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SURVEYS

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

ARTS

THE HUNGARIAN FILM STYLE AND ITS VARIATIONS

by

YVETTE BÍRÓ

Is there a Hungarian film style? A few years ago artists and critics alike argued about this question at meetings and in the press. According to some, only individuals make their appearance in the motion picture arts, and the most interesting characteristic of the Hungarian school is exactly the great number of different styles and temperaments which make the artistic product so varied. Others have discovered common themes but deny similarity in forms and methods. However, the number of films grew and slowly we had to notice that a characteristic style had been created. Of course, this didn't happen outwardly, it was not a compulsory voice or tone which was prescribed but more deeply, closer to the essentials, a conduct, a point of view was embodied in the style.

It is always easier to circumscribe the realm of themes than that of the message hidden within the story, or of the history uncovered, or of the truths which emerge. Already the areas toward which the interests tend are conspicuous. Why do the recent past's dramatic turning points appear with such an insistent repetitiousness, the time of the personality cult, the era of lost illusions, the inglorious "cold days" of the second World War, or further in the past, the back-breaking years after the defeat of the Hungarian revolutions? It's as if these movies undertook the making of new statements in which the period of sins, of omissions, and of misappropriated possibilities is to be photographed. With merciless questions aimed at us, they bring us face to face with a cross-examination of the historical past and the pressing problem of human responsibility. One foreign critic was justified in saying that the history which appears in Hungarian movies is not a sign of the usual escape, or the result of a need for myths but rather the other way around, it is a means of destroying myths. *The Round Up* and *Twenty Hours* or *Cold Days* and *Father* have one thing in common, they strive for a finally authentic, even though painful national self-knowledge. History appears in these works as a collective self-portrait.

Demand an explanation of man from history

The individual and the community, the accepted and accented subjectivity, which, however, immediately stretches to a historical size, are the both equally essential dual themes. The formula becomes crystal clear when we see the connection between these two themes. In these movies, man does not fight in everyday dimensions but in the scenery of history. His field of struggle expands beyond that of individual existence. The explosive conflicts brought about by social changes echo within him, his personal dilemmas arise in having to make choices at the crossroads of history.

The question is: does this presentation raise the threat of one-sidedness, of didacticism, and of an extremely political approach? It seems the artists are helped over this obstacle by a ruthless honesty, and a relentless passion for truth. That is, after so many years of double talk which had become habitual, they, for the first time, speak of the inner, moral crises of their heroes without the distance which makes everything look equal and harmonious. In one of the newest movies, the movingly beautiful *A stone thrown into the air* by Sándor Sára, the hero says at one point: "Ask history to account for man." And at this point the accounting becomes the most personal, the most deeply lived existential question. In seeking to place responsibility it is always we who are talked about, our fates, and what we did or didn't do. History doesn't stand in front of us like an abstract, nameless evil spirit, it is here, visible, tangible, in its human reality, the source of our weaknesses, of our possible strengths and talents.

Disturbing movies, we like to call the Hungarian new wave with pride, noting that their function, beyond the excitement of discovery, is not so much to delight, but rather to shake up, to force us to think with an impolite gesture. Of course this work of breaking down walls also injects pathos into these movies, but this is not the pathos of the artificially kindled romanticism of the age when everything was schematized. This work gets all its strength from toppling over heroes, from its manly harshness, and from breaking down the limiting walls put up by trivia. In the classic sense of the word, this is an avant-garde task, which besieges real barriers, and in this attack, even if its bravery is crowned by success, it stays heartrendingly on its own. This is the imposed loneliness of the advance guard. Or, in other words, looking at our place in the picture, we must understand that the popularity, the mass effect of these movies cannot be measured by the usual means of observing the movie-going public. But can the above argument be turned against this undertaking? For example,

if in Hungary fewer people saw the movie *Ten Thousand Suns* than in France, does this mean that there is no need, no demand for such works?

It should, rather, make us think about what, beyond the duty to change the public (and this does not belong among the problems with which this article deals), the artistic forms themselves, the language can do to make its effect more telling, more basic, if necessary. In this respect, I think the critical position which deals with the rhythms of our movies, is appropriate. The wide-ranging inclusion of themes, their patient unravelling and their constantly high incandescence create an unusual wave pattern. The dignified, but sometimes undefendable slowness of being serious holds back dramatic development. A more pulsating, agile method of presentation would not only make these works more lively, but would also bring them closer to the temperamental needs, the thinking, and the more quickly changing associations of the public.

Intellectualism Hidden in Pictures

It is an undeniable fact that these movies have a primarily intellectual effect and that perhaps this system of impressions is the least known, the one behind which there is the least tradition. When, at an international conference, we tried to summarize the product of a few years, to tell the truth, even we were surprised by the suddenly dominant intellectuality. The intention and the strength of the newer movies is that, before anything else, they tried to take possession of the world through ideas. This seemed an unusual trait, because neither Hungarian prose, nor poetry, nor painting ever shone in the light of that rationality which carefully weighs and puts everything in its place. Even the best works were made rich, weighty and cohesive by the more elementary impulses and emotions of Hungarian lyricism. And now, it is exactly in movies that this orientation toward ideas takes place, in an art form, which, according to many, is by nature incapable of reaching real intellectual heights.

However, no matter how we look at the products of the new Hungarian film, searching the common notes of style, from Jancsó to Fábri, from Kovács to Szabó, in the work of each director the pain, or if you want, the joy of thinking is undeniably present. The curse which you cannot avoid is that the artist, while the story unfolds, attacks the secrets behind everything. Even the very personal confessions try to look behind the events, they try to solve the mysteries of connections and to come up with some sort of laws about what they see. And this thinking out loud also forces the viewer

to get involved. He must accept a part of the common work, because no one offers him finished solutions here. He must struggle for the answers just as the creators of the movie struggled to find truth.

Of course, in the movies, thoughts are not expressed in words. The director hides these in the pictures; the rhythm and the movements form the structure of the work, the scoring of these many elements, that living organism which carries the message of the artist is I think the most attractive thing about the Hungarian new wave, this is exactly why it created so many variations of structure, that it was able to unfold so many nuances of the intellectual movie in such a few years.

The films of Miklós Jancsó represent daring and original variants. *The Round-Up*, *The Red and the White*, and *Silence and Cry* accept abstraction with the same resolve. At the centre of these movies, above all, there is a truth, one or another of the laws of life's movement, and the movie bares this clear, piercing thought, so as to be able to show it cleanly. By forcing secondary elements into the background and by always concentrating the situations around the essential points, the viewer is led to feel the connections even beyond the material of the story of the movie or the history behind it. So that what the artist has to say stands in front of us as clearly as the equation for a parabola.

If abstractions give form to these movies and this is done consciously, then the question must arise, what gives them liveliness, and a telling effect. It is not, as I have said before, the conceptual instruments of dialogue which convey factual truths, but a spectacle which has a summarizing effect, which concentrates the relationships of freedom and human servitude into the infinity of grim landscapes, into the deadly current of cavalry charges, and the hesitating dance of impatient movement. There is almost no hierarchy to the sequence of pictures. There is only the positioning of one scene beside another, or persistent repetition, in which truths are formulated again and again. No matter how repetitious the sequences might be as far as their mechanism is concerned, the row of events still contains surprises, because here, the unexpected, the uncalculated is the basic principle of movement. This is how the "build" of the structure and its dynamics, the visible and felt machinery communicates and reveals thoughts. Spectacle and movement are the living elements of these movies, more precisely the choreography of a movement in which man and his environment struggle and the tensions of this struggle change. Extreme poles constantly argue and come together, cruelty and beauty, silent acceptance and rising passions try to make life's deadly repressions into an experience. Since the mechanism knows no explanations, it is natural that there is no end in the traditional

sense of the word, only the effect echoing which for a long time holds you, and you cannot escape it.

The other group of works from among which in the past years successful films have been made can be called, for want of a better word, analytical. *Twenty Hours, Cold Days, Walls* and, in its own unusual way, even *Ten Thousand Suns* belong to this group, that is, these are the works in which the constantly circling method of analysis arranges the material. The main tension of these movies, for example that of *Cold Days*, actually comes from the process of conceptual analysis. Because the viewer's interest is held not so much by the unfolding of the story as by the creator's struggle with his material, the work is built from the fragments of a mosaic in front of our eyes, and all of a sudden we get the pleasant feeling that we go through, suffer through a process which leads us to truth. In these movies, in contrast to the previously discussed ones, the primary role is that of montage. The directive principle becomes one of placing the pieces next to each other in a certain way, sometimes this proves, sometimes it contradicts, sometimes it places certain moments parallel to each other. The constant confrontation leads further and further into deeper layers of the story. We live through new relationships and our sight is caught by heretofore unseen driving mechanisms. By calling up the events of the past we can guess that which the heroes themselves don't know or cover up because they are incapable of facing these facts. The flash-back technique is in fact essential, but if the process of analysis is really powerful then we can hardly feel the changes in time. After all the thoughts keep their continuity.

In these films too, the emotional effect causes problems. Doesn't the cool analysis make the works dry and unemotional? Each director overcomes this obstacle in his own way. Fábri *(Twenty Hours)* does it by boosting the emotional content of the details, Kovács *(Cold Days, Walls)* by the zigzagging of arguments and contradictory viewpoints, and Kósa *(Ten Thousand Suns)* above all with lyricism, painful, nostalgic poetry which almost covers memories.

Finally we must talk of the possibility of a third genre if we want to examine how these directors' intellectual needs created something new in style and method, and this is one which unfortunately is not cultivated very much in Hungary, although its conquests are unusual all over the world. This is the essay genre. Here we don't mean sketchy, fragmentary organisation of the material, but rather an unrestricted form, a free handling. However, from this it immediately follows that the director should handle his experiences boldly and that he should pair and mix the elements of reality

even more daringly. Among these raw documentaries and poetic day dreams there are moments stolen from life and pleasant games of the imagination. It is as if the creators as well as the heroes intended the many things that can be seen as a sort of speaking to oneself. Eagerness and immoderation drive the camera, keeping personal lyricism as the only force holding things together. *The Age of Daydreaming*, and *Father* are two of the most successful movies by István Szabó which can be included in the above category, but there are many short films by younger directors just beginning their careers which can be mentioned here and also Pál Sándor's *Clown on the Wall.*

Even in this sketchy listing a few of the common characteristics of the new principles of dramaturgy and directing become obvious. First of all, there is the dethroning of the story. It has not been completely done away with, after all, it's pretty hard to imagine a movie without a story, but it is certain that the leading role of the story has been pretty well torn up with these new methods. It comes to have a more modest role, that of one of the elements from among the many.

The meaning of poetry too has changed in these films. While before it was called on to set the atmosphere for one or another detail, or to express the beauty of a moment full of feeling, now lyricism becomes a tone containing everything, an atmosphere expressing essences, which bears the most personal marks of the creator's character.

It is interesting to note how dramatic, one can even say without exception, tragic this lyricism is, in keeping with the great traditions of Hungarian poetry, to which it is so closely related. A painful beauty follows the exploring camera, after all it has taken the weight of tormenting truths upon itself. But an account of the inheritance is unthinkable in any other way.

Seeing the heroism of this undertaking, praising the brave desire to answer the historical questions of fate, I think that today it can be said that all this cannot satisfy the actual needs of movie making by a long way. This is a good beginning, which exactly with its unquestionably high standards, its exacting intellectualism urges us on to further steps, toward the unearthing of possibilities even more rich than these, toward a really variegated spectrum of standards which demands the free emergence of the most differentiated individuals, styles and methods.

COLD DAYS—
THE NOVEL AND THE FILM

by

TIBOR CSERES

In the middle of March, 1941, I was among the first who, with an armed unit of the "liberating" Horthyite army, entered the town of Novi Sad, Újvidék in Hungarian, which for the previous twenty-two years had belonged to Yugoslavia, as it still does now.

Only a few days before the Hungarian Premier, Count Pál Teleki, had protested against Hungary being dragged into military action against Yugoslavia by the Nazis; he had shot himself.

At that time I did not guess that twenty years later I should find myself in a position to protest against a crime that was to be committed scarcely ten months after our entrance into Yugoslavia. It was committed in the name of the Hungarian people and therefore in my name, and there in Novi Sad.

What happened in Novi Sad? While pursuing a small unit of Yugoslav guerillas (Partisans or Chetniks) thousands of innocent people were massacred.

In those years, indeed, Europe and the world had become familiar with bloodshed on this, and indeed a much greater scale, yet I, as a Hungarian, was most shattered by the horror of Novi Sad.

The massacre, whether arbitrary or planned, lasted for three days, from January 21 to January 23, 1942. And I, still in the army, was in the town again in the March of that year.

I wrote the draft of my novel, and consequently also the outline of the motion picture based on it*, a few pages at the time, hiding them in the depths of my kit-box, without the slightest hope of getting it published, or even getting it written.

The opportunities to write it up did not improve after the end of the

* See part of the novel, and the review of the picture directed by András Kovács, in issues No. 21 and 24 of The New Hungarian Quarterly.

war; moreover, from 1949 onward, they rather deteriorated, after the split with Yugoslavia.

It was in 1955 that I could first seriously consider at least to adding to the raw material I possessed, and not continuing to rely exclusively on my own recollections and those of a few civilians of that time. In that year the authorities started to release those former soldiers who had been given a life sentence for their actions in those three January days in Novi Sad.

For years I followed up these former criminals and collected some one-and-half thousand pages of confessions in the process, mostly by waiting and watching how their souls opened in prolonged schnapps sessions.

Finally, in 1961, I felt that I knew everything what I needed and in a thin volume of scarcely 150 pages I recorded those three days.*

After the publication of this novel, and even more so after the motion picture was released, readers and cinemagoers have turned to me with two invariable, constantly recurring questions; 1. What part did I take in these horrible events? 2. What circumstance, what moment, made me recall and write of this horror?

The first question I have just answered. The second one is answered by a note from the bottom of my kit-bag: a brief sketch noted down in March, 1942, telling of that Hungarian army officer, himself an organic element in the murder machine, whose innocent wife died with the innocent victims.

*

What kind of a novel—or film—is "Cold Days," I am frequently asked even by those who have read the one or seen the other. Apart from explaining how it came into being I don't really want to discuss it, but if I must I would begin with the statement that it is an historical novel. Only to withdraw it on the spot. It is true that it deals with an historical event. But no conclusion can be drawn from this fact either on its conception, nor its reception. Nor regarding the selection of the historical point of time, which at the beginning proved more of a disadvantage than a help.

I received numerous letters after my novel was published. They very largely represent contradictory points of view, yet in one thing my readers generally agree, that it is interesting.

Why? Even from the letters of people quite ignorant of historical events it developped—and this is not said boastfully—that they read the book in one swoop, like a crime story. In point of fact, "Cold Days" *is* a crime novel, though not at all the usual sort.

* *Hideg napok* ("Cold Days"), first published in *Kortárs*, a Budapest literary monthly, in 1962.

I can see how the more serious and responsible readers will protest: no, no, no, this is a novel of conscience. The writer examines the question of conscience in the name of an entire nation, ruthlessly dissecting within this fixed period of three days the greatest sin his own people committed against others, and by this he lays claim to the right to reveal any sins later committed against his own people, in the further or nearer past.

What can the author say? I say, both statements are true. And I might add that I do not know how much the foreigner, the non-Central European can understand of this kind of examination of the conscience, and whether he is at all able to comprehend the significance of speaking out, something which the writer owes to the world, to his readers and to himself. I know, however, and the proof of this is again to be found in the multitude of very expressive letters, that the Hungarian reader, as he makes his way through the book with ever increasing excitement, does in fact read these hundred and fifty pages of indictment with a crumbling of his inner resistance, and finally is able to accept the stark truth that only by the free confession and discussion of each painful truth can the peoples coexisting in Central Europe hope to abate their nationalist passion and pride.

