned once and for all in the direction of printing.

György Klösz died in Budapest on 4 July 1913. The printing press operated by his son went on to become one of the most important printing presses in Budapest in the twentieth century. They no longer limited themselves to printing maps, but produced all kinds of typographic material. They were the first printing house in Hungary to introduce colour offset printing. Pál Klösz received the honorary title of Royal Chief Counselor and went on to play a leading role in several organizations of printers. He achieved in printing what his father had in photography.

The György Klösz and Son Institute of Graphic Art was nationalized in 1948 and renamed the Offset Printing House. It was merged with the Kogutowitz and Associates Cartographic Company and placed under Communist control.

György Klösz's photographs used to be displayed in the printing press in large albums for customers who wished to publish them. A substantial number of his pictures did appear in various publications, books, lexicons and periodicals. Twelve of these large albums containing about 2000 pictures ended up in the Budapest Municipal Archives, where they are to this day. The larger glass plates remained in the building housing the printing press until 1959, when they

were handed over to public collections. First they were taken to the Kiscelli Museum, but since it only collects pictures connected with Budapest, the others were sent on to other museums. A number of these glass plates have since disappeared. Today, only the plates of the Budapest pictures, of the series about country houses and a few of the wet plates showing the Szeged flood are known to have survived.

Many of Klösz's photographs are in specialist museums, thus a large number of pictures showing trams and trains can be found in the photographic archives of the Transport Museum in Budapest. In recent years, many prints and documents have ended up in the collection of the Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét.

There are many instances when we know of the taking of a photograph or series, but we do not have the actual photographs. The most obvious case is his portraits, which he continued taking for more than forty years. Even if we suppose that in one day he produced only three or four, this would still amount to 1000 a year, and 40,000 photographs in all. Their whereabouts is a mystery, since only a few hundred are in public collections.

Despite these hindrances, we can say with absolute certainty that György Klösz was an outstanding figure in nineteenth-century photography – and not only in Hungary. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, photographers all over the world were very early to specialize in some field of photography. Klösz, on the other hand, was engaged in diverse activities. This is why his pictures are able to give us such a broad and excellent image of the last third of the nineteenth-century; they contain a wealth of information about the age. Secondly, he was a perfectionist in everything he did. His pictures are of excellent quality, and, what is more, a great number of them also impress the viewer with their size, since he was not afraid to use large glass plates. Finally, his life and his work are perfect demonstrations of how a young man born abroad was able to make a major career in the Hungary of the nineteenth century.

What makes György Klösz especially exciting is that just when we think we know everything about his life, something new always comes along. Recently, while browsing at a second-hand bookshop in Budapest, I came across eight of his pictures taken at the 1879 Vienna World Exhibition. This is a small find, that is true, but copies of these pictures were not known to exist in these particular sizes so far, which just goes to show that even today, György Klösz is able to provide us with pleasant surprises. I await similar discoveries eagerly. ❁

Pál Ritoók

A City in Photographs

Károly Kincses–P. Tibor Sándor: *Fotó–Város–Történet* (Photo–City–History)
Budapest, Hungarian Museum of Photography–Budapest Municipal Szabó Ervin
Library, 1998, 278 pp.

Károly Kincses set up the Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét and was the initiator in Budapest of the Hungarian Photographers' Gallery (Magyar Fotográfusok Háza) in the beautifully restored Manó Mai studio building in Nagymező Street, whose artistic director he became. A specialist and teacher on the history of photography, both Hungarian and foreign, he is the man from whom many curators of photographic collections learnt their trade, and he has also written several studies on the history of the medium.

P. Tibor Sándor is Director of the Budapest Collection of the Municipal Szabó Ervin Library in Budapest, a specialist in local history and himself a photographer, whose work for many years has meant that he has primarily been involved in looking at the history of the city as it is preserved in photographs.

The two authors have taken 56 Hungarian photographers and selected one hundred or so pictures (from the early

1860s to 1984) that are significant for the history of photography and for local history. The photography historian presents the careers of the photographers in alphabetical order. The local historian, meanwhile, takes one or two of the pictures illustrating the work of each photographer and sketches a particular segment of the city's history through an analysis of these.

Of the hundred and twenty years the book spans, the first third covers the period in which, virtually simultaneously, both the city of Budapest and the art of photography came into adulthood. The political stability which followed the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 led to a boom in construction, with private capital invested principally in apartment blocks. At the same time, Budapest had to demonstrate its status as the Hungarian capital of the Dual Monarchy. Thus the majority of Budapest's spectacular public buildings, its government offices, courts, schools and university buildings, its Parliament, its Opera and other theatres, railway stations and many of its museums were all built during this period. Two of the city's largest town planning projects were completed, the construction of Andrásy Avenue and the Nagykörút (Grand Boulevard).

The residents of this rapidly-growing city were open towards technical innovation, which then included photography.

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His field of research is 19th–20th century
architecture.*

The aristocracy and the upper middle class were no longer satisfied with painted portraits or drawings as a record of social events. As their quality steadily improved, photographs were used increasingly in the press. Commercial advertising more and more frequently exploited the opportunities photography afforded. In order to service the tourists visiting the capital and Hungary's spas, popular with foreign visitors too, large numbers of picture postcards came on the market. Last but not least, in the technical disciplines and the humanities, photography was establishing itself as an instrument for recording facts.

A large number of elegant photographic studios opened up in the city centre and photographers were already beginning to specialize to a certain extent. The photographic portraits of the royal family and the aristocracy were mainly the work of Mór Erdélyi, István Goszleth and Károly Koller. Erdélyi, however, also undertook work for the Royal Hungarian Mail, while some of his cityscapes have a claim to be regarded as the precursors of social photography. The Opera House employed its own photographer. Although photographers such as Károly Divald, Ferenc Kozmata, György Klösz, Béla Gévay produced many portraits, they became famous mainly for their artistic and architectural photography and their cityscapes. Manó Mai was a portrait photographer who specialized in pictures of children, and the venue for an exhibition of the pictures published in this volume was the building where his studio was housed.

Professional associations of photographers were set up and specialist journals were launched. The articles and efforts of Aladár Székely, Olga Máté and most of all József Pécsi led to photography being considered an art form in Hungary at the beginning of this century, a status that was well established by the inter-war period.

In this book, famous and rare photographs, familiar and unfamiliar names alternate. We encounter photographers, for example, that even photographic historians may know very little about (Béla Gévay, János Indrikó, Lajos Pentli), alongside names that even non-Hungarians are likely to be familiar with, such as Angelo, Robert Capa and André Kertész. The subjects of the pictures show a similar variety. We see anonymous pedestrians, people who have been evicted from their homes, beggars and children, alongside figures like Frigyes Schulek or Imre Steindl, who designed the Parliament building, and other people whose architectural imagination changed the face of the city.

The locations also vary considerably. Many are well-known: the old Tabán district, demolished in the nineteen-twenties, nestling at the foot of the Gellért Hill, Margaret Island, the Inner City, Elizabeth Bridge, the Danube Embankment, the City Park (Városliget) and the Amusement Park (Vidámpark). We also see areas of the city that are still bustling today: the square now called Moscow Square, Zsigmond Móricz Circus, the railway stations, the poor districts and the scars of two world wars. We see pictures showing exciting industrial buildings, the interior of a water tower or a gigantic gasometer, or a tragic accident that has just taken place. The subjects of the remaining pictures is more mundane—a house with a yard overgrown with woodbine, a dilapidated shop entrance, taxis, trams—but transformed by the photographer's lens. Particular traits have been picked out and the viewer's attention directed towards them, thus turning a straightforward view into an image.

Although the Hungarian Museum of Photography in Kecskemét and other institutions have published studies on individual photographers, this work is likely to become a handy reference book of photo-

graphic history because of the biographies it contains. These are likely to be more than just stimulating reading for specialists researching the history of Hungarian photography. What is especially interesting is the accounts of how different people came into contact with photography and the role it played in their later lives. Was the individual a chemist or pharmacist turned photographer, as so many were in the nineteenth century, when a sound knowledge of chemistry was still a basic prerequisite for making pictures? Or was he perhaps a bank clerk, or a toolmaker, or an architect, or someone already versed in the art of making pictures, an art historian or graphic artist? How did each one make his living and did this have any bearing on what he considered important in his photography? And what happened to the talented photographic artists and professional photographers amidst the turbulence of the twentieth century?

The book is the result of collecting, processing and collating a great deal of information, although the authors must have felt their effort rewarded simply because of the opportunity to work through so many fine pictures before making their final selection. Anyone who attended the exhibition between April and June of this year at least had a taste of the pictures in the original, scanning the panoramic views and musing on the technical skill and the freshness of the photographer's perspective which makes the picture remain fresh.

The book itself is beautifully produced. The authors have declared their intention

of presenting the reader with a book arranged into concise, easy-to-read sections: there are one or two pictures, a short description of them and a brief summary of the photographer's life, all on one page. Highly enjoyable informative passages, written with a light touch, alternate with more subjective passages that border on the literary in style. This is a tradition that goes a long way back. One only has to think, if nothing else of the volumes in the series *A mi Budapestünk* (Our Budapest). The writing reflects the authors' biases and love of the subject, infused with humour and a refreshing irony, which the two authors are not averse to turning on themselves on occasion.

André Kertész's picture of Teleki Square prompts Károly Kincses to give the reasons why we are better off than the director of the archives in Paris that holds the larger part of the extraordinarily valuable Kertész estate. For us, Teleki Square and the flea market once held there mean something; moreover, thanks to this book, we now also know that one of the coffee stands hidden away amongst the stalls was owned by Kertész's mother. "We know so many more details about this, and about many other things. This is our treasure. Theirs may be the picture, the copy-right, the money obtained for it; and yet we are the ones who are richer for it—at least that is what I think (and here the author of the present lines agrees wholeheartedly with Károly Kincses), if I may be so presumptuous." ■

Károly Kincses—P. Tibor Sándor
Budapest Trio*

Two Magnum photographers, David Seymour (Chim) and Robert Capa (1913–1954), spent six weeks in Hungary in 1948 on a visit organized by the Budapest-based photographer János Reismann. They photographed the war-torn country, recording the first manifestations of Communist dictatorship, already increasingly in evidence. The first three-year plan was in operation by that time. Capa photographed in the Ganz shipyards in Budapest, he recorded Békés county's first rice harvest and the beginning of Budapest's rising again from its ruins. Reismann's intention was for the trio to stage a joint exhibition in Rome and Paris. The plans of the then cultural attaché at the Hungarian Legation in France were thwarted, however. After the opening of the exhibition in Rome, he was summarily recalled to Budapest and, as one of the accused of the notorious show-trial trial of László Rajk, was sentenced to death. (His sentence was later commuted to life-imprisonment.) The exhibition was cancelled.

Capa and Chim, meanwhile, did manage to complete their picture taking. "On the day before I was due to leave I went to get my exit visa", Capa recalled, "The sergeant who dealt with foreigners scrutinized my passport very carefully. After he had stamped it with the exit visa, he asked which school I had been to. I told him the name of the *gimnázium* in Budapest, whereupon he recited back to me the names of all my teachers, and told me the year I had finished school. He had gone to the same school, leaving two years after me. Returning my passport, he said: if you had been born two years later, with your talents you would either be dead by now or you'd be a government minister at the very least. As things are, however, you're just a woolly-thinking western liberal. That's historical materialism for you."

Robert Capa had also visited Budapest in 1947, one year before he took this picture, but on that occasion he only stayed for a day. He was on his way somewhere else and in any event what he saw and heard did not entice him to prolong his stay. Over and over again he was met by news of the death of

*Excerpts from *Fotó-város-történet* (Photo-City-History), reviewed by Pál Ritoók on pp. 67–69



Robert Capa: Váci Street, 1948, gelatin silver print, 25.8 x 26 cm.
Hungarian Museum of Photography.

relatives, friends and schoolmates, and the sight of all the bridges and buildings reduced to rubble was unbearable. "The town was like a beautiful woman who has had her teeth kicked in," he wrote. In his 1948 pictures, however, Váci Street once again looks pretty much as it must have done when he left Budapest in 1933. There are still one or two telltale gaping holes in the row of buildings, but the street is full of cars and people leisurely strolling, looking at the shop windows; acquaintances stopping for a chat, the cinema posters advertising new films; it is a street for shopping and promenading once again, just like it used to be.

Capa's photograph was taken at a famous spot on Váci Street. This was where, at one time, the inn called The Seven Prince Electors had stood. Visitors to the inn included royalty and its ballroom, opened in 1772, had been the great grandmother of all dance halls in Budapest. The new building, erected on the site in 1840, and which is still there to this day, was designed by the great architect of the period, János Hild. It was a dwelling house for some time, and then in 1862 it was once again turned into a hotel, the Nemzeti Szálló. The front that looks onto Aranykéz Street is what is left of the hotel's coffee salon; there lurks a bar that at one time was called the Florián and later the Colonial before it became widely known as a nighthawks' haunt under the name of the Pipacs (Poppy). Even the moral crusaders of the workers' state failed to have it closed down. Anyone over sixty who ever went carousing in the city centre has a story to tell about the Pipacs. For a long time cinema tickets were sold at the Váci Street entrance to the building, where the box office is located today of the Pesti Színház theatre. In 1911 the glass-covered courtyard restaurant was replaced by the Corso Film Theatre. From 1945 to 1948, when the political parties and the organizations affiliated to them divided up the better cinemas amongst themselves, the Corsó was managed by the National Peasant Party or, to be more precise, the Sarló (Sickle) Book and Film Production and Sales Cooperative. They were in the process of nationalizing it just about the time Capa was there. The photograph even shows what films were on at the time. Since you are hardly likely ever to get to see the Soviet technicolour film, *Express Love*, I shall divulge what it is about, for those who are interested. While the great festivities to celebrate victory are underway in Moscow on 9th May, 1945, an express train rumbles on its way to Vladivostok. On the train, one Captain Lavrentiev meets Zina, an actress who behaves in a very hostile and provocative manner. At some point on their journey, the two somehow manage to get left behind. They have many highly entertaining adventures until finally the misunderstandings are cleared up and it turns out that Zina is in fact a nice girl who is not an actress at all but a botanist and is travelling east to help the fruit farmers. Lavrentiev in turn reveals that he is not in fact married...

Zoltán Berekméri (1923–1988) started taking pictures with a box camera given to him at the age of fourteen. Four years later, the year he finished at a commercial secondary school, he won the title of Hungarian Student Photography Champion. Despite this, he worked as a rural post office clerk between 1942 and 1958, continuing to take photographs in a purely amateur capacity. Kata Kálmán recognized his hidden talents and invited him to Budapest. For twenty years he was the staff photographer of the Petőfi Museum of Literature, taking tens of thousands of photographs of reproductions, objets d'art and interiors; during this period his own artistic career reached its peak. Great technical mastery and exceptionally painstaking craftsmanship were the hallmarks of the pictures in which he depicted micro-situations and emotional nuances. He became a member of the Hungarian Photographers' Federation and from 1958 was also a member of the FIAP (Fédération Internationale d'Art Photographique). A first exhibition of his collected work was held in 1985 in the Ernst Museum. His pictures earned him bronze medals in both Gent and Rio de Janeiro. In 1992 a commemorative exhibition of his work was held in the Munkácsy Mihály Museum in Békéscsaba, and three years later a series of books on contemporary Hungarian photographers, *Fényképtár* (Photo Gallery), was launched, Berekméri being the subject of the first volume.

It is to Count István Széchenyi that we owe horseracing in Budapest, although what he envisaged was rather different to the form it takes today. From the 1820s, for many years he went to great lengths to publicize his views on the value of breeding and racing horses at national level in word, deed and in print. He submitted an application to the Court in Vienna for a licence to hold races, and after riding around the territory of Pest-Buda for three days in the company of a number of friends, looking for suitable terrain, he finally stumbled on a parcel of land in the "flatlands of Üllő" which from then on would no longer be used as a pasture, but would become the Pest racecourse. It was announced that the first race meeting would take place on June 6, 1827, and from that date forward for more than half a century the horse racing public would drive out to this area, also known as the Gubacsi Estate. From 1880 they no longer had to travel as far. The authorities decided they needed the land and instead offered the Pest Jockey Club a lease on the land where the People's Stadium and the adjacent sports pavilions now stand. Although space was somewhat restricted both on the course and in the stands, the several decades when races were held here count as the classic era of horse-racing in Budapest. At the same time, flat races on the training track at Alag, north-east of Budapest, also became fashionable. When there was talk of shutting the city racetrack, influential gentlemen of the Jockey Club suddenly began to enquire among the upper echelons of society whether it might not be possible to extend Andrassy Avenue as far as Alag. They entered into negotiations with the tramway company and the hotel owners. Whether this was a serious enterprise or simply psychological warfare is not known, but any-

way, it had the effect of forcing the city fathers to back down and postpone their plans to shut the racecourse. At the same time, they offered the possibility of setting up another racecourse somewhere else in the city. Their choice fell on the cavalry training grounds at the point where the Albertirsai Road and Fehér Road converge. The fact that it was some distance away filled the cab drivers in particular with great hopes. Work on the site, however, ground to a halt with the outbreak of the First World War.

The fate of horse racing at City Park, too, was sealed under the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919, which lasted only three months, when the race-track was turned over to commercial crop cultivation. The novelist Gyula Krúdy mourned the passing of the old race-course, and the world that disappeared with it, as follows: "all the pretty women decked out in their finery who once got soaked here on Royal Cup day, all the fine cavaliers who would swoop so majestically in at the main gate in their two-horse carriages (one-horse cabs were not permitted even to stop at the gate), and who, at the end of the race, would stroll sadly on foot along the paths that meandered amongst the bushes; and the gentlemen of the Jockey Club who grew old on their podium with its red rope fence and who, at the close of the racing season in the autumn of 1918, never imagined they had seen the lovely race-course for the last time; they still remember it, they remember how sophisticated and impressive She was, how springy the grass around the totalisators' booths, how shady the park where the racehorses were led out to parade in a circle in their colourful blankets, how refined and gay the company that used to meet there from the early, fragrant days of May until late in October, when the tote clerks would have to pay out the last tickets by candlelight in the dusk of evening."

Fewer (and in any case much less nostalgic) descriptions remain of the racegoers in third class with the thirty-farthing tickets. And yet the ordinary people were increasingly keen to share in the passion of the upper crust and in the winnings to be made from gambling. In a world already turned upside down by revolutions, the higher classes of society were forced to rub shoulders with "people who frequented street markets". It must have come as a great relief to them when, in 1925, the sports complex that is still standing to this day on the Albertirsai Road was finally completed, with tiered grandstands, and restaurants and cafés for first and second class customers. Those with third-class tickets once again had only standing room around the central perimeter of the racecourse, with no cover above their heads.

They did have separate betting booths, however. Gambling, after all, was increasingly becoming the principal driving force behind the races. Initially it had only been the owners of the horses who made wagers with each other. Later came the bookmakers, these larger-than-life characters who were a strange combination of the romantic adventurer and the obscure accounts clerk. The names of some of the most famous of them became legends, preserved



*Zoltán Berekméri: At the Race-course, 1958, gelatin silver print, 30 x 40 cm,
Hungarian Museum of Photography.*

for generations in the annals of the turf. A talented bookmaker had to be an expert in horses, a psychologist and a stockbroker all rolled into one, looking at the horses' form, the punters' state of mind and the rates offered by the other "bookies", the competition, to gauge what odds he would offer to anyone with whom he entered into the risk of the deal. At first the bookmakers were merely "bagmen", offering their services they strolled around, but later they became tradespeople organized into guilds and operating according to strict regulations. And yet they were an elite organization: even when gambling became a thriving business, there were still no more than a dozen and a half registered bookmakers operating in Pest at any one time. The first swallows came from England in the eighteen-sixties. The first to make a fortune here in Hungary was a bookmaker named Lehmann who used to be a member of the English colony in Hamburg. He was followed by many others from the island kingdom, who included the Pest racecourse in an itinerary which also took them to Hamburg, Prague, Baden-Baden and Freudenau. At the close of the season they went home for the winter hurdles season, and some went travelling round India. Their successors had offices in both Vienna and Pest. They had their own "ring" at the racecourse. We have to imagine them at their clap-board stands with a sign bearing their name, standing on a small raised platform, leaning on book-stands that looked rather like music stands, waiting for clients to challenge them to a wager. In the city, the first market for betting and small-scale gambling was in Ferenciek (Franciscans') Square, so it was no coincidence that the first off-track, licenced public betting office was on the ground floor of the Ferenciek Bazaar. On racing days a tremendous throng would gather in the courtyard, with sellers of salted pretzels and fruit pressing their way through the milling crowds of horse-experts and small punters. Occasionally some people would find out the results of the first race in Vienna before all the bets had been taken, but when they tried to prevent the word passing round by shutting the doors, the news would still reach the ears of the initiated from the street outside, disguised in the form of an organ-grinder's tune.

Bookmakers were an English institution, whereas the totalisator was an invention of the French, and was based on principles that were diametrically opposed. The main difference was that the total amount of money bet on the race by all the punters was divided up amongst those who had bet on the winning horse, in proportion to each one's stake. First, however, tax and an administration charge are deducted. In other words, the cashier always wins, while the punter, in the worst-case scenario, can still lose even if he picks the winner. The secret of the phenomenal success of this system is the fact that it is possible to place very small bets. It was this institution that finally robbed horse-racing of the last vestiges of its aristocratic character, at the same time guaranteeing an income to the organizers, as well as earning money for various public funds. At that time, the Hungarian Jockey Club and the state treasury, and various

horse-breeding, sporting and charitable foundations in the capital, all received a share of the 14 per cent deducted. During the period when horse-racing was a nationalized industry, no bookmakers were licensed. The totalisator system could not be reconciled with socialist morality either, but the cash machines kept on clacking nevertheless. The amount deducted increased to around 30 per cent at that time. These days the levy on a flutter on the horses is a hefty 44 per cent.

Kálmán Szöllősy (1887–1976) was very old by the time I met him. In the course of our conversations I tried to take in everything, to find out what it was about this old man, who was neither very tall nor very remarkable in appearance, that generated such a tremendous love of women, a passion that was still very much in evidence. What could have been the source of all those thousands of nudes, both negatives and positives? He could have been awarded the title of the Hungarian photographic artist who most often photographed undressed woman. But it was not only the nudes! He was incapable of taking a picture of a woman harvesting, clutching a sheaf of wheat, or a girl picking grapes, or a nurse in her white uniform, without a hidden sensuality shining through the image. I, of course, loved this.

He participated in over one thousand exhibitions in all five continents of the globe, and had 13 gold, 9 silver and numerous bronze medals and certificates of merit to show for it. In the 1933 competition for the most beautiful pictures run by *Die Galerie*, his picture, *Illustration for Gorky*, was only just pipped to the post by Ernő Vadas's *Geese*. Photographs by him appeared in various issues of the Swiss journal *Camera*, the English *Amateur Photographer* and in the German *Fotofreund*. After 1945 he and his wife, who was also a fellow photographer, obtained a licence to trade as photographers and set up a portrait studio, though not a terribly busy one, in their apartment on Andrásy Avenue. Szöllősy took thousands of pictures, many of which make him worthy of a place of honour in the pantheon of Hungarian photographers.

There is so much to look in this picture, it is hard to know where to rest one's gaze. On the figure of the woman, bathed in bright afternoon sunlight? Or the outline of the water speeding out from under her back like a pool of blood? On the old-fashioned briefcase that she is using as a cushion, or the piece of clothing crumpled up underneath it—the objects that give the image a more pervasive sense of intimacy as we explore the physical beauty of the woman? Let us direct our gaze a little further to the left, however, as befits the theme of this book, and look at the fragment of stone slab that can just be glimpsed through the waves. It is part of the Chain Bridge that had been blown up by the Germans in 1945; we can see some of the letters of the name of István Széchenyi whose brainchild it had been. A strange juxtaposition of incongruous images, a memento radiating with blasphemous joy.

The first attempt to blow up the Chain Bridge had taken place on May 21, 1849, in the final minutes of the siege of Buda by the Hungarian army. Seeing the cloud of smoke and dust that flew up following the terrifying blast, the advancing soldiers suspected that the cannon emplacement was in fact between the two lions on the Buda bridgehead, but all they found amidst the ruins was a corpse that had been blown to pieces. These were the mortal remains of Colonel Alois Allnoch; the fuse, ten paces long, had proved too short to ensure his survival. The Chain Bridge, however, remained standing until 7 a.m. on the morning of January 18th, 1945. On the previous evening General Pfeffer-Wildenbruch, the commander of the retreating Germans, had obtained permission to evacuate Pest. The flight of the Germans lasted throughout the night amidst apocalyptic scenes. With the buildings on the Danube embankment burning like torches, casting a light almost as bright as day, civilians and soldiers driven frantic by the Soviet artillery bombardment scrambled across the bridge, which had been breached in many places and was covered in dead bodies. At the time of the explosion there were still people on it. The explosives had been placed with German precision, in the chain chambers on the Pest bank. Following the detonation, the unleased chains flew up and smashed the stone corbels at the top of the pillars, whereupon the suspension rods snapped one by one, and first the section of the bridge on the Pest side, then the middle section crashed into the water. Once again, by sheer good fortune, the anchor chamber on the Buda side was spared; in 1948, when the trench was drained, the workers came across the explosive device that had been intended to destroy it, soaked through and useless.



Kálmán Szöllősy: Woman Sunbathing on the Banks of the Danube, 1947, diacetate from the negative, modern enlargement, 6 x 6 cm, Hungarian Museum of Photography.

István Riba

Minority Self-Governments in Hungary

In 1910 half the population of Hungary had a first language other than Hungarian. This ratio declined to 5–8 per cent after the Treaty of Trianon, the First World War settlement which led to Hungary losing two thirds of her territory, and with it one third of the ethnic Hungarian population. The largest national minority in post-1920 Hungary were the Germans. The German population, which had considerably grown through immigration in the 18th century, approached half a million. They lived in Western Hungary, centred on Sopron (Oedenburg), in villages in the environs of Budapest and the Bakony hills, and in Danube riparian Southern Hungary. In the mid-19th century, Buda and Pest were still reckoned to be German towns, both burghers and industrial workers being predominantly Germans. *Fin-de-siècle* development and population growth (including many Slovak immigrants, who did not maintain their identity in the second generation) meant that Budapest lost its German character. Like some other East and Central European countries, between 1945 and

1947 Hungary expelled its Germans, some 260,000 in all.

Many Slovaks also migrated to the present territory of Hungary, but they were soon largely Magyarized. In 1920 close to half a million claimed to be able to speak Slovak, but only 150,000 indicated Slovak as their first language. Between the wars most Slovaks lived in County Békés, but also in villages along the northern frontier. Post-1945 population exchanges between Czechoslovakia and Hungary meant that 70,000 Slovaks crossed the frontier.

Of other minorities, few of their number remained in the present territory of the country. There used to be more than two million Romanians, in post-Trianon Hungary this number had shrunk to a few thousand; this was true of the South Slavs as well. The Serbs, moving north as the Turks advanced, settled in just about every Danube riparian town and village, forming a majority in many. A greater number of Croats settled along the southern frontier and in a number of villages in western Hungary. There are a few Slovene villages in County Vas, and Ruthenes and Ukrainians in a village or two in northern Hungary. The greater part of Poles are Second World War refugees who settled here, or are their descendants. Armenians are divided between those who settled in Transylvania in the 17th century, and

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those who fled the massacres in Turkey early this century. Greek merchants have long been settled in Hungarian towns, the present small Greek community, however, are Communist refugees from the Greek Civil War and their descendants.

The largest minority are the Gypsies. They first appeared in Hungary late in the 14th century, and have been moving in steadily from the Balkans ever since. Some speak Hungarian, some Roma, and some a dialect of Romanian. Gypsies are found just about everywhere in Hungary, but mainly in Budapest, North Eastern Hungary and County Baranya.

The Communist regime wished to assimilate the national minorities. By 1961 there were no schools or classes with a national minority language as the language of instruction, albeit bilingual teaching survived here and there. Often enough the parents themselves preferred Hungarian elementary schools, since further education in a national minority language was well nigh impossible. The Gypsies had to put up with additional oppressive regulations. They were not even recognized as a national minority, nor was there any teaching in any of their languages. Right up to the mid-eighties there was no national Gypsy organization, although all the other national minorities had one. This situation was radically changed by the 1993 National Minority Act, and by the national minority self-governments which it made possible.

The Hungarian word for the representative bodies *önkormányzat*, literally "self-government", was specially created to avoid the term *tanács* (council), which was compromised by overuse and too close an association with Communism, being the translation of the Russian *soviet*.

The Minority Act of 1993 made it possible to create every four years local and national minority self-governments simultaneously with the election of local govern-

ments. The earlier associations that represented minorities were of doubtful legitimacy and were viewed widely as organizations imposed from above. They were not able to halt the assimilation of minorities. The local and national self-governments provided for by the Act are legitimately elected representative bodies, intended to be partners to regional governments, and at the national level, to the legislation and the executive.

The Act recognizes thirteen minorities as empowered to establish minority self-governments. Special provisions facilitate the creation of these bodies. For example, to nominate a candidate it suffices to put forward 5 persons professing affiliation to a particular minority group, without offering evidence of minority identity by membership in any minority organization or association. For inclusion on the ballot paper, a candidate needs to be nominated by only 5 constituents.