And if just now I hazarded the statement that this a crime story, I now repeat it: on the first reading, and in terms of the excitement it elicits, that is quite definitely what it is. Yet this excitement and suspense has its proper function, its part to play; it is to arouse vigorous interest in a purely moral or purely immoral attitude, whereas even a reader deeply concerned with his own standards of morality is likely to remain more or less insensitive to this kind of challenge when conveyed in the form of simple communication. Even if he is not totally indifferent, it is very difficult to shake him.

But in thinking about this novel, in the very indignation and shock of the demanding readers arises at the same time a certain hidden—and justified—resentment against the author, who has forced them, unwillingly, unaware, to take part in these events and these crimes. They begin to investigate the point in the story at which they fell victim to this hidden intention of his. But even the most intelligent and attentive reader only becomes aware of this artistic "betrayal" on the very last pages of the book, which is the proper crime story formula. What differentiates "Cold Days" from a simple crime story, however, is that the reader instantly or (if the night is already running out) then early next morning will once again try to follow up the experience of his own crime, this time more slowly, at a more attentive pace.

The secret of the book, if there is such a secret, is that horror is a natural element of its atmosphere. The writer was not forced to apply the artificial

procedure of crime stories, the device of revealing the persons of his novel by putting them into extreme situations. In this book all the situations are extreme. Here all the presumptions and hypotheses of peril and menaces that in other cases the writer has to work to make acceptable, if tension is to be created, are absolutely superfluous. Not because history had already done the job—completely—for him, but because in the souls of the four selected "heroes," if this term is permitted, every horror is present, just as nitrogen is in the air.

*

My book carries a hard and bitter message, and because of that I consider it lucky that part of the public, and a large part, at that, have got to know it first in the form of a motion picture. Surely the persuasive power of the film will make a quite a number of them pick up the book in turn.

For the number of those who, after having read the book, want to see the film should be much lower, since the editions of a successful novel always lag far behind the numbers seeing the film. It must be a very old and extremely successful novel that has more readers than cinemagoers viewing the film version.

This is as it should be.

The writer is often asked, of course, whether he feels that his book has been in some way falsified by the film.

I think that András Kovács, the director of "Cold Days," has remained faithful not only to the spirit and the subject of the novel, but even to its text. And since a novel, even such a short one, always contains many more stories, actions and ideas than the one-and-half hours of film projection are able to convey, the main problem of the producer is—and in this case as well—what to leave out.

Compared to the novel those details in the design that the picture has lost do not detract from its understanding nor from the tragic development of the characters.

*

"Cold Days" is my third or fourth film; i.e. the fourth motion picture to which I have contributed. Despite this I am still an outsider, not one of the film people, my main link with the profession is the screen play, which I consider more or less the work of my own hands. Thus when I comment on film production or art, the screen play is the handle I grasp.

*

The novel won appreciation, but more praise is due to the picture.

One might think the writer should be satisfied. Yet he is not, he is not content.

This restiveness comes from the fact that he can not only read but hear, he takes in the unwritten but spoken words. He speculates on the unspoken, half broken, or hidden feelings of the soul expressed in a face, in the twitch of a gown, in a physical attitude.

The reviews in the dailies and in the trade papers (I am speaking of the picture) lacked something that thousands of spectators swarming out of the cinema both felt and thought. I know quite certainly that this public reacted to the experience with a multitude of feelings and thoughts. And from among these many, varied kinds of reaction only a few were reflected in the press comments. This is a real and important shortcoming, because cinema audiences may well have felt a lot of other things, over and above what came to the mind of the critics, and also because just on the most important questions general public thinking and public opinion have to be indicated by word of mouth rather than by the written word, for which full responsibility can be assumed.

Yet I feel the need to learn all the views of the public, those half-expressed, those suppressed, is all the more important since the novel itself (and the film) unfolds itself before the eyes of the viewer as registering the thoughts of four men, years after the actual crime for which, under penal law, they can scarcely be made properly responsible. For their real sin is *how* they think about the horrible crimes that were committed by others.

What I miss is not the opinions expressed in favour of the motion picture and the novel, nor the angry protest or rejection: it is the discussion which could have lanced the ferment of emotions. In the course of that discussion many problems could have been examined, or perhaps only a few important ones, what to think for instance, even in terms of the future, of such historic crimes as have been committed in our national presence yet without ourselves being asked.

The public discussion did not take place, yet the asperity which manifested itself in the course of public opinion polls, and enquiries, and from private letters indicates to this day that both the novel and the picture hit sensitive centres of consciousness, if not the very heart of the reader and the spectator. And what were the bulk of the reactions? Do the two versions of the work give all the facts on the events discussed? Are they accurate?

*

"The public knew 'Cold Days'," said the producer, András Kovács, "before it was even shot, when it was still under discussion whether it should be made at all. People don't often talk about the 'co-writing' role of the public, despite the fact that, willingly or unwillingly, every author takes the public into account, and not only in so far as pure entertainment films are concerned, where the rule of 'what the public wants' is paramount, but also when serious authors and film directors, who desire to serve the public, want to change public thinking.

I happened upon the novel by Cseres accidentally and rather late, but it is something to think about that following the publication of the novel the idea of making a motion picture of it cropped up repeatedly, yet for fear of a hostile public response nobody dared take the risk."

"Every motion picture, and consequently 'Cold Days' as well, over and above the actual plot, works on another plane as well, whether or not the author intended it. It reaches out to those not involved in the specific circumstances of that time and that place. This 'second plane' triggers off a mental process in the onlooker, i.e. makes him expand the thoughts in the film, and rouses his social sensitivity. Works of art have a different significance in different periods. How often does the spectator discern some element in them of which the author was unconscious. In the case of contemporary works the question arises whether thoughts aroused by the picture are being further expanded, and if so, in what direction? The 'co-writing' of the public reveals its ideological attitude as the concept of the film reveals that of the author or the producer.

If we want to judge correctly we ought to consider that in the case of 'Cold Days' the peculiar structure of the picture impeded this 'co-author's activity' of the public, since it made it impossible, even if we had wanted to, for us to formulate our attitude in the film. The film only shows what the four accused men live through or thought; no single one of them was in a position to judge the situation as a whole, as the authors of the film could do. The other, equally great difficulty was that we listen to the excuses made by each of the four, in which truth and suppression and prejudice mingle, all of it contrasting only very subtly with the flashback of events we see on the screen. A cruder confrontation would not only have been psychologically superficial, but would I think have made the film primitive and ineffective."

*

"Cold Days" has come in for several kinds of criticism. Some feel the human and personal aspect to be the more important; others the severity

of the national self-examination. There are also critics who consider it one of the symptoms of disillusion.

I myself meant to produce a series of different impacts. To touch everyone in their heart, through different approaches to it, and then in their thinking, to shock them into awareness. What was interesting was that the many kinds of opinion which cropped up from all sides on the novel, and particularly on the motion picture, were not reflected in published criticism. I said before that the numbers of letters and opinions expressed by word of mouth convinced me it would have been worthwhile to make space in our newspapers for some of the highly contradictory views of readers and moviegoers, and the fact that it was not done has proved a hindrance to a proper development of opinion on this subject among both writers and readers. I feel Hungarian literary opinion is underdeveloped and one-sided, and the attitude of the readers, due to the unprecedented increase in newspaper readership, is a little conservative, not to use a stronger term. Many of these readers would like to prevent the writer saying or describing anything which in any way animadverts upon the Hungarian people. Thus they would prevent any realistic and eventually painful recognition of the position by our people, even through the medium of the arts. I have attended many a conference these months, and I could compile a bulky paper (and incidentally, I ought to do it sometime) on how many kinds of doubts and distorted notions are hidden behind even the best of intentions. I have received innumerable letters: "This is not true, I simply will not believe that Hungarians did such a thing."—"The Chetniks controlled the town through terrorism, any regular army would have been forced to act the same way. And actually, everywhere soldiers on active service in a similar situation acted in a similar way."—"I consider the number of the dead to be vastly exaggerated."—"The picture of the Serbs is absolutely false and insulting to the Serb people. The Serbs are not like that, they fought and did not surrender so easily."—"I only read 101 pages. I could not go on. A Hungarian should not write such a thing. Let *them* write it. This is not our task."—"Why do you defend the killers? We do not learn from the novel or the film whether the guilty duly received their punishment? And what happened to the other murderers?"—"This will hardly produce true and correct ideas in the politically uninformed, or among Hungarian youth with their one-sided education, who, ignorant of the historic background, cannot imagine at all what that little episode of Újvidék meant amidst the thunderstorm of world war."—"This could only have happened upon the order of the Germans. And that ought to have been stressed much more strongly."—"Unfortunately the complicity of the Serb population

was beyond doubt. They hid the Comitadjis."—"And what happened in November of 1944? In Bezdan (in Yugoslavia) for instance. On the 3rd of that month everybody was summoned to the football ground, on pain on death for anybody found at home. On two sides of the football grounds were placed machine guns. From the massed crowd all the men between twenty and fifty were picked out, and that very day 121 of them were executed to gramophone music."—"There are no statistics of how many thousands of Hungarians were innocently killed toward the end of the war. I do not want to keep the flame of revenge burning, yet my own young brother, who was sixteen at the time, and could not have committed any crime in his brief past, was thrown into the Danube. And this in spite of a former Bosnian lieutenant coming to the defence of our village: he had married amongst us back in the time of the king. But he, too, was shot, and now it really would be good to believe, to hear, that the world knows: they were innocent, and died innocently."—"By writing this you can cause immeasurable damage to the prestige of the Hungarian people, which is already so damaged."—"I am curious to know whether another country exists where such things are written about their own homeland. Quite apart from this, what shall I say to my pupils when they ask me what I would have done in the place of the characters of the novel, or how should they themselves act if they find themselves in a similar situation?"

*

The Institute of Film Science in Budapest, after "Cold Days" had won the Grand Prix at Karlovy Vary, undertook an extensive and methodical public opinion poll.

To me the opinions of young students are of special interest:

"If everything good, and everything bad is due to only a few people, then we have to be grateful: they are the only guilty ones, everybody else must be acquitted, i.e. the others have nothing to do with it. But then they must not claim the right to interfere. In the case of 'Cold Days' the indictment of a few, obviously guilty major figures would have saved us all a world of discomfort, saved us from thinking. The most important question would have been obscured: how can it happen that even people no worse than the average do terrible things, since it is evident that without 'innocent' ones the 'evil' men could not act."

What may the human ideal of that university student be who asked: "Doesn't it lead to anarchy if we make it possible for men to re-examine illegal orders and eventually to refuse them?"—And what is the human

ideal of that grammar school boy who declared that when he become a soldier he would carry out any order given, for anyway "there is no chance of thinking for oneself if one is a soldier, and from the very beginning one would feel oneself guiltless should it develop later on that these commands were illegal or served a bad cause."

But let me also quote students' opinions which reveal that it was precisely the young ones who understood the novel and the film properly.

"We did not live then, we did not understand many things in the film, yet we were able to comprehend it."

"I feel responsibility for something which happened at a time when I was not even alive, and I now meditate on what I would do if I had to face a similar situation."

"It did not shock me, but it illuminated many things in the behaviour of the grown-ups that up to now I had not understood."

"It did not occur at all to the characters of the film that one also can say no. The film itself suggests that you must resist evil."

"It accumulated energies within me so that I might find my way in difficult situations."

"This film is not an accusation or a self-accusation; it is an examination."

"This film is the drama of missed opportunities."

"They are almost decent people, yet this 'almost' caused the death of thousands of people."

"My father would not see the film, saying that such a thing would never happen again. But we young ones are more concerned with war than those who continuously reproach us for not having lived through it, and they say we are unable to understand what happened then."

"The film suggests that whatever happens one must make a stand."

"Újvidék is at the same time a national tragedy for the Hungarian."

"I cannot get away from the film, for all the time I felt that I would do the same as these four men, I would not have the strength to resist"—says a university co-ed. "It is so realistic that it hurts," says another.

Yugoslav reactions to the film fail to confirm fears which were voiced regarding our reputation and the friendship between the two peoples. Just as sincere friendship between two individuals begins when there is nothing they cannot discuss with each other, the voice of honesty in this film elicited confidence and sympathy in Novi Sad, Belgrade and Zagreb when the picture was shown. One paper wrote: "Cold Days" is a film which knows no frontiers between countries, a film which speaks of people." Another viewer, by the way, a Serb from Zombor who speaks a certain amount of Hungarian, and who has memories of those days, took his leave

after the showing with the words: "I do not thank you for having invited me to this showing, but for having made this film." Progressive circles in Yugoslavia received the picture with pleasure, since various kinds of nationalism exist there as well, and in our own country, whenever the fight against chauvinism is mentioned, such nationalists declare: "Why should we be the first when nationalism exists elsewhere as well? Does not this film discredit the Magyars in the eyes of the Yugoslav nationalists?" Somebody answered this question by reporting that he had met two such prejudiced viewers, who were displeased with the picture because the Hungarians in it were not villainous enough, and their actions were "embellished." They therefore considered the film was prejudiced *in favour of* the Magyars, and thus not suitable to engender an "anti-Hungarian" atmosphere.

Other reactions abroad, too, disprove preliminary fears. In Moscow a writer defined the impact of the film upon himself as follows: "While watching the film I realized that the responsibility for our actions cannot be shifted on anybody else." And a Frenchman said: "This concerns all of us, man, and the weaknesses inherent in every man." Experience shows that abroad the national aspects of the film took a secondary place, and the universal human aspect of it came to the forefront.

Let me quote another foreign reaction, the reaction of a person who left Hungary eighteen years ago saying that never again would she return, she even would forget that she had ever lived there. A woman of twenty-eight who had lived through the 'forties as a child; at the time of the siege of Budapest the family, which was Jewish, hid from the persecution in the capital, and in 1949 they emigrated to Australia. Since then she had heard practically nothing of Hungary, read no Hungarian writers; she was educated in an English school, then worked in Israel, England, New York, and Paris, and travelled over the whole of Europe. This was the first Hungarian film she ever saw, and it completely "upset" her. Not the way one might expect, she did not say: "Well, that's what the Hungarians are." On the contrary: she was deeply moved by the sincerity of the picture, by the very fact that it had been made at all, that it was being shown, being seen, that it was being sent abroad, and a certain confidence towards the world from which she had suffered so much, and which she had wanted to forget, rose in her heart: she became aware again of the fact that she, too, was Hungarian.

*

So many reactions did not come unexpectedly, nor did they surprise me. I wondered a bit that so many of these adult letter writers thought they

knew more about the subject than I did, regarding the novel as an improvised report vulnerable in each detail, and thus with no sound foundation. And that when, morever, my circumspection had been even greater than necessary, lasting for more than twenty years. I had the transcripts of three criminal trials to select from, and findings of the military courts of Miklós Horthy. And over and above this, I would not have taken to writing it if I had not borne in mind the favourable treatment of the Hungarians in Yugoslavia which followed the war. I have already said it once, and now, finally, I say it again; "Cold Days" undertook to record the story of three days, and the subject, the naked and shameful reality, is expanded by a single device: those three days seen as re-filtered through the consciousness of four men who themselves had committed no crime for which they could be made responsible according to civilian law; they had only been present. Their one sin is *how* they think about those three days, four years later.

"Cold Days" is the beginning, the first piece of a possible cycle. I should prefer it if someone else, not I, went on with it. The second part should be spoken by the writers (or perhaps by the film producers) of the neighbouring peoples in the first place. It is our neighbours that are our main concern, their writers, their work for the common cause, for the joint heaven and hell of our natural propinquity.

THE RED AND THE WHITE

A Film by Miklós Jancsó

(Excerpt from the script written in collaboration with Gyula Hernádi)

András sets out.

The wide wall of the cathedral extends opposite the bell tower. Half-stripped men stand there, facing the wall. They are the captured Internationalists.

András joins them, and he also faces the wall.

A number of young officers of the White Guard walk about behind them. They are immaculately elegant, and all their gestures and movements are hard and self-assured.

The sharp-faced officer turns to the prisoners.

YOUNG OFFICER: Turn round!

(He repeats it directly in German):

Attention! About face! Quick march!

The Internationalists turn and start off.

The young officer snaps out orders, speaking alternately in Russian and in bad German:

YOUNG OFFICER: Go to the wall and back! To the wall and back!

The prisoners go to the wall of the bell tower, turn there and come back directly. The officer yells.

YOUNG OFFICER: And back again! Now turn back again!

While this officer keeps the prisoners on the move, another officer, also young, paces between the rows of men, looking hard into their faces. Then he points out first one and again someone else and picks them out of the line.

Four are already standing behind the house, including András.

An older officer approaches through the empty, wide, white-walled side-court of the monastery. He is a colonel.

Eight to ten young officers are behind him. They follow the colonel in a loose group. Every one of them carries a rifle, some in their hands, some slung on their shoulder. Some hold it loosely as if they were out shooting game.

The colonel comes through the gate of the side-court leaving the young officers behind. He stops in front of the selected prisoners, looks at them for a short while, then motions one of them to come with him and takes him over into the empty yard.

It is the huge yard of a fortress, high walls all round, breastworks and a machicolated gallery on the inside. It has not been used for some time, the ground is covered by high grass and weeds.

The colonel does not even stop while he addresses one of the young officers in a composed and commanding fashion.

COLONEL: Let me have your gun!

He has hardly taken the gun when he already speaks to the prisoner.

COLONEL: Run!

He motions with his head and points forward in the direction of the large trellised gate closing off the yard in the distance.

The prisoner stands without understanding what it is all about and the colonel calls to him again.

COLONEL: Go!

He points the way with the barrel of his rifle. The prisoner finally moves. He goes slowly, looking back again and again.

The colonel shouts at him.

COLONEL: Run!

The prisoner makes a dash for it.

The colonel takes a short step forward, he loads his gun, aims and shoots. The prisoner falls.

The colonel returns the gun to his officer and motions to another prisoner to come forward. It is András.

The colonel stands and looks at him.

COLONEL: Do you understand Russian?

ANDRÁS: A little.

COLONEL: What nationality are you?

ANDRÁS: Hungarian.

COLONEL: How old are you?

ANDRÁS: Forty-six.

COLONEL: Forty-six?

He waits. He takes a good look at András. Then he speaks quietly:

COLONEL: All right, get back!

András backs slowly.

The colonel goes on speaking.

COLONEL: Why are you fighting here in Russia?

But he is no longer looking at András.

He motions to a different prisoner, a younger man, and then, almost with the same gesture, he picks one of his own officers. He is also young, tall, with a meditative look. He is Nikita.

COLONEL: Come here! Load!

With an energetic gesture he pushes the prisoner towards the middle of the courtyard.

COLONEL: Run!

The prisoner starts to run immediately. Nikita shoots, but misses. He lowers his gun.

The colonel shouts at him.

COLONEL: Again! Shoot again!

Nikita aims, but he does not pull the trigger at once, he waits, drops to one knee and shoots from that position.

The prisoner can no longer be seen, but one can sense from the colonel's and Nikita's reaction that this time he did not miss.

COLONEL: Well, you see, it's not all that hard.

He takes the rifle from Nikita and then calls to his officers.

COLONEL: Well, one more!

A young man is brought forward straight away. He is wearing a striped sailor's blouse.

The colonel looks him over.

COLONEL: You are Russian, aren't you?

The prisoner does not answer.

The colonel points in the direction of the yard.

The sailor starts slowly, then after a few steps he stops. He looks straight at the officers.

The colonel shouts.

COLONEL: Turn round and run!

The sailor obeys.

The colonel points to one of his officers.

COLONEL: Shoot!

The officer raises his rifle.

At this moment the sailor jumps aside.

The officer follows him with the rifle, he aims and pulls the trigger, but misses. He loads his rifle, shoots again, reloads and shoots for a third time. He misses.

The colonel picks up a rifle and he too shoots, and in fact two or three other officers are also beginning to fire.

Drumfire.

By now the sailor is a long way across the yard and still jumping and leaping facing backwards.

Then he slips down and no longer gets up.

With rifle in hand, the colonel looks in the sailor's direction, then he slowly returns the rifle to Nikita, and goes out through the gate in the direction of the smaller yard. There he stops and looks about.

András stands next to the wall.

COLONEL: Stand to attention!

András stands up straight.

The picture grows dark.

The wide road leading to the harbour is seen from above. Tumble down streets and bare partition walls.

A group of prisoners, some two hundred men, stand in the middle of the cobbled street. They stand about in their trousers and shirts, barefooted.

Around them and farther off there is a guard with rifles and bayonets.

Opposite to them two platoons of officers of the White Guard in black uniforms stand stiffly to attention.

Two older White officers—not Guardsmen—walk about among the prisoners.

They are selecting the prisoners.

FIRST OLDER WHITE OFFICER: You aren't Russian, stand over there! You aren't Russian either, move over there! And you. Everyone who isn't Russian come forward.

The prisoners leave the group, moving close to a colonnade. The second officer reaches the foreground. He is doing and saying the same things as the other.

SECOND OLDER WHITE OFFICER: You Russian? No? Stand over there! Russian? No? You stand there! All those who aren't Russian stand there.

The colonel who is standing not far from them begins to speak in a louder tone of voice, in German:

COLONEL: Listen! You are foreigners. No one invited you! Now, for once you can go. Go on, be off.

He turns away.

The prisoners are still standing, without moving.

The colonel steps forward to face them and shouts at them in Russian:

COLONEL: Don't you understand? You can go!

(Changing again to German):

Go on, hurry up, get going.

The prisoners start out. The colonel turns his back to them and inspects the hundred-and-fifty Reds left behind.

He notices András among them. He moves a little closer to him and points at him.

COLONEL: You aren't Russian. Why have you stayed behind?

András is scared, he says in broken Russian:

ANDRÁS: I did not know. I did not understand properly.

He is silent for a moment.

ANDRÁS: Now if I may go there...

COLONEL: Now you can stay.

The colonel steps a little farther back and begins to speak to the prisoners.

COLONEL: Listen. We are giving you one last chance. For a quarter of an hour you are free! You can leave, you can run off. In fifteen minutes we are coming after you, and those we catch will die.

Do you understand? Answer me, do you understand?

The colonel waits.

A few voices can be heard.

RUSSIAN VOICES: We understand.

The colonel waits a little longer.

COLONEL: Take off your shirts and throw them on the ground!

He checks his watch and looks up.

COLONEL: All right. You can start!

The prisoners scatter.

The yard empties completely.

A few soldiers pick up the cast-off shirts.

Two platoons of Guards march into the square, their heels thudding hard against the ground. They divide to form small rectangles and fix bayonets.

Cossacks exercise their horses in the squares formed by the White Guards.

Cossack horsemen play war-games in the wide square in front of the monastery wall. They gallop about, suddenly come to a halt and then rush off again, riding full tilt and flourishing their swords.

They turn. They ride through the small gate of the outer court.

Before they get to the low gate, each one crouches in his saddle, slides to the side of the horse's belly and speeds through the gate.

The square is deserted again.

A square of Guards officers reaches the gate. They approach the foreground, taking slow, steady steps, their bayonets fixed.

Farther back there are low wooden houses, and behind them, in the background, there is a small three-domed chapel.

The officers of the White Guard whistle as they march.

There is quiet.

You can see the empty street through the half-open back-door of the yard of a peasant house.

A muscular young man, bare to the waist, is behind the gate. He has slanting narrow eyes. His name is Chingiz.

He is tensely alert.

The sound of whistling approaches from the street.

The young man slowly raises his arms.

First a rifle and bayonet, then the young Guardsman holding the rifle appears in the gate. He takes a cautious step in the direction of the courtyard and then slowly turns.

This is the moment when the young man with his arms raised jumps at him.

With a single movement he grabs his neck and stops his mouth with the palm of his hand. Then he chokes him. He lowers the lifeless body by the gate, picks up the dead Guardsman's rifle and throws it forward.

László is on the other side of the gate, also bare chested. He skilfully catches the gun.

Both of them go off, half-stooping; they run along the street, close to the fence.

They stop. László turns round, and fires a few shots.

They keep running.

The grass is tall on the meadow. It reaches up to a man's waist.

Three men, each of them prisoners bare from the waist up, are running in the meadow. They run stoopingly. The grass only partly covers them.

Rifle fire is heard.

First one of them, then the other, falls.

The third one keeps running. It is András. There is a wooden house on the edge of the meadow. András dashes up on the porch, and runs through the gate.

The door shuts behind him.

A short silence.

The door opens again, a young peasant girl is seen, holding a water-jug.

She walks up to the well and draws water.

Cossacks appear on horseback, five of them. They ride around the house.

They dismount. One of them, the officer, shouts into the house.

COSSACK OFFICER: Come out, everyone!

The Cossacks stand there pointing their guns.

There is a short silence.

The door opens, an old woman comes out, then another, younger woman.

The officer shouts again.

COSSACK OFFICER: Everyone inside must come out!

András comes out. He is wearing a shirt. He stops. The officer looks at him.

COSSACK OFFICER: You are not Russian.

ANDRÁS: No.

COSSACK OFFICER: You are wearing a shirt.

ANDRÁS: Yes.

COSSACK OFFICER: So they let you go.

ANDRÁS: Yes.

The Cossack officer waits a bit.

COSSACK OFFICER: Well, then take off your shirt.

András slowly takes off his shirt. A Cossack steps behind him and points his gun at András.

The officer turns away and walks to the girl standing by the well.

COSSACK OFFICER: Get undressed!

The girl raises her hands in terror.

The officer speaks again.

COSSACK OFFICER: Get undressed!

There is the report of a gun, the officer steps aside and sees how András's body is being dragged into the grass on the meadow.

He turns back.

The girls is standing in a shirt between the well and the water-pail.

The officer points at the shirt.

COSSACK OFFICER: Your shirt, too! You look pretty enough.

The girl takes off the shirt.

The officer looks at the nude girl and then roughly says to the two Cossacks standing in front of him:

COSSACK OFFICER: Give her a bath!

The soldiers walk up to the girl. They grab her and lift her into the tub.

A little farther off in the meadow a patrol of the officer's Guard appears. There are five of them, with Nikita in command. They are approaching the house with rifles with fixed bayonets ready to fire.

They scatter and forming a half circle, they stop in front of the Cossacks.

Nikita comes forward.

NIKITA: What is this?

The Cossack officer walks up to him. He is smiling a little.

COSSACK OFFICER: We are going to play a game. You can join in if you want to.

Nikita speaks coldly.

NIKITA: Stand to attention!

The Cossacks stand there as if petrified, frozen in the movement they started but have not completed.

Nikita points at the ground:

NIKITA: Throw your swords and belts on the ground.

The four men do as they are told, but the Cossack officer asks without understanding.

COSSACK OFFICER: What's all this?

NIKITA: Stand to attention and give me your sword!

Going pale, the Cossack officer unstraps his sword and hands it to Nikita, who throws it to the ground.

At the river bend, where the water flows more gently, the Cossack officer stands, facing the water. His head is bare and his jacket open.

Farther back are the disarmed Cossacks and still farther behind the officers of the White Guard.

Nikita moves slightly to the side, and then says, speaking softly but resolutely:

NIKITA: I, Nikita Alexandrovich Glazunov, lieutenant of the Guard, by the right vested in me by military regulations and army law, sentence you to death for violence committed in a theatre of war. God have mercy on your soul. The sentence is to be carried out immediately.

(Steps back and commands):

Fire! Fire!

The guns of the Guardsmen roar in unison. Nikita turns to the Cossacks.

NIKITA: Bury him.

He steps to the river bank and notices that on the opposite side fleeing Reds are jumping into the river, and he begins to shoot at them immediately.

The Reds shout.

SHOUTS (in Russian and Hungarian): Dive! Swim underwater. Under water!

The officers of the Guard run on the bank and keep shooting.

The Reds dive. They are all submerged.

Nikita is running along the bank holding a hand-grenade. He removes the safety pin and throws the grenade a long way into the water.

An explosion.

Another.

And another.

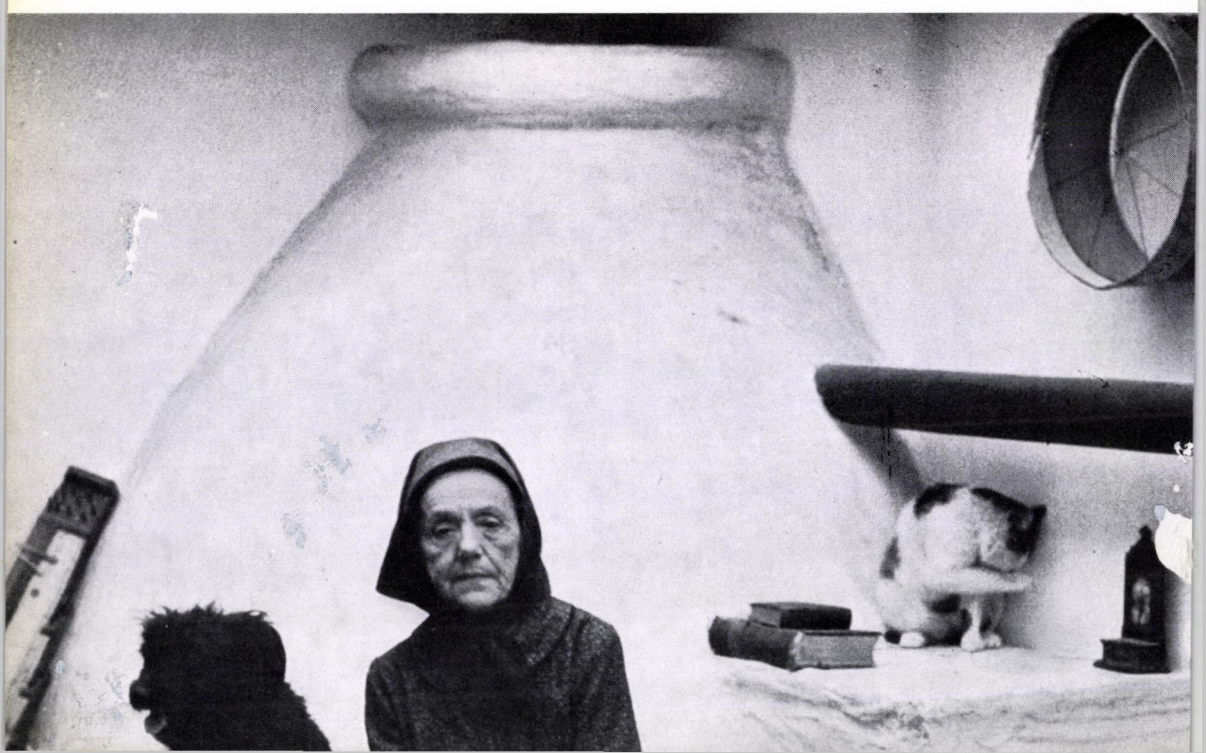
The picture darkens.