The Act also sets the threshold for valid election very low: for a municipality with a population under 10,000, no more than 50 (elsewhere 100) votes are needed, and all voters are entitled to vote for the minority list. This latter concession is disputed by a number of—mainly Gypsy—minority politicians, who argue that minority self-governments are not being elected by those immediately concerned; on the other hand, all the national minorities refuse to participate in compiling a separate "verified" national minority electoral register. For communities numbering only a few thousand, the current practice is acceptable; for instance, the nearly five-thousand-strong ethnic Serb minority (the figure includes minors) attracted 16,000 votes in the 1994 elections, and Greek or Armenian self-governments would probably not even have come into existence had there not been "sympathy" votes. In municipalities with a population numbering less than 1,300, the

representative bodies of minority self-governments may comprise at most 3, in other places a maximum of 5, individuals (even in towns with a population of a hundred thousand, where the duties of a representative are likely to be more taxing). According to data published by the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKH), 738 ethnic municipal authorities were functioning of the 817 created during the 1994 and 1995 local government elections. In the autumn 1998 local government elections, 1364 minority self-governments were created. Certain individuals, however, clearly took advantage of the electoral law to make a mockery of the system. Jenő Kaltenbach, the Minority Ombudsman, initiated an investigation stating that "a number of complaints have reached us concerning the minority elections and for this reason we have decided to launch a general investigation regarding the issue." (One of those who appealed to the Ombudsman was Tosho Donchev, the President of NEKH.)

The Ombudsman was trying to discover how non-minority candidates in a number of municipalities came to run in the colours of the ethnic minorities; some of them even successfully driving out locally well-known minority representatives. The national leadership of ethnic Greeks in Hungary had learned from the experience of the previous elections, when a Greek minority self-government was established in the Ferencváros district of Budapest that had absolutely no contact with the Greek community in Hungary; accordingly they began organizing and selecting their candidates in good time. To no avail, as they were unable to prevent the nomination of self-styled candidates, some members of the Greek community standing as independents and, as in the case of the self-styled candidates, the only way they could be identified was through their family name. It is characteristic of the chaos that Ferenc Sárközi, one of the candidates in Újpest for the Greek self-government, "confessed" to

National Minorities in Hungary	According to first language*	According to ethnic allegiance**
Gypsy	48,072	400,000=600,000
German	37,511	200,000=220,000
Croat	17,577	80,000=90,000
Slovak	12,745	100,000=110,000
Romanian	8,730	25,000
Polish	3,788	10,000
Serb	2,953	5,000
Slovene	2,627	5,000
Greek	1,640	5,000
Bulgarian	1,370	3,500
Ukrainian and Ruthenian	674	2,000
Armenian	37	5,000
Total	137,724	840,000 – 1,080,000

* estimates

** estimate of minority organizations

his Gypsy identity by standing as a Roma candidate in another district. (Since he could be a member of minority self-government only in one constituency, he withdrew his Gypsy candidacy, but failed to secure enough votes as a Greek.)

A candidate from one of the Roma organizations, called Rom Som, was better acquainted with the electoral law; he did not enter the minority elections in various guises, but reserved one of his identities for the regional self-government elections. Thus, József Abházi, who ran as a candidate in Rom Som colours in the 5th district of Budapest, became a self-government deputy in the 15th district—as a German candidate on the compensation list. Rom Som had candidates who also tried their luck either as Greeks or Armenians.

Strange results also surfaced in the village of Pomáz near Budapest. Sándor Erdélyi became a member of the German minority self-government; in the municipal self-government—to which he was elected via the minority compensation list—he represents the Slovene minority. József Czink, the notary of Pomáz, remarked “until now I was unaware that Slovenes lived in the municipality.” Representing the Slovaks in Pomáz, Erzsébet Csabai became a member of the Pomáz governing body, despite running as a German in the minority self-government elections. The most striking case was that of the Romanian minority in Hungary, a case the Ombudsman specially investigated. The Hungarian-Romanian Democratic Federation (MRDSZ), formed just before the elections, scored a sweeping victory in the minority self-government elections in the autumn of 1998. According to the leaders of the long-standing Romanian Cultural Society of Budapest (BRKT) its members “up to this time had never appeared at any Romanian social or cultural function.” BRKT fielded candidates in the minority self-government elections purely

because they observed that civil minority associations are now being allotted less and less money by the local authorities. They would have liked to form self-governments in three districts; they found however, that in 15 districts candidates were running in Romanian colours. Thus, the MRDSZ gained 58 minority self-government deputies.

The BRKT and the National Self-Government of Romanians of Hungary turned to several authorities “in order to pre-empt further consequences of the humiliation of our community”. The Ombudsman replied that “I am not in a position to take legal action in this respect,” at the same time he found the situation absurd. He also noted that the dispute made “the whole purpose of the minority self-government system questionable.” The MRDSZ succeeded in preventing the constitution of a national federation of Romanian self-governments in Hungary, since the election meeting lacked a quorum. Due to the high quorum imposed—a minimum of 75 per cent of those elected locally had to participate—MRDSZ candidates (who accounted for 40 per cent of the total) were thus able to prevent the creation of the national federation. (The leader of the MRDSZ, Zoltán Papp, who had, for four years, been president of the Gypsy minority self-government in one of the Budapest districts, was willing to form an election alliance with former representatives of Romanians in Hungary but his offer was rebuffed.) Tosho Donchev, the NEKH President, also turned to the Ombudsman, signalling that the current legal framework makes it impossible for the administration to exclude cases similar to those of the Romanians.

The legislation respecting the election of minority self-governments is worthless in its entirety, the Minority Ombudsman Jenő Kaltenbach concluded. Abuse was suspected in many cases in the autumn 1998 elections: apart from those competing in

Romanian, Greek, Serb, Slovene and German colours, persons whom particular minority organizations reject and do not recognize as community members, also gained self-government mandates. According to the Minority Ombudsman, two articles in the Constitution contradict each other: one paragraph of article 68 stipulates that nationalities have a basic right to self-government, but article 70 guarantees the right for all adult Hungarian citizens to vote in minority self-government elections. Jenő Kaltenbach argues that the right to self-government must take priority; therefore it must by definition restrict "basic constitutional right to the free choice of identity." There is one case that speaks for the urgency of prompt intervention: in the course of the Interior Ministry investigations called for by Jenő Kaltenbach, it was revealed that two members of a group professing to be Romanians during the elections, had preferentially received Hungarian citizenship earlier by claiming to be ethnic Hungarians resettled from Transylvania.

All ethnic leaders questioned agreed that the current electoral system cries out for modification as regards the qualifications needed for standing as a minority representative. However, the views on the question of who is entitled to vote were at variance. Minority leaders, virtually without exception, reject the proposal offered by the Ombudsman as a solution, namely that voting for ethnic candidates should be restricted to those who register beforehand their affiliation to a particular minority (obviously this would apply to candidates as well). Among the minority politicians only one Gypsy leader, Jenő Zsigó, supported the proposal, the leaders of the other minorities, on various grounds, all reject the idea of a register.

Smaller ethnic communities, understandably, oppose the register, for the

number of votes lost thereby would in all probability prevent the constitution of minority-specific local self-governments in several municipalities. (Even though the law stipulates that in municipalities comprising over ten thousand inhabitants only a hundred, and in smaller places as few as fifty votes are needed for the creation of a minority self-government). The leader of the national Serb self-government agrees that, in theory, elections based on a register would undoubtedly be the most transparent, but the Serb community in Hungary also rejects it. Similarly, the leader of the Greek minority is of the opinion that sparsely populated and dispersed minority communities would face serious problems. In the end the consequence of all this might be that the financing for minority self-governments would depend solely on their size, as the Gypsy community requests, and not on their performance. One of the ad hoc committees of Parliament debated the issue of registration a number of times; it decided to abandon this solution, but instead revise the operational regulations for elections. In an attempt to avoid the introduction of a register, several ideas have been put forward. According to some, affiliation to a community could be proven, for instance, by activity in the community over a period of time. (This would virtually prevent independent candidates from standing, which in turn would raise constitutional problems.) The staging of minority and regional self-government elections on different days was also proposed. In that case in all probability, only those with a particular interest would participate. This was rejected earlier by the Interior Ministry on cost grounds. It was also suggested that staging the two elections on consecutive days, with the electoral apparatus thus in place, would incur relatively little extra cost.

In the view of the Ombudsman, the 75 per cent participation ratio required for a

quorum at electoral assemblies is too high. If it is not attained, a new national minority self-government cannot be created and the old one ceases to exist. In one instance a voter hoping to become a member of the self-government failed to arrive in time as he was held up by traffic. The law stipulates that only those present in person at the assembly can be elected. This led the Ombudsman to appeal to the Constitutional Court with a request that this article be deleted from the Minority Law and from the Interior Ministry decrees that regulate national self-government elections.

Separate regulations govern the constitution of Budapest municipal and national self-governments. Two modes govern the election of self-government bodies comprising 9 members in each and every case: at electoral assemblies, or assemblies called for by the constituents. The electors are the Budapest district minority deputies (the city comprises 24 districts), members of elected self-governments; if a district cannot field any of these there can be chosen electors. The second mode is applicable when a minority lacks district self-governments; in this case—on the initiative of 10 constituents—an electoral assembly must be called and with the participation of at least hundred eligible voters the Budapest municipal minority self-government may be chosen.

It is only the voting of electors that can create national self-government. At the electoral assembly, minority representatives of local self-governments, minority self-government members, minority advocates, as well as chosen electors from municipalities that have neither of the above, can cast a ballot. Depending on the number of electors, national self-governments may have between 13 and 53 members, to be elected according to the regulations set out under the "small list" system. A minority may elect one national self-government; thus, if

a community is dissatisfied with its government, it has to wait patiently for the next elections, to be held four years later.

So far, it has been only the governing body for the largest minority group, that of the Gypsies, that created complications at national self-government elections. Expert opinion is that only the representational disproportion in the electoral law allowed the Flórián Farkas-led Lungo Drom organization to fill the 53 places on the National Gypsy Self-Government in 1995, and to do so again this year. Bearing in mind that every municipal minority self-government deputy is an elector, a huge number had to be mobilized to ensure a quorum. Thus in 1995 some 2000, and this year over 3000 electors had to be present. In 1995 the then government, referring to a lack of a suitable venue, decided to stage the elections not in Budapest, but in the less accessible city of Szolnok—the headquarters of Lungo Drom. As a result, only eighty per cent of the electors turned up in the sports hall of Szolnok and several, lacking accommodation, could not stay for the ballot that extended well into the night. 62 per cent of the electors voted for the 263 candidates on the list—the 75 per cent quorum refers to presence and not to voting—and only Flórián Farkas received over half of the votes. Afterwards, the 53 self-government members were elected, in practice, in an open ballot: the electors, tumbling over one another, filled in the ballot papers. Finally—with the support of one third of eligible voters—Flórián Farkas's candidates received all of the mandates. In this year's spring elections, just as four years ago, the Flórián Farkas-led Lungo Drom and its associates gained all 53 of the national self-government general assembly mandates. The elections were held in one of the pavilions of the Kôbánya Trade Centre in Budapest, out of

the 3,613 delegates (satisfying the 75 per cent quorum), 2,798 were present (but only 2,262 stayed for the constituting resolution). It was conspicuous that the voting was carried out openly, electors filled in the ballot papers, not individually, in the designated cubicles, but each sitting in his place, in full view of other delegates.

Minority leaders have long objected to the lack of legislation guaranteeing their parliamentary representation, despite the stipulations of the Constitution. Parliament's failure for the past eight years to meet this demand is a continuing violation of the Constitution, for the Constitutional Court has already ruled on the necessary legislation. The debates over the years have focused on whether each of the listed national minorities should simply delegate one representative to parliament or that elections, perhaps with an element of positive discrimination, should take place. Gypsy leaders would only support delegation on condition that they were offered more seats. "We would like to see the realization of representation in proportion to numbers, instead of having to delegate one representative per national minority to Parliament" said Flórián Farkas, the President of the National Gypsy Self-Government. His proposal, however, fell upon deaf ears: without exception the parties reject the idea that minority organizations should gain parliamentary mandates for their representatives by delegation. "A solution must be found for minority parliamentary representation that does not destroy the unity of the electoral system, nevertheless, the mandate gained by the minority candidate must mirror the unequivocal will of the given electorate," stated parliamentary deputy Peter Hack (Alliance of Free Democrats), expressing the view of constitutional lawyers. The conditions set out by the Free Democrats are not new: they formulated them during

the autumn 1993 debate on the electoral law. At that time they prepared a recommendation which stipulated a reduction to half of the minimum number of votes needed to obtain a "normal" mandate which would have enabled one candidate each from the minority lists to enter parliament. In 1998, the Socialists would have liked a minority candidate to need no more than one third of the minimum votes required. (In 1994, for example, 24,000 votes were enough to enable a candidate from the Nógrád County list to succeed, thus 8-12,000 votes would have to be gained by each minority list.) This, however, would keep smaller minorities out of parliament, and they accordingly argue that this would violate the Constitution. The wariness of the political parties concerning large numbers of minority members who may have gained preferential access to parliament is understandable, for there are many draft bills whose adoption often turns on one or two votes, and voting by minority deputies might upset the delicate balance among the parties. At the same time, it must be taken into account that in the European Union's country report on Hungary, minority representation is featured as a key requirement. It also draws attention to the fact that the absence of minority parliamentary representation violates the Constitution and the 1993 Minority Act. Hungarian governments have been reminded by neighbouring countries that there are Hungarian members in their parliaments. They therefore asked for reciprocity. But in Slovakia as well as Romania, Hungarians were elected to parliament as members of political parties without any form of positive discrimination.

Faced with the wrangling in parliament, the leaders of the German, Slovak and Croat minorities decided to form a party called Nationality Forum for the parliamentary elections. They fielded 62 candidates,

the majority of them German. They failed to gain a mandate. A former Alliance of Free Democrats member for the Kőszeg electoral district, Vilmos Horváth, an ethnic Croat, pointed out that in minority colours his chances would have been minimal. Horváth, who frequently used his first language in parliament is also active in local Croat affairs, being a member of the Croat minority self-government in Szombathely. Still, some of the Croat electorate did not vote for him in his electoral district. "The Croats are deeply religious Catholics and provide a strong electoral base for the Christian Democratic Party, I only managed to secure their votes in my birthplace, Horvátzsidány," said the former deputy.

At present, minority representation is not on the agenda of parliament; indeed, the debate focuses on how to create an electoral system reducing the seats in Parliament, while still maintaining the ratio between the parties. In these circumstances, the question of minority parliamentary representation is of low priority, even if the Constitution is violated as a result.

The rights of minority self-governments are guaranteed by law; they express an opinion and have veto rights respecting issues pivotal to minority life (education and culture). The majority of existing self-governments consider their scope to be unsatisfactory, for they have only a very small fund granted by the state to cover all their expenses. This state grant is virtually the sole income for a large proportion of self-governments, which, in 1996 totalled 240,000, in 1997, 380,000 and 350,000 forints (about \$1500) in 1998 annually.

The anxieties of the Gypsies are far removed from those of the other minorities: "While, understandably, Gypsy self-governments are occupied primarily with social issues, the efforts of the other minorities focus more on the creation of the edu-

cational and cultural conditions essential for traditional minority autonomy," concluded researchers at the Transdanubian Regional Research Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The researchers questioned minority self-government members in approximately 220 municipalities countrywide, and the findings were published in the spring of 1998.

Although the goal of the legislation pertaining to minorities was primarily the promotion of cultural autonomy, the social problems of the Gypsies have virtually engulfed their minority self-governments. According to researchers, in practice it is only the Gypsies who are concerned with housing and employment problems, and accordingly they have much less energy to nurture their traditions than the other minorities.

None of the self-governments are in the position to provide substantial social support simply because they are not so endowed. The law decrees, in vain, that municipal self-governments must promote the activities of minority self-governments. A quarter of the Romanians, Croats and Slovaks interviewed told researchers that they received neither offices nor furniture, albeit a March 1995 government decree stipulates that municipal self-governments are obliged to provide, free of charge, accommodation for minority bodies and their apparatus. The overwhelming majority of minority self-governments are confined to a single room in the municipal town hall, and there are self-governments which, in infringement of the law, don't even provide them with that one room.

16 per cent of the German and 12 per cent of the Gypsy minority self-governments complained of a lack of resources. Although Gypsy self-governments were not allotted properties, many of them could still count on receiving furniture, free use of the telephone and postal expenses.

But, with the exception of the Poles, all the other minority self-governments also consider their operational conditions inadequate.

Normative state support together with the financial assistance provided by municipal self-governments do not exceed half a million forints for 65 per cent of the minority self-governments. Three-fifths of this goes into operational costs; on an average no more than 14 per cent remains for cultural programmes and 12 per cent for education. For the purpose of the latter, self-governments are attempting to tap other sources and around a quarter of them managed to collect over half a million forints last year. Many sources are unavailable since the regulations of various foundations require that those receiving help contribute some of their own money. This, however, few are able or prepared to do. Of the minority leaders concerned, several argue that local conditions determine minority self-government activity to such a degree that it does not make sense to talk about a system of self-governments. The relevant statutory provisions stipulate, for example, that they may calculate their budget or use their assets solely within the framework defined by municipal self-government regulations—in other words, their financial dependence is virtually complete. There are municipalities where minority self-governments are viewed purely as one of the many civil organizations and are given a pittance; on the other hand, there are municipalities which provide an amount of support to each minority self-government that puts to shame what the national self-governments receive. Nearly one-third of village minority self-governments would be content with a mere half a million forints annual support, the majority would like to receive between 1 and 2 million, and only 6 per cent

ask for a sum in excess of 3 million. At the same time, 45 per cent of existing minority self-governments in municipalities with inhabitants numbering over 50,000 lay claim to more than 3 million. There is no obvious correlation between local assistance provided for minorities and the size of the minority in the municipality.

In a number of respects, the source of conflicts is the lack of clarity over principles dividing the sphere of responsibilities between municipal and minority self-governments. To a large extent it depends on the municipality, what kind of duties are delegated to its "little brother". Though the law empowers minorities to participate in municipal self-government assemblies, it is determined locally whether they are or are not included in decision-making. It is rare to find a place like the 3rd district of Budapest, where minority deputies have even been granted voting rights in three committees. In many places, alluding to bad past experience, they are cautious about granting "too many" rights to minority self-government members. In more than one place members of the Gypsy self-government—stressing their minority rights—wanted to intervene, for example, in the distribution of municipal aid funds. Ferenc Hranek, chairman of the Gypsy self-government in the northern Hungarian industrial city of Salgótarján considers it a success that their proposed method of distributing social aid was taken into account. Some money was reallocated at their suggestion to local schools to feed needy Gypsy children; they also succeeded in dissuading the authorities from evicting nearly a hundred Gypsy families. "During the debate we did not defend the Gypsies in general terms, but offered constructive proposals aimed at resolving the issue. For instance, we asked for a deferred payment scheme for those in debt, as well as for smaller homes they can af-

Money for the Gypsies

In 1998, according to government estimates, the Gypsy community received 3.5–4 billion forints of which only 600 million was designated: 120 million for the National Gypsy Self-Government, 250 million for the Social Fund for Gypsies in Hungary and 230 million for the Gandhi Social Fund. Of the 350 million for local minority self-governments, the Gypsies received approximately 180 million; they also received 95.5 million from the Hungarian National and Ethnic Minority Social Fund. Over and above this, funds are allocated for “Gypsy objectives”, for instance for education, from the minority total, projects are financed by the Board of Public Works, council apartment construction and agricultural projects. The various ministries will have to carve out from their own budgets the sums needed for the financing of mid-range Gypsy programmes initiated by the government in 1997; but neither the National and Ethnic Minority Office (NEKH) nor the National Gypsy Self-Government (OCÖ) have clear views on this. It does not transpire from the budget act how the 3.5–4 billion forints are to be compiled. Some Gypsy leaders claim that the government includes sums in the Gypsy funds that other minorities also share. For this reason, the Flórián Farkas-led National Gypsy Self-Government, in the hope of access to other financial resources, aims to have the government separate the Gypsies from all the other minorities. According to their reasoning, the only thing in common between Gypsies and other recognized minorities is that their representative bodies are made up in the same way.

ford to maintain”, said Ferenc Hranek, adding, “we were also in agreement with the eviction of five families.” Indeed, the Salgótarján self-government has provided separate offices for Gypsy representatives, who this year—although they considered the central state support a bit tight—did not ask for financial assistance from an overburdened municipality. On the other hand, in other places municipal leaders endeavour to reject such “interventionist” attempts, hence the activities of minority self-governments are practically exhausted by staging a few tradition-saving functions and, perhaps, the management of the occasional school minority-language class.

Serious conflicts exist between municipal and minority self-governments over education. Although the central budget’s supplementary aggregate stipulates the provision of additional funds for schools

undertaking the education of minority pupils, there are uncertainties in the provision of this sum to educational institutions as additional income. Although schools receive the money through local self-governments, it transpires from the complaints of minority self-governments that they do not pass on as extra income the additional money designated for minority education.

It is better if the school receives the money. According to Béla Csillei, education specialist at the National Gypsy Self-Government (OCÖ), in one instance, in an answer to one of their queries, the self-government replied that it had spent the minority education funds on repairing the pavement since the children use that too.

Considerable sums are involved, for the central budget pays 23,000 forints per person participating in minority education. In

the case of the Budapest suburb Budaörs in 1997, this amounted to 27 million and on the national level to 3 billion forints. "This appears in the central budget as the largest item intended for minority purposes, hence it is all the more regrettable there are so many uncertainties in the way the money is used," comments István Karszlán, rapporteur on educational affairs at the National Slovak Minority Self-Government. Local self-governments, from their own resources, add fewer additional moneys to the state subsidies designated for schools which undertake minority education as well. Hence the sum received per capita minority quota is a windfall for self-governments, which they reckon with as part of the state subsidy and only compensate for losses in excess of this sum.

On the other hand, it has not been unusual in recent years for minority leaders to use even this small amount of money received in an unorthodox manner, to put it

mildly. The majority of smaller or greater irregularities and infringements committed by minority self-governments usually don't come to light, but when they do, those responsible are seldom named.

It is not without precedent either that members of the minority representative body award themselves presents and bonuses—which, since they hold honorary offices, they should not receive. There have also been instances of the members dividing up the few hundred thousand forints government subsidy among themselves. The fee payable to the chairman of the representative body—as stipulated in the relevant regulation—can be between 10 to 35 per cent of the current salary payable to a government minister. A widespread practice designed to increase such fees involves the appointment of the chairman to one of the committees—the law on self-government forbids this—and also paying him as a committee member. ■



The back of photographs prepared in his summer studio, opened at the beginning of the 1880s, feature this picture of György Klösz's, which shows the nearby terminus of the Buda funicular railway.

Kai Schafft

Local Minority Self-Governance and Hungary's Roma

The enormous socio-political transformations which have taken place in East-Central Europe since 1989 have generated significant discussion not only on the politics of economic reform, but also on the building of civil society and democratic institutions. Regarding the latter, the evolving social and political status of minority populations has served as an important benchmark in evaluating the nature of regional social and political transformation. In 1993 the Hungarian Parliament distinguished itself by passing Act LXXVII on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, a move which constituted a regionally unique policy response to the needs and concerns of its minority populations, and has put the issue of minority representation and participation firmly on the Hungarian political agenda.

While minority policies formulated during the socialist era were explicitly assimilationist in an attempt to minimize distinct ethnic and national identities and incorporate minority populations into the larger "Hungarian" nation, the minorities law

was written with *cultural autonomy* for all national and ethnic minority groups as its central organizing principle. What made this law truly distinct however, was its provision for minority self-government. This aspect of the law created the legal context for minority political representation and participation at two different levels: municipal minority self-governance, and a minority government at the national level serving as a liaison between the municipal minority governments and the Hungarian Parliament. As the law currently stands, representatives from minority communities within municipalities are elected at the same time as local government officials. Once formed, minority self-governments work with the established local governments on a primarily consultative basis, acting as a liaison between the minority community and the local government, and as an advocate for their minority constituency.

However, the law also states that "within the sphere of its authority, the minority government... may establish and maintain institutions especially in fields such as local public education, local printed or electronic media... culture and general education. Within the limits of the available resources, it is (also) authorized to establish and run enterprises and other economic organizations; to announce

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competitions and to raise foundations¹." Local governments are required by law to include minority representatives in all local council meetings. Minority self-governments can't cast votes in local council meetings, but the law states that they have the power to veto decisions which have a direct impact on "local public education, local mass media, cultivation of traditions, culture and the collective use of language which affect the minority population as such."

In two rounds of elections occurring in December, 1994 and November, 1995, minority communities across Hungary took advantage of this new opportunity for entry into the Hungarian political system, forming over 700 minority self-governments, representing 12 different minority populations². October 1998 marked the end of the first term of these self-governments and the election of representatives for the second term. This historical juncture provides an important opportunity to review and evaluate what this system has meant for Hungary's minorities. This is especially the case for the Roma, which, at over 5% of the total population, is Hungary's largest as well as its most socio-economically disadvantaged minority, and historically the most firmly entrenched within the political margins of mainstream Hungarian society.

As a way of assessing the results of the Minorities Law and the self-governance system over the past four years, rural sociologists from Cornell University in the United States and Godollo University in Hungary collaborated in the development and administration of a nation-wide survey³. In March, 1998, 420 surveys were sent out to leaders of Roma self-governments which were identified by the Hungarian Office of National and Ethnic Minorities as still being in operation. Two hundred thirty two responses from Buda-

pest and 18 of Hungary's 19 counties comprised a response rate of nearly 60%. Using the survey data, this article addresses the political emergence of the self-governance system in Hungary and what it has meant for the Roma. At the end of the article, the most recent 1998 round of elections is discussed as a way of further suggesting how minority self-governance has begun to reconfigure the shape of local politics.

Controversy Over the Minorities Law

The advent of the Minorities Law was quickly hailed as an innovative response to the needs of its minorities, and the Council of Europe called the provisions for self-government "rare" and the achievements of the law "highly progressive⁴." Despite its "progressive" nature however, the Minorities Law has been the focus of controversy since its inception. Hungary's Law on National and Ethnic Minorities was passed in 1993 after three years of negotiation between the Hungarian government and a coalition of minority groups called the "Minority Roundtable." The Minority Roundtable was in fact modeled after the Opposition Roundtable which negotiated the political transition with Hungary's socialist government in 1989. This was thus an important symbolic appropriation of the moral authority held by the opposition groups which managed the larger processes of political and economic transformation in 1989. Yet, the law was originally conceived as a law on *national* minorities, a move which effectively excluded the Hungary's Roma, an *ethnic* minority.

This exclusion produced strong and sustained criticism that the concern of the government was primarily oriented towards demonstrating progressive *de jure* legal policies to the West in order to facili-

tate the acquisition of international aid and ease Hungary's political and economic integration into Western Europe. Other critics argued that the law was a way of leveraging neighboring countries into passing similar legislation benefiting populations of ethnic Hungarians living outside Hungary's borders, particularly in Romania, Slovakia and the former Yugoslavia. Advocates of both arguments pointed to the initial exclusion of Roma from the law's drafting, arguing that this was clear evidence that the intent of the law had little or nothing to do with improving the social and political status of Hungary's largest minority and the group which would have the most to potentially benefit from a law of this type. Vocal protest from assorted Roma groups led the government by 1993 to rewrite the law and include ethnic as well as national minorities, with the guarantee that individual and collective legal rights would remain identical for both minority group classifications. However, evidence has continued to accumulate that the law has been inconsistently enforced, particularly with regard to the Roma⁵.

Results of the Spring, 1998 Roma self-government survey

Although well aware of the financial, legal and material constraints imposed upon Roma self-governments, we were nonetheless interested in gauging the accomplishments of Roma self-governments despite these constraints. Previous literature on Roma local minority self-governance has documented the challenges faced by Roma leaders who have little or no formal political experience and are caught in an ongoing struggle for scarce resources and political legitimacy⁶. This

has seemed to characterize the experience of many Roma leaders, yet the 1998 survey data also strongly suggest that by the end of their first term many Roma minority self-governments were able to secure sufficient resources to initiate a variety of programs benefiting the minority community, and in some instances, the majority population as well.

Table 1 presents a selection of survey responses concerning local development and social support activities initiated by Roma self-governments. It compares close-ended question responses (in which the answer is either "yes" or "no") with responses generated from an open-ended question asking "What do you consider the most important accomplishments of your self-government?" Positive responses were high in all close-ended items, while the areas of activity cited as "most important" in the open-ended responses were agricultural support, the initiation of educational programs and job training. In responses to the open-ended question, Roma leaders described arranging the usage of public land for local Roma, and supplying inputs such as seeds and fertilizer, often organized in collaboration with the local government. Many Roma leaders had identified external funding sources and had successfully applied for grant funding. "We won a pig application from a Gypsy foundation in 1997," one leader wrote. "The amount of the application was 1.5 million forints⁷. We purchased 84 pigs. We have to repay 30% of this money, but we could support 52 families from this."