Miklós Jancsó: "The Round-up" (1966)

ANDRÁS KOVÁCS: "COLD DAYS" (1966)

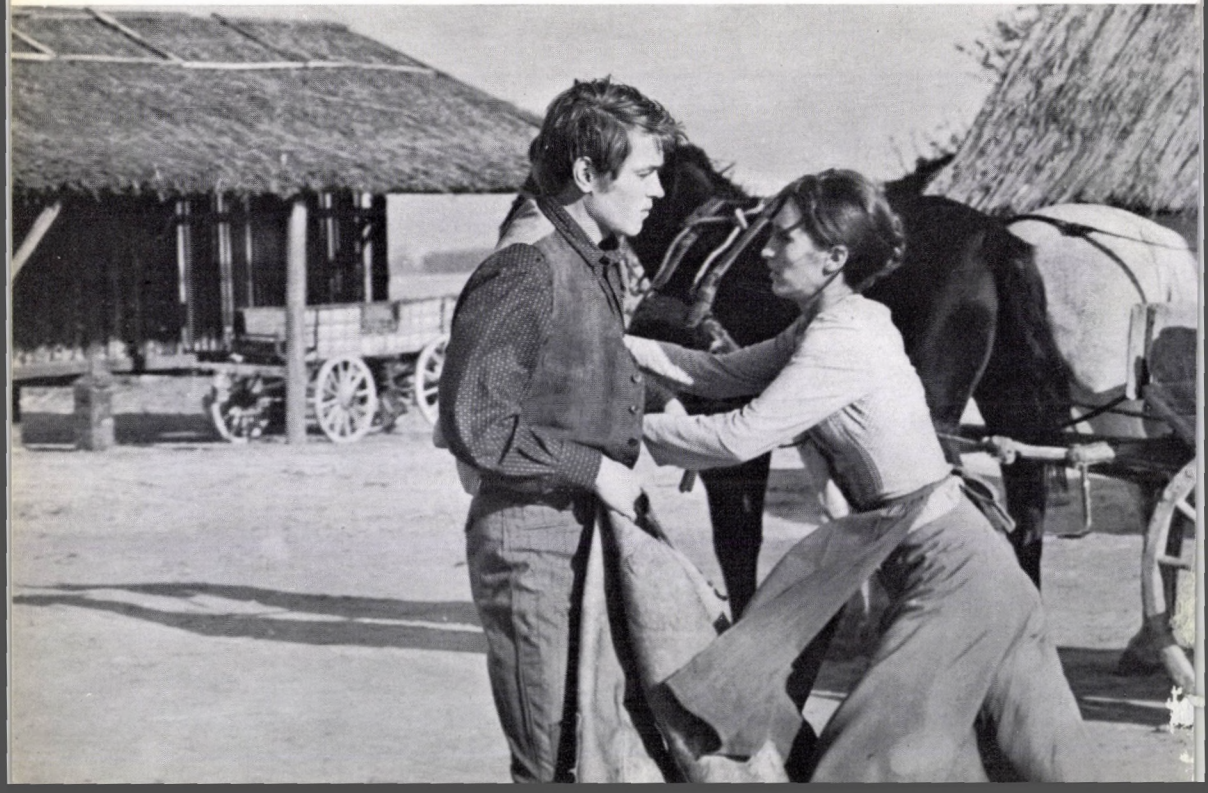
Miklós Jancsó: "The Red and the White" (1967)

Ferenc Kósa: "Ten Thousand Suns" (1967)



ANDRÁS KOVÁCS: "WALLS" (1968)

Miklós Jancsó: "Silence and Cry" (1968)



JANCSÓ SHOOTING

by

GYULA MAÁR

Postscript by Way of Introduction

In the ancient town of Kostroma on the banks of the Volga I was for two months —from beginning to end—a witness and enthusiastic supporter of the birth of a work of art; Miklós Jancsó was shooting his film *Csillagosok, katonák* (The Red and the White), produced as a Hungaro-Soviet co-production.

The film shows that stage in the history of the 1917 revolution in which the White Guard temporarily gained the upper hand. However, every essential condition for their victory was absent: the one-time Czarist officers chasing the outdated, nationalist illusions of eternal Russia had lost sight of reality, and were piling blunder upon blunder.

The Hungarian heroes of the story—volunteers in the service of the revolution—and their fellows were made prisoner by just such White Guards. The colonel of the Whites picks out the foreigners and lets them run for their lives. True, he only grants them a quarter of an hour for the flight and makes them take off their shirts so that they might be recognized.

The prisoners scatter in all directions.

During the chase we see such a confusion of pursuers and quick and unforeseeable changes which already border on symbolism.

Some of the fugitives find a temporary hiding place in a military hospital controlled by the Whites; but the White Guards discover them. The executions begin, many are already dead when the Reds led by Spiridon arrive. The execution is stopped, or rather it is continued by the execution of the Whites; when the Reds have to flee again, they face such tremendous odds that the hope of escape totally disappears and there is only one choice left for them: death. With the exception of László, the Hungarian, all of them perish.

That, roughly summarized, is the story. This film, however, is among those about which we find out very little by merely telling the story. The story itself does not allow us to feel the tension or the pace of the happenings, the mutual effect of the individual themes on each other, the human emotions crumbling under the logic of events. But an account of the story even if it isn't of any other use, perhaps suggests those terrible sudden changes which these "changing times" produced. Death—though quite impersonally—is lurking there at every moment; we meet such a cavalcade of hope and ultimate hopelessness, of captivity, escape and involuntary acceptance of death, such a rapid exchange of roles of pursuer and pursued, of executor and executed that it shows the producer's vision of all that which ordinarily and in an abstract way one customarily calls forces influencing history.

To Start with one Wonders

It all starts with Jancsó not knowing. He doesn't know the angle for the take. This —according to the norms of conventional film-making—is an unpardonable sin; the principal way in which one recognizes a dilettante. Not long ago one would have sacked a director who, on the spot, in the cross-fire of actors and staff, in the midst of urgent expectation evidently "doesn't know." What's more even today when improvisation has already received an international licence, this dilly-dallying can only be accepted from a director who has a serious cover for it. Who soon afterwards "does know."

Why doesn't he look at the script? He doesn't look at it, he hasn't the slightest intention of doing so; it's not from that direction that he expects the solution. His imagination is got going by the field, he stops, he thinks, he walks on—then the result makes it evident that at such times space is set into motion in front of him. It comes alive, it inspires the building up of the movement. That's what happens then, as seen by an outsider. The choreography of the scene comes into being suddenly with extraordinary speed—so fast that one is inclined to think that the earlier "I don't know" was merely a mannerism. Then one realizes: Jancsó thoroughly knows the vision which he wants to fix within the objective world, and what is at most in he seems unsure about is that he does not know the solution for that moment.

The Soviet actors wait for instructions. What is more, not merely those which they are given and which tell them no more than where to move and at what pace. They expect other sorts of directions: the kind that concern the psychological characterization of the figures that are portrayed by them. But there is no question of this: Jancsó says nothing, what he says is always some kind of physical instruction. He only keeps an eye on the dynamics of the scene, he considers the actors as a part of these dynamics too.

At the very moment when he hits upon the scene he orders a take. The assistant is still shouting "rehearsal"—but he hastily, and not without some irony adds: "Let's take the rehearsal."

A Struggle with Space

Strizhenov, who plays the colonel of the White Guards—he seems to be a mixture of an all-knowing intellectual and of a fatally refined English lord addicted to drink—asks whether it might not be a good idea to wear a monocle. An obvious memory is mixed into the question; of course Jancsó answers in the negative: "the importance of the officers is such in this scene that it can under no circumstances be further increased by externals."

Jancsó instructs the White officers. One cannot escape from the thought that the directing is more of a polite gesture; for him it is indeed almost of no interest whether the actor grasps what he is playing, the whole of the work—in a dictatorial way which on the other hand means the creator's freedom—is dominated by him anyway. It is only a question of his trying to meet that obvious wish which, even unsaid, lives in every one of the actors. He cannot stand in the way of this ambition, or rather it is less trouble not to stand in its way.

Therefore he "instructs." Does he really believe what he tells his actors or is he simply completing what is prescribed? He is perfectly polite but does not hide the fact that the actor doesn't interest him beyond what he was chosen for; on the contrary it is just as if this courtesy were compensating for this lack of interest. At the same time even this is not true; I have observed dozens and dozens of times how he watches his actors, how well he knows the character of their movements, their physical properties, with what precision he maps out their capabilities, all that he avoids is that they should "portray."

He shows his respect for the actors by selecting them. He narrates the scene: the colonel has picked out the Internationalists, the foreigners from among the prisoners, and sets them free for a quarter of an hour: let him who can, run for his life. There is an aristocratic haughtiness in his presuming gesture. Jancsó doesn't speak with accuracy in the accustomed and scholarly sense of the word; at times he stutters—still what he says is effective, at least in the sense that they all feel that they have been given their instructions. He gave just one instruction, it is true, a significant one to the actors. He said: "The scene is a special one, the officers need not 'act' their parts, the uniforms are enough." As a matter of fact he is bored throughout, but where he is, the space he lives in becomes really exciting. In the background the extras are waiting in their hundreds, on both sides the actors, at the back the tracking rail is being built, still farther back are the "fans" talking and laughing, but he is alone. These are his truly great moments, it is now that that tension which is part of the act of creation, can really be felt which is expected and observed with pleasure by the outsider. With his peculiar, hard movements he is walking up and down the space encircled by the one-time horse dealers' store-rooms; now and then with one of his movements he draws his assistants, the staff members, the one who just happens to be at hand into the game that fills the space and makes up the scene. He uses them as puppets. His thoughts are a long way ahead of his curt instructions. Thus he is often impatient and irascible when the puppets do not understand precisely what they have to do. His outbursts of temper are unjust, but everybody knows that it is now that the detailed directions are born, nobody is shocked by the tone. It is impossible to keep up with him: by the time his colleagues grasp what is happening he has already arrived at an altogether different train of thought. "Stepping off" the scene twice in succession, he never does it the same way again, he constantly enlarges it, changes the choreography and is astonished when a puppet steps into its previous place. It is from here, from this inability to follow him that his loneliness derives. Because he *is* lonely. It is amazing how lonely he can be even as the creator of an art which necessarily depends on collective effort. In the midst of all the whirl of about two hundred people he is as lonely as the writer behind his desk. It is not surprising if this forces him—in order to enforce his will—to become a tyrant at times; often this tyrant's attitude is the sole thing by which this man not born to be a tyrant dictatorially breaks through his loneliness.

Today we are taking a big scene: there is a black-uniformed firing squad, a young officer in charge of the execution whose ideological rigidity has not yet been loosened by experience—the execution itself, cavalrymen riding at top speed, fleeing Internationalists, pursuers hot on their track, bursting bullets in the Poksha river—all this again in one tremendous arrangement choreographed with care and mathematical precision.

Jancsó doesn't bother at all about certain things, among others even about those which for a director of a different type would signify a cardinal problem. For instance he hardly pays attention to the words which are said in the film. I had previously been a witness when he got the actor to improvise the words; when he said: "Here at this point say something." I can hear it even now as he instructed two Russian actors like this: "You decide on a good Russian text." Then he said to Mihalkov, who directed the execution: "You say the words. You ought to give your name too. Pick some sort of name quickly."

The texts that come into being in this way, must never be more than simple sentences, words of command and instructions, they must never contain any kind of expressed philosophy or value judgement, nor a description of a state of affairs that

allows one to infer a character, nor an obvious psychologizing content.

Again we arrived at a point which could make his method look suspicious: how is it possible that he should care so little about the spoken word, especially since in other respects his style is completely removed from the sort of improvisations which are peculiar to the *cinema vérité*. Yes, there it would be comprehensible, there it is a well-known practice: the actors are given the basic setting, the situation and they improvise the text to fit. But here evidently something else is involved: he pays such attention to the choreography, he transposes the psychology to such an extent into the construction of movement, he exploits this possibility undoubtedly residing in the fundamental potentialities of the film so much that as a rule the text can play a role only as part of this dynamism, as a practical or as an emotional vocabulary.

These simple sentences, however, since psychologically they do not interpret, they do not transmit states of mind, or character sketches-become strangely abstract, the dynamic scraps of text of a dynamic construction; so even in their stiffness, just because they never interpret, they expressly ask for the spectator's interpretation. Hence the pattern is almost the same as in the case of a text for the *cinema vérité*, even if their style and thus also their essence is exactly the opposite: instead of verbosity a compactness that cannot be intensified further; instead of a constant and therefore unappraisable psychology its complete displacement.

The Sight-seeing Ride

He is shooting the enormous, grandiose scene again without cutting, in one piece. The camera—as up to now almost always—is moving on a straight track, riding up and down, with its movement characteristically doubling, at times counterbalancing the scene. It is sight-seeing. In my own mind I even give Tamás Somló, the camerman's rides the name of "sight-seeing rides." Because this is what is actually involved: the camera is taking part in the gigantic confusion as a continuous observer, it walks with a perfect naturalness in the very centre of the event, it stops if it wants to eye something and starts if some kind of new motion carries it off.

There is a circumscribed and easily understood philosophy behind such movement by the camera.

Not so very long ago it was the fundamental pride of film aesthetics that a film created the possibility of selecting and evaluating among the incidents in reality by cutting. And here is a director—evidently it isn't simply Jancsó who is in question, in this respect he is himself the follower of an already existing school—who doesn't wish to exploit this proudly proclaimed facility. For the sake of dynamism—for the sake of the vision to be formulated—he simply renounced its use. He produces a surging process with the camera which at least in appearance performs the role of the objective observer.

Of course there is no objectivity—there isn't really any need to explain this—which wouldn't avail itself in one form or another of selection, of evaluation. The above is therefore only relatively true. Even here, it is not accidental which way the camera walks, where it rests, when it moves on. It pans through the whole scene, which from an outsider's point of view is almost always "grand opera," with a lens which never or very seldom shows the whole, it uses change almost constantly in such a way that it approaches certain things and moves away from others. That is to say it creates "cutting," only it is by some sort of internal prompting, without the necessary jolts of cutting, showing the process as a process, submitting everything to the dynamism of transmitting what is seen.

It is perhaps the way the direction devel-

ops into the construction of movements, the perpetual repetition of rides by the tracking camera which gives the appearance that all the scenes are made on the same last. Or rather it isn't merely an appearance, this is the actual situation as well. Jancsó realizes his conception in every atom of the film, continually and without stopping he enforces the very same thing. History, his vision of history. His vision of history's current, of the enormous dynamism which carries away men out of the perspective of individual existence, often confusedly, but actually as a part of a process which can scarcely be experienced individually but which moves according to an objectively determined order. In the scenes—most of them are of a 3–4 minutes' duration—which—film being involved—are as a matter of fact very long—we come across complex movements, happenings answering to each other, such a confusion and swirl of Reds and Whites that it constantly suggests the presence of this greater power, and the way it becomes effective.

Jancsó's preceding film, *The Round-Up*, had used history only as some kind of pretext—as the pretext for a particular vision of the world, but this film is already the formulation of a final large-scale current. Here history has already become the sole dominating theme: the style which was already clear in *The Round-Up* finds its most adequate expression in this film.

Prose-poem on the Camera Track

Somló the cameraman moves to and fro on the track; he follows the scene. Jancsó sits next to him on the track-car and directs movements even during shooting. He is constantly giving directions to the performers; it seems that his own rhythmical words of command like some sort of a prose-poem help him in getting the timing right. This monologue ripened into a prose-poem is one of the most decisive reasons why he doesn't take sound on location. If he did, he couldn't talk.

There are other reasons why he prefers to dub later. Naturally also because constructed sound is what he wants for his constructed world, and only later dubbing can liberate from the unwanted sound on location. It is also true that the light and mobile Arryflex camera which is important to him is unsuitable for simultaneous sound recording. However, the decisive factor is —and I am sure of this—that he wants to be able to direct while a scene is going on; to say the magic, rhythmical words which cast a spell on himself and the actors as well.

He is the conductor of all that happens. Not so long ago you could call a director a conductor only in a pejorative sense. In the past decade and a half a slogan has become popular according to which the director should not be a conductor, but a mere executor, the good or bad man in charge of the score. It is interesting that in connection with Jancsó who makes authors' films there isn't a more appropriate epithet than that of calling him a conductor, of course in the changed sense of the word.

When I feel him to be a conductor what I think of is that he keeps a firm hand on the almost musically built construction and he times it well. In his eyes the greatest sin is if the dynamics of a scene breaks off. Even now I hear him saying to Somló: "The scene has completely come to a standstill... don't you notice it... let's go on... you are composing on film... don't compose on film... let's go on..." He will not tolerate this composing on film; even without that he is anyway continually afraid that expressionism in the usual sense of the word might appear in his work. Perhaps it is this fear that separates him most from that Eisenstein from whom he has not only learnt much but whose attitude, whose life-history, dynamic and mass-movements are so much akin to what he is after in *The Red and The White*.

Home Ground

In the afternoon it is mostly Hungarian actors who are working; the "home ground" makes itself felt. Jancsó doesn't at all exert himself to give instructions; he doesn't attempt to explain the situation, not even in broad outlines. Of course these actors—József Madaras, András Kozák, Tibor Molnár—belong to his accustomed ensemble, they have had plenty of training in the methodology of the director. At one time all this was probably very hard for them, but they have simply got used to it, one way or another they have built the thing in into the foundation of their actor's being. Since they work with other directors as well they are very likely so schizophrenic in practice that they know exactly: there you must play like that and here like this.

Of course now—here in the courtyard of the monastery of Kostroma—there is also a touch of boasting in the way they "catch on," they show their Soviet colleagues that there is nothing unnatural in what is happening. They got used to Jancsó and this fact immediately makes the atmosphere more loosened-up and easy—now the shooting isn't burdened with talk in two languages either, a practice rendered more difficult by interpreting and at times interlarded with misunderstandings.

A mere trifle. In one part of a scene József Madaras passes by in front of the prisoners. Again there are no words. They agree that the actor should say: "Look into my eyes." Jancsó thinks the words too few, Madaras suggests: "One should say something like this: 'Look me in the eye! Don't you even dare to look me in the eyes?' "

Jancsó flares up: "No good! No philosophy!" Finally, characteristically, the following words are delivered: "Look me in the eye! You too! You too! You too!"

An Attempt at Analysis

The scene shot today is described by the script as follows:

The unit forms itself into a square. Spiridon gives a command: "March!" They march.

Spiridon shouts: "Fix bayonets!" They fix bayonets, aim their rifles. They march ahead.

Spiridon shouts: "Sing!"

The Hungarian Internationalist next to him starts to sing in Hungarian: "Capital won't be our boss any more."

They are marching and singing, Spiridon again shouts: "Drummer! The attack!"

The drum sounds. They walk in step, in one mass, the formation swings forward with fixed bayonets.

Over the way, on the edge of the green crops, the Whites are waiting in a wide line.

The scene as formulated in the script is no more than average: it reminds one of what one has seen hundreds of times. It is at most by its compactness, and its puritanism that is differs from the others. The realization essentially fulfils what is contained in the script—although it adds to it the picture of the death of all of them—still it doesn't resemble that which we would imagine on the basis of the written text. Of course differences always arise. Those directors who are specially keen to film the script and nothing but the script know that this is impossible. Jancsó himself talks about this, he says: "Ever since I have compared the film with the drawings Eisenstein made for *Ivan the Terrible* I know that what appears on the screen is never that which one wants." But now we aren't simply speaking of these natural differences, of these deviations "within the tolerance limits." In two months I have not once seen the script in Jancsó's hands, he takes the descriptions given only as a starting-point: in the given space he changes everything. That's what is happening now.

I try to follow the optical angle of the

camera; the machine stands on the crest of the hill behind the Reds marching to their death; during the take a lever is lifting it. It starts from below: we are seeing the troop of the Reds ready to start, they stand in one mass; the crowd has strength and determination. They set off, then due to the nature of the sloping ground, they are out of the optical angle of the camera for the time being; now it is the back "area" that dominates everything. The meadow below the hill, behind it the bend of the broad, endless Volga. In the meadow the mass of White Guards is waiting in stiff immobility; the front rows like chessmen, then in a simple firing line, still further back, already right on the bank, the cavalrymen's silhouette is lost in the surface of the Volga. Their numerical superiority is overwhelming. In the picture again—getting out of the precipitous part of the slopes—the Reds come into sight again; now in the enormous space, in contrast with the mass of White Guards getting ready to deal out death. Now only it can be felt how few they are. They are going forward. The sound of firing; they perish at the same time, all of them in the very same moment. Small heaps of white shirts lie on the meadow; behind them the motionless crowd of the black-uniformed.

It is only in quite exceptional cases that Jancsó does not follow a scene in the track-car; here, however, he uses machine-motion only moving vertically, ascending and then becoming motionless. The vertical rise is on the one hand justified by the nature of the terrain, on the other hand it is this which allows us to experience that most effective feeling of the Reds marching along still feeling strong, and then "rising out" of them as it were we feel the shock of the outnumbering force facing them. Horizontally the position of the camera doesn't change. This motionlessness of horizontal direction and the taking up of a "fixed position" following the ascent provide the dignity of the scene; it is this that associates the paradox of the static state with the final dynamic march leading to death.

The selection of the area and the recognition of its potentialities were particularly lucky; the hillside sloping toward the river bank is very steep at one point; it is here that the Reds come out of the picture. The sight of the black-uniformed lines on the meadow, standing out prominently, and behind them the endless silvery surface of the river are together extraordinarily effective. The river awakens hardly expressible associations anyway: its endlessness, its lazy rolling "speaks" in a peculiar way which can only be perceived but not formulated by words—of some kind of "peacefulness" which is in contrast with the scene, of "abstract freedom." "Abstract liberty," "peacefulness," "infinity beyond death" become meaningless platitudes the moment they are written down, while the vision as a whole, producing only vague feelings is an important component of the alloy.

The part of the hill suddenly sloping steeply when the Reds disappear out of the picture not only produces the effect of superior force. The Reds appearing again later doubles the effect: at first it was only superior force that we saw, but now its real proportions appear; it is now that we truly see what a handful the troop marching opposite is. The picture itself clearly expresses the psychology of the rebels. The outcome of the undertaking becomes evident without any kind of direct psychologizing element getting mixed up with the statement.

In this mostly dramatic moment—when all the Internationalists perish—the artist takes us a long way from them, he lets us become aware of the whole of the picture, of the inexorable superiority of numbers to such an extent that just because of that the scene becomes impregnated with psychology. Actually this is a well-known method: when it becomes impossible to further intensify the scene, when close-ups, or direct psychological reactions can no longer increase the effect, then the withdrawal from

the subjective medium, the objectivity of the whole is capable of stretching the emotions further. Nothing could have prevented this final, death-bringing attack, the acceptance of death against the numerical superiority, from becoming a nauseating, often-seen cliché if it had been done by showing the psychology of the participants; if the director had cut the scene into little bits and let us say, broken up the total picture by shots showing the resolution, the embittered, desperate emotions of the marchers. What a monstrously pathetic attitude and what sentimentality this could have been invoked; however, it is just by a certain detachment, by a picture formulation taken in the noblest sense of the word, by elevating the experience to a vision that Jancsó avoids the traps. Although he uses an extremely simple solution: an almost total absence of movement, or rather only as much movement of the machine as the terrain functionally prescribes.

The scene—strictly speaking—is again unreal, more precisely, is only realistic in a higher sense. The battle order of the black-uniformed soldiers seems to be a perfect fiction, it apparently doesn't resemble the model of any kind of battle order. Its norms are provided only by its appearance. All of the Reds die at one and the same moment; this too is absurd. Somebody says this too, Jancsó characteristically doesn't reply that the laws of vision demand it but as always he strives—his tone brooking no contradiction—to give a realistic explanation. This is what he says: "When such a well-aimed volley is fired everyone dies at once."

Loyalty and Disloyalty

The wardrobe mistress of the Soviet staff, the kind Maya, remarks: "Jancsó has shortened the dresses of the nurses; this would have been unimaginable in those times, this was pornography." I have already noticed at other times that they inflinchingly stick to the historic truth. Once, for instance during a scene shot from a helicopter, they went to great lengths changing the buttons of the soldiers to historically authentic ones; in all that fuss nobody seemed to be aware that buttons cannot be seen from an aircraft.

Crises

We are on the set—the nobleman's country-house turned into a military hospital—and simultaneously also in the middle of a disquieting and danger-fraught problem. Up till now we had worked constantly in the open air; Jancsó could make his dynamics prevail to the fullest extent, he could people space with unending happenings, with a wide sweep, with counter and background movements, he could make the whole historic arsenal march up; the camera could walk up and down unimpeded. Now we are in a room; all that can take place here cannot set aside psychology so easily and this is one of the fundamentals of the method up to the present.

As I can see Jancsó too is nervous. Is it because of this? Or for some other reason? The shooting undoubtedly has its ebbs and flows; for a few days we have indubitably been in an ebb tide. At the standard shooting the cloud of low spirits can be dispersed, every artist has a more or less satisfactory formula for this; but the peculiar conditions of the co-production put the staff and the actors into one pot.

We are together not only while filming but even afterwards in the hotel, in the dining-room: the continous presence of the "colony" doesn't allow Jancsó to relax, doesn't allow the cramp to loosen. Many times the opposite happens. Would this too contribute towards the crisis? Through the director the others are troubled too; the jokes stop, the bad mood grips the whole ensemble.

A Recognition

Today we are indeed shooting a big scene, that preceding the march towards death. The camera moves on a straight rail, beside a small wooden cottage, on the crest of the hill; there is a meadow at the foot of the hill, behind it the tiver. The grandeur of the terrain comes to life through this small house; without it a beautiful though ordinary landscape would unfold itself; the small house and its neighbourhood, at its side a far-flung rye-field, provide the detail breaking up the great whole. The scene takes place around the house but in such a way that the moving camera incessantly reveals now the patch of rye, now the meadow and now the endless water stretching at the foot of the hill. Again everybody is on "deck": mounted Cossacks riding at full speed, fleeing Reds, the superior force assembling on the meadow, battle around the house, a Cossack officer falls off his horse, the death of Chingiz the horseman, Reds gathering for an attack, a fantastic choreography: scattering and again gathering crowds and so forth, all this of course once more in one single scene, as usual.

Somebody aptly remarks that Jancsó in this scene works exactly like a most professional director of Westerns. Jancsó himself verifies the statement: "The film is a primitive artistic form and what we are doing is indeed the most primitive Western, there isn't anything else than movement and action in it." I have already often heard his theory about the "primitiveness" of the film. To refute the statement itself isn't worth while, it would be far too easy. It is more important to understand how and why he says it. It is precisely this black and white perception that helps him to seek and find in the film possibilities for an art of a new kind. Psychologizing—in which field he feels the film to be a non-starter—is eradicated by him almost in its entirety and he writes into the spectacle, more precisely into the dynamism of the spectacle, not only his world view, his philosophy—but in a paradoxical manner also that complex psychology with which ultimately he inoculates his "primitive art." However, this is already no longer the psychology of the figures of the characters but exclusively that of the director behind them.

The method often recalls Westerns; this is undeniable. Everything is based on unceasing action—nevertheless he saturates the dual nature of the spectacle and the dynamics actually resulting from the basic potentialities of the film with artistic values. Jancsó uses them as music uses sound, as painting uses colours or line. Besides the burlesque I do not even know an artistic form which could have realized this with such consistency; true, there too it was the artistic form itself that provided the idea. His first important film *Oldás és kötés* (Cantata) doesn't contain this perception yet; that chamber drama was fundamentally moving along a path determined by Antonioni's example. This is what its problem is too. Nor can the fact that in the second half of the film the hero walks about on a genuine Hungarian farmstead and that at its end Bartók's music accentuates its peculiar character make it truly original. His next film, *Így jöttem* (This Was My Path), is a road-junction; from there he could have set out in many other directions. It is not accidental that one of his themes, history's horrible and implacable, but according to a higher logic, appropriate course becomes subsequently his *leitmotif*. In *This Was My Path* he is balancing with one foot on individual psychology and the other on history; *The Round-Up* is already virtually in its entirety about history. The film set in the last century attempted to demythologize; it examines a legend, the romantic legend of the world of outlaws, and breaks it to pieces by showing how it works, the mechanism of the power-enforcement organization and the machinery of oppression. What the process in his present film boils down to we know already.

It is in this film that Jancsó's style is

given its most suitable material. The resources, however, were already there in *The Round-Up*, so much so that now, during the shooting, we feel a constant return in direction, of movements which were characteristic features of his earlier work. But is there any harm in this? The theme continues to be developed, it becomes more perfect. This film is a terrifying vision of history, and in it the people can as a rule do no more than accept death.

I believe that the early Jancsó was frequently compared to Antonioni.

Jancsó at the beginning did indeed include ideas, but it is curious that he should have found the true character of his art just in opposition to Antonioni. Bergman, Bresson, Antonioni delved into the depths of individual psychology, they widened the possibilities of the film, and they produced nuances which up to that time we felt only literature was capable of.

Jancsó sets off from the most self-evident possibilities of his "primitive art": he makes the spectacle, the unceasing dynamic movement serve his purposes.

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WALLS

A Film by András Kovács

(Excerpt from the script)

Walls shows the events of two days concurrently in Budapest and in Paris. Ambrus, a hotheaded, ambitious and restless engineer find himself in opposition to his boss, the director of the enterprise, and disciplinary action against him has been initiated. Benkő, one of the deputy directors of the enterprise and a friend of Ambrus, is at the same time on an official mission in Paris. When he returns to Budapest he will have to take sides; each party expects him to support their position.

The film is based less on action than on ideas and their confrontation; the director wanted to show the problems, troubles and behaviour of Hungarian intellectuals, now in their forties, through conversation and discussions. This film shows that generation which, twenty years earlier, full of enthusiasm, started building a new life, and many members of which are nowadays in leading positions.

A party at a Budapest flat

An architect's home. He has furnished the flat according to his own taste. A gentleman's residence, only a part of it is his. The old pretentious pillars fit in well, as it were in quotation marks, with the modern furnishings. Conversation is in full swing. The women are as loud as the men. Though public affairs are discussed, they don't withdraw, the way they used to, to speak about domestic affairs and children. A television programme has provoked a lively discussion.

The small screen shows small houses from around Lake Balaton, most of them hardly differ from the usual village house except perhaps in being smaller and not as well built. The commentary is enthusiastic, speaking of the "little man's home and happiness" with greasy pomposity. One of the guests steps over to the set.

1ST GUEST: I'll switch it off. It only disturbs us.

2ND GUEST: Wait a minute. Maybe they'll show the jungle around Lake Velence. That's the real thing.

1ST GUEST: At least I'll turn the sound down.

2ND GUEST: Everyone retreats into his own separate solitude; they put a lot of money into them and then they can't even breathe without the neighbours hearing it all. *(Turning to the host who is busying himself with the drinks)* Géza, you're an architect, you tell us why one can't build blocks of summer flats, and sell them, the way it's done with ordinary flats, which wouldn't be such miserable affairs? Or would it be dearer?

BERECZKY *(the host):* Why should they be dearer? It's nothing to do with the architect. You've got to order them, that's all.

4TH GUEST: The petit bourgeois don't like such collective arrangements. They

want to take it easy on their own, in peace and quiet.

2ND GUEST: As in Gárdony?