Other self-governments had received grants and funding to cover textbook costs for primary and secondary school students⁸, subsidize after-school academic support programs for Roma youth and organize adult education programs to help participants earn primary school, or "8th class," diplomas. Some minority self-gov-

Roma Self-Government Reported Accomplishments

Since 1994 has the Roma minority self-government been involved in or helped to start...	YES	Also mentioned as "most important" in the open ended responses
...social welfare programs directed towards the Roma community?	78.8% (N=182)	21.4% (N=46)
...cultural programs or events which promoted the local Roma culture	61.1% (N=140)	18.1% (N=40)
...educational or job training programs directed towards the Roma community?	60.7% (N=139)	30.2% (N=65)
...agricultural support programs directed towards the Roma community?	58.4% (N=135)	32% (N=69)
...local media programs (TV or newspaper) which were directed towards the Roma community?	45.5% (N=105)	.9% (N=19)
...economic enterprises or business which directly benefited the Roma community?	42.4% (N=97)	12.7% (N=27)

ernments were able to purchase computers for the use of primary and secondary school students as well as for adult computer training. Other minority self-governments were able to take a leading role in the construction of social housing for impoverished Roma families. One leader wrote, "Together with the local government we have built a school gym, medical clinic and housing for those who work for the local government." Another wrote, "Recently there have been family homes built for 13 families. I am the president of the housing committee and we have been involved in the construction of social homes... and educating people for skilled labor positions."

An important and perhaps overlooked factor in previous evaluations of Roma minority self-government institutional capac-

ity is simply the newness of these institutions and the period of time required for both Roma leaders and local government representatives to develop cooperative working relationships. It may well be that previous evaluations were conducted too early to adequately assess the impact Roma minority self-governments would be able to assume in local communities or the extent to which minority political leaders and municipal officials would be able to develop cooperative working relations. Open-ended responses tend to suggest that the development of institutional capacity has in fact been a gradual process. "We have three years behind us and we have accumulated a lot of experience," wrote one Roma president. Another wrote, "We are considered as equals by both the municipal government and the local coun-

cil. We have a four year advantage over those minority governments which haven't been established yet."

In addition to initiating specific local-level development projects, many Roma leaders cited the transformative effect of minority self-government activity on local social and political structure. One repre-

sentative from northern Hungary wrote, "Nowadays not only the Gypsies go to us asking for help, but many members of the majority community and they help our work as well. Even though we have some difficulties we are able to keep going and we exist." "We organized a community house," responded another leader, de-

The Roma Self-Government/Local Council Relationship

	Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The concerns expressed by the Roma minority self-government have made the local council more sympathetic to the needs of the Roma minority. (N=226)	17,3%	18,1%	30,0%	17,3%	17,3%
Relations between the Roma minority self-government and the local council are generally friendly and cooperative. (N=232)	12,5%	13,4%	32,15	21,4%	20,55
The Roma minority self-government can depend on the local council for advice, technical assistance and information to help make the minority self-government a stronger, more effective organization. (N=228)	17,5%	9,6%	21,9%	21,5%	29,4%
The Roma minority self-government can depend on the local council for financial and material support to help make the minority self-government a stronger, more effective organization. (N=229)	22,3%	15,7%	19,2%	16,25	26,6%
The local council is generally interested in the opinions of the Roma minority self-government. (N=227)	23,3%	15,0%	25,6%	18,9%	17,2%
The Roma minority self-government has an important role in local politics and decision-making. (N=228)	26.3%	14,9%	26,8%	14,9%	17,1%

scribing an inter-minority self-government collaboration. "It is unique in Tolna County. The Gypsy minority governments (in this village and the neighboring village) created this institution for both the Gypsies and the majority society." If these figures are an accurate accounting of the role of Roma minority self-government, then it is apparent that many of these organizations are taking significant steps to act as an important resource to their communities. While the survey data cannot directly assess the impact of these individual programs on minority communities, the fact that they were reported with such prevalence is in itself significant as previous literature has not indicated the presence of this degree of minority self-government activity and institutional capacity.

The survey findings also underscore the importance of the relationship to the local council. Although many minority self-government leaders report positive relations, responses overall are mixed, particularly in the areas of political influence and decision-making. The data in Table 2 help to illustrate the variability of this relationship. Most Roma leaders were able to report a friendly and cooperative relationship to the local council and indicated that they could trust local officials for advice and technical assistance. One president from northern Hungary wrote, "The big government takes our opinions into account when making decisions. The relationship and communication is pretty good and the local government provides help both legally and economically." Another from southern Hungary wrote, "I am the president of the minority self-government. I am a member of the local council, a member of the financial committee and the president of Lungo Drom⁹. I have a good relationship with the local council and the mayor. They ask my opinions in all the Gypsy-related matters and

my opinion is carefully considered." Nearly 40 percent of respondents identified at least one council member as Roma, however the presence of a Roma representative on the local council made no statistically significant difference in the quality of the reported relationship to the local council.

Minority self-governance: challenges and limitations

However, even if most respondents were able to report a positive overall relationship to the local council, many felt that their political autonomy was also clearly limited. The ambiguous nature of the Minorities Law has meant that in many cases it is the local government which has played a major role in determining the minority self-government/local council relationship, and if the local government chooses not to cooperate with or support the minority self-government, Roma leaders find themselves with little political leverage. Legal ambiguities concerning decision-making, fiscal authority and minority self-government/local council cooperation, often resulted in frustration, cynicism and political powerlessness. One president from a village in northeastern Hungary wrote, "We are only puppets and (the local government) makes us move however they want. There is no harmony in the law." Another president from a village in central Hungary wrote, "The minority self-governments are relegated only to pretend political activity. This is just a showcase politics handled as if by play-acting." Another wrote simply, "The local government does not pay attention to the Gypsy government...we could create public works contracts but we don't have enough financial means to even pay our basic bills and taxes. In this respect it's not even worth being

a representative and from June 30 the minority self-government will cease."

In the open-ended responses, forty-one percent of respondents complained generally about the minority self-government's lack of political influence, its lack of voting privileges and the ambiguity of the Minorities Law in delineating minority self-government sphere of authority. Despite the fact that local governments are legally obligated to extend open invitations to minority representatives during all local council meetings, 12 respondents reported being barred completely from "closed sessions" or similarly prevented from giving input or voicing opinions. While the law states that local council decisions on issues concerning education, media, cultivation of local traditions, culture and language affecting the minority population can only be passed by the local council in agreement with the local minority self-government¹⁰, many respondents reported that they had been allowed no such right by the local council and that only being allowed to voice opinions with no obligations on the part of the local council seriously undermined their political influence, eroding precious legitimacy in the eyes of their constituency. One respondent from northern Hungary wrote, "Whatever decision is made by the minority self-government, the mayor and the council may cancel it at any time and they are not penalized...the minority self-government are totally enslaved to the local government's wishes." Another from central Hungary wrote that "the emotional character of our mayor determines the success or failure of our minority government. At the same time, it determines the behavior of all local government employees. Regardless of what the local government officials do or don't do, they will receive the same salary." Yet another in southwest Hungary wrote, "the minority self-government is

dependent upon the local governments and (because of this) our rights are restricted. Nobody is defending the minority self-government. Nobody is listening." Nearly 60 percent of the respondents had reported on at least one occasion challenging or attempting to veto an administrative decision made by the local council. Of those that did challenge local council decisions, only 40 percent reported that this had any effect on the decisions which the local council subsequently made.

The 1998 elections

On October 18, 1998, elections were held across Hungary for both municipal governments and local minority self-governments. The results were striking in several respects. First of all, the elections produced a dramatic increase in the number of minority self-governments. The number of Roma self-governments jumped to 721, an increase of over 50% from the total number of self-governments formed during the 94-95 elections. Moreover, similar increases occurred for all minority groups. Groups which previously had the least numbers of self-governments showed the largest percentage increases, such as the Bulgarian minority with an increase of 250%, the Polish minority with an increase of 342%, and the Ruthene minority with an increase of 700%. No minority group showed a decrease in self-government formation, and the total number of self-governments jumped from 817 from the '94-'95 elections to 1,251 in 1998, an overall increase of 53%. This means that between one quarter and one third of local governments currently work with at least one minority self-government.

These results would suggest that the self-government system is becoming increasingly institutionalized as a way for

Local Minority Self-Government Increases, 1994-1998*

Minority Group	Total Estimated Population	Total # of Self- Governments Formed, 94-95	Total # of Self- Governments Formed, 1998	Percent Increase
Roma	500,000+	477	721	51%
German	210,000	162	236	46
Slovak	105,000	51	62	22%
Croat	85,000	57	60	5%
Romanian	25,000	11	30	172%
Polish	10,000	7	31	342%
Armenian	6,750	16	24	50%
Serb	5,000	19	3	79%
Slovenia	5,000	6	9	50%
Greek	4,250	6	1	183%
Bulgarian	3,250	4	14	250%
Ukrainian	2,000	0	5	—
Ruthene	1,00	1	8	700%
TOTAL:	962,250 (+/- 125,000)	817	1,251	53%

Total 1996 population of Hungary: 10,212,000

* 1994-95 Figures from Report No. J/3670 of the Government of the Republic of Hungary to the National Assembly on the situation of the national and ethnic minorities living in the Republic of Hungary. 1998 election figures from the Hungarian elections website: www.valasztas.hu.

minority communities to consolidate their political role and influence within municipalities. While adequate data are not yet available to systematically analyze the movement of minority self-government representatives into local government seats, anecdotal evidence suggests minority representatives in some locales have used the 4 years of local-level political experience and exposure as a stepping stone for entree into the local government. As one Roma self-government representative from Borsod County in northeastern Hungary remarked last spring, "We are essentially trying to convert the minority government into the local council. I have a

personal role in this because I hope to be the mayor. With better control over the local government and with the minority self-government we can make better choices about what is best for the people in our village." The election results show that he is indeed now the mayor as well as a minority self-government representative within his village. While the instances of Roma candidates successfully running for mayoral positions are rare, there is evidence that many minority representatives have in fact gained seats within municipal councils. With increased integration into the local political structure, it will be important to continue to gauge the effects on

minority-majority negotiation and coalition-building over local issues and decision-making.

What does the future hold?

Particularly for East-Central Europe, where there are large concentrations of national and ethnic minority populations throughout the region, the issue of minority rights and political representation will continue to demand attention and, more importantly, progressive policy formation. For this reason Hungary's minority self-governance system is important to examine closely. Nicolae Gheorghe¹¹, Roma scholar and activist, has written that East-Central Europe's Roma population is currently undergoing a process of ethnogenesis in which its status is shifting from one of fundamental political and economic marginalization, to that of an acknowledged ethnic minority with specific legal rights. This process is occurring as ethnic communities simultaneously assert new political voices, and national governments come to realize that minority communities

cannot be ruled out of the political process. Gheorghe argues that this process can play itself out within two political contexts: a "democratic political context" in which a pluralistic state effectively promotes a sense of shared identity for all citizens, or an "ethnic political context" in which identity and rights are framed primarily for those who identify with one another in terms of a common culture and ancestry. While there are enough Roma leaders reporting positive experiences to produce a cautious hopefulness, there are still many more who have complained bitterly about the lack of human and economic resources, uncooperative and sometimes hostile local governments, and helplessness in the face of severe and worsening socio-economic conditions. The minority self-governance system is an important step towards local democratization, political participation, minority self-determination and even local development. It is not and cannot be, however, the primary solution to problems affecting Hungary's minorities, and particularly the Roma. ■

NOTES

1 ■ Act LXXVII, section 27.

2 ■ Other minority populations electing self-governments included Bulgarian, Greek, Croat, Polish, German, Armenian, Romanian, Ruthene, Serb, Slovak, and Slovenian.

3 ■ This survey was part of a border program of research concerning the determinants of Roma minority self government institutional capacity with a particular focus on how social and institutional structures mediate the involvement of these organizations in local development initiatives.

4 ■ See Réti, György. 1995. "Hungary and the Problem of National Minorities." *The Hungarian Quarterly*. Vol. 36, No. 139 (Autumn).

5 ■ See e.g. Waters, Timothy William and Rachel Guglielmo. 1996. "Two Souls to Struggle With... The Failing Implementation of Hungary's New Minorities Law and Discrimination Against the Gypsies." Pp. 177-197 in *State and Nation Build-*

ing in East Central Europe, edited by J.S. Micgiel. The Institute on East Central Europe and the Harriman Institute, Columbia University.

6 ■ Human Rights Watch/Helsinki. 1996. *Rights Denied: The Roma of Hungary*. Human Rights Watch.

7 ■ 1.5 million HUF at the 1997 exchange rate is approximately \$8,800.

8 ■ These are costs ordinarily assumed by parents, yet which often exceed what many can afford.

9 ■ Lungo Drom is a national-level Roma NGO.

10 ■ 1993 Law on National and Ethnic Minorities, section 29, part 1.

11 ■ See Gheorghe, Nicolae. 1991. "Roma-Gypsy Ethnicity in Eastern Europe." *Social Research*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Winter)

12 ■ The total number of responses to the open-ended question asking Roma leaders to cite their self-government's most important accomplishment was 215 (out of a possible 232).

Miklós Györffy

From Bogdanska Dolina to New York

László Krasznahorkai: *Háború és háború* (War and War). Magvető, Budapest, 1999, 227 pp. • Ádám Bodor: *Az érsek látogatása* (The Archbishop's Visit). Magvető, Budapest, 1999, 127 pp. • Lajos Grendel: *Tömegsír* (Mass Grave). Kalligram, Bratislava, 1999, 159 pp.

The third novel by László Krasznahorkai, the author of *Sátántangó* (Satan's Tango), one of the most important Hungarian novels of the 1980s, was published this year, a full ten years after his second, *Az ellenállás melankóliája* (The Melancholy of Resistance). Publication of *Háború és háború* (War and War) had indeed already begun some time before; as the author says, "I was determined to send a message to my kind, lonely, weary and sensitive readers, namely that the work in progress was/ would be about them. I began to publish single sentences at a time in three carefully chosen periodicals, and in so doing I wanted to send a signal to those readers who I thought would recognize that the sentences were intended for them. I had no message for readers who were not kind, not lonely, not weary nor sensitive, and I never will have." These single sentences ultimately ran to a pamphlet-worth of material, which was published last year under the title *Megjött Ézsaiás* (Isaiah Has Come). The author originally wanted to deliver it to his friends in person, but in the end it came out via the usual book retailing channels, although

in terms of publicity it was a very low-key event.

All this may be regarded either as a publicity stunt to arouse interest in the forthcoming book or as a ploy on the part of the author to prevent his followers from forgetting him during his long silence. Krasznahorkai himself, on the other hand, interprets these events in the same way as the events that were deliberately staged in the aftermath of the book's publication; he uses these events to transpose his fictitious hero into the real world. "In my imagination a character came into being whose life I would like to follow through to the end, and the end as far as I am concerned is not in the world of fiction, but in reality... I don't think a novel has to end where we always thought it did."

Let us, however, look first of all at what we are dealing with in the space that begins and ends between the covers of the book itself. *Háború és háború*, in long and convoluted compound sentences, tells the story of the strange adventures, the Odyssey or, if you like, the obsession of a rural archivist. Dr György Korim, who works in the public archives of a small town some two hundred and twenty kilometres south-east of Budapest, one day stumbles unexpectedly upon a mysterious typescript among the papers of the Wlassich family. The typewritten script re-

Miklós Györffy

reviews new fiction for this journal.

veals no clue as to who its author was, when or where it was written, or for what purpose. Korim reads it through at one sitting and is so spellbound by the beauty and mysteriousness of it that his life would never be the same again. He decides that "he must do something", that this document should not go *back* into the archives, but *forward* into immortality where it belongs. Breaking all ties with his family and his workplace, he sells up everything he owns and sets off like a sleepwalker for the epicentre of the world, New York, where he intends to type the text of the manuscript into a computer and put it on the world-wide web, which he considers to be a safer and sounder place, or medium, for something eternal than anything else that has ever been devised for that purpose by humankind.

From the moment of his great awakening Korim behaves like some kind of saint or prophet who has had a vision and now, in a state of exaltation, sets about fulfilling the mission he was entrusted with. Hungry and thirsty, filthy, stinking, with shaven head and jug-ears, looking like some weird kind of bat in his black overcoat, all sorts of dreadful mishaps befall him as he bumbles along amongst people he meets by chance or, more often, taking flight from his supposed persecutors. He travels up to Budapest stowing away in goods carriages, and hurriedly, surreptitiously gets himself a ticket and a visa for America. Once in New York he finds refuge as a lodger in the home of a Hungarian interpreter of dubious means who happens to stumble across his path. Korim's compulsive, obsessive behaviour is also expressed in the way the book is written. The novel is divided into eight chapters, subdivided into numbered sub-chapters, each comprising one sentence, usually one or two pages in length. They are composed as reported speech. The text for the most part

cites what Korim says; Korim is forever starting conversations with total strangers and, due to the confidential nature of what he perceives to be his mission, he is not always consistent in the way he delivers his soliloquy tale of his discovery and his decision, the mishaps and tribulations that have befallen him, and the ideas that have occurred to him on the way. The novel opens with a scene that simultaneously serves to inform the reader of the background situation: in the process of fleeing, Korim is attacked by thugs on a railway footbridge, but they soon realize that there is no point in robbing him because he has nothing worth stealing—they are unaware that Korim has several thousand dollars sewn into his coat—and they end up listening to the interminable monologue that this madman has launched in his own defence, though they can make neither head nor tail of it.

The novel's central chapters, those set in New York, are also composed of similar, reported monologues; sometimes Korim is speaking to his landlord, the drunken interpreter who is inclined to violence, and sometimes to the latter's Puerto Rican lover, who of course has no idea what he is talking about, although Korim constantly peppers his discourse with words in English, haphazardly translating with the help of his dictionary. Details regarding the mysterious manuscript are woven into the text of the novel, likewise in reported speech; sometimes the narrator "quotes" what Korim taps into the laptop he has purchased in New York, at other times what he "tells" the woman who is forever busying herself about the kitchen in silence.

As regards the mysterious and beautiful manuscript itself, it is difficult to know what to say. It is not that Korim does not quote abundantly from it on Krasznahorkai's behalf, or that he does not try to describe it, circumscribing it maniacally over

and over again; it is just that ultimately what we find out about it remains pretty intangible. Of course some images, situations or motifs nevertheless emerge and indeed, sometimes they are highly evocative. It emerges quite clearly, for example, that the manuscript is about five men who appear at different times and places in history and in different roles, yet they are always the same person. They even have names: they are called Kasser, Falke, Bengazza, Toot and Mastemann—and even the constellation in which they appear repeats itself: the first four are companions and friends, good, kind men, and they always appear together, while the other one, Mastemann, is some kind of enemy, a demonic figure, and his appearance always presages something dreadful. There is a common pattern to the episodes in which they appear, with the four men arriving from somewhere—where is unclear—and in the end they depart again, likewise to an unknown destination. Three of the episodes can be taken more or less as a unit: one takes place on Crete, shortly before the natural disaster that wiped out Cretan civilisation; the second takes place in Cologne in the 1870s, at the time when one of many attempts was being made to complete the cathedral, just before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, while the third is set in Northern Italy in 1493, during the election of the Doge of Venice. There are two further episodes: one is set in Roman times in Britain and the other in Gibraltar, also in 1493, but these two blend into each other, they are written superimposed on one another, so that it is impossible to tell whether they are written this way in the manuscript, or whether they simply get mixed up in Korim's mind.

The way these historical interludes are presented clearly serves two rather contradictory purposes. First, there is an attempt to maintain the impression of the manu-

script's mysteriousness, to convey how difficult it is even to come close to describing, or circumscribing its *indescribable* beauty and uniqueness, and how impossible it is to capture it in all its entirety. In other words, what Korim is dealing with is a sacred text, a divine proclamation that his mere human words can never reproduce. At the same time, they are supposed to give a glimpse of the secrets contained in the manuscript; indeed, although Korim repeatedly states that he has searched in vain for the key to understanding the mystery of the manuscript, he later claims that he has managed to find it, and then goes on to tell us what it is:

...he read it over and over again, asking over and over again, okay, fine, but why, why, why?! This was his first question, but it was also the last, and it contained within it all the other questions, such as what kind of language was this that the manuscript was written in, if indeed it could be called a language, since it was evidently not directed at anyone, and why had its author deemed it unimportant to comply with even the most basic of standards expected of a work of literature, and anyway, if it is not a work of literature, then what is it, because it is not one, that is plain to see, and why is it that the author uses lots of amateurish devices, and yet all the while it never even enters his head that he should be in the least concerned about appearing amateurish.

and then, after all the questioning, we finally arrive at the realization that the unknown author had taken these four fictitious good, kind men and

...sent them out into reality, into history, in other words, into an eternity of war, and tried to set them down in times and places where there was a chance of peace, but without success, despite ever more frenzied attempts to conjure up this reality and depict it with ever more fiendish accuracy and diabolical palpability writing his own cre-

ations into it, but it is all in vain, more and more in vain, because the path only takes them from one war to another, never from war to peace, and this Wlassich character, or whoever he is, falls into ever deeper desperation in his one-man amateurish ritual, until in the end he loses his mind altogether, because there is no Way Out...

If we are to judge by this, the manuscript is ultimately about the fact that history is only "War and War", as anticipated in the title of the novel, which also echoes *War and Peace*, although in the course of reading the book this realization does not come as a great revelation, nor is it terribly convincing, first of all because it is a truism, and second because it manifests itself almost exclusively at the level of a verbal statement. About War, at least in the sense in which the term is used in common parlance, the historical interludes in fact say very little; they speak rather of some diabolical Evil that forever and everywhere rears its head, and from which there is no Way Out. Krasznahorkai's attempt, via his central character, to make the manuscript appear full of "frenzied energy", "fiendish accuracy" and "demoniacal palpability" is somewhat unfortunate as well as being unsuccessful, since ultimately it is his own words he is describing in this way, so it would hardly hold much credibility even if it were true. If artistic or scientific genius is indescribable in literature, then how can a piece of fiction be presented credibly in fiction as a sacred work or a work of genius—or even as amateurish, since amateurishness can only be conveyed convincingly by professional means.

The key role played by the manuscript and the way it is described have not been satisfactorily resolved in *Háború és háború*, and the sections related to this in the book are difficult to read, tedious and stilted. The story of Korim's profane apotheosis, on the other hand, which at times tends to-

wards subtle irony, is poignantly beautiful, although rather fragmented if one separates it from the manuscript. After rescuing the manuscript and taking it to "heaven", in other words, the internet, and the saga of events that surround this mission, Korim becomes entranced by a photograph of a work of art representing an Eskimo igloo, and goes to visit the museum in Schaffhausen where the original is kept. Here we lose sight of him, but his story does not end there, since the author intended his tale to continue in real life. Just as he began to introduce his character before the novel was actually published, a few weeks after its publication a commemorative plaque was put up on the wall of the Schaffhausen museum, in the eye of the real public, bearing a message from Korim, "may you find peace in the words of a plaque", the peace that his four beloved fictitious heroes failed to find; the peace that he too, the fictitious hero of a novel whom Krasznahorkai's "kind, lonely weary and sensitive" reader has grown fond of, failed to find.

The publication of the new book by Ádám Bodor was also preceded by great anticipation, given that it was he who produced one of the most important Hungarian literary works of the last ten years, *Sinistra körzet* (Sinistra District). While Krasznahorkai's new book is ambitious, assailing the bounds of the possible, and at times rather tough going, *Az érsek látogatása* (The Archbishop's Visit) is a wonderfully elegant, virtuoso, witty chamber piece. This may appear strange given that this short book, which takes no time at all to read, is set in more or less the same area as *Sinistra District*, somewhere in Eastern Europe, near the border between the Ukraine and Romania, an infernal region composed of real and imaginary elements creating a picture of decay, dilapidation

and chaos. It is as if nature had ordained that meaninglessness and misery should be the eternal lot of those living here, and they all regard it as quite natural because of this. The special magic and morbid humour of *The Archbishop's Visit* lies in the tension created by the grotesque contradiction between this Kafkaesque, nightmarish world and the dispassionate, indeed insolently joyful, flowing tone in which it is written. The first-person narrator is an eyewitness directly affected and later actively involved, an individual not really capable of seeing beyond the horizons of her world and for whom everything that happens is part of a familiar, everyday reality in which she feels quite comfortable. She seems almost to take pleasure in painstakingly piecing together, bit by bit, the mosaic of this nightmarish story. The reader meanwhile, in the face of the casually presented details, the mad turns of events, squirms in recognition at the horrors and absurdities of this Eastern European world with its mix of nationalities where, it seems, nothing ever changes.

Bogdanska Dolina is the name of the small town where the events take place. On the edge of the town there are towering heaps of rubbish whose stinking fumes envelop the town in a thick soup of fog. At one time the mountain infantry ran this territory, as we read in *Sinistra District*, but in the meantime there has been a change of regime and Orthodox priests have taken charge. The town's leader, the bishop's Vicar Periprava, has been asleep for years and to put an end to this permanent state of transition, his deputies have him butchered and cut up into small pieces. Real power in the town is exercised by these two deputies, the archimandrites. At their instructions the town has been preparing, likewise for several years, for a visit from the archbishop. In theory, the visit is supposed to take place each week-

end, so each weekend everything must be ready. The railway station has been renovated and locked up, out of use, awaiting the archbishop's train. The only people allowed through the nailed-up doors and windows are the seminary students who spend their days and nights polishing the floor with pads attached to the soles of their feet. This haunting image recurs on numerous occasions in the narrative, as do other indications of this constant state of readiness, such as the fact that there is a clothing hire business that operates out of a trailer, where the local people can hire their dress suits for the great occasion that is supposed to happen each week; or the fact that there are storerooms where all the gifts intended for the archbishop are kept, including bone carvings made by the seminary students and mounds of mouse-eaten egg-loaf with jam that people bake each week on a Friday night in anticipation of the great event. Not only does the archbishop never arrive, we find out from a casual remark interpolated by the narrator that at some point in the course of events he has been blown up in an explosion at the railway station of a nearby town.

The story centres around the hairdressing salon of Mrs Colentina Dunka, the narrator, where the brushing ladies spend their time brushing and washing the long beards of the priests and rubbing them with royal jelly, curd-cheese and mink oil. It is here that Gábel Ventuza appears one day. On behalf of his brother, who mysteriously seems to wield considerable power despite the fact that he is in prison, Ventuza intends to have his father's mortal remains exhumed and removed. Until he was murdered, the latter had enjoyed great fame in the locality as a smuggler of people. To get authorization for this undertaking and to carry it through, Ventuza needs money, for which purpose he has himself appointed military chaplain and, following

in his father's footsteps, at the request of rich Armenian relatives, he helps the elderly Senkowits sisters to escape via underground tunnels from the internment camp that had been set up at the edge of the town, according to the official version for the purpose of isolating consumptives. In fact, the priests are in the habit of declaring people sick and shutting them away here at will. The geography teacher, Vidra, thus finds himself in the quarantine camp; his wife Natalia Vidra is a brushing lady at the hairdressing salon, and the only contact she has with her husband takes the form of small scraps of cloth soaked in saliva that they send each other via the good offices of Gábríel Ventuza, who has access to the camp, and who ferries these highly intimate objects backwards and forwards in a medical phial concealed in his underpants. Every evening the seminary students pelt the quarantine patients with stones. Bizarre motifs such as these drift through the story like the shreds of plastic carrier bags from the garbage dump that drift through the air above the town.

But Gábríel Ventuza has rescued the Senkowits girls in vain; they have seen better days, but now they are just ugly, smelly old women, and the Armenian relative has no use for them. When they exhume the father's remains, it turns out that they are not his. By the end of the story, the town's bosses have completely changed; Gábríel's brother, whom we previously encountered as a prisoner in an underground jail, unexpectedly emerges in the role of Vicar General. The post of chaplain of the camp is inherited from Gábríel by the narrator, while Gábríel himself, who originally came to Bogdanska Dolina with the intention of moving on as soon as he had done what he came to do, takes over her clothing hire business. Years pass in Ádám Bodor's story, and appearances suggest that a great deal happens to Gábríel

Ventuza and his fellow townspeople: it is as if a nicely rounded, eventful, plausible story were unfolding around them, yet everything stays exactly the same. Im-mutable madness and degeneration circle forever above Bogdanska Dolina.

The most important living writer to emerge from Slovakia's Hungarian population, Lajos Grendel, this year received Hungary's highest artistic distinction, the Kossuth Prize. Grendel belongs to a generation of Hungarian writers from outside the country's borders who just as much, if not more, are part of Hungarian literature as their minority's literature. Previously this minority literature had been largely closed in on itself. From 1990, however, the borders between the literature of the Hungarian minority in neighbouring countries and that of the mother country have become increasingly blurred. Grendel had been part of this more unified trend earlier on too, insofar as he was unwilling to devote himself as a writer to the particular local socio-political problems of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, but depicted these from a greater distance and, importantly, in the post-modern spirit of literary narrative. He did so sometimes at the price of taking an ironic, critical approach to certain characteristics and contradictions of minority life that, in the light of the historical developments of the last century, are more usually treated with great gravity.

One such example is his new short novel, *Tömegsír* (Mass Grave), which is a satire on how provincialism tends towards absurdity. Here Grendel provocatively confronts the tragic historical past and a blinkered present that deals with this past in a clumsy and stupid manner. The present has no real connection with this past, but if it comes across traces of the past, it manipulates these according to its own petty and selfish way of thinking. The first-

person narrator is a middle-aged man, a historian and lecturer at Bratislava University, who has had family property returned to him as a result of the post-communist restitution process, a piece of land in a village populated by Hungarians. Here, while digging a well, they unearth a mass grave, which causes great excitement and confusion among the locals. The village eminencies have to deal with the matter in an official capacity, but they have no idea how to handle it, whether to try to hush it up, or to capitalize on it. The bones that are being unearthed provide no clues as to the identity of the people buried there, or as to when or in what circumstances they met their death.

A pharmacist, Doctor Dömötör, a wise and widely respected native of the village, solves the problem when he thinks he remembers how once, during the war, German soldiers herded hundreds of innocent people towards the village. These had obviously been the victims. This seems fairly plausible, and since what Doctor Dömötör thinks and wants is in any event accepted unquestioningly by everybody in the village, they decide to exploit the mass grave to the village's advantage; they have a monument erected to commemorate the victims and ask their new fellow-resident, the historian from Bratislava, to write the history of Doctor Dömötör's tale. The latter, meanwhile, is made a freeman of the village.

Grendel's story is written most artfully. Of course the real story is not about the mass grave, and even less about what actually happened at that time long ago in T. Indeed it skirts the issue to such an extent as to be almost blasphemous and lacking in reverence. Grendel takes cover behind his hero, the historian, who is probably no different from the self-important villagers. Although the author perplexingly conceals the story's "bias", in other words, sup-

pressing any criticism of his narrator and hero, the detailed account of his hero's entanglements with women, his sexual exploits and his life in the capital in general, in which our only link to events taking place in the village is through him, may be construed as a portrait of a cynical historian and intellectual for whom history means nothing apart from teaching material and a means of earning a living. He is not interested in forming a relationship with the villagers or getting involved in the business of the mass grave, and when the latter refuse to be shaken off, pursuing him at work and harassing him at home, he tries to escape them. In the end he capitulates, however, and so completely that he even goes to live in the village, and gradually adopts their way of life and way of thinking.

This grotesque satire is at its best in the description of the village potentates. The middle third of this short novel takes the form of one, large-scale, interconnected scene: a wild party at a hunting lodge, where the mayor, the chief of police, the notary public and Doctor Dömötör are trying to win over the guest from Bratislava with a lavish orgy of eating and drinking, and a few willing girls thrown in for good measure. He is reluctant and uncooperative, and thereby offends Doctor Dömötör. This scene, written with great vigour and in virtuoso passages of dialogue, recalls on the one hand the classic portrayals of country gentlemen by writers such as Móricz or Krúdy, and on the other the masters of the Czech grotesque absurd such as Hrabal or the film-makers Forman and Menzel. The aggressive, narcissistic pharmacist is a perfect caricature of the perennial provincial figure whose confident bearing leads him to be regarded as something of an oracle in a small community, a role he is never tired of and which gives him great satisfaction. ■

András Nagy

Life and Times

Tibor Scitovsky: *Egy "büszke magyar" emlékiratai* (The Memoirs of a "Proud Hungarian"). Translated from the English by Éva Kuti. *Közgazdasági Szemle Alapítvány*, Budapest, 1997, 252 pp.

Tibor Scitovsky, a Hungarian-born economist, who rose to prominence in the United States, has published an absorbing memoir. The reader is presented with a truly candid, accurate and critical self-portrait by this affable, highly talented and extremely modest man, a man of ideas and moral principle—and much more. For this is also a broad survey of changing times from the early days of the century up to the present, telling us much about the Hungarian aristocracy, student life in Paris, London and Cambridge before the war, and army life and academic life in the United States.

On the male side Tibor Scitovsky traces his ancestry to a teacher in a poor Slovak village in the old Upper Hungary (today Slovakia), one of whose sons rose to become Archbishop of Esztergom in 1849 and thus Prince Primate of Hungary. Ennobled by the Emperor, he became a wealthy aristocrat who built numerous schools and churches, including the Esztergom Basilica. It was for the opening ceremony of the latter cathedral that he commissioned Franz Liszt to compose the

Missa Solennis of Esztergom. He gave generously to the poor, became a major patron of culture, and financially supported the foundation of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

The Prince Primate entrusted the management of his estates to his favourite nephew, Tibor Scitovsky's great-grandfather, who eventually inherited the lands and the high offices in county administration which went with them. But as the estate of some 6,000 acres, given obsolete production methods, failed to provide the descendants with a decent middle-class standard of living, and since they were not entrepreneurs, they sought employment in the civil service, as was customary for the gentry in those times.

Nevertheless, the property remained theirs right up to the end of the First World War, and so the author, in the company of various uncles, aunts and cousins, spent all his summers in Nótincs. The description of these vacations provides perhaps the most colourful part of the book. It is hard to imagine now how the well off extended family of the Scitovskys, an early-twentieth-century Hungarian version of Chekov's world, could spend blissfully happy holidays in a mansion approximately sixty kilometres from Budapest, inaccessible by train, where there was no telephone, no electricity, no water mains, no drainage, no

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shops. The children had a fortnightly bath in a wooden tub set up in the garden, but the adults very likely went without one while there. The household was taken care of by a huge number of servants, in return for food and occasionally cast-off clothes, but no wages. The children, of course, enjoyed their escape from city life and, even more importantly, from being locked up in school, they were free to wander about, to watch the feeding of the animals, the milking, the harvest and the thrashing, but the adults spent their time in idleness, they neither shot nor rode, nor went for walks, neither did they read or make music. Scitovsky writes of these vacations:

Every time I see a Chekhov play, it makes me think of those summers, because they depict that atmosphere of lazy boredom where people are too bored to enjoy their laziness and too lazy to rouse themselves to do something enjoyable.

This early experience of such concentrated boredom left a deep impression on him, that is why it played such an important part in his theoretical writings, in which he traced the origins of aggression and violence back to boredom.

Scitovsky is fully aware of the influence his parents had on his development. He gives a vivid account of this. His father was an Undersecretary in the Ministry of Commerce, and also one of the economic advisors to the Hungarian delegation attending the Trianon Peace Treaty, before he became, in 1922, the CEO of one of the largest Hungarian banks, the Hítelbank. For a short time he was Minister of Foreign Affairs, then he went back to the bank, but this time as President, on which his son comments, "I am still amazed by the abrupt rise in our affluence". Scitovsky admired and respected his father, especially for his "generosity, compassion, correctness and

polite behaviour towards everybody..." This made him different from the ruling gentry with their "insolent swagger" and "uncivil behaviour". To this he adds the following:

I disliked that insolent swagger, adopted in some measure by all civil servants down to ordinary policemen; and my resentment of their uncivil, masterful behavior, which belied their very name, may have been the origin of my lifelong leftist sympathies.

On reading this, we cannot help feeling how little public servants have changed: revolutions, counter-revolutions, fascist Arrow-Cross rule or Soviet-type dictatorship, Christian-conservative, social-liberal or bourgeois right of centre regimes have been unable to change the arrogance and overbearing attitude of public servants.

Tibor Scitovsky's mother was of a different mettle:

She was a complex person: charming but masterful, generous but demanding, kind and polite but short-tempered, superior and ambitious, secretive and prying, strong willed and not very choosy about the means to get her will. She was elegant, exquisitely dressed, a gracious hostess whose Thursday afternoon 'at homes' soon became a meeting place of Budapest's high society. She had the commanding presence, self assurance and generosity of a great lady and looked every inch of it, but in some respects was no lady at all.

Already as a child he noticed that, if need be, his mother would freely resort to lying, spying on others, or opening other people's letters; her over-possessive nature was manifest in her decision to stop him attending school so as to keep him by her side a little longer. This isolation from his own coevals left a mark on the boy's entire development, making him a "lonely, aloof bookworm", one who found it difficult to show affection or to make friends. His mother's behaviour was another

source for his later leftist convictions, it sensitized him "to the implications of one person's powers over others in whatever form or context."

The family background of this successful society lady, who conducted one of the most exclusive salons in Horthy's Hungary, was, however, full of dark secrets. His parents carefully concealed from him that his mother had been married before, as a divorce was still scandalous at the time in those circles. To add to her social stigma, she had also been a cashier in her first husband's delicatessen, where she had picked out her future husband, displaying remarkable purpose in making his acquaintance. His father, a reserved and reticent man, must have been very much in love with the strikingly beautiful young woman, so much so that he overcame both his own conservatism and his family's vehement disapproval. It is a testimony to the woman's charm that after the birth of the author she was accepted by the family and even became the favourite daughter-in-law of Scitovsky's grandmother, eventually being presented with the Cardinal's episcopal ring.

The family background of his mother concealed even darker secrets. Her son went to great pains to discover that his mother was in fact the illegitimate daughter of a French officer stationed in a Hungarian garrison, a Duc La Rochefoucauld, by a Jewish girl. To avoid unpleasantness, a husband was found for her, who was rewarded with the lease of the garrison canteen. The aristocratic French father lavishly cared for his daughter, paying for her education at the best finishing schools, sending her expensive gifts, and even buying his grandson, Tibor Scitovsky, a sports car on the occasion of his coming of age, given to him as a present from his mother.

Scitovsky had difficulties in making the transition from a retiring and lonely child to a well-adjusted adult. He enrolled in

Budapest University to study law, which demanded neither attendance nor hard work. He was given the chance to go to Trinity College, Cambridge, for two years, where he was gradually able to make friends, so much so that at afternoon teas he slowly overcame his shyness with girls. It was not merely his upbringing that caused his wariness in that regard; being a highly eligible young man, he had reason to be on his guard against Hungarian girls, or rather their parents, who might try to force him into an unwanted marriage by compromising him.

In Cambridge he discovered that economics was much more interesting than law, mainly because Maurice Dobb, Joan Robinson and Denis Robertson all taught there at the time. Teaching at Cambridge was very different from what he had experienced in Budapest. (It still is). Instead of making students memorize textbooks and notes for exams, supervisors gave individual tutorials, for which they were asked to write fortnightly essays, which they had to present and to discuss. In one very revealing episode, the author recounts how he was once given the task by Joan Robinson, the great lady of economics who was his supervisor, to write an essay on the theory of money.

I had just started on economics a month earlier and did not even know there was a theory about money. But I worked hard to prepare myself for what was to be my first English composition apart from Garcia's love letters, and so read everything I could find on the subject, trying to present it all as an integrated whole. Joan read it while I watched her and waited with bated breath for her to deliver her verdict. There was no harm, she said, in listing what other people had to say about money but she looked in vain for my theory of it. So she suggested that I write the paper again, this time presenting my own ideas on the subject. I felt humiliated and went home devastated. My

one year's study of law in Hungary had not prepared me for independent thinking and contributions of my own. I spent an agonizing fortnight chewing my pencil, walking up and down like a caged animal, trying not to read, just to think, and to think of nothing but what I thought about the theory of money. Somehow, I managed to produce a paper Joan found acceptable; and while it probably was not much good, since I have no recollection of what it said, I have been grateful to Joan ever since for having taught me to think.

An ironically related event, which occurred when he returned from Cambridge, but illustrates the relationship between theory and practice:

When I arrived home from Cambridge in the Spring of 1931, Father asked what if any economics I had learned that would be helpful in those difficult days to someone in his position. I dared not tell him that I learnt precious little but did mention having read that Britain declared bank holidays in past financial crises. Father listened carefully, asked for an appointment with his schoolfriend, Count Bethlen, the Prime Minister, and a few weeks later the Government proclaimed the bank holiday that helped Hungary to weather the Great Depression much better than did neighboring Austria, the bankruptcy of whose largest bank, the Kredit Anstalt, was an important landmark of the depression. That was the most valuable economic advice I have given in my entire career and the only one that was followed.

After graduating in law, Scitovsky went to Paris for a full year to learn French. This was "the most frivolous period" of his life, he writes.

It was in Paris that he finally succeeded in losing his virginity, although under less than ideal circumstances: he was seduced by a German girl who turned out to be both a nymphomaniac and a Nazi. Scitovsky provides a detailed picture of a wide range of

events both in his own life and the lives of his friends and acquaintances, but strangely enough we do not get to know much about his feelings: he hardly mentions his wife, his divorce, his daughter or his second marriage, regardless of the obvious impacts these must have had on his life.

On his return to Budapest he was engaged as a clerk in one of the branches of his father's bank: the idea was for him to work his way up from the lowest rung of the ladder, learning all aspects of the banking business. He could obviously have risen through the ranks quickly, eventually very likely inheriting his father's position. But he would have none of it, not only because banking did not satisfy his intellectual needs, but also because of his growing concern with the rise of Nazism in Germany and Italy, and even in Austria and Hungary. Since he felt:

Since my isolated upbringing prevented me from forming strong ties of friendship in Hungary and my resentment of being dominated by a strong-willed mother made me feel more at home in Cambridge and Paris than in Budapest, my pessimism about Hungary's political future led to an urgent desire to escape by emigrating. That the more honorable course would have been to stay put and fight the inevitable had not even occurred to me at the time—a sign perhaps of the egoism of youth or my lack of heroism.

Of his time in the bank, one event deserves mention. In his low position he received a miserable salary, which enabled him to draw his father's attention to the enormous gap between the salaries of the president and the lowest-paid clerks: a ratio of 1/2000. (This is staggering even by present standards: the equivalent figure would now be closer to 1/200.)

In 1935 he returned to Britain, where he threw himself into his studies at the London School of Economics, being de-

terminated to make his way in the West as an economist. ("I worked as hard and unremittingly there as I never had before or have after...") At the LSE he found himself taking part in an acrimonious political conflict: the majority of the students and staff were socialists, but the economics department was dominated by Hayek, Mises and Robbins, who were decidedly right-wing and conservative. This conflict, along with the accompanying personal and academic debates, obviously greatly inspired the ambitious young student:

I and my leftist friends were impressed by the elegance of the logic of its self-equilibrating mechanism but very much disturbed by the theory's inability either to explain, or to suggest remedies for the mass unemployment, poverty and other economic problems we saw around us.

He recognized that Anglo-American economic thinking concentrated on economic performance and efficiency, pretending to ignore the malfunctions: that the goals set in the models were not achieved. In contrast, Marx, in Scitovsky's view, concentrated on the exploitation of the poor by the rich, without ever trying to discuss what is good about a market economy and why. So he set himself the goal of producing a model between the two extremes, one that took into consideration the problems of both exploitation and the allocation of resources, in other words, the advantages and the disadvantages of the various models. Despite the tremendous progress in economics, what he set out to do more than sixty years ago has largely remained undone.

He was soon caught up in the enthusiasm generated by the Keynesian revolution. Keynes' *General Theory* was published just six months after his arrival in London. "I am still proud, happy and satisfied to have fought in that revolution in

however humble a role," he writes sixty years later.

In the second half of the 1930s he watched the aggressive designs of Hitler with growing concern, at the same time sadly realizing just how unprepared and lethargic Britain and France were in the face of this challenge. There was one particular section of Western opinion, which has remained largely unknown in Hungary, that argued that the German economy was far too weak to sustain a prolonged war effort, looking on its sabre rattling merely as an empty gesture. Rather than being a politicians' mistake, the underestimation of the National-socialist threat was very much what the Western public wanted to hear. By contrast, Scitovsky points out that "Hitler's rearmament programme unwittingly adopted a Keynesian employment policy and strikingly illustrated the latter's effectiveness, since far from weakening the German economy, it had greatly strengthened it by restoring full employment and the full utilization of productive capacity."

The other source of his worries was his complete disillusionment with Communism. He makes no bones of the fact that "In my young days, I was favourably impressed by the lofty ideals of Communism," but such sympathy "was quickly dissipated by the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow show trials and extreme authoritarianism of the Stalinist era." Upon the successful completion of his studies, just when he was reunited with his father in Switzerland, the war broke out. He decided to return to Britain, as "I would rather be interned in England as an enemy alien than be called up for military duty in Hungary and fight on Germany's side [...] one of the best decisions I ever made."

He went to the United States on a scholarship, studying at Columbia, Harvard and the University of Chicago, where he

had the good fortune to meet Leontieff, Sweezy, Lange and Schumpeter. Unable to find employment and to obtain resident status, he started to publish articles with a view to obtaining a university post. First he explained Keynes's *General Theory* in clear and simple terms, a project he still rates among his best accomplishments. Fifty years later he would return to the subject, rewriting it in a more generalized form and achieving considerable success with it. He wrote essays on the causes of the deviations in price flexibility, on the advantages of the war-time rationing system and on the interconnections between tariffs levied on goods and profit margins. His initial lack of success made him doubt his own academic prospects initially, but as his essays began to make an impact, his confidence was restored.

He relates a strange episode from the time of the United States' entry into the war. First he discovered that, as a suspicious Central European, his phone was tapped; then he was arrested prior to deportation. He eventually learned that he was charged with "premature anti-Fascism", a charge he dismissed as complete nonsense until he discovered that many Americans could not forgive President Clinton's turning against the Vietnam war "prematurely".

Luckily, he was able to avoid deportation by enlisting. Although he never served in action, the duties he was assigned to were very interesting. On President Roosevelt's orders a special unit of a thousand men was set up to study the efficiency of US strategic bombing. This enabled him to move in the wake of the American army in France, Germany and Austria; he describes how, despite pressure from the Army Air Force command, they came to the conclusion that the American air strikes had failed to contribute substantially to the shortening of the war. This was a surpris-

ing finding then, and it comes as a surprise even now to readers who lived through the war. The team based their conclusions on a survey of the damage caused to the war industry, and they were probably right in asserting that the Germans were able to make up for their losses by utilizing the free capacities in the engineering industry and by working more shifts. However, the survey makes no mention of the psychological effect of the colossal British-American saturation bombing, the complete destruction of the Ruhr area, Berlin, and Dresden, which played an important part in destroying German morale and the fanatic faith in ultimate victory. It is hard to believe that this contributed nothing to the shortening of the war.

Scitovsky relates many of his interesting experiences in the recently liberated areas: how, together with Nicholas Káldor, he helped to capture a dozen German generals; how they discovered Göring's special train in a tunnel, packed with stolen paintings, and so on. Interestingly enough, however, he has nothing to say about the shock many soldiers felt when they came face to face with the inferno of the concentration camps, the destruction of cities and the wretched condition of the residents of the liberated areas.

It was not until the end of 1945, when he was thirty-five, that Scitovsky's career in economics really took off, but then with a vengeance. He was appointed lecturer at Stanford University. His main objective was to present the basic terms of economics in a simple and comprehensive form, and it was precisely this that led him to the discovery how many unsolved problems generally accepted notions contained. He early on established that the bargaining position of sellers and buyers was different, since sellers, who usually know a great deal more about the choice and market of the goods they were selling, often

took unfair advantage of this knowledge. Informational asymmetry, as originally formulated by Scitovsky, is now something of a commonplace.

He also noticed early on that the theory of equilibrium based on perfect competition—which possessed many advantages from an educational point of view—was in fact a far cry from real market conditions. He also realized that, in addition to its disadvantages, monopoly had a distinct advantage too, in that the high profit margin thus achieved could in many instances encourage risk-taking necessary for innovations.

Scitovsky refused to become an economics professor of narrow professional interests. He appreciated good music, opera and the theatre, along with the other arts. For a short period, when he was working for the OECD in Paris, he had the opportunity to visit Brazil and Mexico, and to travel extensively in Europe, to see cathedrals, castles, and the treasures of museums. This led him to the recognition that welfare was more than simply the accumulation of commodities: it also meant the opportunity to enjoy culture. He clearly expresses his *ars poetica* in connection with this:

I had no intention to sacrifice any part of my interesting and varied life for the sake of rising higher on the professional or economic scale.

The same attitude lent his writings their broad perspective of the world, and of people's living conditions and fate.

He describes in his book the dramatic changes that took place in every area of science, including economics, after the 1950s. Spectacular developments occurred in education and research, accompanied by rapid specialization. In sharp contrast with the situation before the war, when it was still possible to grasp the entire field of economics and only a limited number of specialized periodicals were published, the sit-

uation changed dramatically after the 1960s: students and teachers alike were forced to specialize, and it became increasingly difficult to keep abreast with the growing number of publications. This experience made members of his generation feel impatient and disillusioned, fearing that their knowledge would gradually grow outmoded. It also had to do with the development that the economic processes at individual country level became more and more unmanageable in a world growing increasingly open and global. It is interesting that in connection with this development he failed to notice how the growing specialization of academic research and the increasing number of publications—in large part due to the universities' specific interests—were accompanied by declining standards, and that a large number of them were directed to irrelevant problems. The "old man" of econometrics, Ragnar Frisch, declared back in the 1960s how his own field was increasingly turning into "playometrics".

Since it is Scitovsky's memoirs that are the subject of this review, this is hardly the place for evaluating his academic achievements. Nevertheless, we can safely contradict him on this point: Tibor Scitovsky's knowledge has become anything but outmoded, as its essence is precisely his ability to question, over and over again, generally accepted theories, to dig deeper, and to find answers to unsolved problems of economics outside the narrow scope of his field.

To prove that point, there is his book *Joyless Economy* (Oxford University Press, 1976), in which he uses the findings of psychological research to explain why a rapid growth in wages is not necessarily accompanied by a similar growth in welfare, happiness and joy. His experience in France made him realize how much the joys of life were unrelated to income. In France he discovered that "the comfort which money buys, however great and luxurious, con-

tributes surprisingly little to one's welfare if that means finding interest in one's life, and a feeling of contentment and satisfaction with it." In the past twenty-five years the average income of American citizens has doubled, yet it seems, from a European perspective, that people's *joie de vivre* has failed to keep abreast with the increase in the efficiency of production. It was while he was contemplating this problem that the theory of motivation in physiological psychology hit him with the "force of a revelation", demonstrating to him that striving after welfare was a process a great deal more complex than most economists—with their narrow-minded focus on incomes—imagined.

Joyless Economy has rightly been regarded as one of his most important works in the field of economics. In it he points out that the ready availability of material goods to meet consumer demand is not enough to lead a full and happy life. To achieve that one also needs challenges, stimuli and diversity. And that, in turn, requires a broad and diverse education and a rich cultural environment in which to develop the potential hidden in people. He convincingly demonstrates that culture is indispensable for welfare and for a full and happy life.

An interesting thought in the book focuses on the demaging effect boredom has on people's lives. He believes that there are a vast number of people who have a substantial amount of leisure on their hands and do not know what to do with it.

As hunger makes one look for food, so boredom makes one seek excitement; and just as people with no money for buying food stoop to thieving to avoid starvation, so those who lack the skills that can relieve boredom in a harmless way, will relieve it with violence or vandalism—the most exciting and so most enjoyable activities and the only ones that require no skill, only strength.

One can hardly argue the point that highly cultured people rarely feel bored

(on the contrary, they usually feel that they could do with a great deal more leisure), while large numbers of the uneducated and uncultured are unable to spend whatever leisure they have in a meaningful way, a situation hugely aggravated by unemployment, illness and physical disability. Still, to put the blame on boredom for wars, revolutions and various violent and aggressive acts might seem to some as an oversimplification.

Similarly unconvincing is that "all the arts and sciences must have originated as the leisure activities people took up in their free time to escape boredom".

More than anyone else, Scitovsky should know that to have time on one's hand in itself is not enough for one to make a contribution to scholarship, and even less so to do the same in the arts, and it is precisely people engaged in the arts or sciences who constantly feel that they have very little leisure. Still, these occasional oversimplifications take nothing away from the originality of the views presented in the memoirs.

Unfortunately, a review lacks the space to carry all the stories and anecdotes in which the author vividly describes his friends, his parents' acquaintances, millionaires and domestics, famous or undeservedly forgotten people. The entire book is captivating in style, a style which made his university lectures so popular. The reader cannot help envying those who had the good fortune to be taught by him. We cannot argue that his decision to emigrate before the war was the best he ever made and yet, we have to be saddened by the realization of the great loss this was for his country. How much better off we could all be, if the present generation of Hungarian economists had teachers in Scitovsky's mould!

It is to be hoped that this fascinating memoir will soon be published in English. ❧

Tibor Hajdu
Our Century

Ignác Romsics: *Magyarország története a XX. században* (Hungary in the Twentieth Century). Budapest, Osiris, 1999, 662 pp. With illustrations.

The publication of Ignác Romsics's new book is a major event, not only because this is the first comprehensive and coherent overview of the Hungarian 20th century, but also because it is the first (successful) attempt to sum up the nearly fifty years of Communist rule in this country. Scholarly works of various leanings and academic standards have already been published on the eras marked by the names of Francis Joseph and Miklós Horthy, but the greater part of this century (the period after the Second World War) has, aside from the wildly erratic products of political journalism, only been covered by research into particular subjects.

Both the strength and the weakness of Professor Romsics's book lie in the fact that it is the work of a single author: a historian's independent interpretation of the past, rather than a compilation of earlier publications. We know too much about the 20th century, and no single individual can be a specialist in all fields. Economic historians or authorities on the political

struggles before the First World War might raise their eyebrows at some sentences by Romsics, they might perhaps wish he expressed himself more unambiguously on this or that event—in eight or nine thousand words. Nevertheless, comprehensive treatises assembled from many specialist studies usually contain contradictions and, therefore, prove largely unsuitable for the general reader or student. Here, however, we are given a homogeneous picture—one that occasionally might be open to debate and perhaps raises questions and needs further elaboration; this can be said about every scholarly work, but not all academic treatises are as clear, comprehensive and unequivocal as Romsics's new book.

The book deserves much credit for being able to transcend the perennial debates and extreme prejudices deep-rooted in Hungarian thinking, which are growing more and more tiresome and stereotyped, such as the evaluation of the Compromise of 1867, the overall character of the Horthy era, the world wars and the left and right wings of the political arena, or even the clashes between "national" and "international" views of history. This will obviously be a welcome relief for students (the book is intended as a university textbook, although it is much more than that), who are fed up with their grandfathers' generation fighting it out over the graves of out-

Tibor Hajdu's

books include *A magyarországi*

Tanácsköztársaság (The Hungarian Soviet Republic, 1969) and a biography of Count Mihály Károlyi.

moded ideas. Not that Romsics has nothing to say about these controversies (in fact he tells us where he stands), it is more that he resists the temptation to complicate unnecessarily the tangled web of ancient conflicts, preferring to concentrate on what seems relevant today, while showing the utmost patience with the views of others. Since he applies the methods of the modern social sciences in discussing traditional issues, his approach is novel, even on subjects where the basic facts have already been established.

Comparing various chapters of the book, one asks oneself how one might define the century now coming to a close: whether it is better to accept the now fashionable idea of the "short century", confined to the period between 1914 and 1989, or whether to insist on the formal, and also safer, option of the calendar itself. Romsics opts for the latter, beginning his account with a description of the early 20th century and finishing it with Hungary's admission to NATO in March 1999. The notion of a "short century" seems perfectly acceptable to me, all the more so in Hungary's case, where the year 1914 stands for both the source of all our problems and marks the burial of the old order, when, in the poet Endre Ady's much quoted words, "all things whole were fragmented". And while no one can foresee what the 21st century might have in store for us, that century clearly started in 1989 in this part of Europe. In spite of this, Romsics' choice is both unassailable and unequivocal, regardless of its drawbacks. I do not feel it a drawback that the events of the 1990s have been dealt with in a rather summary manner and will have to be expanded in a second edition (which will follow no doubt), since it is a problem for the author rather than the reader, who will find this up-to-date account rather handy. More problematic is the fact that

the years between 1900 and 1913 are very much part of the established order of the 1867 Compromise and therefore really belong to the previous century.

Romsics opens with a freeze-frame: over more than eighty pages he paints a broad tableau of the economic, social and cultural conditions prevailing in Hungary at the beginning of the century; of this only a few pages are devoted to the political struggles of the years between 1910 and 1913. It is fair to say, therefore, that he was able to strike a delicate balance between the two possibilities, as the chronological narrative only begins with the outbreak of the First World War. Still, this is the point where we feel shortchanged: we do get a description of half of the period of the Compromise and yet we do not; hardly anything is said about the immediate antecedents of the Great War, nor about the crisis of 1908 and the Balkan war of 1912.

Right until the 1960s, the Compromise between Austria and Hungary in 1867 was viewed by just about everyone, from the extreme nationalists to the dogmatic Marxists, as the darkest evidence of that original sin, the surrender of national sovereignty. Beginning in the 1960s, a new view was taking shape, primarily as the result of the efforts of the late Péter Hanák, which presented 1867 as a great step forward and as the only way to achieve modernization and economic and social development. Seeing Romsics performing a balancing act between these two views, we may even regard this as a move backwards; at the same time, to my mind, he seems to be too lenient to Count István Tisza, the Prime Minister, who was the staunchest defender of the 1867 Compromise right until his death in 1918.

Contradictions such as this are few and far between, and are completely absent once we reach 1914, or the beginning of the "short 20th century". There are no

truly up-to-date works on Hungary's part in the First World War, on which Romsics could have drawn, but he nevertheless gives a concise and authoritative account of the essential facts. He convincingly argues for the inevitability of the war even if there had been no Sarajevo assassination, and shows that the victory of the Allies inexorably led to Hungary's dismemberment, not so much in accordance with the Wilsonian principles of "national self-determination" (i.e., the ethnic map of the area), but rather to meet the demands of Romania, Serbia and the newly emerging Czechoslovakia. The prime reason why the Tisza government in Hungary was at political odds with both the military leadership and the Austrian politicians was that, although it consented to take part in the hostilities as a defensive war, it was strongly opposed to territorial acquisitions, since those would have added to the main ills of both Austria-Hungary and Hungary, as part of it, i.e., the preponderance of Slavs and Romanians in the population. Since there was no independent Hungarian military command, the book makes no attempt to cover the events of the war in any detail.