(He points towards the set, as if that still showed the area around Lake Velence, but some sort of comic programme has started, cheap little attempts at being funny, a sort of musical comedy, the actors are just declaring their love. The effect is grotesque)

2ND GUEST: Are there only petit bourgeois in this country?

6TH GUEST: Why? Do you think it's the teachers who buy up the lots on the shores of the lake?

(Laughter)

2ND GUEST: I, for example, would gladly join in with others to build a house.

5TH GUEST: You belong to the minority.

MRS. AMBRUS: Hasn't the minority any rights?

6TH GUEST: Come to think of it, why do we look on everybody as being the same? There was another attitude fifteen years ago, another sort of prejudice. At that time we believed that everybody would become a communist within a few years, and now we forget that there are quite a lot of communists in Hungary.

5TH GUEST: Fewer than the newspapers say.

6TH GUEST: Yes, but more than we think.

(The volume at which the discussion is carried on leads one to think that there are considerable differences of opinion, one voice leads straight to the next, occasionally an interjection breaks the flow of an argument. Another group's conversation now catches our ear)

A WOMAN: But Tamás, this reform is only on the surface.

3RD GUEST: All the same it's not so simple. If you adjust the sights just a little, when the range is long enough, it means getting kilometres closer to the target.

4TH GUEST: Yes, or we miss it and destroy social ownership altogether. Or isn't that so?

A WOMAN: What does social ownership mean?

4TH GUEST: Don't be so superior. All right, I don't understand it, I accept it, I simply don't understand it.

A WOMAN: Don't let's quarrel, don't let's quarrel about this. Do you know what social ownership is? The code-name for the old privileges.

3RD GUEST: No, you can't dismiss it like that. The problem is how can one really make ownership more social. In this mechanism...

4TH GUEST: This is precisely what is not clear...

MRS. BERECZKY: Can I offer you anything?

3RD GUEST: In other words... if the bosses are not appointed by the king. Do you get me? If the bosses are appointed by someone else that doesn't make ownership any more social.

A WOMAN: Yes, and who'll take the responsibility then?

3RD GUEST: The one who shows enterprise. Why don't you become a tight-rope dancer? Because you're afraid of falling off. Isn't that so?

A WOMAN: That's all right but... one also needs some brains.

3RD GUEST: One needs intelligence. And at the same time the sort of financial mechanism is needed in which a fellow who takes something on will really face risks. Then you don't become a boss because you've got connections but because you weigh things up and decide if there is something in it for society or not. If I can't... Well, today being a boss has only advantages. There is no responsibility and no risk. He doesn't need to worry that if he wastes two millions society will do something about it. Well that's social ownership. If we could only work out such a mechanism.

(They change the subject)

3RD GUEST: Well, certainly the managers need a certain amount of backing.

4TH GUEST: What do you want? In the eyes of the public we are almost untouchable. This support is what leaves us wide open

to attack. You can't defend yourself because there's nothing to fight against. You can defend yourself against public criticism, but against gossip?

4TH GUEST: We're at their mercy, that's the truth. Anybody can wipe his boots on us. Abusing the managers has always been popular, but now it has become advisable. The people who don't abuse them, are suspect and are accused of having sold out to them.

2ND GUEST: And all this goes on because there is no real publicity which measures the value of words. I tell you that this support only harms those people who don't need it. Only incompetent managers need to be backed, those whom you don't want to support.

(This subject too is drowned by the noise of voices, our attention is caught by another and another group)

4TH GUEST: Have you heard that Kelemen defected? The doctor.

5TH GUEST: What d'you mean he defected? There's a certain flow of emigrants from every country of the world. That's quite normal. It is only we who make political refugees out of these unlucky emigrants.

MRS. AMBRUS: But it's true that the people who emigrate are those who earn the most money.

5TH GUEST: He made a lot of money, but in the West he'll make a lot more. We can't compete with that. If we don't let people take part in shaping things, if we don't share responsibility with them, they'll feel strangers in spite of all the red-white-and-green phrases. They'll go where they are still strangers, but at least they'll earn a lot more.

(We can't hear what they are saying, only the voice of Ambrus, who eats and can thus not take part in the discussion without being noticed. The discussion continues while he speaks)

THE VOICE OF AMBRUS: They have the same kind of responsible job as Ferenczi or Benkő, or the other members of our management, and look how clever and quick-witted they are! Even their wives take part in their conversation, they don't sit on one side talking about household problems. It's good to be with them. But who knows how they behave in their offices? When they have to make a decision? Perhaps Ferenczi is like them when he's at a party? Where do all these ideas disappear to? Why are we more stupid and more cowardly when taking part in public life than when we are at a party? He's a manager, he's an editor, he's a section head in a Ministry. Not one of them is an oppressed and misunderstood genius like me, and all the same! Each of them has more in him than he's given so far. It's true that I have the least right to judge them, and especially now, on the eve of being sacked. At last, there's another failure! No, he used to be a Minister when he was thirty, then it looked as if he had failed for life, and now he is a great authority in his field. Damn it, I'm the only failure here. Perhaps they don't invite the failures? Perhaps next time they'll forget to mention the party to me too. Nonsense! The ones they don't invite are those who got somewhere without deserving it. That's the sort of crowd it is. But why does each of them act so to speak far below his real form?

(Meanwhile Bereczky has put on the pop songs of twenty years ago and everyone sings as loud as they can. This is their interval, then the discussion continues and so does Ambrus's meditation)

*

(They are getting ready to go home, they have got up but they just can't stop the conversation. Everyone is still sober, but they are intoxicated with their thoughts. One of them is waving about a copy of "Valóság" from which he had read something aloud. Ambrus interrupts)

AMBRUS: No, they couldn't have published this; I bet you got it out of the archives a couple of weeks ago.

2ND GUEST: Believe me, it was really published! Géza, have you got the complete works of Lenin?

BERECZKY: If you want to read them I can put you up for the week. Relatives are due then.

2ND GUEST: No need to panic. I think he wrote this just before the Revolution, I only have to look through a couple of pages. *(He starts looking through one of the volumes, but all the same he takes part in the discussion)* As far as I am concerned those who claim we have unlimited liberty in this country, are just as ridiculous as those who demand it. We always speak about subjective obstacles to democracy, but with the best will in the world we can't get more liberty than the objective conditions permit.

3RD GUEST: That sort of talk can be used to justify tyranny. That's Stalinism!

2ND GUEST: Thanks for the label. It may come in handy one day.

4TH GUEST: If what you mean is that to announce more rights than can be put into practice is to go against the rule of law then I agree with you.

3RD GUEST: I hope you don't want to start off the enlargement of democracy with limitations. I'm sorry, but I can't follow this.

MRS. AMBRUS: What he is trying to say is that we should not talk so much about freedom, but make sure that we really get it.

2ND GUEST: I've found it at last. Laci, when do you think this was published? "I feel obliged to ask you to relieve me of membership of the Central Committee, and I resign herewith, reserving the right to continue agitation amongst the rank and file of the Party and at the Party Congress." In 1952. Here you are. The Szikra edition. Anybody could have read it, what's more it was compulsory reading.

AMBRUS: Unbelievable!

3RD GUEST: I wouldn't quote Lenin if I were you. He contradicts you. In his time the Revolution could give much less to the people, your objective conditions were more unfavourable, and despite that there was more democracy.

2ND GUEST: It was stronger in a way. There was much more democracy in the Party.

3RD GUEST: It doesn't matter how much...

2ND GUEST: Yes, it does. The key to everything is what goes on in the Party!

A Street in Budapest

They are saying good-bye, some are given lifts by others, taxis are called, a whole line of cars leaves amidst loud good-byes. Two of them still can't stop talking.

3RD GUEST: That's squaring the circle.

2ND GUEST: Why? Where there's a one-party system the party must also take on the role of the opposition. How can there be democracy otherwise?

(Budapest in the early hours. The life of the city has not started yet)

AMBRUS: Such talk should be forbidden, its only use is to clear the air and make us well-behaved, peaceful citizens. It seems to me that the only way for us to put up with a life without any real action, imagine things. God, if only a tenth of them came off, that would be something!

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDRÁS KOVÁCS

—Among the films you made prior to Walls *you used the methods of the "cinéma direct" in* Difficult People, *whereas* Cold Days *is the screen version of a novel. As far as their form is concerned both of them are absolutely different from* Walls.

—In so far as the form of my films is concerned, let me say that it was chance rather than deliberate intention that led me make either an improvised film or else a feature film in the traditional meaning of the term. In all three cases the starting-point was offered by problems connected with the position and responsibility of the individual in modern Hungarian society, problems about which I felt I had to speak. If we approach the three films from this angle they no longer appear to be so very different because they explore the same questions. *Difficult People* presents the portraits of five men who are very active and who, in the interest of their ideas or inventions, stubbornly fight against bureaucracy. It is a film that investigates the possibilities for and obstacles to creative work in the conditions prevailing under socialism. It had sprung from the anxiety I felt over of the spread of servility, time-serving, simply marking time, a refusal of responsibility. That it was produced with the methods of the "cinéma direct" can be explained—apart from the appeal improvised methods have for me—by the fact that I did not consider the available scenario to be of a high enough standard and I therefore selected the phenomena that interested and excited me direct from reality. To all intents and purposes *Cold Days* is a historical film exploring the moral responsibility of four soldiers, more or less passive participants in a massacre, which took place during the Second World War. However, it is not hard to recognize that the moral problems discussed are the same as in *Difficult People:* what are the choices an individual can make, what responsibility devolves upon the "non-guilty," who because of cowardice or indifference will passively watch inhumanity, without interfering. The characters in *Cold Days* represent the opposite of the attitude of responsibility shown in *Difficult People;* they are "easy" people—easy for their superiors to work with, for they are always complaisant, they accept circumstances and do not try to change them. *Walls* is organically connected with these two films, although in form it is not a product of the "cinéma direct" methods—though it has some features reminiscent of them—nor is it a film-drama in the traditional meaning of the word—though it was based on a script and played by professional actors. In this film I have tried to find out what scope active people have in this country, and what restrict it; to what extent compromise is justified;

where does time-serving begin; how long is it worth while to continue fighting and where does senseless sham-heroism and quixotism begin. I could also put it into other words: what does being a revolutionary mean in a socialist country today? how one can live a life worthy of a human being?

—In what sense do you use the term revolutionary? After all, the film only discusses the problem whether the leading character will or will not stand by a friend who takes up a right cause in a wrong way; so, when all is said and done, it is about a private matter.

—Generally the word "revolutionary" arouses associations of spectacular gestures, of barricades, mortal danger, gunfire, mass demonstrations, etc. and this fact in itself indicates a problem. That is to say the notion it has been blurred; of what it really means to be a revolutionary in a country where the fight for power has been decided and where the realization of the actual purposes of the revolution is in progress, has either not yet been crystallized or been obfuscated. It is evident that the acquisition of power is only a means by which the aims of the revolution can be realized.

—Thus you investigate the problems of conformism and non-conformism.

—I don't like these rigid categories, according to which all non-conformism is to be glorified and all conformism to be rejected irrespective of the given situation and time. This is the negative mirror image of dogmatic politics, of the practice that only tolerates conformism and looks askance at all disagreement or criticism. Life would be a very simple thing if it only comprised good and evil, if we had dealings only with devils and angels. My generation has experienced a great deal prompting us to refuse all such simplifications.

Can the film be considered the self-examination of a generation?

—In *Walls* I speak about my own generation, not only because I know it best of all but also because I feel that in our situation the questions that puzzle people both younger and older than ourselves emerge in a more intensified way.

—What is the special point that refers to your generation?

—I belong to the age-group that started on their career right after the Liberation, that took an active part in struggles within society while still at the university, while still quite young. At times my generation fought

literally for an advancement of the revolutionary transformation then in progress. After these active years we went through a number of critical periods as well (the "personality cult," then the period of disillusion, 1956) and these crises affected us much more intensely than they touched those older or younger than ourselves. After 1956 our age-group was frequently called the "lost generation," which could never completely recover from the shock it had suffered. But history gave us no respite for meditation; today most people in leading positions belong to this generation and willy-nilly they must shoulder the responsibility for action; what is more, they cannot even blame the situation on others, for they have taken part in its shaping themselves. They can't say "wait and see"—as young people still do at the outset of their careers; nor can they be resigned as older people are, declaring that "it doesn't matter now, it's the young people's job," because neither their age nor their social position allows them to withdraw. Day after day this generation is confronted with decisions and must decide. This singular situation raises singular moral problems (I would add only in brackets that when speaking of a generation I don't think of all my contemporaries, who are about forty now; it is not the outlines of an age-group but of an attitude that I'm trying to investigate, an attitude also found amongst people younger or older than we are, which however is not the attitude of those contemporaries of mine who only vegetate, who have adjusted themselves to circumstances or have chosen the convenient attitude of agreeing with everybody all the time. I deal with people who are at the hub of things, who undertake the risks of action and who have not given up the attempt to reconsider and to transform reality.)

—Can the attitudes of the two leading characters be considered as mutually exclusive; as an argument taking place between radical Ambrus, unwilling to temporize, and realistic Benkő, who tends to compromise?

—Although practically up to the last moment of the film the two characters watch each other with suspicion it remains undecided whose side the audience is expected to take. I have tried to represent Ambrus and Benkő as two possible alternatives of a revolutionary attitude. In my opinion both are valid and circumstances decide which one holds good in a given situation. The dynamism of Ambrus, his extraordinary sensitivity to mistakes and shortcomings, his passion are as indispensable as are the sobriety, logic and sense of tactics of Benkő. Indeed, as we know, in certain situations a shortcoming may turn into a virtue, in the same way as an asset can become a fault. The hot-headedness and forwardness of Ambrus prove to be useful in the given situation, for they sharpen the issues and

throw light on all sides. Benkő's prudence, his ability to weigh things up, which at other times helped Ambrus, would now lead to negative results if Benkő did not take dangerous risks, and was not prepared to engage in a fight, whose outcome was quite uncertain. The debate between these two kinds of attitudes, I might say, or methods—leaving out of consideration their innumerable shades—has run parallel with the histories of revolutionary movements and will always lead to a tragic outcome if, irrespective of time and space, we accept only one of the two attitudes as valid.

—*In* Difficult People *you chiefly presented persons who would attack walls even if they smashed their heads against them, and you unequivocally took their side. But the answer you've just given indicates a certain shift of emphasis. Has your opinion changed since then?*

—It's not my opinion but conditions in Hungary that have undergone a change in recent years. *Difficult People* was made before the economic reform was drawn up, at a time when I considered the field open to human activity and creative force to be unbearably restricted. In such a situation, I think it was justifiable to emphasize—even if one-sidedly—that it was necessary to attack walls even if one smashed one's head against them. Since then the outlines of radical changes have appeared, opportunities have been extended, and the scope for action has become larger. I think it should also be emphasized that the new possibilities should be used wherever they are available. The constraining walls of wrong reflexes, of inhibitions and of fear, imposed upon us by negative experiences should be demolished because they make us cautious even when it is unnecessary. In this film I have indeed stressed that there are also walls we build ourselves but they can be demolished if we take the risk of groping about to find the real walls, if we do not acquiesce in these real walls remaining obscure.

—*What do you mean by real walls?*

—The framework within which we live. Not the whole of this framework is such as must necessarily be destroyed. In my opinion we must throw ourselves against those walls that are more restrictive than objective circumstances require. But even then they are not to be hit with one's head, but with pickaxes. On the other hand, in certain situations, it is our task to proceed as far as the walls allow us to go, that is to say, to use space. In the ending of the film I wanted to express this duality in the scene where Benkő, returning home, recognizes in the course of the talk he has with Ambrus, that there is no possibility for further compromise and he shows himself ready to take up the fight, perhaps not in Ambrus's personal defence

—for by then there is much more at stake than that—but against Ferenczi, that is to say against conservative forces.