The chapters discussing the revolutions of 1918 and 1919, along with the ensuing counter-revolution surpass even the previous ones. Although Romsics is regarded as an authority on the revolutions, he describes the events only briefly (the same applies to the events of 1956), as he wishes to dwell not so much on the colourful and rapidly changing scenes of the revolutions, themselves but on the exploration of their causes and their consequences—in other words, on the enduring historical and social processes. In addition to an exemplary objectivity, this approach explains his decision to turn his back on the "ideological" reflexes which induce people to give a blood-curling account of either the

"red" or the "white" terror by exaggerating the number of victims. Instead, he factually states that the 1919 Red Terror only claimed one or two hundred victims, as opposed to the one or two thousand victims of the ensuing White Terror (and not five or six thousand, as claimed in earlier works).

The book discusses the twenty-five years of the Horthy era in more detail—although even here Romsics does not run to more than 120 pages, but the readers can rest assured that they are reading the first objective, balanced and well-proportioned overview of the history of a quarter of a century. The Horthy regime as both the consequence of, and a reaction to the Trianon Peace Treaty is the main motif that can explain much, yet a discussion of the economic processes, the social and school reforms and the rich cultural life also follows. For Romsics, the previous decades' main bone of contention—was the Horthy establishment a Fascist regime—no longer poses a problem: In his definition, it was "a limited bourgeois parliamentary system also containing authoritarian elements", in other words, "a hegemonistic multi-party authoritarianism." (p. 233.)

This is fair enough; still, one cannot get around the problem of having to choose a particular angle from which to view this extremely diverse period. The view of history and the public thinking over the past decades preferred to see the Francis Joseph era as a successful new beginning, a period of "golden peace", while the Horthy era was seen through the lenses of its terrible end, still vividly remembered by many, thus associating its essential features with the Second World War and the alliance with Hitler. Romsics is inclined to associate the "classic" period of the Horthy era with the decade of Count István Bethlen's government (1921–1931), a period free of excesses and one that verged on

liberalism; in general, he seems to regard Bethlen—on whom he has published an excellent biography—as a politician of great vision in comparison with Horthy.

I also think of Bethlen as a more agreeable politician, but at this point I have some reservations. After 1938 the pro-Nazi elements, who had hitherto been kept in check by Bethlen and his followers, were gaining in popularity at such an alarming rate, recruiting new followers from every walk of life, from the political elite down to the working class, that one should ask whether such a distortion of the political arena can be explained merely by outside (Nazi) influences. Romsics factually describes, and properly condemns, the crimes of the Horthy regime after 1938, yet he avoids the question of the nature of the regime in power before and after March 19, 1944 (the day of German occupation). He prefers to criticize Bethlen for not insisting more resolutely on his Anglophile line, rather than say out loud that the pro-Nazi politicians had more followers than Bethlen and his friends.

Precisely half of this well-balanced and ably-judged book is devoted to the history of the period between 1945 and 1989. I have described the previous section as first class; as to the part covering the history after 1945, it is peerless: no scholarly account of that standard has so far been published on that period. In general, Romsics opposes the aims of socialist policy, nor does he consider them feasible; in some sense he looks on the period as deviating from the mainstream of Hungary's history, in other words, he regards it as something alien, yet he avoids the Cold-War rhetoric of moral judgement, which is (somewhat belatedly) so typical of Hungarian journalism now. His judgement is objective and to the point: instead of asking what was bad and what was good, he considers what was

possible and what was not. He examines the economic, cultural and social problems and achievements of the era that he himself has rejected with the same objectivity, as he did in the case of earlier periods. For school teachers, this second half of the book will prove to be an unqualified blessing, since they have had no idea what to teach about the recent past.

Romsics does not share the nostalgia common to many "third-road" thinkers (including István Bibó) that between 1945 and 1948 something remarkable was in the bud, which could have had a glorious continuation, had Stalin allowed it to blossom. Nor does he agree with those who think that Soviet occupation and oppression were the crucial features thus integrating the whole period between 1945 and 1990. (Recently we witnessed the erection of monuments for "the resistance and victims" of 1945–46.) Romsics views the years between 1945 and 1949 as a separate period, acknowledging its great achievements—land reform, democratic suffrage—yet firmly holds that Stalin had decided on the Sovietization of the region already in 1945, and the halting execution of his plans was linked to the balance of power between the Soviet Union and the West. (He gives a detailed account of the policies, peace proposals and border revision ideas of the various powers both for the post-1945 settlement and for the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919–1920.)

Nor does he agree with those who believe that the Kádár era after 1956 was essentially indistinct from the Rákosi era between 1949 and 1956. He describes Rákosi's rule as one of absolute terror, which Imre Nagy and other reform Communists wishing to use milder and more practical methods were unable to moderate substantially. Although he states in a factual manner, and documents with figures, the achievements of the 1950s, such

as rapid industrialization or the extension of public education to cater to the needs of working-class and village children, these cannot alter his judgement that what took place between 1949 and 1956 was not part of the organic development of Hungarian history.

The author is much more understanding in his evaluation of the Kádár regime. He, of course, clearly separates the years of retaliation after 1956 from the later years of consolidation: "The Kádár era can be divided into two main phases. The first phase, which lasted from Kádár's installation in power until 1962 or 1963, was characterized by the brutal suppression of the revolutionaries, the restoration of the institutions of dictatorship, the consolidation of Kádár's personal power, and finally, the regime's international recognition [...] The second main phase, during which Kádárism (a term theoretically never developed to any degree, and interpreted more as a pragmatic concept rather than a closed construct of formal logic) achieved stability and its distinctive features became clear, lasted from the early 1960s to the end of the 1980s [...] its main features were the totalitarian nature of the dictatorship giving way to an authoritarian character, in other words, the repressive elements were softened: the sub-systems of society—the economy, education, science, culture, etc.—attained a measure of independence; and above else, the planned economy based on state ownership underwent rationalization, and the hegemony of one-party-state ideology came to an end. Further characteristics were the de-politization of everyday life and the attempt to meet consumer needs and to modernize." (p. 399.)

It is, once again, possible to view the two phases of Kádárism from different an-

gles. After the mid-1960s, political and economic liberalization was accompanied by the gradual abandonment of socialist principles, the stated objectives of social progress: relative equality, equal opportunities in education, every family's right to a decent home, social policies and "job democracy" were all abandoned. At the end only one "socialist achievement" was left intact: the right to work, quite often in return for a miserable income. Romsics regards the surrender of unrealistic objectives as no particular loss—the improvement in living standards was more closely related to the slow decay of the system. The last years of collapsing regimes are often the most pleasant: one should remember France of the 1780s, Vienna before the First World War—and the Budapest of the 1980s.

Some historians might find it disconcerting that the last chapter finishes at a date just weeks before the publication of the book. I do not believe that this chapter will prove to be as lasting as the rest, but it will satisfy the needs of those readers and students who live in the present and who look for answers to questions such as where we have come from and how we have got here. This book is for them.

There is much more that could be said in praise of the book—suffice it to say here that it comes complete with a fine collection of supplements, including a lengthy survey of the literature, a chronological overview and a witty selection of illustrations; the credit for the latter should go to Osiris, a publishing house piling success upon success within the few years of its existence. There is no question about the book's favourable reception in Hungary; an English translation has just been published. (*Hungary in the Twentieth Century*. Budapest, Corvina, 516 pp.)

Gábor Vermes

Noble Resistance

Éva H. Balázs: *Hungary and the Habsburgs. An Experiment in Enlightened Absolutism*. Budapest, Central European University Press, 1997, 304 pp.

Professor Éva H. Balázs has been at the centre of Hungarian historical scholarship for several decades. Commitment to her chosen topics, breadth of vision, profound knowledge of the sources, and her linguistic skills have justifiably assured her prominence in the profession. The book under review is, in her own words, "a distillation of forty years of researching, reading, and reflecting." (viii)

A sentence on the Empress/Queen Maria Theresa gives us a clue about what, in my opinion, is the greatest merit of her book. "Although Hungarian historians have been primarily interested in Maria Theresa as the queen of Hungary," Balázs wrote, "it should not be forgotten that she thought of herself first and foremost as sovereign of the Austrian hereditary lands." (p. 45) Indeed, while the book emphasizes the relationship between Hungary and the Habsburgs, this topic is rightly treated as part of a larger whole, as an important and

at the same time interdependent link to other parts of the Habsburg realm, as well as to other countries within the framework of European international relations.

Balázs has done well in tracking down the German, French and Italian sources of the Enlightenment in Hungary, and she is instructive on how Freemasonry arrived in Central Europe. For Hungary, she correctly ties the Freemasons' appeal primarily to the Protestants.

For them, membership in lodges somewhat diminished the adverse impact of official discrimination, which came to an end in 1781, when Joseph II's Toleration Patent was issued.

This book presents excellent portraits of major figures in Vienna, including Maria Theresa herself, Count (later Prince) Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz and Count Karl von Zinzendorf, who had paramount influence on the governance of Hungary. These portraits are complemented by the author's perceptive depiction of Joseph von Sonnenfels, the behind-the-scenes architect of Maria Theresa's enlightened reforms.

Balázs is also effective in demolishing the old shibboleth in Hungarian historiography that reproaches the aristocrats, especially those who chose to live in Vienna, for becoming "denationalized courtiers."¹ Balázs attempts to show, through the use of several examples, how these aristocrats

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left Hungary in 1956. He teaches history at Rutgers University and is the author of the biography István Tisza: The Liberal Vision and Conservative Statecraft of a Magyar Nationalist, Columbia University Press, 1985, translated into Hungarian in 1994.

did "pursue a distinctive brand of patriotism." (p. 104) Although her remark presents a welcome corrective, this is surely not an either/or proposition. It is hard to imagine how Hungarian aristocrats, living in Vienna, at close proximity to the Court and frequently marrying daughters from non-Hungarian aristocratic families, could have resisted the pressures of assimilation. What did emerge on occasion was a measure of self-identification with the nation. To call it Hungarian patriotism within the aristocratic context of the 18th century is however questionable.²

Professor Balázs has interesting things to say about the Hungarian gentry, their geographical distribution in the country, vertical social mobility, litigiousness and economic difficulties, caused in part by Vienna's mercantilist policies. Her discussions of towns and of Montesquieu's influence in Hungary is likewise instructive.

The central focus of the book is, of course, Joseph II's decade of rule between 1780 and 1790, which Balázs correctly characterizes as "the drama of the 1780s." Few rulers in world history are as fascinating as Joseph II, who wished to bend the entire population of a polyglot monarchy to his will. Convinced that he was the custodian of the welfare of his subjects, Joseph II was manifestly, even contemptuously, indifferent to what they thought or how they felt. While modest in his personal life, he was immodest in his quest for trying to realize unrealistic plans.

Balázs is very good in analyzing the Emperor's various edicts and plans, and her characterizations of Joseph and Josephinism are excellent as well. "The blend of monomania and martial rigour" (p. 201) is an apt depiction, as is her conclusion: "The regime of this enlightened and fiercely absolutist sovereign was crippled by its own irreconcilable dichotomy." (p. 289)

Nevertheless, a curious paragraph attributes the Emperor's downfall not to "internal tensions within his multinational monarchy," nor to the fact that "the regime was despotic in its enlightenedness," but to the obsolescence of a "dynastically centred yet simultaneously enlightened government." (p. 146) This paragraph shifts causality to an abstract plane, which is anachronistic for the late 18th century. Then, republics were still isolated phenomena, most monarchies were not yet constitutional, and rulers still had a wide range of latitude. In fact, this view of Balázs's lets Joseph II off the hook, denying the critical historical role of personalities that she otherwise affirms in the rest of her book. Certainly, a consistently enlightened absolutist regime was an unattainable ideal, but several contemporary and early 19th-century absolutist regimes—the German states of Baden, Prussia and Württemberg, even Russia, briefly, under Tsar Alexander I, and France, under First Consul Napoleon—displayed enlightened features.

As this issue demonstrates, Balázs sometimes prefers a strongly held view over available evidence. While in most instances she scrupulously adheres to meticulous research, she can become captive to her own biases. She reveals a tendency toward romantic idealism, which has characterized many works on Hungarian history. The 19th-century romantic idealization of the nation embodying putative permanent values and virtues has been replaced, mostly after 1945, by a romantic glorification of the Hungarian progressive tradition. Usually, a line is drawn from members of the 1794 Martinovics conspiracy through the radical democrats of 1848–1849 to the so-called bourgeois radicals before the First World War, and their respective importance in each historical period is emphasized or implicitly assumed.

This is not to say that historians should subscribe to the needlessly belittling comments of C. A. Macartney, who described the Martinovics conspiracy as "an almost ludicrously childish affair of a few men,"³ or to Gyula Szekfű's mordant criticism of the two latter groups in his *Három Nemzedék* (1920). Rather, the forward-looking views of these radicals, as well as their personal integrity and courage, deserve respect. Still, T.C.W. Blanning's view of the controversy about the Martinovics conspiracy also applies to the mid-19th and early 20th-century groups. "The attention paid to the episode," Blanning wrote, "certainly owes more to late twentieth-century politics than to late eighteenth-century reality."⁴

As Marc Bloch observed, "knowledge of the past is something progressive which is constantly transforming and perfecting itself."⁵ Indeed, successive generations of historians view the past differently, often in ways which increase our historical understanding. Nevertheless, historians engaged in reinterpretation have an obligation to respect proportionality in the past, which means respecting the sense of what was more or less significant in the eyes of contemporaries, according to their own observations and values.

Professor Balázs pays no attention to the Martinovics conspiracy; she does something infinitely bolder. She has elevated the gentry to be the depository of progressive views. Naturally, she is too good a historian to believe that the entire class was progressive; she does speak of "retrograde factions" (p. 8), "of the feudal outlook of the nobility" (pp. 125–126), and of how members of the noble assembly in Szabolcs County were complaining in 1788 about the loss of their "ancient rights and liberties." (p. 269)

At the same time, she has made statements contrary to her own acknowle-

ments of the limitations of gentry involvement in reform, claiming that "the reformist nobility embraced much of the aristocrat, gentry, and petty gentry classes," (p. 142) and that the gentry began "to organize outside the traditional framework of counties in small groups that were pressing for regeneration." (p. 122)

The key to Balázs' thinking rests on the assumption that resistance to Joseph II united the country's progressive and retrograde factions, who in turn then developed a "genuine commitment to independent action and modernization replacing a policy that merely expressed the grievances of the Estates." (p. 8) This assumption, unfortunately, is a giant leap of faith based on wishful thinking, rather than on hard evidence.

All contemporary and later accounts of the gentry in Hungary stress their narrow provincialism, characterized by obsessive preoccupation with their homes, estates and amusements, hospitality to friends and relatives, and love of local politics in county assemblies, where they felt truly safe and at home.⁶ Balázs has built her case through selecting individuals from the gentry, such as Miklós Skerlecz and József Podmaniczky, who had displayed erudition and progressive views, and then exhorts the historian Domokos Kosáry "to widen his currently somewhat restricted definition of the Hungarian progressive camp." (p. 10)

However, neither Kosáry nor anyone else to my knowledge has ever denied the existence of few relatively outstanding individuals who came from the gentry. Even if diligent research would unearth a few more names, this would not validate Professor Balázs' claims about widespread involvement of the gentry with modernization and regeneration.

The alliance between friends and foes of the Enlightenment against Joseph II was

a purely tactical one which dissolved immediately upon his death. All instructions to delegates from the counties to the Diet of 1790–1791 contained a reference to “the ancient constitution under past attack”, a clear-cut repudiation of Enlightenment ideas and practices. The delegates’ sole concession to the latter was the setting up of nine committees to explore the country’s problems. This was done, according to Marczali, because, while the delegates adhered to “the old,” they could not completely shut themselves off from “the new.”⁸ However, the archreactionary Emperor Francis I’s oppressive regime and the nobility’s aversion to any reform in the wake of the French revolutionary experiences put on hold any activities of these committees, let alone dissemination of new ideas and adoption of new solutions.

Éva Balázs registers her dissent, asserting that progressive political thinking continued and indeed formed a link during the intervening period between the reform movements of the 1780s and 1790s and the Age of Reform of the 1830s and 1840s. To Balázs, continuity is the most significant fact about this transitional period, and she again castigates Kosáry for giving insufficient weight to this fact. (p. 318)

This rather jaded controversy needs to be replaced by a more nuanced and balanced depiction of periods between eras of reform. History knows no vacuum, no period dies off without consequences and residues, and no new period is born without antecedents. Oppression was brutal in Hungary after the defeat of the 1848–1849 War of Liberation, but its memory survived and the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise was constructed of building blocks deriving from the agreement between Hungary and the Habsburg dynasty in 1848. Likewise, noble politicians during the Age of Reform built on the legacy of the 18th century and also the subsequent

activities of mostly poets, writers and playwrights, who against heavy odds had championed modernity in Hungary in various ways and to various degrees.

Once again, Balázs bases her strong stand on the activities of a few individuals, including József Podmaniczky, Miklós Skerlecz and the Palatine, Archduke Joseph, that truly outstanding representative of the Josephinist tradition. However, for all the threads of continuity, the distinctiveness of any historical period in a given country should be measured not so much by what later became important concerns and themes as by the character of the government at the time and by the dominant mood of the intellectual elite, usually the most sensitive barometer to the tenor of the times. Although the government perpetuated the forms of Josephinism and even its content in church–state relations, its underlying substance became, in R. J. W. Evans’ words, “arid dynastic loyalism.”⁹

Among those who cared not just about their family and their county but also about the country of Hungary as a whole, the outlook on life was grim. Between the period of 1795 and 1815, no solutions for the country’s backwardness, provincialism and spiritual and intellectual stagnation seemed to appear on the horizon. The mood among the small elite was a sense of malaise.¹⁰ “I dread the future,” the historian István Horvát wrote to János Ferenczy in 1809, “as we are just muddling through. It would be good if we could do something on our own.... that would be worthy of our nation but we are unfit to do it.”¹¹

Of Balázs’s two principal heroes, Skerlecz died in 1799, and Podmaniczky became a high county official and then a diplomat in Paris. When he returned to Hungary in 1818, he received the Grand Cross of the Leopold Order. He refused to accept it, saying that he would not need

such an "empty ornament" among his serfs at Aszód.¹² The threads of continuity were made up of such gestures and the activities of a small group of writers. However, the prime characteristics of the 1780s and 1790s were left behind, and what was coming in the 1830s and 1840s was a set of partially resurfacing but essen-

tially new responses to new circumstances.

Although I would prefer that Professor Balázs reconsider the validity of some of her interpretations, she has written a valuable book, which should be read by specialists and all those who are interested in this fascinating period of Hungarian and Habsburg history. ■

NOTES

1 ■ Bela K. Kiraly: *Hungary in the Late Eighteenth Century. The Decline of Enlightened Despotism*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 30.

2 ■ T. C. W. Blanning: *Joseph II*. London, Longman, 1994, p. 13; Domokos Kosáry: *Újjáépítés és polgárosodás 1711–1867*. (Reconstruction and Embourgeoisement) Budapest, Háttér Lap és Könyvkiadó, 1990, p. 99; Henrik Marczali, *Hungary in the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1910, p. 119.

3 ■ C.A. Macartney: *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918*. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1969, p. 157.

4 ■ Blanning, *op.cit.*, p. 204.

5 ■ Marc Bloch: *The Historian's Craft*. New York, Alfred Knopf, 1961, p. 58.

6 ■ Kiraly: *op.cit.*, p. 39.

7 ■ Henrik Marczali: *Az 1790/I-diki Ország-*

gyűlés. (The National Diet of 1790/1) Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1907, I, p. 167.

8 ■ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

9 ■ R. J. W. Evans: "Josephinism, 'Austrianness,' and the Revolution of 1848," in Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, eds., *The Austrian Enlightenment and its Aftermath*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1991, p. 148.

10 ■ János Pór: *Kényszerpályák nemzedéke 1795–1815. (A Derailed Generation)*, Budapest, Gondolat, 1988, p. 176.

11 ■ István Soós, ed., *Horvát István és Ferenczy János Levelezése*. (The Correspondence of István Horvát and János Ferenczy) Budapest, Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Irodalomtudományi Intézete, 1990, p. 194.

12 ■ József Szinnyei, *Magyar írók élete és munkái (The Lives and Works of Hungarian Writers)*. Budapest, Hornyánszky Viktor, 1910, vol. X, p. 1298.

László Ferenczi

And the Birds Fly Away

A magyar avantgárd irodalom (1915–1930) olvasókönyve

(A Hungarian Avant-garde Literature Reader). With a Commentary.

Selected and edited by Pál Deréky; biographical details and foreword by Pál Deréky.

Budapest, Argumentum Kiadó, 1998 334 pp.

Pál Deréky teaches Hungarian literature at the University of Vienna. He has devoted many years to the theory and history of the Avant-garde. His *A vasbeton torony költői* (The Poets of the Tower of Reinforced Concrete) was published in 1992 in Budapest, one year after the German-language version of the book (*Ungarische Avantgarde-Dichtung in Wien. 1920–1926*, Wien, 1991) appeared.

In 1996 Deréky brought out a supplementary reader in two languages: *A magyar avantgárd irodalom (1915–1930) olvasókönyve* (In German as *Lesebuch der Ungarischen Avantgarde-literatur (1915–1930)*). The book here considered is the revised edition of the reader, this time only in Hungarian. As an extra feature, there are unsigned commentaries, written by Deréky and others. Close to the year 2000, Deréky's reader meets a need. To explain what I mean by this, I shall briefly review the history of the Hungarian Avant-garde and its reception. Ady's *Új versek* (New Poems) a herald of Symbolism and the

emergence of one of the giants of Hungarian poetry were published in 1906; the first volume of the anthology *Holnap* (Tomorrow) came out in 1908, the same year that saw the first issue of the journal *Nyugat* (West). (*Nyugat* lasted until 1941.) The main figure behind both the anthology and the magazine was Endre Ady. Modern Hungarian literature (including the Hungarian Avant-garde, a more or less distinct entity within it, and of a more limited timespan than the more generally used term modernity denotes) emerged against a background that was far from intellectually isolated, introspective or backward-looking; it was an open environment, which looked to the future and was able to incorporate foreign influences in a sovereign manner. The environment was one in which the works of Marx, Nietzsche, Ferrero, Bergson and Freud were known to every educated man or woman. Budapest was Europe's most rapidly developing city at the time. The spring of 1914 saw the appearance of *Modern költők* (Modern Poets), a collection of Dezső Kosztolányi's translations. Making accessible the poetry that followed Poe, Baudelaire and Whitman was among the greatest achievements of the revolution in poetry that *Nyugat* set off. The collection introduced Belgian and Russian Symbolists, Italian Futurists and German Expressionists, thus bringing these

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diverse movements to Hungary more or less simultaneously. Beside Kosztolányi's book, the great art exhibitions before 1914 also provide evidence to confirm this. Works by Picasso, Kandinsky and the Italian Futurists were shown in Budapest. In April 1909—the same year that the Futurist Manifesto was published in Paris, with its momentous international repercussions—Lajos Kassák (1887–1967), a young man of twenty-two at the time, set out to walk there: Dropping out of school at the age of eleven, Kassák found employment in a foundry. He had taken up serious reading and writing more or less around that time, at the age of just twenty; the first volume of *Holnap* made a crucial impact on him. At his wife's prompting, he decided to emulate Ady's journey to Paris. His journey took him through Pozsony, the later Bratislava, and Germany; it was in a German tavern that he met the Hungarian Emil Szittyá, who persuaded him to make his way to Paris via Belgium.

Szittyá, a vagabond apostle of the European Avant-garde, was a character who defies description. He had helped launch two great poets, Kassák and the French Blaise Cendrars, and he was probably also the first to recognize Chagall's talent. Kassák mentioned him in two of his works that describe his wanderings across Western Europe: in the long narrative poem "A ló meghal a madarak kirepülnek" (The Horse Dies the Birds Fly Away, 1922) and in both volumes of his autobiography *Egy ember élete* (The Life of a Man). In the poem he speaks of him briefly and scornfully, and in prose at length and in great detail, with a love-hate ambivalence. He made no bones about admitting that Szittyá had spotted his talent as early as 1909, and that it was Szittyá who directed him towards the arts; nor did he deny that in 1915, when the two met once again, it was Szittyá who encouraged him to publish his poems and launch a new magazine. Kassák was also quick to

point out that they had fallen out soon after that. What Kassák failed to mention was that in the Autumn of 1914, when Szittyá started the journal *Mistral* in Switzerland, its first issue included a poem each from Kassák and Apollinaire; and he also forgot to say anything about the relations between Szittyá and Cendrars, of which he must have been fully aware. Falling out and ex-communication was very much an everyday occurrence in modernist circles. On his return from Paris in 1910, Kassák published a fortnightly, *Renaissance* (1910–1911). (All the leading figures of *Nyugat*, including Ady, contributed to *Renaissance*.)

Kassák's first book, a collection of short stories *Életsiratás* (Life Mourning), appeared in 1912. The critics welcomed it as the first authentic product of proletarian literature; nothing was said about the isms—quite rightly.

Right up to autumn 1914 *Nyugat* accepted Kassák; it was Kassák who singled out *Nyugat* as his chosen opposition, the circle against which he wished to define his own movement. (He did not even consider the conservative opposition to *Nyugat*.)

In 1915 he published a book of poems, *Eposz Wagner maszkjában* (Epic in Wagner's Mask)—three of its important pieces had been published in *Nyugat*, and soon afterwards started another journal, *Tett* (Act).

Eposz and *Tett* are closely related. Through the former Kassák established the authority he needed to start *Tett*, and *Tett* in turn proved that something radically new had begun with *Eposz*. It was *Tett* that provoked controversy, rather than *Eposz*, which was well received by *Nyugat*; in other words, it was Kassák's movement, rather than his poetry, that touched off the storm.

In 1916 *Tett* was banned because of the foreword to its international issue; however, within weeks Kassák launched yet another new journal, *MA* (Today). There is a fundamental difference between the two.

Tett was a workshop, in which Kassák was still merely the first among equals. By contrast, in *MA* Kassák was already the undisputed leader, against whom the others could, at the most, only rebel—and rebel they did. Furthermore, *Tett* was a literary magazine with occasional articles on art. In *MA* literature and art were on an equal footing, with the latter coming to dominate during the Viennese period of the magazine (1920–1925).

Kassák and his movement had four glorious years after starting *Tett* and *MA*. The two revolutions that came in quick succession, first in Russia and then in Hungary, seemed to bear out the international, world-revolutionary and messianic views of *MA*. The *MA* contributors launched a frontal attack against the writers of *Nyugat*, burying Ady as a relic of the past even in his lifetime. The future seemed to belong to Kassák and his circle. Ady died in January 1919; Kassák himself wrote the obituary in *MA*, which read like a proclamation of a victor's viewpoint. The establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in March 1919 further brightened Kassák's prospects; however, he soon fell out with its Communist leader Béla Kun over artistic and political matters. In all probability he would have been jailed, had the Republic not collapsed so quickly; however, during the ensuing white terror he was arrested as a dangerous revolutionary. On his release from prison he went into exile in Vienna, then the haven for those of progressive views, who often engaged in fierce disputes among themselves.

Against incredible odds, Kassák managed to re-launch *MA* in Vienna in 1920; it was able to survive until 1925, a surprisingly long period in comparison with other international modernist magazines. The following six years were the most productive and most versatile period in Kassák's life. Meanwhile, the position of *Nyugat* in

Hungary was weakened, although not on account of *MA*, but under the attacks of the conservative right, who accused *Nyugat*, and most notably Ady, of subversion.

In 1926, following the proclamation of a general amnesty, a large number of the exiles returned to Hungary. With his associates (Tibor Déry, József Nádass, Gyula Illyés, Andor Németh), Kassák founded *Dokumentum*, the most important magazine of Hungarian Surrealism. (It even published a review of the Budapest phone directory by Illyés.) Around that time, Lőrinc Szabó, the author of a volume of Expressionist free verses, *A sátán műremekei* (Satan's Masterpieces), founded *Pandora*, launched from within the *Nyugat* circle by some young writers, who had turned against it. Another new journal was founded, *Kút* (Well), which was first and foremost an art magazine, although it did publish a poem by Lőrinc Szabó and a play by Herwarth Walden. One of its regular contributors was the art critic Ernő Kállay, who had earlier published his articles in *MA* of Vienna. In 1927 all three magazines folded.

To all appearances it was curtains for the Avant-garde.

The literature devoted to a discussion of Hungarian Avant-garde since 1916–1917 could fill a small library. The earliest article on the subject was written in 1916 by Mihály Babits, a prominent poet, and later editor, of *Nyugat*, who was the magazine's most important figure between the two World Wars. Although Babits rejected the movement, he discussed it at length, and gave it much attention, in fact doing much to boost its standing. Soon after this he reviewed the activities of *Tett* in an academic magazine. Since then, masses of pamphlets, essays, monographs and autobiographies have been published on the subject. Even the theoretical writings about Avant-garde art and literature have

been collected in a single volume—everything except the poems and short stories that prompted the debates.

Only a few devoted students had access to the old magazines and the rare volumes of poems, now mostly transferred to microfiche. The interested general reader could read the commentaries, but not the original texts. It is hard not to form the impression that both supporters and opponents of the Avant-garde were equally reluctant to check the actual primary texts for fear that these would not corroborate their respective positions, for or against. Indeed, the non-availability of texts might also have been caused by the unswerving hostility the political powers of the day showed towards modernism in all its aspects. As a result, Deréky's anthology provides non-specialist readers with their first chance to make direct contact with Hungarian Avant-garde poetry, their first opportunity to select and to evaluate it according to individual taste, experience and sensibilities.

Naturally, not all texts were completely unknown. Lajos Kassák's books were usually available, except in the period roughly between 1949 and 1955, but sometimes even his books had their own fate. In 1920, in Vienna, he published a prose epic on the Hungarian Soviet Republic, *Máglyák énekelnek* (The Bonfires Are Singing), which was rejected by the successive political regimes with equal vehemence. A second edition came out only in 1970, a few years after Kassák's death (1967). The epic poem "*A ló meghal a madarak kirepülnek*", a major opus in Kassák's oeuvre, was published in Vienna in 1922, in a small Hungarian magazine which only had a single issue; it was also published soon after in an anthology. At the time of its appearance it elicited no response whatsoever. In any event, the year 1922 was a turning point in the history of Kassák's reception.

Up till then all the important critics had applauded the poet; after that, critical enthusiasm began to wane, and after the late 1920s they praised the author of the autobiography *Egy ember élete* at the expense of the poet. It was only in the mid-1960s that the poem "*A ló meghal a madarak kirepülnek*" came to be regarded as one of the great poems of the century; its growing reputation culminated in 1967, when an entire academic conference was devoted to its analysis. It has frequently been suggested by literary historians that the piece was inspired by Apollinaire and Cendrars. About fifteen years ago it was suggested that the poem may have had a Hungarian antecedent in the form of a poem of a journey published in Kassák's *Tett*. After 1916, this poem, *Páris, Liège, Trencsény-teplíc*, by Tivadar Raith, was republished first by Pál Deréky in his anthology. It was Tivadar Raith who was the first to translate Apollinaire into Hungarian, in the very first issue of *Tett*. Raith's first volume of prose poems, in Hungarian, was published in Paris in 1914. Deréky, who puts the birth of the Avant-garde at 1915, did not include any pieces from the volume in this anthology.

In consequence, Deréky omits the proto-history of the Avant-garde, the years preceding the formation of *Tett*; however, he does show the Avant-garde spirit that was present in the 1920s independent of the movement by publishing works by Sándor Márai, just then first publishing as a novelist, and by three other young poets, Lőrinc Szabó, Attila József and Miklós Radnóti. In other words, for the early period he identifies the Avant-garde with the movement, drawing a distinction between the two only later, after 1920.

In 1920 Kassák was forced into exile in Vienna, and the movement continued to operate from there. However, after the war new figures emerged both in Hungary and

in exile, who were influenced by the Avant-garde yet did not wish to join the movement. One of them was the novelist Sándor Márai (1900–1989), who wrote about Kassák with great enthusiasm in 1918. In 1919 he left Hungary to live in Berlin and later in Paris; he even switched to using German in his prose right up to the mid-1920s; he had no contact with Kassák whatsoever. Today, Márai is regarded as one of the outstanding masters of twentieth-century Hungarian prose, who soon shed all traces of the experimental or of modernism. Back in the 1940s, and most recently also, many of his novels were translated into foreign languages, primarily into French and Italian. Deréky deserves much credit for rediscovering the poet Márai, whose lyrical vein has been largely overlooked even by his greatest admirers; the reader contains a selection of his early poems. Deréky also merits praise for his decision to include some of Lőrinc Szabó's expressionist poems. Szabó had no connection with the movement, nor with the exiles; as a young poet whose star was rapidly rising in the circles of *Nyugat*, it was there that he published an enthusiastic article about *Máglyák énekelnek*. He predicted that these poems would soon come home to Hungary; they had to wait fifty years. In *Az izmusok története* (A History of the Isms), a book written after the Second World War, Kassák claimed that the Avant-garde lived on in the poetry of Attila József (1905–1937) and Gyula Illyés (1902–1983). Attila József, who did not go into exile, tried to establish contact with Kassák; in Vienna he looked him up, but Kassák was unwilling to publish any of his poems. The only piece he ever published by Attila József was a translation, but that was in Budapest, in the magazine *Munka* (Work), established in 1928. Illyés, who was in exile in Paris between 1920 and 1926, met

the Dadaist and Surrealist poets there. He enjoyed a lifelong friendship with Tzara and Eluard. Illyés sent his poems and translations to the rival journals in Vienna. These were usually run by those who had deserted Kassák, such as Kassák's brother-in-law, Sándor Barta, a poet by whom was included in Ivan Goll's anthology *Poètes de cinq continents* (1922). After their return to Hungary in 1926, Illyés and Kassák co-edited (along with Tibor Déry, Andor Németh and József Nádass) *Dokumentum*. The journal folded after six issues for want of an audience who could have appreciated it, as Kassák put it. After that, the lives of Kassák and Illyés took their different courses, and Deréky once again deserves credit for including the relevant poems by Attila József and Gyula Illyés in his anthology.

In this selection, Deréky has provided a new portrait of the Hungarian Avant-garde. Before the publication of his book, the Avant-garde was essentially identified with the movement, and the movement with Kassák. The Hungarian Avant-garde was basically reduced to the person of Kassák, whose talent even his opponents recognized. The general assumption was, however, that only people of mediocre gifts and unhappy circumstances gathered around Kassák, and that the entire movement was an alien body in twentieth-century Hungarian literature. This was done without actually denying that for a brief period of time, Attila József and Gyula Illyés, two poets now regarded as classic twentieth-century authors, had also been seduced by him. Although Deréky never questions Kassák's revolutionary significance, he does not identify the Avant-garde with the movement and, therefore, assumes the Avant-garde spirit to be a great deal more complex and with a more intricately woven texture. This Avant-garde is hallmarked not only by Kassák, but also

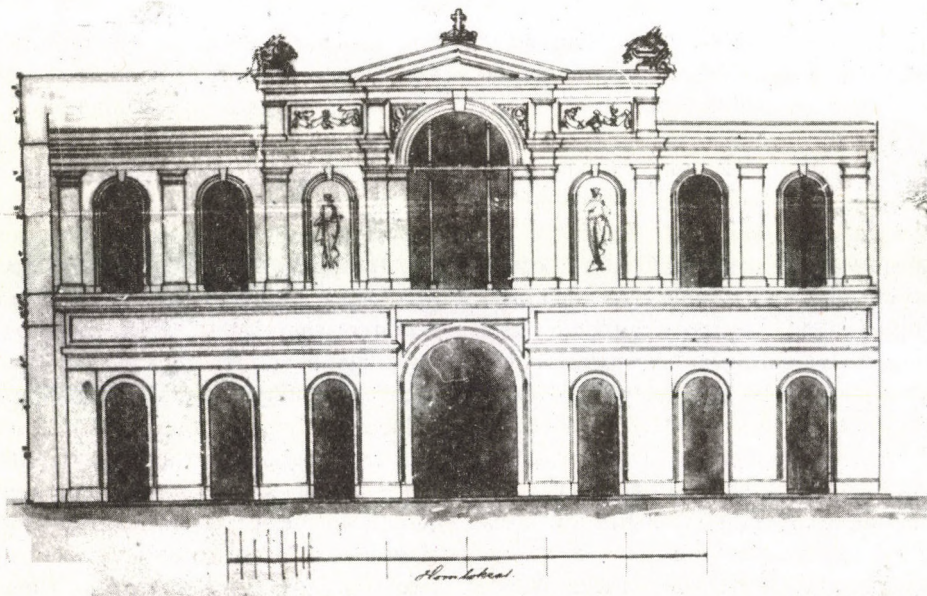
by Attila József, Gyula Illyés, Sándor Márai, Lőrinc Szabó and Miklós Radnóti.

The anthology also merits praise for selecting the works of many neglected poets. József Nádass, for example, deliberately left his early, Avant-garde works out from his collected poems published in 1962—on political considerations. After seventy years, Derékly has republished some fine pieces that Nádass was trying to edit out of his oeuvre.

Derékly ends his anthology with the year 1930, and quite rightly so. In 1930, or perhaps even a few years earlier, the Avant-garde was generally viewed as finished, outmoded and dangerous. Many, Kassák included, identified free verse with the Avant-garde; and in 1929 Lőrinc Szabó suggested that anyone who wrote free verse was a Communist. By contrast, after 1945 those so engaged were branded as bourgeois decadents, the servants of Imperialism. In any event, regardless of the political connotations, people writing

free verse were regarded as clumsy and artistically immature, especially after Attila József, Miklós Radnóti, Gyula Illyés and Lőrinc Szabó had all reverted to rhyme and classic metric forms. The rehabilitation of free verse, and also of the isms in general, began in the 1960s.

Pál Derékly has published a very useful book: he has made formerly inaccessible and, thus, largely forgotten texts available again. For the first time, the general reader has direct access to these works, rather than through the interpretation of literary historians and theoreticians. His arrangement is alphabetical by authors, which is the most unbiased way, one that allows the works to speak for themselves, independent of the intentions and individual ideas of the editor. Since his intention was not a comprehensive anthology, Derékly was bold enough to leave out those Avant-garde authors, or authors publishing in Avant-garde magazines, for whom he felt no special affinity. ■



Frontage of György Klösz's second studio, into which he moved at the beginning of the 1870s.

Júlia Szabó

Idea Aeroplanes and Oberdada

László Beke (ed.): *Dadaizmus antológia* (An Anthology of Dadaism). Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 1998, 337 pp. • Krisztina Passuth: *Avantgarde kapcsolatok Prágától Budapestig 1907–1930* (Avant-garde Connections from Prague to Budapest). Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 1998, 381 pp.

Both these books are authoritative statements on their subject, complete with the needed scholarly apparatus. Their target readership are students and others with a special interest. Exhibition catalogues and books in many parts of the world have discussed these themes, with some of the present authors as contributors—both books include a comprehensive list of the relevant publications.¹ Works by Czech Cubists, Constructivists and Poetists have been shown (more than once) in Budapest, and there has also been an important exhibition devoted to the Zenit circle and to a group of Polish Constructivists.² A small exhibition featuring Estonian Modernism and Avant-garde art was held in Pécs in 1991, though making a small impact, and the material selected left much to be desired.³ Since the 1960s, the Hungarian Avant-garde has been abundantly represented in Hungarian and foreign exhibitions alike, corresponding to

the important role it played in the art and literature of the region. Judging by their past publications, both authors are well aware of this fact, in the books under review, however, only Krisztina Passuth stresses it in her insightful analysis.

In the *An Anthology of Dadaism*, edited by László Beke, we are treated to some fine translations of Kurt Schwitters' and Tristan Tzara's writings from the 1920s, along with the Hungarian rendering of some poems by that master translator, Dezső Tandori (for example, "The Dialogue of the Coach-Driver and the Lark," by Richard Hülsenbeck—Tristan Tzara or "The Hyperbole of the Crocodile Hairdresser and the Walking Stick", the latter he translated twice, in 1982 and 1986). Beke himself has provided his own translations of both prose and poetry. Thus, the texts take centre stage. The postscript, the notes and the black-and-white photographs on their part, serve as sign posts only as regards the artists, settings and works of a movement once regarded as scandalous.

At this stage we might well ask whether the year 1907, which also appears in Krisztina Passuth's title, can be taken as the starting point of the Avant-garde as a movement. She identifies it with the beginnings of Cubism in Paris, László Beke on the other hand includes Symbolist and Expressionist verse as a manifestation of

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the Avant-garde. Both approaches are familiar from other scholars as well, not to mention dating that differs from both. Mario de Micheli goes back furthest to 1848. These days S. A. Mansbach and others also look on Art Nouveau and the Modernism of the 1890s as an Avant-garde movement. Partisans of a more rigorous definition—myself included—only speak of an Avant-garde after 1910. The Cubist approach to space and time and to new image structures only became fully-fledged then, completely changing the world, seen as an active social force, and precisely in Central and Eastern Europe. Just before the outbreak of the First World War (1913) and during it, it synthesized with German Expressionism which started around 1905, and with Futurism, created by Italian artists in Milan and Paris in and after 1909, which embarked on the conquest of the whole of the continent of Europe. Krisztina Passuth does not focus on particular schools and trends, but discusses in detail specific locations, events and artists.

The jacket cover of Krisztina Passuth's *Avant-garde Connections from Prague to Budapest* features the poster for the 1924 exhibition of the Belgrade group, Zenit, which declared itself in a manifesto by the Serb poet and the movement's chief organizer, Ljubomir Micić, to be one of the "idea flyers", symbolizing friendship between the innovating artists of all countries. Ignoring historical problems, Krisztina Passuth does not discuss the historical context of the Europe of the 1910s and 1920s—barely mentioning the gestures of those avant-garde activists who tried to disregard the prevailing conditions. Her book offers a rich selection of the Cubo-Expressionist paintings and sculptures of the Prague and Brno museums, along with some works by individuals and groups within the Polish Avant-garde, and several portraits of Tristan Tzara (including one by

the Hungarian painter Lajos Tihanyi and another by M. H. Maxy).

Tristan Tzara was first a Romanian Symbolist poet. In 1916, when Romania entered the war, he and his friend Marcel Iancu packed all their belongings into suitcases and took the train to Zurich in neutral Switzerland. There, they and other East and Central-European artists in exile, dressed in vividly coloured paper clothes and recited cabaret poems in French or German. Dadaism mostly figures as something Western; both books deserve credit for modifying this simplified picture. Krisztina Passuth places greater emphasis on the preliminaries, Beke on his part points to the universal in what to others appears as of merely local of Central or Eastern European significance.

Krisztina Passuth closely observes the emergence of new techniques, iconographic types and formal elements in the areas she considers as important. She concentrates her attention topographically on Czech, Polish, Romanian and South Slav manifestations as well as on the Hungarian Avant-garde in both Budapest and Vienna. Somewhat exaggerating, she declares in her opening pages: "Before 1914 avant-garde movements were present in two Central-European countries, in Bohemia and Hungary." Fortunately, a few paragraphs later she does underline the importance of what went on in Germany, and at several points in her book she also addresses the impact of Futurism. She tends to give more emphasis to Berlin in the twenties, saying less about Dresden and Munich. She has greater sympathy for education through art at Weimar and Dessau than for the anti-militarist and anarchist Berlin *Die Aktion*. She is unimpressed by *Die Aktion's* graphic work—quite unfairly—describing it as secondary. She has less to say about Expressionism, and though she mentions Futurism in various connec-

De Styl Weimar		2x2		ÇA IRA Bruxelles		UT Novi Sad	
DER STURM Berlin		Wien		L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU Paris			
BROOM Berlin				MECANO Weimar		LA VIE DES LETTRES ET DES ARTS Paris	
DER GEGNER Berlin		DIE AKTION Berlin		ZENIT Zagreb			

MA

Internacionális aktivista művészeti folyóirat • Szerkesztő: Kassák Lajos • Feltételező: Josef Kalmer • Szerkesztőség és kiadóhivatal: Wien, XIII. Bel-Amalienstrasse 26. I. II • Megjelenés dátuma 1922 október 15 • Előfizetési ár: EGY ÉVRE: 35.000 osztrák kor., 70 szokol, 100 dinár, 200 lei, 800 márka • EGYES SZÁM ÁRA: 3000 osztrák korona, 7 szokol, 10 dinár, 20 lei, 80 márka • VIII. évfolyam, 1. szám • A lapban megjelenő cikkekért a szerző felel.

Druckerei: J. Demmel, Wien, IX., Bergasse 31

Back page of the cover of MA (15 October 1922) with the advertisements of different European modernist magazines.

tions, she largely overlooks the often dubious, but in their importance crucial, links between the Futurists and the other avant-garde movements. In any event, for her Paris Cubism takes pride of place.

She is able to establish what is Futurist about the early Hungarian Activists, yet she makes no mention of the fact that the first Futurist manifesto (drafted in Paris in 1909) was published in Budapest in April 1910 in the journal *Nyugat* in Mihály

Babits's translation (and this happened in other places in Central and Eastern Europe as well).⁴ The poets and critics of *Nyugat* (Babits, Kosztolányi, Dezső Szabó), along with a member of the first Modernist group, Nyolcak (The Eight), the painter Róbert Berény discussed and argued against, the Futurist approach. In 1962, Krisztina Passuth published a book on the painting of The Eight⁵ and in several exhibitions which she arranged these Express-

sionist and Naturalist painters were presented as the first avant-garde movement in Hungary. In the light of current research, The Eight, who were followers of Cézanne and other Post-Impressionists, seem more like an intermediate step towards the Avant-garde, with only a few of them (Berényi, Tihanyi) becoming involved in the politically tainted avant-garde genres.

Krisztina Passuth's Paris-centred notion of the Avant-garde before the mid-1920s is a by-product of a number of exhibitions and the research connected with them. Over several decades she has written on the Hungarian Cubists in Paris (Alfréd Réth, József Csáky, et al.), and she played a major part in the production of the catalogue of the Paris exhibition of František Kupka's oeuvre, as well as in the famous Paris-Berlin exhibition emphasizing the primacy of Paris.⁶ Thus her championing of Paris is a logical outcome of a claim, in many respects well-founded, which goes back to the 19th century. She has found a painter-genius in the person of Kupka to give substance to this idea. His musically-structured Cubist and Orphic compositions and organic abstract paintings made him a true creator of new painterly values, one of the outstanding artists in Central Europe's approaching closest to the ideal Avant-garde, an equal of Kandinsky. A similar intellectuality was present in the exhibitions of the Berlin *Der Sturm*, which after the 1910s paid respect to Robert and Sonia Delaunay's Orphism and to the artists of the Munich *Blauer Reiter*. A sad yet dignified relict of this age is Egon Schiele's drawing on the cover of the 1914 *Die Aktion*, showing the features of Charles Peguy, the French poet who was killed in one of the opening battles of the war. A similar gesture was the publication, in Zsófia Dénes' translation, of Apollinaire's essay on Cubism by the Hungarian magazine *MA*. Its editor, Lajos Kassák,

who in 1909 had walked on foot all the way to Paris, always spoke of the primacy of Cubism, and both Futurism and Expressionism were strongly criticized in his magazine; nevertheless, in the first wave of the Hungarian Avant-garde, that is amongst the artists grouped around the magazines *MA* and *Tett*, all three movements were equally present. Passuth notes these distinctions when discussing the oeuvres of individual artists such as Béla Uitz and Sándor Bortnyik, but prefers not to draw any general conclusions, perhaps to avoid simplifications.

The painter, sculptor and graphic artist Máttis Teutsch, most highly favoured by Krisztina Passuth, had no direct ties with Kupka. Like him, he was nevertheless a spiritual, orphic avant-garde artist. Krisztina Passuth started to discuss him back in the 1970s, drawing attention to his special qualities, manifest in colouring and form. His art took shape in the Paris-Berlin-Munich-Budapest-Rome context. The more's the pity that, because of a number of Bucharest exhibitions, she discusses the second period of the Brasow-based artist as part of the Romanian Avant-garde.

Krisztina Passuth gives primacy to Máttis Teutsch but discusses all the principal members of the Hungarian Avant-garde. The presentation of the Hungarian Dada is a shade paler in László Beke's selection and his own essay than the reality. Bearing in mind that, after the shared Futurist preludes, Kassák included a quasi-Dadaist poem in his first volume, *Eposz Wagner maszkjában* (An Epic Poem in Wagner's Mask) as early as 1915, with a German translation also published in the anti-militarist Zurich newspaper *Der Mistral*, we are bound to feel it unjust to begin an anthology of Hungarian Dada with Tibor Déry's forgotten writings, overlooking the earlier volumes of Kassák, the author of *Világanyám* (Universe Mother,

1921) and the Dadaist masterpiece "A ló meghal a madarak kirepülnek" (The Horse Dies the Birds Fly Away, 1922).⁷

Krisztina Passuth pays a great deal more attention to the Avant-garde events of the "main centres" of the 1920s (Berlin, Paris), than to the goings-on of the early 1910s. In this book she once again shows herself partial to the Bohemian, Polish, Romanian and Yugoslav Avant-garde. Sadly, neither the Slovakian nor the Hungarian Avant-garde of Pozsony (Bratislava) nor Kassa (Kosice) or Losonc (Lučenec) are present in her account of the region. Nor is there any mention of the Avant-garde literature and art of the Transylvanian cities of Kolozsvár (Cluj) and Arad, with their Hungarian magazines *Kiáltás* (Scream), *Napkelet* (East), *Korunk* (Our Age), and *Periszkóp* (Periscope), each abounding with ideas and closely tied to the mainstream of European modernism. The Serbian *Zenit* from the Voivodina is the only Újvidék (Novi Sad) entry, even though there was also a Hungarian Activist publication there, *Az Út* (The Road), edited by Zoltán Csuka, who captured the tragic and precarious historical position of Central Europe in a number of Expressionist poems. Csuka discovered the signs of disintegration in the Central Europe of the 1920s, while his Activist/Constructivist fellow artists were building the sand castles of the future, and the "idea Aeroplanes" (Micić) were commuting between the centres and the peripheries.

At a time when many were already burying Expressionism in German, Hungarian, Polish, Czech, Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian publications, the Expressionist/Dadaist modes still seemed timely in this part of Europe. (The latter three are, again, sadly left out of Krisztina Passuth's book.)⁸

In the 1920s an absurd version of Expressionism, influenced by Dada, appeared in remote towns in Central Europe,

(such as Osiek and Subotica in the Voivodina, as Krisztina Passuth herself mentions) on stage, in magazines and in books. Ödön Palasovszky and his friends in Budapest, who receive little attention in either book, produced Tristan Tzara's *Gas-Heart* in Endre Gáspár's translation.⁹ This production presented in an ironic vein the myth of the avant-garde artist's supremacy and his power to change the world, as proclaimed by Kupka, Kassák and Marinetti: "...man is dirty, he kills off the animals, the plants and his brothers and sisters, he is contentious, intelligent and talks too much... But the artist is able to produce creative forms which become organic." These were Tristan Tzara's words, who looked back with an incredulous nostalgia on a dream born at the beginning of the century.

Beginning with the 1960s, the programmes and forms of European Constructivism revived all over the world; in conjunction with this, Dada and Oberdada were also resuscitated in both poetry, performance and mockery. I mention only one event, which took place in Budapest in the Spring of 1999. In the private gallery Studio 1900, a young artist, Tibor Bada Dada, showed his provocative paintings and collages,¹⁰ along with a video recording which captured him dressed in Dada costume, doing his physical jerks while repeating the battle cries of *Total Spring* as the heir of the immortal Dada. His paintings feature *The Werewolf in the Deadly Spring* and *Moon Ring Triangle and the Cubo-Cosmic Conversion with the Sunrise*. With both sleeves of his jacket cut off, the young man wore a colourful hat decorated with strange figures, and was visibly trembling with cold. His performance, poems and pictures would not have seemed out of place in the anthology compiled by Beke and, being a native of Újvidék (Novi Sad), his name could have been mentioned by Krisztina Passuth. ❁

NOTES

- 1 ■ A. Turowsky: *Constructivism in Poland*. 1923–1936. Essen, Museum Folkwang, 1973; A. Turowsky: *W kregu Konstruktywizmu*. Warszawa, 1979; *L'activisme hongrois sous le direction de Charles D'autrey et Jean-Claude Guerlain*, Paris, 1979; *The Hungarian Avant-Garde. The Eight and the Activists*. London, The Art Council of Britain, 1980, Joanna Drew, ed.; Passuth, K.: *Les avant-gardes de l'Europe Centrale 1907–1927*. Paris, 1988. Flammarion; *Wille zur Form. Ungegenständliche Kunst 1910–1938 in Österreich, Polen, Tschechoslovakei und Ungarn*. Schilling, J. ed., Wien, 1993; *Europa–Europa. Das Jahrhundert der Avantgard in Mittel und Osteuropa*. Vols. 1–4. Bonn, Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1994; *Prague 1908–1938. Capital secret des avant-gardes*. Dijon, Musée de Beaux Arts, 1997.
- 2 ■ *Az avant-garde Jugoszláviában. A Zenit kör* (The Avant-garde in Yugoslavia. The Zenit Circle). Irena Subotic, ed., Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1986–1987; *Devetsil. A huszas évek cseh avantgarde-ja*. Budapest, Múcsarnok, February–March, 1989. František Smejkal and Rostislav Svacha, eds.; *Konstruktivizmus Lengyelországban* (Constructivism in Poland). An Exhibition by the Museum Sztuki Lodz in the Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, Budapest, December 1989–February 1990, László Beke–R. Stanislawski eds., et al.; *Czech Avant-garde of the 1920s*, Oxford Museum of Art, 1990; *Standing in the Tempest. Painters of the Hungarian Avant-garde 1908–1930*; S. A. Mansbach ed., with essays by Krisztina Passuth, John Bolt et al., Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 1991; Mario de Micheli: *Le avanguardia artistica del Novecento*. Milano: ed., Schwarz, 1959.
- 3 ■ *Modern törekvések az észt művészetben* (Modern Tendencies in Estonian Art). Pécs, 1991. A Janus Pannonius Múzeum Művészeti Kiadványai (The Art Publications of the Janus Pannonius Museum).
- 4 ■ Mihály Babits: "Futurizmus." *Nyugat*, 1 April 1910; Ferenc Csaplár: *Kassák körei* (Kassák's Circles). Budapest, Magvető 1987; Júlia Szabó: "Avant-garde Visitors in Central Europe. 1913–1931." *Ars Bratislava*, 2/1994, pp. 175–186.
- 5 ■ Krisztina Passuth: *A Nyolcak festészete* (The Painting of the Eight). Budapest, Képzőművészeti Alap Kiadó, 1963.
- 6 ■ Krisztina Passuth: *Magyar művészek az európai avantgarde-ban. A kubizmustól a konstruktivizmusig, 1919–1923* (Hungarian Artists in the European Avant-garde. From Cubism to Constructivism). Budapest, Corvina, 1977; *Tranzit. Tanulmányok a kelet-középeurópai avantgarde művészeti témaköréből* (Transit. Essays in the Subject of Eastern/Central European Avant-garde Art). Budapest, Új Művészet Kiadó, 1996; *František Kupka 1871–1957 ou l'invention d'une abstraction*. Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris. 1989–1990. pp. 1–7; *Paris–Berlin 1900–1933. Übereinstimmungen und Gegensätze Frankreich–Deutschland*. Pontus Hulten, ed., Munich, Prestel Verlag, 1979, pp. 98–104.
- 7 ■ Imre Bori–Éva Körner: *Kassák irodalma és festészete* (Kassák's Writing and Painting). Budapest, Magvető, 1967; Thomas Strauss: *Kassák*. Köln, 1975; *Kassák Lajos 1887–1967*. A Magyar Nemzeti Galéria és a Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum emlékkiállítása (A Memorial Exhibition by the Hungarian National Gallery and the Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum). Budapest, Magyar Nemzeti Galéria, 1987. A catalogue containing several essays.
- 8 ■ Endre Bojtár: *A kelet-európai avantgarde irodalom* (Eastern-European Avant-garde Literature). Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977; "The Avant-garde in Central and Eastern European Literature." *Art Journal*, 49, no. 1. Spring 1990, pp. 56–62.
- 9 ■ Tristan Tzara: *Gáz-szív* (Gas-Heart), Wien, 1921. Published by MA.
- 10 ■ *Totáltavaszi Holdada. Bada Dada Tiborunk kiállítása a Studio 1900 Galériában*. (Total Spring Moondada. Our Very Own Tibor Bada Dada's Exhibition in the Studio 1900 Gallery). Budapest, March–April 1999.

Mihály Vargha

Initiation: A Capital Reclaims its Place in Europe

Edwin Heathcote: *Budapest. A Guide to Twentieth-Century Architecture*:
Photographs by Keith Collie. London, Ellipsis-Cologne, Könemann, 1997,
10.5 cm x 10.5 cm, 317 pp.

This is a well thought-out series of pocket books presenting the architecture of various cities. This one is the presentation of 116 Budapest buildings, each introduced in two pages of text and black-and-white photographs (in the case of some important buildings, four pages). The series had been functioning smoothly in Western Europe when the Iron Curtain vanished and the opportunity arose for the cities of Eastern and Central Europe, after forty years of artificial isolation, to feature in the series. Post-Communist architecture dominates the Moscow volume; Prague and Budapest are presented through their 20th-century buildings. The twenty-seven pocket-books published so far mostly focus on modern architecture in cities from Hong Kong through Las Vegas to Tokyo, with the Netherlands featuring twice as a country. The volume on Budapest has now been available for two years.

In this book the right author and publisher meet. The author is a British architect, partly of Hungarian origin, who spent a few years in Budapest working for the

English-language programmes of Hungarian Radio, if my information is correct. He wrote several articles on architecture at that time, and published an English-language book on the architect Imre Makovecz. His most recent book, on the architecture of cemeteries (*Monument Builders*, Academy, 1999), also includes Hungarian material. Edwin Heathcote's vitality and interest, personal and professional alike, guarantee the quality of this book. Had the same job been entrusted to an author resident in Budapest, the result might have been a more carefully documented and more inspired book perhaps, but the chances are that the publisher would still be waiting for the manuscript. That is also part of Budapest's reality.