—Did you mean the change taking place in Benkő's thinking to be a happy ending?

—It's not so much a change, it's a recognition. In Benkő's character I tried all along to suggest the possibility of his taking this step. Benkő is a man who does not idealize circumstances, a man courageous enough to face even questions that may appear delicate. Nor is he unaware of the difficulties in store for him in this fight. But I would not call the ending of the film a happy one because there is no hint at all of the outcome, no suggestion that Benkő's attitude will decide Ambrus's fate or the future of the cause he represents. It may even happen that in the end Benkő himself will have to share Ambrus's fate. I haven't pursued the story further because the essence lies in Ambrus's words: "The greatest trouble isn't that Ferenczi will get me fired but that he can do it at all." And this problem can only be solved if the struggle of the Benkős and Ambruses creates a situation which puts an end to the possibility of subjectivism and of the abuse of power.

—Can we say that whereas Difficult People *wanted to batter down the walls of bureaucracy,* Walls *has tried to burst the walls of subjectivism, which distorts human relations?*

—Indeed *Walls* argues that in the situation created by the new methods of economic control a new mechanism of human relations must come into being. To put an end to the so-called personality cult it is not enough to prohibit the cult of certain persons, nor is it enough simply to iron out faults or to restore the rule of law; the whole of the organization of society must be surveyed and what is obsolete, must be rejected. Defences must be raised against these distortions. All this doesn't mean that, in the solution of problems, I don't attach a great importance to the moral behaviour of the individual and to his responsibility—it only means that I am fully aware of the weight of the burdens that make individual decisions more difficult.

—It is obvious from Walls *that you see the solution in an extension of democracy, in control through publicity. But if your worries are as grave as is testified by the film, can you discern any promising signs that these problems can be solved in today's Hungary?*

—Among others, the very fact that I could overtly discuss these worries in a film, which has had the greatest publicity, indicates that the same recognition has matured in others too.

—How can you explain the fact that the government of a socialist country spends money on the making of films which criticize the conditions prevailing in the country?

—I think this is quite normal and could not be otherwise. One of the characters gives voice to the opinion that in a country where there is a one-party system that party must play the part of the opposition too. Unless this is so a socialist democracy is unthinkable. I don't say that we have already achieved this—if we had there would have been no point in making *Walls* —on the other hand, I repeat that the making of the film proves that—and here I continue my simile—the walls are not rigid, they are moving.

—Hasn't the somewhat critical tone of the film caused any difficulties, then?

—I knew beforehand that some people were going to attack the film, particularly such people as only accept enthusiasm, full of pathos, as an approval of socialism and who would ban everything critical. And that there are still such people with us was indicated by the discussion following the presentation of *Difficult People*, of *Twenty Hours* and of *Ten Thousand Suns*. In the course of these discussions some demanded the suppression of these films, which, in their opinion, stood for a counterrevolutionary spirit.

—Are they then socialist films, in your opinion?

—When hearing the term socialist art a great many people imagine some sweetish and well-rounded work that gives guidance and provides an answer to every question. Of course, it is surprising for them if they meet the adjective "socialist" connected with films such as mine. New Hungarian films are socialist ones in a new way, based upon a dialectic unity of acceptance and criticism and the fact that these films have come into being also indicates that significant forces of society support not only the realistic approach of socialist art but mere, dialectic thinking and a pursuance of realistic politics.

—How would you explain the fact that the revival of the Hungarian film is chiefly marked by historical pictures (e.g. The Round-Up, Cold Days, *but* Ten Thousand Suns *and* Father *too)? Is this not an evasion of embarrassing questions?*

—I don't want to belittle what these films said about our historical past but their real significance lies in the fact that using history they explore in a new manner *today's* problems in human relations. And in the same way that the present cannot be understood without overcoming the illusions of the past, new human relations cannot be established if we do not take into account the heritage burdening us, the danger still threatening us. In this sense I consider these films topical.

—Why do you think it was just in the early sixties that these questions arose in films?

—The same worries were alive in us before but they weren't expressed; in the same way as all colours can be present in the negative of a film but they do not appear if a certain chemical is missing from the developing agent. The debates about the new system of economic control and about the Chinese question, which touched the greatest problems of the labour movement, rendered it possible for us, in fact, obliged us to rethink attitudes considered as final up to then. The fact that the new position of the individual within the framework of society was the point of issue was particularly favourable to the art of the cinema.

—Doesn't starting too much from the individual's point of view entail the danger that instead of seeking for a solution in the transformation of social circumstances the same aim will be pursued as the self-perfectionment of the individual?

—The films themselves don't indicate this danger; moreover, I think that it is one of the most characteristic features of Hungarian films that they explore the troubles of the individual by making you feel that they are determined by society. As a matter of fact it was not in films that the real change emerged but in life itself when we broke with the antidialectic aspect, which failed to take into consideration individual's interests along with the stupendous significance of personal activity and responsibility. We are also leaving behind us the situation in which we kept on speaking about the role of the masses, but, at the same time, invested some persons with immense and uncontrollable power, whereas the activity of individuals, of whom masses are made up after all, was reduced to the minimum. In that situation, to the detriment of Marxist realism, religious and Rousseauesque elements were introduced into the way we looked at man. A patriarchal approach could only induce people to accept the fatherly providence of leaders if it appeared in "democratic" colours, which again demanded that not only the "fathers" but the "sons," i.e. common people, should also be idealized. Thus the myth of the perfect hero, never making

a mistake, never hesitating but always seeing the right way, emerged. Alas—if it had only been a myth in literature! The trouble was that by and by these absolutes grew into moral norms, in the interest of which Lenin and other great historical figures were retouched to make them correspond to these norms. And if somebody could not be shaped completely in line with these norms he was simply deleted from the list. And as he was rigidly excluded—as is good from evil in certain religions—he became a representative of evil who was even when doing good impelled by mean and calculating motives. Such human norms can be accepted only cynically or with inferiority complexes. Everybody who is not perfect—and who is?—tries to appear to be so, trembling with fear lest anybody find out his real self. The turning of man into a fetish can only bring about a split and hypocrisy. If a person cannot see a way to sincere action he must defend himself and to achieve this he can choose fatalism, cynicism or an absolutely superficial faith displayed only to the external world.

I have apparently digressed from the subject, but I must say that in these apparently abstract explanations I am discussing the same walls the remains of which hinder the movements of the characters of the film and hamper their actions. The pursuance of infallibility, a terror of making mistakes, the absence of a right to err are by no means less menacing than overt, crude violence. When in *Walls* I tried to represent characters showing contradictions, people who are not unequivocally good or evil, I was not only impelled by artistic ideas but also by a desire to attack the abovementioned conservative aspect of man and, in general, to fight against simplifications.

—I thought I recognized Miklós Jancsó in a scene of "Walls." Does this have any significance?

—As a matter of fact it was just a joke. During a stay in Paris, I often went to that odd place together with Jancsó and other friends of mine—and it was this event I recalled. On the other hand, I cannot deny that the joke had a serious point too. I, or rather we, wanted to indicate that however different the films we made were, we pursued the same direction and this refers not only to Jancsó and Ferenc Kósa (the director of *Ten Thousand Suns*), who also appeared in the picture, but to some other Hungarian film-makers too.

—What, in your opinion, is the criterion of success?

—The criteria are different for different films. If somebody makes spectacular, entertaining films—capacity houses may be the criteria. How-

ever, if a film is aimed at discovery, at transforming things, it may be the very resistance of the audience that proves the necessity and value of the film; or it is rather the resistance manifested in the course of acceptance, because if a film only meets with resistance it can be a failure too.

—How long did it take you to make Walls?

—I worked at the script for fifteen months, the shooting itself took six weeks.

—How much did the film cost?

—The equivalent of about 80 thousand dollars. This is the cost of an average Hungarian film.

*—Watching the discussion in which a company of friends engaged in your film one has the impression that the actors are not saying lines written in advance but are improvising. Is this indeed an improvisation?**

—With the exception of a text said by a friend of mine who is an economist (his lines were not fixed beforehand only circumscribed)—it isn't. The rest of the text follows the script word by word. This could not have been done in any other way for the ideas are put into absolutely concise forms in which the meaning of a whole sentence could have been changed if a single word had been left out. We achieved spontaneity in another way. Only some people in the company were actors, the others were non-professionals, practically unknown to the actors. The actors had not known the script before, it was there that they saw their lines for the first time and thus lively debates and arguments ensued around the dialogues they had to perform. This freshness and excitement made itself felt in the way they said their lines. They were interested in the debates not only as actors but as citizens as well—and even if they did not emphasize it in their acting—the audience could feel this.

—Don't you consider the film a bit overcrowded? There are so many ideas—by the way highly interesting ones—raised in it that one can hardly follow them.

—I didn't attempt to give equal stress every thought. I took the spectator into a forest of thoughts and a forest differs from a park by the very fact that we cannot observe every single tree one by one—this suggests the mood of a forest. The paths in a park are easy to survey, every tree has its place in it. There are films like parks—very beautiful films—but *Walls* is not a film of this kind. I wanted to make an intellectual thriller, which may

* See this scene on p. 35 of this issue. *Ed.*

lure the viewer to paths he did not want—or perhaps did not dare—to explore. There are signs in this forest though; but the audience have to decide for itself which of them it will observe more closely.

—There is hardly any plot in the film, and a great deal of dialogue. Don't you think that the film would have been more effective if you had chosen a story with a greater visual impact?

—A thrilling plot, in fact one verging on a crime story, is discernible in the film: it is whether Ambrus has disclosed the weak points of the equipment to the foreign buyers in order to discredit his boss or not. None of the parties can prove his statements and the charge is grave indeed, thus the plot could easily lend itself to thrills. I didn't avail myself of these opportunities because I wasn't interested in what had happened but in the attitude, the intentions, fears and reasonings of the people and in the inhibitions that prevented action. The drama of the film was built on non-action and the situation might have been obscured if a spectacular plot had occupied the foreground. In other ways too I tried to avoid tricks reminiscent of the stage; this may account for the seemingly loose structure of the film. Different thoughts are not exposed and completed, the real plot of the drama is hardly mentioned in the most passionate discussion, for instance in the company of friends; characters unknown until then appear, people who don't even know about the conflicts of the leading character. What they talk about is not directly connected with this conflict; Ambrus himself takes hardly any part in this talk and the characters appearing in this scene will not appear any more in the film. By this I endeavoured to bring about a certain open feeling and looked for dramatic qualities in disquieting questions rather than in the production of a well-rounded story.

"WHY ARE HUNGARIAN FILMS SO LOUSY?"

Treatment for the 1964 film of the same title

by

ISTVÁN CSURKA

One summer morning in the nineteen hundred and sixty-third year of Our Lord, the young writer, Tivadar Fodor, said to be an existentialist, took all the bottles down to the grocer for purely existentialist reasons. Though indeed, for purely financial reasons, he had first counted them. He had managed to ferret out twenty-three different kinds of bottles tucked away in the larder, the kitchen cabinet, the sideboard, and other odd corners. Twelve of them he washed out to make sure the grocer would take them; the rest he considered clean enough. Twenty-three empty bottles for return, at a deposit of two forints each, make 46 forints, but Fodor, who never gave up, even in the tightest of corners, knew that some of them would fetch 2.50, and a few even 3.50: he calculated on something over 50 forints. Feeling happier, he went back to the room where his wife was still in bed, lying on her belly because she had a headache.

"Fifty forints worth," he began.

The woman, face down, said without moving:

"Have you found the vinegar bottle?"

"It's still got some vinegar in it."

"Empty it out. Who wants vinegar?" she mumbled into the pillow.

"Too true. Who wants vinegar?" Fodor echoed going out to the kitchen to pour the vinegar down the sink and throw the bottle in with the rest. They filled three bags, and he lugged them down to the grocer's.

The transaction went off successfully. Fodor was able to buy butter, milk and sausages and still return with forty forints in his pocket.

The woman had slipped into a dressing-gown, and they sat down to breakfast. Mrs. Fodor spread the butter on the bread with a preoccupied expression, and munched the slice with the same preoccupied air. The

predicament was four-square simple. Forty forints was forty forints. No more and no less. Twenty each. And Fodor duly passed her half to his wife.

"So what next?" demanded Mrs. Fodor.

It was self-evident to Fodor that the question had gone to the heart of the matter. He could no longer pass it off with the first thing that came into his mind; the answer had to be meditated, weighty and—considering her headache—hopeful. Something that promised something.

Fodor took a deep breath.

"I'll go to the film studio," he said.

The film studio. Fodor saw it as female in gender, quite a respectable woman, anything between thirty and fifty, but capricious, fickle, temperamental, petty or broad-minded as the occasion arose, bad-tempered, and insatiable.

The gatekeeper knew him but greeted him with no particular deference. Fodor counted for nothing on the premises nor did he rate as one of those on the inside. But he had written a successful film or two. Firm in this knowledge Fodor went through the gate, ego up, independent, not like a man with twenty forints in his pocket, but striding in like one of Them.

The first person he banged into in the courtyard was Hevesi the assistant director. They exchanged over-hearty greetings. Hevesi was an assistant director who would some time or other direct a film himself. The prospect and his eager anticipation of it was so much in evidence that it obliterated all other aspects of his appearance. Everything that was taking place in Budapest was irrelevant, was of little importance, said his every gesture.

"Aha, Fodor!... some intellectual commodities to offer, eh... intellectual commodities?"

Fodor picked the joke up.

"That's right, I'm not selling my body..."

"Not that your weight on the hoof wouldn't fetch quite a bit..." riposted the other.

They shook hands. "How's things?" said Hevesi.

"Broke, man," said Fodor. Hevesi also counted for nothing.

"Brought anything?" Hevesi inquired.

"Oh, just looking around."

"You do that." Hevesi continued on his way as if urgent matters called him.

The next stock figure was Zsámbéki a few paces further on. The anxious actor.

"A one-day job," he said, impassively, to make it sound all the more of an outrage.

"With whom?"

"Lamperth."

"Big day for you," Fodor commented.

"Write us a good film, please. A good one in which. . ."

"I will," Fodor interrupted holding out his hand, and went on.

All that happened before eleven in the morning, and Fodor was still at the film studio at two in the afternoon, without the faintest prospect of an advance in the offing. One thing, however, emerged very clearly; he had better do his thinking in terms of Gergely. Yes, Gergely, for whom he had in fact written a script, and what was more it had been made.

The tip had come in the buffet around twelve. He had been sitting with Tokodi, the art director, over a cup of coffee. Tokodi was doing the talking, retailing the latest gossip. With a titbit about Gergely.

"He had two of his scripts rejected last week."

"Was that final?" he said, feeling his way.

"Oh, quite final," Tokodi replied.

"And has he got anything in hand?"

"No, he hasn't. I should know because I was working with him," Tokodi said.

"Grand," Fodor told himself and left Tokodi. Gergely, however, wasn't in yet. Fodor hung around for a while waiting for him, and began to be conscious of a new vigour gathering momentum inside him. He even found himself trying to think up something which Gergely might fall for; only he couldn't think of anything.

At last Gergely arrived. He was very down in the mouth.

They went and sat in an empty room with the window opening on the courtyard. Fodor played the commiserating string:

"Were they any good, those scripts?" he asked.

"One of them was very good," Gergely said. "The other one still needed work on it."

"And what did they object to?"

Gergely wrinkled his nose.

"Object to? Nothing in the world, man. They're just in a blue funk. Last week Kálmán's film was stopped and now they're all pissing in their pants. A script which has an idea in it, tackles some real problem, has something to say, is just out."

Fodor nodded sympathetically, "That's what always happens."

"There are only two things that are being given the green light now, old man, and you'd better remember it: co-ops and comedy."

"What about the workers' theme?" Fodor asked.