A gap seems to appear between historical and contemporary architecture. At least that is the trend right now in Budapest. The Ministry of Cultural Heritage, formed after the 1998 elections, embarked on a vigorous programme to set to order the protection of architectural monuments; now there is a danger that contemporary or even recent architecture will not be given the same attention.

This gap is present in what is published too; fortunately, here neither side is neglected. In addition to the numerous books on Historicism, there are a myriad

Mihály Vargha

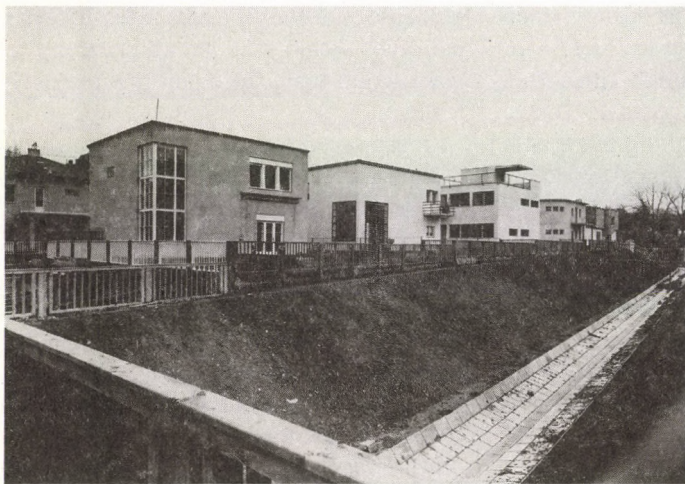
is editor of the architectural journal
Új Magyar Építőművészet. He is also
a theatre technological consultant.

volumes devoted to twentieth-century, and quite often distinctly contemporary, architecture. Of course, one must discriminate, one cannot include everything, especially not in such a small volume. But on the model of guide books, of good guide books I should say (and I primarily bear in mind András Török's *Budapest. A Critical Guide* here), some specifically architectural publications by writers of authority may eventually follow. Until such time, we should content ourselves with odd bits, and not just as regards periods: books on cafés, museums, banks, villas, etc. (These are Hungarian publications in the series *Our Budapest*, published in several languages), and now this small volume by Edwin Heathcote on the 20th-century architecture of Budapest.

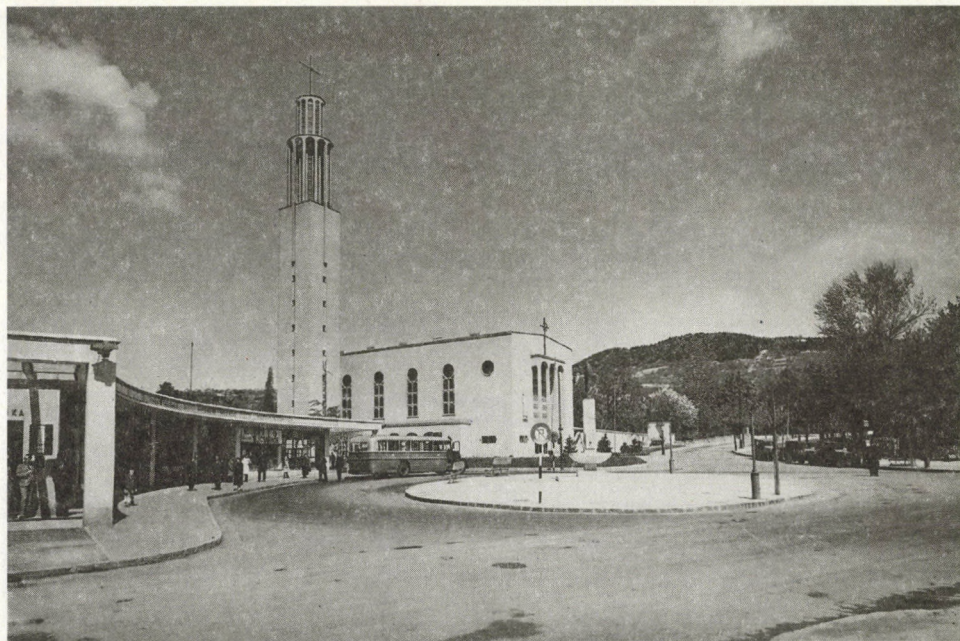
I mentioned the Iron Curtain with good reason: even the cover seems to suggest a distant, exotic country. Just as we are likely to find the obligatory two-dimensional Indian-inspired murals in connection with Mexico, in connection with Budapest there is this frontal relief (which is also reminiscent of Egypt) evoking the feel of the

1950s, the "later lamented" period of socialism. Actually, the source of the picture is mentioned on the back cover (MÉMOSZ—Trade Union Headquarters, relief), even though the text itself fails to refer back to it, regardless of the fact that the subject has an added interest: the building, completed precisely fifty years ago, was one of the best designs of post-war Hungarian architecture (architects: Lajos Gádoros, Imre Perényi, Gábor Preisich, György Szrogh). Nevertheless, soon after its completion it became the butt of criticism for manifesting the "cosmopolitan" architecture of the wretched West. Regardless of that, the frontal relief of its conference hall, in a separate block, seems to evoke the spirit of socialist realism, the art form that reigned supreme for years to come. That period is actually somewhat neglected in the book: only two houses from the Rákosi era (Stalinism, that is) have been included. A housing estate, such as the one on Kerepesi út, should definitely have been included in the interest of historical authenticity.

Also contributing to the book's exoticism is the fact that it emphasizes the organic movement within contemporary architecture. Of course, one must appreciate the author's difficult position here. Remaining objective is always most difficult when selection has to be made from the latest designs. In addition, this movement is associated more closely with architecture in the provinces: in Budapest, a city built a hundred years



Villa settlement with single-family residences, Napraforgó utca, 1931.



*St Anthony's Church and House of the Franciscans, Pasaréti tér.
Architect: Gyula Rimanóczy, 1934.*

ago at a staggering speed, it is not easy to find space for organic architecture often flirting with postmodern gestures. But the author has done his homework and delivered the goods, coming up with the most typical examples. As to those who are interested specifically in the organic movement, they will have to get out of Budapest and thus need to turn to other books.

While on the subject of selection, I should mention a few buildings which could also have been included. In Semmelweis utca in central Budapest (District V) there is a corner building designed by Tamás Nagy, an architect closely associated with the organic movement (1986), which could have been a prospective candidate. Failing that, the parsonage of the Lutheran Church (1993) in Régi Főti út 73, District XV, by the same architect, is clearly

a worthy candidate, primarily on account of its fine details.

One of my favourites is also in District V: the office building of the Savings Bank (OTP, originally Chemolimpex headquarters and OTP Bank, Deák Ferenc utca 7/9, architect: Zoltán Gulyás). I am of course aware of the fact that this building has had predecessors both in the USA and in Europe, but that takes nothing away from its merits. The handling of volume allows to the building to blend in well with the turn-of-the-century houses so typical of Budapest; also worth mentioning in connection with this house are the details, which are of course different from those associated with architecture in a historicist style. Built precisely one decade later, the furniture store DOMUS (Róbert Károly körút 67, District XIII, architects: Antal Lázár and Péter Reimholz, 1974) deserves



*Inter-Európa Bank, Szabadság tér.
Architects: Tamás Dévényi and Éva Magyari, 1997.*

credit for both its striking outside appearance and its inner spaces of very large span, a functional requirement in this case. I would like to mention two more houses from more recent times: the poetically composed small homes in Ellák utca 2, District II (architect: István Janáky), and the block of flats with twelve flats and an atrium in Víznyelő utca 6, District III (architects: János Mónus, Zsuzsa Szóke and Sándor Nagy, 1993), the latter already earning recognition abroad for its designers. It would be unfair to continue the list with examples built after the book's publication, so I only want to mention it in brackets that, luckily, we would have a few to choose from. One good thing about books such as this is that they eventually become obsolete and within a few years they will have to be revised.

By contrast, the descriptions of the buildings seem anything but obsolete; they

show that the author is well-informed, and not just about architecture, but also about history and Hungarian literature even. Heathcote occasionally indulges in comments customarily confined to travel books (for example, in the description of the Gellért spa), which I personally find wholly acceptable. This approach, one that is comprehensive yet never overbearing, seems to be the most effective to arouse the interest of readers, both professional and lay, who want to know not only about architecture, but also about the people who create and use it.

Unfortunately, I could not find any list of literature in the book, which is a pity since I would have liked to know what sources the author had used. I would be prepared to wager on two books in particular: János Gerle-Attila Kovács-Imre Makovecz: *A századforduló magyar építészete* (Hungarian Architecture at the Turn

of the Century, Budapest, 1990); and András Ferkai: *Buda építészete a két világháború között* (The Architecture of Buda between the Two Wars, Budapest, 1995). Although it is likely that the author had some help in compiling the information, there are no acknowledgements.

Since it is a book about architecture, the absence of plans is often annoying, especially when the new ideas regarding the layout of the houses built between the two World Wars are discussed. It is possible that the design of the series allowed for photos only, although the layout of the text, and quite often of the pictures, too, would actually have left room for the drawings. While on the sub-

ject of photos, it should be pointed out that their quality is nowhere near as homogeneous as that of the writings. Although the overall impact of the pictures is quite effective, one or two buildings should have deserved more characteristic photos. (One more reason for foreign visitors to come to Hungary: they can take their own photos.) My favourite is the photograph on page 175, showing the Arcade Bazaar. Taken from the diagonal direction, the picture looks just like Micky Mouse's head. Who would have thought that Budapest could offer such a tourist attraction, and not even from the last few decades but from 1909? ■



*Museum of Applied Arts, Üllői út.
Architects: Ödön Lechner and Gyula Pártos, 1891–96.*

András Török

Two Introductions to a Capital City

Mátyás Sárközi: *Budapest. World Bibliography Series*, Volume 198, Oxford, Santa Barbara, Denver, Clio Press, 1997, 113 pp. • Michael Jacobs: *Budapest: A Cultural Guide*, Oxford University Press, 1998, 226 pp.

Two books on Budapest have been published, both by publishing houses that give them an automatic advantage over all the hundred or so other books published recently on Budapest, a fashionable topic since the political system has changed. Given that books from these publishers are bought almost automatically by libraries the world over, both books will solidly influence the orientation of journalists, diplomatists, businessmen and visitors seriously interested in Budapest.

Both are written by men who know the city well and can write well. One of them left Budapest, the other came to visit. One did not leave altogether, the other may not have come often enough. One did not get a tailor-made commission, the other let his own opinions run away with him. In short, basically sound books containing errors. An academic friend of mine says you can and should judge a manuscript in

two ways. A search for mistakes and internal contradictions he calls a "minor criticism". A considerably more absorbing task is to examine what a book lacks, how it could have been structured or approached differently—and that he calls a "major criticism".

Let's take *Budapest* in the The World Bibliography Series first. Matyás Sárközi, a writer and journalist who now works for the BBC Hungarian section, arrived in London when a student leaving Budapest in 1956. He keeps to the format of the series. His bibliography (of 341 items) is not confined to books: longer articles (primarily from current journals) and a few particularly important articles in German, and some Hungarian books in which the illustrations play the principal part are also included. At the end of an extremely well-written historical summary, he points out that "There is not an enormous wealth of English material on Budapest." Aside from being true, this tells us right away that the relative bareness of the list is not due to lack of space or lack of research.

So a minor reviewer looking for error would not get much joy under the pretext of bibliography. A few faulty accents, a writer's name written differently in different places. (However, it is a pity that only 22 districts are featured in the map obviously drawn specially for the book, where-

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as there are now 23.) Apart from that, any mistakes are the fault of the publisher rather than the author.

The major review will have to start with a statement and some praise. It is not worth passing judgment on the structure—the author has been given it (though he mentions certain “necessary amendments” without going into their nature). My praise is for the high standard of the annotations. The annotated bibliography demands just the sort of writer/journalist qualities that Sárközi has in abundance. He is capable of summarizing hundreds of pages in a few paragraphs and in such a way that content and comment are clearly distinct.

In terms of criteria for selection, it is obvious that this bibliography catalogues first and foremost the books that are easily available abroad, and less the works to be found in Hungarian libraries. Thus Sárközi does not exactly encourage the prospective reader to get hold of a book through interlibrary loan or by mail, not to mention looking it up in a Budapest library. The reason I am presuming restrictions of this kind is because, even at first glance, someone reasonably familiar with, or collecting books on Budapest may discover serious omissions.

These can be divided into several groups. In the first are books which the introduction does not even mention, written in Hungarian, yet with a summary in English or illustrative material that makes them a significant source. Let's look at two books typical of this important group.

In the chapter on Statistics one single work is featured; this is at first sight unbelievable. After all, the Hungarian statistical service was famous throughout Europe even in the last century, and they always endeavoured to publish their results in foreign languages too. In any case the following book is available in every public library: *Budapest társadalmának és gaz-*

daságának 100 éve (100 Years of Budapest Society and Economy. Közgazdasági és Jogi/Kossuth Publishers, 1972). If you come into contact with this book you will see that it is entirely in Hungarian, on the other hand the texts of all the tables and diagrams are translated into English as well. The other example is a vividly descriptive book on the city's history: Tamás Biczó: *Budapest egykor és ma* (Budapest in Former Times and Today. Panorama, 1979). On the one hand, this book goes from era to era tracing the town's development on separate maps (indicating in different colours the buildings standing today and those that have been destroyed), projecting all this onto Budapest's present street structure. At the end of the book you can find a chapter to chapter summary in English and in German.

It is hard to see why another group, comprising books in English published in Hungary, was omitted. Here is an example for the selection of the most thorough-seeming chapter, containing memoirs: Ferenc Zöld-Gábor Kelecsényi, eds.: *What They Saw in Hungary: British and American Travellers About Our Country*, Hungarian Publishers' and Booksellers' Association, 1988. This beautifully produced publication, provided with an incredibly party-state biased introduction, would have ensured the author adequate opportunity for irony. (After all, in 1988 this kind of lap of honour was no longer really expected from anyone.)

Another piece of interesting “applied local history work”: Márta Sz. Gyápay—Elizabeth Szász: *Budapest for Guides*. Belkereskedelmi Továbbképző Intézet, 1986, which is not only in English, but also contains a great many very interesting illustrations which bring out the salient points.

The writer/journalist author clearly sought out the travel books with great en-

thusiasm. Though there are major omissions here too, especially in the more recent material. As if the author depended too much on existing lists and neglected to do some collecting of his own. Here are a few examples of books which can be found in any bigger library anywhere: Stephen Brook: *Vanished Empire: Vienna/Budapest/Prague: The Three Capital Cities of the Habsburg Empire as Seen Today*, New York, William Morrow, 1988; Brian Hall: *Stealing from a Deep Place. (Travels in Southeastern Europe)* New York, Hill and Wang, 1988; Eva Hoffman: *Exit into History: A Journey Through Eastern Europe*, London, Heinemann, 1993; Andrew Riemer: *Inside Outside: Life Between Two Worlds*, London, Angus and Robertson, Pymble, 1992.

The chapter headed "Literature" seems somewhat sketchy. The author of the book, who is the grandson of the playwright Ferenc Molnár, is so well-informed in literary matters, and is reputed to be more or less personally acquainted with the more important writers, that I am compelled to suspect this is intentional. Maybe he was attempting to be consistent in only putting on the list those books that have Budapest as their definite theme (for example Péter Lengyel's novel *Macskakő* (Cobblestone) published in English as well, which is featured, though in my opinion with an undeservedly brief annotation). If this is so, then it's a great pity. In this chapter I again had the awkward feeling that the author had probably gone right through an available list, which in this case would be Corvina Publishers', which does not include, for instance, the bilingual volumes of poetry and the poetry anthologies in English published by Maecenas Publishers. But basic works such as the Géza Csáth anthology published by Penguin is also not on the list: Géza Csáth: *Opium and Other Stories*. Penguin Books, 1983. (Series Editor: Philip Roth).

The theme of Budapest and Hungarian literature are difficult to separate. For this reason perhaps it would have been better to go for a wider range, starting from regional anthologies: Michael March ed: *Description of a Struggle* (The Vintage Book of Contemporary Eastern European Writing, 1994.)

Finally, should the above works have been omitted on account of the author's rigorous principles, it is hard to explain why the political daily *Esti Hírlap* is listed in the chapter "Newspapers, Journals", considering it is published in Hungarian and the name Budapest does not even feature in its title.

In spite of the above list of omissions, my opinion still holds: this is a useful book, though it could not come quite as close to the comprehension demanded by the series as one would expect from a work which is meant to last for some years.

The author of *Budapest: A Cultural Guide* is an "applied cultural historian" who often disguises his books as guide books. He is at home primarily in Spanish-speaking countries. He first came to Hungary, as we learn from the blurb, in 1980 when he was collecting material for a book on art colonies in Europe. Although he spent longer periods in Budapest and elsewhere in the country on about half a dozen occasions, made deep friendships here and read a tremendous amount in many languages, he has never learnt Hungarian. His book is a centaur: it opens with a connected string of essays, the second half being a catalogue of things to see, in the guise of a guide book. The centaur combination is surely Michael Jacobs's invention. The preface, which is interspersed with quotations from the passionate travel writers of old, shows how deep an impression Budapest made on Jacobs on his first arrival here from Vienna: "I was instantly en-

thrilled by Budapest's gaiety and energy, and by the way it exuded the excitement of a major capital." He indicates a number of reasons which encouraged him to write the book: "...Budapest has as much to offer the tourist as any of its city rivals, and that a fuller understanding of the place is dependent on a knowledge of Hungary's rich, idiosyncratic but undeservedly little-known culture."

In other words, the book aims to serve as a first introduction for anyone considering whether to come here. For this Jacobs's qualifications are first rate: he exists somewhere at the junction between writing, journalism and history. He is obviously extremely good at making contacts, bearing in mind that people like Árpád Szabados, Péter Esterházy, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák, Imre Makovecz, Gyula Illyés's (unnamed) grandchild and others took him straight into their confidence. He has a portion of refreshing British eccentricity and irreverence about him which makes the book good reading. His aims are ambitious and the question is how close he has come to accomplishing them. I would say a great deal, despite the following disappointing list of errors.

Even the minor review finds a large number of impermissible mistakes in the book. Some examples, in order of appearance, not importance. The Mongols attacked Hungary in 1241, not 1246; in the family name of Ferenc Széchenyi the second "e" has an accent, too; Kossuth wasn't a "landless aristocrat", he was born into the lesser nobility and became a lawyer and journalist, and it is not true that he spent his exile "first in Turkey, then in France and England", when, for the most part, he lived in Turin. The last part (in the chronology of writing) of János Arany's epic poem the *Toldi Trilogy* was not *Toldi's Evening*, it was *Toldi's Love*; in 1896 only the idea of the Museum of Fine Arts exist-

ed, the building came in 1906; the name Pál Szinyei Merse has never been abbreviated to "Merse"; it was not Admiral Miklós Horthy who was kidnapped by the Germans, but his son of the same name. Imre Nagy did not take Rákosi's place in 1953, because he became prime minister, not party first secretary. The demonstration on 23 October 1956 crossed over Margaret Bridge, not Elizabeth Bridge; at the statue of General Bem "Pilski" should be read as "Piski"; the Grand Hotel on Margaret Island was not built on the location of the hotel where the poet Arany had stayed. The Neo-Classical houses in Óbuda were not demolished because of the widening of the Árpád Bridge. The name of the former Török Bank in Szervita tér cannot be translated as "Turkish Bank", and conclusions as to the style of the building cannot be drawn from this. (Török is a fairly common Hungarian surname.) Városház utca should not be confused with Városmajor utca; Manó Mai was never "a Viennese society photographer"; the scaffolding on the New York Palace has nothing to do with 1956 tanks, it has been there since about 1989; the name is István Angyal, not Angyvál—just to mention the most characteristic factual mistakes. And I have not even mentioned the sloppy editorial work, the contradictions. What on page 7 is described as a "theatrical late-nineteenth century Matthias fountain" becomes "Alajos Stróbl's superb and enormous Matthias fountain" though this sort of thing is fortunately rare. There are some debatable statements that come close to being mistakes. If there is a sentence about Gyula Illyés (in one place), he cannot be called a "populist poet", because the word populist in English means something different, and does not convey that complex concept which the author is perhaps aiming at. The political party Fidesz, which happens to be leading the present coalition government,

should not be described as "a liberal party that reputedly attracted the children of former high-ranking Communists", (p. 107 and a similar sentence on p. 176). This could get by in the tabloids, but not in a publication of the Oxford University Press. In the same way, one cannot claim in a serious work that the poet Petőfi recited the "National Song" on the steps of the National Museum on March 15, 1848; this has been denied by historians a thousand times. To describe the poet Endre Ady's definition of Art Nouveau in one sentence as ridiculous and make schoolboy fun of his alcoholism and venereal disease is to completely misunderstand his importance and his style. So much for the "minor review". Part of the criticisms are directed at the famous publishing house: after all, the majority of the mistakes mentioned above could have been weeded out by anybody who has so much as matriculated in Hungarian. (No mention is made of a copy editor in the colophon.)

Now let us take the book as a whole. As I mentioned, the first part of the book comprises cultural historical essays. These have all got their own focus, yet they progress in time. "In the Court of King Matthias" is about the Hungarian Middle Ages and within that it describes the golden age of the Renaissance with a well-drawn portrait of King Matthias. In the chapter "Turkish Baths" Jacobs talks about the baths, and indirectly about Budapest manners in a highly entertaining way, with excellent quotes. "The Ghost of Gyula Krúdy" is naturally about Hungarian eating habits, and goes back to the Middle Ages, even though the focus is on the 19th century and even though he relates the story of the Gundels with its far from happy ending. The reader only gradually realizes that the chapters progress in time too, the author carries out a kind of "chronological swing of the pendulum" in Hungarian his-

tory in such a way that the pendulum itself progresses. This method (disregarding the already mentioned annoying factual mistakes) is reliable too. In the fourth chapter, 'Sinful City, the better informed reader feels for the first time that there is a problem. Instead of relating the things seen, heard or read in an entertaining fashion, spiced with his own amusing, eccentric remarks and personal experiences, he is after more than that: his own original discoveries. At this point Jacobs was overcome by *hubris*, and there was no editor in Oxford or friend in Budapest to tug him back from that dangerous path. Apart from dealing with an enormous period of time in one chunk—from the Age of Reform at the beginning of the 19th century to Attila József's suicide (1937), he has the nerve to state among other things that Hungarian writers and poets traditionally did not concern themselves with urban topics, they have always only written about the country. Anyone who has not heard of Kassák, Lajos Nagy, Gelléri, Kosztolányi and Déry, to list but a few, should not set out on a voyage of discovery, and should not say in the last chapter of the first part, "Moving World", that Mátyás and Örkény were the first writers to emphatically deal with urban life.

About half way through the first section, the problems with this structure multiply. After all, everyone knows much more about the recent past, so that the 20th century should have been divided into shorter periods. And the writer should not have thrown in every name he ever heard. He disposes of Ady, Attila József and Karinthy with one or two clumsy sentences. There is certain complex information (especially in connection with the writers' characters and oeuvre) which can be mentioned, but it is not possible and not worth trying to summarize it in less than a page. (Even then it is quite a task.) Something that works in one page in the

case of King Matthias is no good for great modern writers like Kosztolányi or Attila József. Either the book should be longer or more homogeneous.

I am not saying this to make excuses for the author, but the same text would make an excellent upper layer for a home page "Budapest: A Cultural Guide", or a CD-ROM where, at a click, we could dig ourselves deeper into the knowledge and browse through wider surveys and original texts, by means of hyperlinks.

The fifth chapter, the focus of which is on the problems suffered by the magazine *Mozgó Világ*, is interesting and comes close to be successful. One of Jacob's visits to Hungary coincided with the action against the monthly, and at that time he spent a lot of time with the editorial staff. It is a pity he just mentions but does not explain the whole business, just as he skims over one of the key questions of Hungarian cultural history, the anti-Communist link-up of the various intellectual traditions, followed by their conflicts with each other. Perhaps he still does not understand the whole thing, or perhaps noncomprehension is a writer's device.

The title of the second part is *Walks*; he himself admits that these are not really possible on foot, only by tram. The truth is that it is not only transport you need, but a guide too. The brief remarks are not sufficient for a foreign traveller to identify the

sights in question. The black and white sketch maps do not help either.

The six routes are really just a charming excuse for the author to hop about freely in the city, in an ascending numerical order of districts—as he proudly mentions, lumping together Districts VII, VIII and IX because he did not have enough to say about them separately. Meanwhile, he recalls his experiences, sometimes interesting, sometimes touching, but never in a boring way. In the second part he cleverly tries to repeat the things learnt in the first part. (This is known as "recycling" in teaching.) Here too Jacobs occasionally tricks his readers. Who on earth would think of Attila József on hearing the name Ferencváros? Though it is true that he was born there.

Why do I like this book in spite of everything? Why do I recommend it to anybody seriously interested? Because it is a book that sweeps you along with it, emanating enthusiasm for Hungarian culture. Michael Jacobs writes well, whether he is describing the *Mozgó Világ* staff football match, his visits to old people, the friends he knew, or an operation carried out on an over-active kangaroo in the Veterinary School. What's more, he has constructed it well too, not the slightest bit artificially, almost stealthily, unnoticed.

Two well-written handbooks to help even more people to understand Budapest. Possibly to help even better books than these to come into being. ■

Paul Griffiths

Invented Peasant Music

Béla Bartók: *Dance Suite for Orchestra*. Reprint of the original manuscript. (Budapest Historical Museum). Edited by Ferenc Bónis. Budapest, Balassi Kiadó, 1998. 64+48 pp.

As Ferenc Bónis points out in his thorough notes for this sumptuous facsimile edition of the autograph full score of Bartók's *Dance Suite* (1923), the work was the first to be commissioned from the composer by an institution—specifically the Council of Budapest, for a concert to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the unification of Buda and Pest. Perhaps this fact, more than any profound rethinking of his creative direction, moved Bartók to adopt a simpler style here than he had in his immediately preceding compositions, the two violin sonatas he wrote for Jelly d'Arányi and himself. After all, there are later works, notably the Third Quartet of 1927, which are again more difficult. But if the *Dance Suite* was designed to be a success with a big audience, it was a success Bartók achieved on his own terms.

This could have been the moment for nationalist celebration. (Mr. Bónis points out that Miklós Horthy was in the audience. "To our knowledge this was the only occasion when he attended a Bartók premiere.") But, on the contrary, Bartók chose the moment to express an ideal of different nations dancing together—Hungarian, Ro-

manian and Arab—creating melodies in the several linked movements that take up elements from folk melodies he had studied in the field. As he originally planned the score, Slovaks were also to be included, though after completing the two-stave draft he excised his Slovak-coloured number.

One of the fascinations of the present edition is that it includes this movement, in a photographic reproduction and in music type. Mr. Bónis surmises that Bartók omitted it because of its "lightness" (it is indeed much simpler harmonically than the other movements, and one may well doubt whether the contrast would work in performance) and also because it would disrupt the Golden Section proportions of the composition (which seems more arguable). Most persuasive is his suggestion that Bartók began the work imagining it might be a folksy confection like others he had produced (at an early stage he wrote to his publisher about "the new dances for small orchestra"), and that the score deepened and darkened under his hand as he worked. Perhaps, once he was into the project of assembling dances of diverse national sorts, which he had not done before, the work took on an importance he had not suspected, as an image of what, in a later letter to a Romanian friend, he called his "guiding idea": "the brotherhood of peoples".

Paul Griffiths

is music critic of The New York Times.

Mr Bónis's remarks, printed in a separate fascicle, document possible models for the work's motifs—in Mussorgsky and, even more surprisingly, Monteverdi, as well as in Hungarian and Arab folk music. He also provides a full narrative of the compositional process, traced through a complex array of sources, including a copy in full score made by the composer's first wife, Márta, only months after their divorce. The divorce came through in June 1923. On August 19 Bartók completed the *Dance Suite* in Radvány, where he was, despite the recent split, spending the summer with Márta and their son; on August 28 he married Ditta Pásztory; and on August 30 he dispatched the first half of Márta's copy to his publisher, Universal Edition. This music of "brotherhood" thus required a certain amount of sisterly compromise within the composer's circle.

Also included in Mr. Bónis's material are reproductions of caricatures and handbills relating to early performances, a record of those performances complete up to the end of 1927, and reviews of the first performance. The record shows how the piece

could indeed have been, as a Universal advertisement proudly declared, "the most played work of the coming winter", i.e. the 1925/6 season, for during that season it was heard in cities as far-flung as Leningrad, Chicago, Manchester and Göteborg, under conductors including Henry Wood, Wilhelm Furtwängler, Pierre Monteux, Václav Talich and Fritz Reiner. Present-day composers, even the most eminent, might envy such exposure—though there were prices to be paid. The New York première, in April 1927, was of a "dance romance", for which Bartók's score was combined "with folk and gypsy songs" and arranged for a fourteen-piece ensemble.

The facsimile itself, bound in black cloth, brings one rapidly back to Bartók, whose grey and red pencil annotations are clearly distinguished from his ink score. The paper's browning is accurately imitated, and the stamps of the Budapest Historical Museum seem to confirm that one holds in one's hand the *Dance Suite* before anyone but its composer had ever heard its earthy vitality—its brilliance and its savagery. ■



Current photograph of the façade of the studio György Klösz opened in 1895.

Tamás Koltai

Remakes

Géza Bereményi: *Az arany ára* (The Price of Gold) • István Tasnádi: *Közellenség* (Public Enemy) • István Mohácsi and János Mohácsi: *Krétakör* (Chalk Circle)

Whenever there are new plays of good quality in reasonable quantity, and whenever these are well produced, we can relax in the belief that the theatre is keeping abreast of literature. Yet this does not mean that it does so with life: the received wisdom is that for reality to be faithfully reproduced, original plays with contemporary themes are needed. But what happens when the writers do not write new plays about present concerns? What happens when they present what they have to say about today in a Shakespearean mode?

That is the time when the "ready-made" has to be recut. Writers and directors work on the material their customers bring them, just as bespoke's tailors used to in the Hungary of yore.

Géza Bereményi, for example, has borrowed from the screen his own story which he filmed as the highly successful *Eldorado*, and turned it into a stage play at Zalaegerszeg. Bereményi is a phenomenon on the literary scene, originally establishing himself with his short stories and novels, who came to fame with biting, intel-

lectually and politically charged songs, arranged in cycles, that for years now have been performed and recorded by Tamás Cseh on stage at the Katona József Theatre. Still later Bereményi, who in his early days had made a living by writing dubbing-scripts for foreign films (in the 1960s and 70s most foreign films were shown here dubbed, on a smaller scale they still are) suddenly appeared as a movie director. He had no film-school training, he simply learned on the job as an assistant director, and he enjoyed considerable success already with his first film, not only at home but also abroad. Since then he has had several prize-winning films to his credit, while continuing to write, both fiction and drama. One of his plays he directed himself. For the past eighteen months he has been the artistic director at the Hevesi Sándor Theatre of Zalaegerszeg; so he must have decided that he would have an easier time of it by making his debut with "tried and proven material" and naturally enough, undertook personally the tasks both of adapting the film *Eldorado* to the stage and of directing the performance.

The Price of Gold is about money, a topic that has not been untimely since Phoenician times. It is also about power bought with money. And about how money cannot make people happy. It is also

Tamás Koltai,

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The Hungarian Quarterly's regular theatre
reviewer.*

about wasted lives, about the vicissitudes of history, about riding out the storm.

Commonplaces from first to last.

But that is beside the point. Bereményi tells a tale. For the past twenty years he has followed the tracks of a man. The same story. For the past twenty years he has been showing the same scene: a flea market at the outskirts of the city where nothing ever changes, while the whole world is being turned upside down. In Hungary, the last writer to have had the courage to do this was Endre Fejes in his novel *Rozsdatemető* (Junkyard) at the beginning of the 1960s. Ever since everybody has kept clear of epic material in the theatre. Of the story. It has been curtains for stories since then. There are no tales anymore. Only "textual substratum". Dialogue, yes. Human condition, yes. Language, yes.

Ironically, *The Price of Gold* is an out-and-out avant-garde play. Its characters are amazingly alive and recognizable, its scenes unbearably life-like. The attitudes of the characters, and their speech, are provocatively quotidian. The dramatic structure is unashamedly three-part, if only to allow time for changing the sets during the intermissions.

This stirring "modernism" actually has a message. The low angle. The one used in *Eldorado*, when the little boy suffering from diphtheria goes from stall to stall choking on his cough, with a low-angled camera staggering after him. Bereményi's viewpoint is the low-angle camera position. The market level. The level of everyday life. The horizon of the stall-holder "Uncle Sanyi", who is willing to do business with anybody: with the Germans and the Russians, the Communists and foreigners, with thieves, informers, body guards, party officials and the re-emerging capitalists—so that he can acquire possessions. Not only material goods. Influence.

Power. Future. He buys his grandson off his son-in-law. He buys the life of his grandson from death (by not letting the ambulance men take the sick boy to a hospice for the dying, then paying an inexperienced doctor a gold bar to perform an operation). He would equally like to buy the boy's love, to make sure that someone would take his place. But that is beyond his reach. The ideology of money goes up in smoke just as that other, similar delusion, Soviet-type socialism, which kept the characters of the Fejes novel down at the level of room and kitchen accomodation.

The Price of Gold spans the same two decades as *Junkyard*. We should be able to extend both stories in time right up to the present. We would find many similarities. Only politicians try to measure life in changes of regimes or the cycles of parliaments. From this low-angle camera position the whole thing looks like a simple case of swapping ideologies. The frog's perspective continues to be low. That is the message of Bereményi's play.

As a director, Bereményi has given a great impetus to the Zalaegerszeg company. The performance is team-work *par excellence*. There are no stars, but even the smallest episode makes an impact. The dialogue is simple and uncomplicated, as the mosaic-like structure could not carry an over-abundance of details. A sentence or a gesture always pushes forward the story. Close-ups require such "simple techniques"; Bereményi was able to transplant from his cinematic experience the sociographical power of the actors' presence. Watching the main character in the third part, selling roasted pumpkin seeds at the flea market from two small sacks, with his eyes set on the timeless horizon and shouting out roughly, we see the emblematic substance of the character. A kind of Golem frozen in infinity, completely emptied and having come to

terms with everything, ready to embark on the last journey.

Bereményi usually resolves each scene and each act in a musical mood; with vile emotional effects piling up, the performance ends in a Grand Guignol *tableau vivant*, while the flea market is being torn apart by a demolition gang in a film-like take. If there had been a camera, it would have slowly been raised high at this point, before the words "The End" appear, just as in movies made in the sixties.

For emblematic stories one has to turn to the classics. Heinrich von Kleist's story *Michael Kohlhaas* was adapted to the Hungarian stage back in the seventies in a version by the Transylvanian writer András Sütő, under the title *Egy lócsiszár virágvasárnapja* (A Horse Coper's Palm Sunday), being performed even as late as the 1980s.

The story draws its power from the moral outrage generated by a feeling of helplessness in the face of the law: the horse coper, who rebels because of the illegal seizing of his horses, is turned into "a robber and a murderer by his sense of rectitude", in Kleist's words. So when we morally endorse the violent acts that he commits in order to serve justice—and this we cannot help doing—we actually let our moral principles and common-sense notions of justice triumph over the administration of justice expropriated by authority. In other words, we are moralizing, and this is the only, possibly quite useless and self-destructive, weapon in our hands against the authorities who have the sole right to interpret the law.

When István Tasnádi made the two seized horses the main characters of his own adaptation of Kleist's story, *Közellenség* (Public Enemy), he emphasized this moral—or "moralizing" if you wish—view. Rather than telling the story from the viewpoint of the horses, he shifts the em-

phasis from the social sphere to the private sphere. This can serve two purposes. On the one hand, Kohlhaas' story can lose some of its pathos, which audiences today would hardly be able to put up with (we shall see how the basic story is turned into a grotesque play in the Katona József Theatre's remarkable version), and on the other hand, lyrical love can replace the idyllic family life sacrificed on the altar of a maniacal search for justice, in the form of the anthropomorphic behaviour of the narrators, the stallion and the mare.

Naturally, the actors do not play as horses, they are rather people showing the behavioural attributes of horses. Crude imitation, neighing and the clatter of hooves are out of the question. There are no horse tails and bridle bits, only iron heels. And posture. A somewhat cocksure posture, hands in pockets, is the stallion's distinguishing mark, while the mare's are an erect carriage, head held high, proud smile. The stallion watches Kohlhaas' adventures silently and with an inner approval, although the mare sometimes utters her doubts also. Dressed in an elegant, formal attire, they cut a fine figure as long as they are still in prime condition. Worked to death and soaking wet, they become begrimed on the sand-covered floor. At the beginning and the end of the play, constituting the narrative framework, dressed in underwear and torn socks, they show signs of physical abuse and humiliation.

A love story unfolds on stage, one that abounds with teasing, irony, humour and tragedy. The stallion off-handedly accepts the mare's approaches—he is a professional stud who only inseminates as a public service. By the time they have found each other amidst troubles, they are separated by force and the stallion goes to his destiny: he is gelded. (A touching moment in the production is when the ex-stallion turns to the audience asking them if any-

one would be kind enough to stand in for him, and the mare defiantly shakes her head at the audience: she wants no one else's colt.

In sharp contrast with the human dimension of the horses, the "background story" is presented as the mad grotesque of an inhuman world. The gentle horse copier is made into a public enemy by monstrous and odious characters, grimish princes and guileful courtiers. The actor in the title role, a man apparently endowed with remarkable physical qualities, has to tackle a miniature track of obstacles with ditches and draw-bridges, stocks and iron chains, which are eventually used to hang him by the leg, like a butchered animal. The self-destructive heroism in his pursuit of the law becomes a series of action-man escapades. Physically identified with the role of the manic seeker of justice, Kohlhaas chops wood—accompanied by fierce martial tunes—as if he was chopping up his enemies. Burnt and looted towns are symbolized by four burning torches in the four corners of the stage. A horse race is simulated by the actors sitting in basins and propelling themselves forward with their hands. A miniature guillotine crushes a green apple. This well-ordered stylization and the emotive and mimetic skills of the actors produce a unique combination. The epitome of motherhood, the wife Lisbeth, spends most of her time sitting on a plank suspended from the ceiling, with her two babies under her arms. (She continues to sit there even after her death, avidly watching events.) The lawless baron is a champion wrestler, the dwarf prince is the symbol of deformed power. Martin Luther, the champion of ideological reconciliation, is busy coping with his flatulence.

From time to time the demonstrative yet crudely life-like story is interrupted by musical effects. The tragic end of the hors-

es provides the epilogue: beaten and fated to die, they waltz into the knackers'-yard in each other's arms. "This is how we ended up here", the gelding finishes the story. The mare turns to the audience: "How about you?"

Chalk Circle is a production by the Mórícz Zsigmond Theatre of Nyíregyháza that more or less follows the story line of Bertolt Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, without actually using the author's text. Apart from a few sentences by Brecht, the text is by István Mohácsi and János Mohácsi, the latter also directing. (The lyrics to the songs were also written by the brothers, and not even the music is "original": it was composed by Béla Faragó.)

It would perhaps be helpful to describe a typical scene to give some idea about the nature of the adaptation. Using a piece of chalk, Judge Adcak draws a small circle on a fireplace, the appointed pulpit. That is where the two sides can place their bribes. The judge occasionally slips into the role of counsel for the defence, and he and his assistant often change their clients, switching between prosecuting and defending. Finally Adcak rules that the child should stay with the foster mother, rather than the real mother, himself admitting that "he could not explain why".

In fact, the Mohácsi brothers did precisely what Brecht had done, reshape the parable in harmony with the spirit of the age, just as Brecht had adapted the Chinese cautionary tale to his own purposes.

The time has come for the world to be ruled by moral order, Brecht claims. In troubled class societies, where political coups succeed each other, the resourceful son of the people turned official temporarily assumes the task of restoring moral order, but he finds it better to disappear before people find out that he acted to protect the "mother-hearted" have-nots and

also to line his own pocket. In the new world no such tricks are needed, Brecht is proud to declare. The soil belongs to the *kolkhoz* that cultivates it. In a similar manner, the child belongs to the mother who has raised him. It is the people's artist, the Singer bearing the State's laurels, who presses home this message by relating this morality tale.

The world is still lacking a moral order, István and János Mohácsi claim. The world is still ruled by infatuation with power and lack of scruples. We should not go on pretending that we have no idea what has been going on in the world since the time Brecht wrote his lofty parable. Nor should we believe in the Artist's ability to serve justice. Not only are children abandoned and persecuted in the Mohácsis' Chalk Circle, they are killed too, and the moral fable of self-sacrifice fails to restore the just order of the world. More than twenty years ago, the director Tamás Ascher looked on the patronizing manners of the Singer, who arrived as a poet laureate, with nothing more than mild irony. For the Mohácsis, the allegorical playacting of the *kolkhoz* members cuts no ice, nor do the presentation and arguments, which are not known to affect the narrow brain of the deputy; the brutality of the authorities erases all this with a single gesture. The commandos dropping in by parachute find a "practical" solution to the "land problem": they herd the quarrelling bunch into a container and ship them all off to Siberia. So much for the power of art.

The Nyíregyháza performance is nothing if not sarcastic. The text itself abounds with phrases attempting to parody people's hackneyed thinking by using and turning upside down some of the stupidest clichés. The soldiers are looking for "a weapon resembling an object", and the expert comrade warns—by turning a saying upside down—that we "must not throw

the bath-water out with the baby". János Mohácsi's directions usually produce a firework of textual frolics, with the carefully orchestrated body of individual comments issuing from the crowd constituting an aesthetic version of street commotion, residents' meetings and the public outrage displayed just for the cameras. Similarly revealing are the familiar clichés uttered by public figures. Just minutes into a debate, the participants devour all the cheese samples offered merely as a demonstration. While taking flight, the dethroned head of state carries off the strong box with the state treasures. While delivering his election speech, the shrewd son of the people parodies the commonplaces of racist and nationalist demagoguery, dangerously reminiscent of the genuine stuff frequently heard in parliament. Mohácsi reacts to the manifest signs of our cultural backwardness, without ever slipping into the role of a moralizing preacher cracking the whip. His bitter humour and irony save him from that.

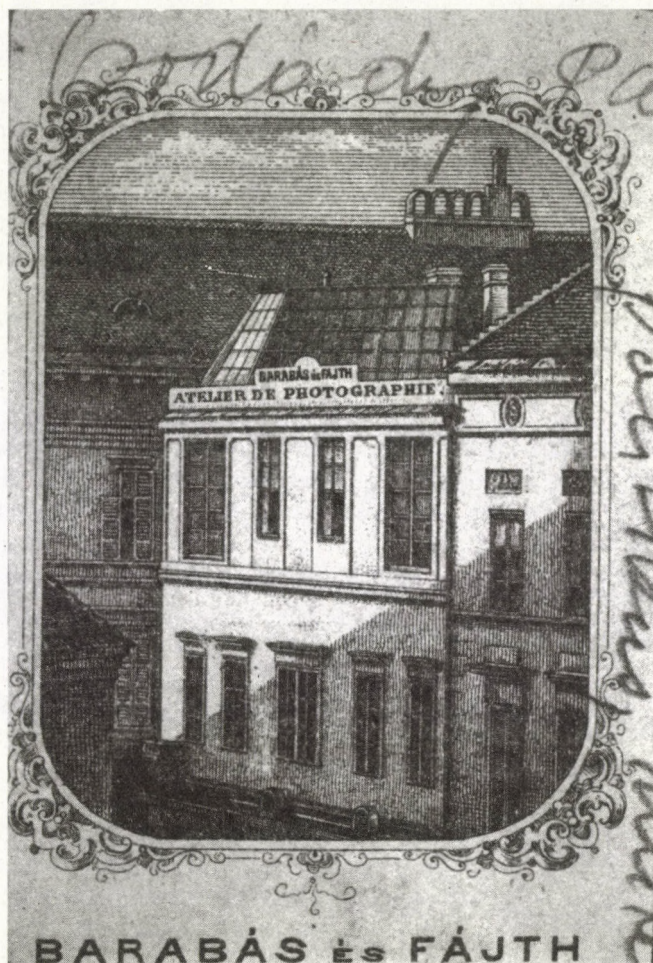
The performance is not without some extreme and bizarre elements. The putschist prince jovially ponders on the age limit below which all babies have to be put to death in order to make sure that the fugitive heir to the throne cannot escape. Then we see a soldier picking up and cuddling the baby before squeezing it to death in front of the mother. The rampage of killing that follows extends the biblical Massacre of the Innocents to the ethnic cleansings of the present. In her attempt to rescue the baby, the girl swings across a gorge using an iron cable; this fairy-tale element contrasts with the next scene, where workers cordon off the area where the cable broke with tape in the manner of the police at the scene of road accidents.

The set equally refers to a "Georgian" village and a place "pacified" in war. The costumes are masterpieces of stylizing:

home-made clothes incorporating pieces of baskets and carpets imperceptibly change into timeless folk costume. The story is occasionally interrupted by songs, and as the play approaches its climax (after violating the four-hour time limit against the explicit warning of the "expert comrade": party officials and the like can hardly be asked to concentrate longer than this), we are slowly submerged in the tragicomic whirlpool of our age. For a

farewell we are told what fate the undeservingly rescued baby came to as an emperor, and how history has buried the deserving heroes of the fable. The performance fades out with the babies' shrieks of horror, a perennial emblem of history.

De-Brechtified Brecht has thus given birth to a new Hungarian drama. The performance received the first prize of the Hungarian Theatrical Festival and was also voted best performance of 1998/99. ■



Drawing of György Klösz's first studio in the centre of Pest, on the corner of Korona and Uri Streets. He started using this studio around 1867.

Erzsébet Bori

Border Violations

Short Hungarian Features

János Szász: *Temetés* (Funeral) • János Xantus: *A morel fiú* (The Morel Boy) • Mihály Győrik: *Keresztutak* (Crossroads) • Daniel Young: *Roarsch* • Antal Nimród: *Biztosítás* (Insurance) • András Kroó: *Én, Rippl-Rónai József* (I the Painter—The Life and Times of József Rippl-Rónai) • Péter Gábor: *Pattogatott kukorica* (Popcorn) • Lívia Gyarmathy: *A mi gólyánk* (Our Stork) • Edit Kőszegi: *Sitiprince* (Prince of the Clink) Júlia Szederkényi: *Bóbita* (Based on Sándor Weöres' s children's poetry)

If it's summer, it must be drive-in cinema time. Must be so, even if this version of mass entertainment has been overtaken by the air-conditioned multiplex. Yet the choice fit for drive-ins is still wide: for some reason distributors are convinced that in summer anything, up to the dullest comedies and the most ridiculous horror films, will do. Movies of a higher calibre were put on ice. Fortunately, this summer the art cinemas have ventured to show Hungarian films as well and not only to tourists. Most unusually, short feature films are also on offer.

In recent years we have seen an almost complete halt in the production and distribution of short features. Now the shortage of money has revived them and so did the fighting spirit of film makers. Be it someone at the start of their career waiting to shoot a first movie or a well-established name, directors are no longer standing by idly, waiting for the big chance. They have decided to start shooting in the meantime, just as they are, with what they have got.

János Szász, who received the Europe Prize for his *Woyzeck* in 1994, has recently

finished *A Witman fiúk* (The Witman Boys), his adaptation of a short story by Géza Csáth, and is about to embark on an adaptation of Imre Kertész's novel about Auschwitz, *Sorstalanság* (Fatelessness). In-between these two full-length features, he decided to make a short feature and, once again, based on a literary subject. *Jézus Krisztus menyasszonya* (The Bride of Jesus Christ) is a pessimistic utopia by Péter Hajnóczy, a self-destructive alcoholic, who died young some years ago. *Funeral* was made with the meticulous care that is characteristic of Szász. Despite the fact that it runs for only 35 minutes, many who saw it were convinced that it would deserve first prize in the category of short and experimental feature films—if there had been prizes. It tells the story of one day in the life of a father and son, the story of the day the father goes to meet his death, and the son follows his father, but always avoiding each other. The movie is not an exact adaptation of the Hajnóczy book, it is more a question of drawing on some of its motifs, and its depressing atmosphere. Every frame oozes pure melancholy and the only comfort is the knowledge that at least the writer was able to find his release.

A Morel fiú (The Morel Boy), a forty-minute movie by János Xantus, was pre-

Erzsébet Bori

is the regular film critic of this journal.

miered recently. Xantus has to his credit works such as *Eszkimó asszony fázik* (Eskimo Woman Feels Cold) and *Rock-térítő* (Tropic of Rock), which have won both audience and critical acclaim. In recent years, however, he has been inactive, so *The Morel Boy* marks his return. Morel is the name of a fictitious multinational supermarket chain and the absurd events of the film take place in one of the outlets, where both of the main characters work: the talkative, loud-mouthed born winner and the dreamer who always loses out somehow. The latter is well acted by Szabolcs Hajdu, himself one of the most promising directorial talents of the younger generation. This hypermarket, with all its employees, customers and goods, is a metaphor of life presented by a film that is quite funny and not be taken too seriously.

Three short films by three young directors are being packaged together in one bill. *Keresztutak* (Crossroads) by Mihály Győrik focuses on Budapest, or rather, on that part of it between the Petőfi Bridge and the Western Railway Station, along the number 6 tram line. This boulevard in Pest has had its name changed many times during the turbulence of recent Hungarian history, but it has always been known to one and all as the Nagykörút (the Grand Boulevard). This is where the paths of typical big-city figures cross and double-cross. We are allowed a glimpse into a day in their lives through their successful or unsuccessful, but nevertheless largely unobserved meetings. The film's greatest virtue lies in small details, very well worked out and woven together.

It is questionable whether *Roarsch* by Daniel Young should be classed as a Hungarian movie at all. Suffice it to say that the production, the crew and most of the players, including the superb lead actor, are Hungarian; the important thing is that the pictures of the film are full of visual

power. Roarsch is an American soldier stationed at the US base at Taszár in southern Hungary. One hectic day when he is on furlough, he has his papers and his service revolver stolen by some shady characters, who go on to blackmail him. In return for his possessions they demand his naive country girlfriend. To make matters worse, Roarsch is late reporting for duty on account of the complications. The story comes to light gradually as he is interrogated by Captain Weaver, his company commander. At first he tries to pass off some blatant untruths, but Weaver eventually forces him to tell the truth, and with it his whole chaotic life. The film uses a split screen and the black-and-white pictures evoke this other side of Hungary and of Budapest with remarkable intensity. This is not the world of glitzy tourist brochures and boasts about democracy, but the world of squalid rural houses, pock-marked back streets, shady bars and run-down tenements. The glamour of bright shops, fashionable cafés and American fast-food chains has not reached this dark underworld where the characters live their daily lives.

Antal Nimród's film *Biztosítás* (Insurance) also takes us to a darker Hungary. Some hard cases gather in a shabby bar, engaged in their business of "helping" car owners with a money problem. They provide the service of crashing a client's car badly enough for it to be an insurance write-off. Their most treasured possession is a list of models and the minimum speed at which they have to hit a wall or lamp post in order to achieve the desired result—and walk away unscathed. Occasionally, the list has to be modified; each time one of them has paid for the error with his life. *Insurance* is definitely worth noticing, but it is not much more than an exercise in the genre.

Many current Hungarian films transcend genre. There are some full-length features that could well be classed as documentaries, experimental films or simply non-fiction. A good example is *I the Painter—The Life and Times of József Rippl-Rónai*, directed by András Kroó. The movie was made in the wake of the great exhibition on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the death of Rippl-Rónai, which led to a re-discovery of the post-impressionist master. It makes use of diaries, letters and other documents of the time, as well as the paintings themselves. It could have been a documentary portrait film, despite its unusually long (91 minutes) running time, but instead the director opted for a fictional framework of the aging painter looking back on his life. The idea is good, but not so the realization; the documentary elements, the endless facts and the first person narrative somehow resist integration with the feature film elements. The full-screen shots of the paintings are remarkable, but it could be argued that these large blow-ups falsify the original pictures.

Pattogatott kukorica (Popcorn), by Péter Gábor, is a borderline case in more than one respect. Too short to be full-length, and too long to be a short feature, it has a pseudo-documentary embedded into its framework, with amateur actors and all the stylistic paraphernalia of a televised crime story. Béla Forintos and his wife make their living selling popcorn and are scrimping to meet their dream of having an apartment of their own and of adopting a child, for whom they have to pay quite a large amount of money to a desperate teenage mother. One day they have all their money filched by a shady character called Sutyi. With the police not exactly eager to help, Béla turns to two heavyweights who are his fellow Fradi supporters. (The Ferencvárosi Torna Club, or

Fradi, is the Hungarian football club with the most fanatical and violent supporters, of whom the hard core is called *B-közép*, or B Central.) The two, Penge ('Blade') and Terminator are distinguished members of this group and, equipped with a hatchet, a baseball bat and a gun, they undertake to recover Béla's money. We follow them as they visit Sutyi's haunts in the underworld of the Eighth District in Pest; bars, markets, peep shows and the meat-racks where the cheapest prostitutes hustle. All they get are bruises and injuries until, in the end, they are arrested by the police commando squad and their prospects for the future are now two to eight years in prison. The film is hilarious from start to finish, studded with farcical elements such as the tottering of the two dumbos or their jargon, rivalled by the pushy pomposity of the TV reporter. But after a while the chase becomes repetitive, the money at stake insignificant and you can hardly wait for the whole thing to be over. The last minute, however, yields the unexpected realization that we have been watching a tragedy. These pathetic, petty people are all victims who have been playing with their lives and have become entangled in a difficult situation from which they cannot escape. After all, all they want to do is realize their humble dreams and assert their humble rights, and now they are in prison, confounded by the whole thing.

A mi gólyánk (Our Stork), an unclassifiable film by the renowned Livia Gyarmathy, takes us to much more cheerful locations. This is the second quasi-documentary she has decided to make in-between two full-length feature films. The first, *A lépcső* (The Stairs, 1994) was about the failure of a Gypsy artisan who embarked on a bold venture. *Our Stork* is set in a small village, where some of these beautiful migratory birds come from Africa in early summer, nest and raise their

young, before making the long and perilous return journey at the onset of autumn. But every year there are a few storks who for some reason do not return to Africa with the others. The film follows a year in the life of one such, who needs the help of the locals to survive the cold. During the winter it becomes virtually tame and it befriends the domestic animals. At the first sign of spring, it sets about repairing its nest. Soon the other storks arrive and courting begins. The mating period is eventually successful and three young storks are hatched. An especially touching scene is that where the parents are teaching the nestlings to fly, so that they can all make the journey back to Africa together. *Our Stork* is a fine and simple film, one which warms the heart.

Sitiprinca (Prince of the Clink), directed by Edit Köszegi, is a feature film with some documentary elements. It is based on the diaries of Rudolf Horváth, a peculiar nineteenth century figure who joined a group of wandering Gypsies as a young child and roamed Eastern Europe with them, from Cracow to Moscow and from Bucharest to Sarajevo. When he eventually returns to his Hungarian family at the age of fifteen, he finds himself in a permanent conflict: he longs to be back in the Gypsy camp, where life and love are free, but he is also drawn by the comforts of a normal life and career. This identity crisis is made worse by increasingly drastic interference on the part of the state, which seeks to constrain and regulate the lawless wanderers. Rudolf, not the greatest respecter of private property, is prosecuted for some petty offense and realizes that he is being framed for a series of murders. It is the usual story, the police are hard-pressed to solve the case of a serial killer terrorizing the whole country, and Gypsies perfectly fit the scapegoat role. The sequel is also familiar: the state propaganda machine

starts churning and turns the Gypsies against the poor boy. For the ruling class he becomes a show-Gypsy, but for the Gypsies he is "the prince of the clink", a privileged traitor. The real wonder about this film is that the director managed to find a traditional extended Gypsy family, the Stanescu clan from Galati, Romania, for the role of the wanderers. For the Stanescus traditional Gypsy dress is no folklore pageant costume and their rapid Roma speech is not just lines to be learnt off by heart. They are not playing roles, they are simply living, telling, dancing and singing their own lives.

Júlia Szederkényi's wonderful film *Bóbita* (Based on Sándor Weöres's children's poetry) also features Gypsy children. Several generations have now grown up on the marvellous poems Sándor Weöres (1913–1988), one of the great modern Hungarian poets, wrote for children. Through them not only did children learn to appreciate poetry but also the great musical, rhythmic and rhyming potential of the Hungarian language. As the director herself said: "This film is a gift to me—I have never done anything so effortlessly, without any doubts or fears. Sándor Weöres's poems for children were one of my first memories... They are as clear, transparent and sharp as our dreams, and I listened to them and read them as if I were dreaming. That is how the film was made; I was happy to find my way home, to the liberty and purity of the five-year-old child I was, skipping alongside Sándor Weöres and grabbing his sleeve. My message to critics from abroad is that they should watch it and then they will want to learn Hungarian. And that will not be my doing." In the second half of this century, Sándor Weöres's poems for children have been for Hungarian children what Mother Goose's tales were for English-speaking children. For Weöres, poetry was an intrinsic

sic form of living. The poems written for children only form a small fraction of his great oeuvre, and, what is more, the majority of these are not children's poems in the traditional sense. They are full of amazing colour, light and movement, their melody and rhythm are easy to remember or recite. They are capable of carrying even the weightiest thoughts with the slightest of ease. I would never have thought that this poetry could be made into a film. On

the other hand, it is an open question whether Júlia Szederkényi's piece is a film at all, for it seemed more like one of nature's miracles to me. We hear the poems, and they evoke the images themselves: little girls in long dresses, youngsters in a flowery meadow, blades of grass, drops of water, bugs, mushrooms, and young Gypsy boys marching along in their fathers' coats and hats—all of them wonders of this world. ☪



Photograph of György Klösz's third studio in its current state. The building was completed in 1877 and his studio occupied the first two floors. These are currently residential housing.

ENCOUNTERS

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No one envied them, which was unusual in the general poverty following the lost war, for the Perthrényis were not simply old-style rich, but kept up a private empire in the area known as the Great Wood, and managed a household with a proper staff amidst the scenery of their improbable life. They had a cook, a housemaid, a coachman who later served as footman promoted to the post of chauffeur, the idol of our young hearts, with masses of gold braid; they had a gardener too, who lived in a detached cottage in the kitchen garden, while the other servants lived in the bright, tiled basement, in rooms of their own; the little kitchen maid was housed in an alcove off the huge pantry, to safeguard her from wordly temptations.

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