"Old hat. Mine was the workers' theme, too. One of them. They won't touch it!" Fodor nodded.

"Comedy!" bubbled Gergely enthusiastically. "It sells like hot cakes. We're short of money and the cinemas are empty. Go on, think up some comedy, no matter how idiotic, and in two weeks' time I'll have it on the floor."

He paused and looked at Fodor.

"How's tricks? Have you brought us anything?"

"I have," Fodor sounded definite.

"Let's have it then," Gergely said.

"Well, it's only an idea," said Fodor, looking out of the window.

Down in the yard two scene shifters were carrying a plaster statue.

"May we hear it?" Gergely prodded.

"A statue," Fodor began.

"A what?"

"A statue," Fodor repeated. "Am I going to pull it off?' he asked himself.

"What sort of statue?"

"Lucky his back's to the window," thought Fodor.

"A heroic sort of statue."

Fodor stood up. He felt the inside machinery beginning to click, he even saw himself at the cashier's desk collecting his advance.

"A grand idea," he said. "The germ of a big satirical comedy. A hero's statue. Standing and looking. The main square of a small town with the statue looking out over it. You know, heroic posture, hand-grenade and all that."

"A war memorial?"

"No," said Fodor firmly. "An underground Communist."

"No good."

"All right. A simple anti-fascist."

"Well?" Gergely pressed.

"Well," Fodor repeated slowly, but refusing to give up. "One day the statue steps down from the plinth," he went on. "He sort of comes alive."

"Golem," said Gergely dismissively.

"Oh no, not a golem!" Fodor protested. "A Christ driving the money-changers out of the temple. It's a satire."

"Don't follow," said Gergely.

"Nor do I," murmured Fodor under his breath. He sat down and started to explain.

"The town's preparing for a great celebration. Over this statue. Twentieth

anniversary and all that. The anniversary of his death, but..." Fodor lifted a finger. "But... here's where the story starts. The statue steps down. He doesn't want to be celebrated."

"Fed up with celebrations."

"That too, but mainly because people in the town aren't living the way he meant them to live, for which he sacrificed his life. Clear?"

"Clear," Gergely said. "But that's not good enough. It only becomes really good if it's about a hero who's also a human being. Don't you see? A statue who's tired of being heroic and comes down and shows that though he's a hero, he's human just like any of his admirers. Got it?"

"Oh, excellent!" said Fodor.

"Heroes are human."

"And then the statue steps down, and—wow—women, and a hell of high jinks and the best of everything!" Fodor enthused.

"That's it! That's the way it'll work."

"Do you think it can be made?" Fodor asked.

"Yes," said Gergely.

"Well, so far so good," Fodor thought. But the difficult part was still to come.

"Well, then, I'd like to get cracking with it," Fodor said, his heart in his mouth.

"Yes, do, get on with it. Write it."

"Yes, but you see... er... don't you think it would be better to give the whole project some definite form?"

Gergely grinned.

"Bastard! Why don't you admit you're stony broke and only came to lay your hands on an advance?"

Fodor did not falter.

"Listen, it's true I'm not very well off at the moment, but this is an old and long cherished idea of mine. I may as well tell you frankly that I didn't come while I knew you were busy with other scripts."

"I suppose you tracked me by the blood?"

"Does it matter? Is it a good idea or not?"

"Yes, it is. Put it down in a few lines, now, and we'll take it straight in to Serfőző."

*

"Very good, boys," said Serfőző the deputy director. "I'm behind it a hundred per cent. A really good contemporary satire at last. Just what we want. Get on with it."

He turned to Fodor.

"Had any advance on it yet?"

"No, not yet."

"You get one. 3,000. Now get working on it." He turned to Gergely. "There'll be no trouble with this script, will there?"

"Damn clever move, that was," Fodor thought as he left the film studio about 4 o'clock. He felt relieved to be out of the gate again, to be walking, getting further and further away, feeling himself free. "Just bloody rubbish!" he thought grinning, but with every step his attempts to deceive himself weakened. "What *did* I sell, after all," he asked himself. However much he tried to relish the malicious theory that he was getting money for a bad idea thought up on the spur of the moment, he knew it was not true, and would not be true, and he knew that he had sold himself, cheaply, pitifully below his value. And he also knew there was no getting out of it. "Gergely has no script and I have no money," he thought wryly. "Motherless baby and babyless mother, Bring them together to love one another." To the astonishment of the passers-by he suddenly broke into song.

Ich bin Lohengrin genannt, he sang, and spat.

*

"What you need after those two setbacks is a writer who works fast," Mrs. Gergely told her husband at supper.

"Fodor. You've met him. He's fast enough if I keep kicking him."

"Keep kicking him. What's he brought you?"

"It's about a statue. A hero who's sick and tired of being a hero. A statue who comes alive and shows he's like any other man. That last bit was mine."

"No go. It'll get rejected again."

"Why?"

"You're going to make a film which says heroes are human? After the recent Cuban crisis? Really!"

"Yes. Serfőző is keen on it."

"You'll see. You be careful, it's very tricky."

"No, no, its satirical."

"All the more. You be careful. And don't say you haven't been warned. You just can't afford to be turned down again."

Gergely was crestfallen.

*

The Fodors were also discussing the matter. Fodor threw the contract on the table.

"A covenant sealed with my blood," he declared dramatically, but his wife did not reach for it.

"And then there's the lolly," Fodor added encouragingly.

"How much?"

"A three thousand advance. Collectable tomorrow." The woman looked at the contract and asked:

"What did you think up for them?"

Fodor waved a hand. "Some utter rubbish."

"I want to buy a handbag," she said.

"Do, darling."

Fodor handed her the synopsis which he had dictated to a typist at the film studio. The woman read it through.

"Quite a good idea," she commented. "D'you think they'll make it?"

"That only God Almighty knows," Fodor replied.

"Are you going to write it?"

"Why not? We could do with a film this year as well. Sixty thousand."

"Then do it. Who's going to be the script editor?"

"Éva."

"Why always Éva? Only Éva?"

"Gergely wouldn't work with anybody else."

"Well, why not you? Aren't there any male editors in the film studio?"

"Yes, there are."

"And you'll go down to the Writers Rest House to work, won't you?"

Fodor was exasperated.

"For Heaven's sake, what are you creating for? Here's the money, go and buy yourself a handbag. Isn't that enough?"

"No. I'm going to buy a bathing-suit as well. And lastex too."

"Buy it," Fodor said. "And lastex too."

*

The two creative artists did not meet for a week. At the end of it Fodor received a telegram: "How's it going, Pop?"

Mrs. Fodor had opened the telegram and was mystified.

"What's this?" she said holding it out to him. He read it and did not have to guess.

"Gergely. He seems to have taken it seriously."

"Then why aren't you working on it?" asked his wife.

"Can't you see I'm writing a novel?"

"You can write that novel after you've written the film."

"Well, yes, I can, that's true. I suppose I can."

By then Fodor hated the whole subject, or what he could remember of it. There wasn't much to remember anyway. His wife, however, attacked him:

"You don't want to put it off till we're broke again, do you?"

"I'll call him up," said Fodor evasively and then to himself, "She's right, I don't want to be mucking about with them a minute longer than I have to."

"And get down to work!" she told him.

"I will," said Fodor despondently. He sat down at his desk, pulled out one of the drawers and rummaged busily in it for quite a while.

They met in a café the next day. Gergely had brought Éva along. She had been their constant partner as literary adviser in all their joint undertakings.

"I must say I like the idea," Éva said, "but of course it's only an idea as yet. It all depends on the way it's done."

"And when!" Gergely added. He turned on Fodor:

"The studio's at a standstill! We haven't got a single damn script to work on. A comedy like this is certain to be given the go-ahead. What on earth have you been doing for the past week?"

"Oh," Fodor said airily with a fine assumption of indifference. "I've been down to a cooperative farm."

"Whatever for?"

"Didn't you say co-ops were all the thing nowadays?" Fodor demanded. Gergely choked.

Éva looked at Fodor.

"And what, if I may ask, is a heroic statue doing in a co-op?"

Fodor gave a feeble grin.

"What d'you mean, what's he doing there?"

"Has anyone ever seen a heroic statue in a co-op? In the middle of the barley crop, doubtless. Being heroic in the maize field, I presume?"

"I have," said Fodor with dignity.

"In the co-op office, perhaps," Gergely rejoined. "But what's the good of that? A bust. All the offices have a bust."

Éva laughed disagreeably.

"Let's make a cult-of-the-personality film. The little bust comes alive..."

Fodor gave up.

"All right, all right. It was a waste of time."

"This film can only be imagined in urban surroundings," asserted Gergely. "We'll watch our step nicely and calculate exactly how near the political wind we can sail."

"Listen," Fodor said. "Do you really want to do something?"

"A stupid question," Gergely said.

"All right," Fodor continued. "Then I've only one request: let's forget the whole statue business. Listen, Peter, I'm willing to write you a really good, serious film but let's get shot of this God-forsaken rubbish."

"But that's what you signed the contract for!" Gergely exploded. "That's what you were given money for!"

Fodor remained sitting with complete composure.

"The essential point of the contract is that I write something for you. And that I'm racking my brain and working."

"You're a fraud," Éva said.

"Now wait a minute there," Fodor interposed and pulled a bundle of paper out of his pocket. He waved it at them.

Gergely, after a casual look, reached for it.

"What's this?"

Fodor placed it on the table.

"One of my best short stories," he said and set his palm on it protectingly. "If we decide to do something, let's do something good."

Gergely sighed and shook his head in disapproval. Fodor turned to Éva for help.

"Tell me honestly, isn't that statue business idiotic?"

You could talk to Éva.

"Well, yes, I must admit, it's pretty corny stuff."

"Corny?" Fodor repeated it in a rising voice. "It got neither rhyme nor reason, it's pure slop." Gergely cut in:

"And this here? What's it about? What's it called?"

Fodor spoke calmly: "Amnesty."

Gergely clutched at his head.

"Amnesty! Is that what you want to make a film about?"

"Steady on," said Fodor.

Éva asked darkly: "What's it about?"

"You'd better read it yourselves. But I'll give you the gist of it. There's a chap who is a shop assistant in a state food store."

Gergely flicked his fingers.

"And he steals, of course," he said.

"No," Fodor said, "the others steal."

"First the others, then him," Gergely said.

"I said no," Fodor came down on the word a little more heavily this time. "The whole point of it is that he's the only one that doesn't. Yet the others get him into trouble, along with themselves. He spends a year in jail, and the film begins with his release from prison together with the real culprits, and while they can find themselves good jobs, he can't. It's the struggle of an honest man for the recognition of his honesty, till he realizes that he can only retrieve his honour if he fights the dishonest people to a finish."

Fodor paused here for breath and added, in a lower tone:

"It's a tragedy. The honest man ends with murder. He kills his boss."

Gergely looked at Éva:

"Is he quite normal?" he asked.

Éva was silent.

"How the devil can you make a film out of that?"

"You don't have to tell me that the subject has its risks," Fodor said, "but I know that it can be done, because it touches on one of the great fundamental problems of our age. How should one oppose callous inhumanity? That's what it's about. This chap is alone. He sees that they steal and he doesn't speak. That's where his guilt comes in. When he is released he sees that those others again achieve success, though they are alienated from their class and unprincipled, but they gang up together and he is alone. He would be welcomed if he would join in, he could have a love-affair, if he were willing to join the gang he could make good too, but he remains honest—and alone. In the end he kills, but he already knows where he made his big mistake, and that killing is no answer."

This summary of his short story, related with great gusto, hooked Éva completely.

"Let me read it," she demanded.

They both read it through, and liked it enormously.

Fodor ordered a cognac.

"We'll make an international hit with this!"

"We will," said Éva.

"You're a dirty double-dealer, you are," Gergely said benignly, "but I forgive you."

"And we'll make this one with all our heart and soul, put everything we've got into it!" Fodor said.

"Put our last shirt on it!" cried Gergely.

Éva went off, but Fodor sat on with Gergely. "Another film," he reflected.

Whenever he wrote a film script there was always that sheet of glass

lying between himself and the paper. A sheet of glass. No matter how he struggled there it remained under his pen, and he had never been able to break through it. He had always written his film scripts on this glass sheet, on which he heard the tinkle of money. "But this time I'm going to break through it," he told himself. He heaved a resolute sigh and said:

"Listen, Peter! I'm really going to write this script, no matter what."

"Well, better late than never!" Gergely said. "But I thought we were past that stage, though."

"Does it matter how one gets down to a job so long as it gets done?" Fodor demanded.

"Yes, but take this one seriously, will you."

"I will, seriously," Fodor said. "I'll go down to the Writers Rest House, and get it written."

*

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Fodor.

"To the Writers Rest House." Fodor replied in a tone that brooked no contradiction.

"What for?"

"Work."

"Is Éva going?"

"No, she isn't."

"Gergely?"

"No. Later. When there's something to show him."

"Can't you work at home?"

"No."

"Why? You write all your other things here at home. When it's a film you have to wander off somewhere."

"I've got to," Fodor said. "I'm taking this job seriously."

"At home."

"No."

"All right. But if nothing comes of it, I'll kick you up the arse."

"You can kick me up the arse."

And off he went.

*

He was given a very pleasant room overlooking the park, it was spacious and out of the way. He gave over the first day to taking his time about it. He had to familiarize himself with the environment which was already

familiar, but now he had to familiarize himself again. The environment, of course, included people. And women.

He had scarcely entered the gate when destiny provided him with a congenial environment. His friend and bridge partner, Zsoldos, flung himself at him:

"Tivadar, listen, there's a Dutch woman here. She's getting me down, I can't cope anymore... Please..."

"A Dutch woman?"

"Writer. Critic."

"How old?"

"Thirty-five."

"No more?"

"No, I swear."

The Dutch lady was pretty ample, but had a heart of gold. Fodor took her for a row on the lake.

The Dutch woman, they agreed, would speak Dutch and Fodor Hungarian. They would both say whatever they felt like saying, and at the end they would discover through their common tongue, French, whether they had been monologizing or dialogizing.

They rowed far out into the middle of the lake. Fodor drew the woman close, kissed her, caressed her, and said:

"I'd love to be able to love you, I'd love to love everybody. I'd love to do something, but I hate taking action."

The woman said something in Dutch.

"Only I don't love you. Nor do I love doing this film script. I should only love to love it."

The woman said something. Fodor seemed to hear the word film in her speech.

"I'm not discussing films," Fodor thought to himself. "The dear thing's mistaken me." He renewed his kisses, and went on talking.

"My hands are tied," Fodor continued. "What I want to do I can't, and what I can do I don't want to do. So what more d'you want? Do you think I'm talking about you, you sexual tractor, you? D'you think it's emotion that makes my voice husky? Oh, no, not a bit of it."

She said something in Dutch.

This was how the first day passed.

The next day he buckled down to work. He spent the whole morning sorting and tidying his papers. He cleaned out his pen, filled it with ink, took out the typewriter to type, and looked at it. Around eleven he thought he could visualize the first scene.

A tempest raging over a dismal and abandoned landscape. Rolling mountains, tossing seas, turbulence and turmoil fill the screen, and in the midst of this teeming chaos and the thunderous musical accompaniment the figure of a man in white coat, a shop assistant appears, insistently, urgently, not to be denied.

He had not got to the end of this monumental scene, the mountains were still rolling, the high winds of outer space still tugging at the salesman's white coat, the crescendo still mounting, when there was a knock at the door. It was Horváth who entered. Horváth the mediocrity, Horváth, the chronically impecunious.

"What are you working on?"

"A film," Fodor said like a beaten man.

"Contemporary subject?"

"Contemporary."

Horváth took a seat and settled himself comfortably.

"A film is a paying proposition," he said.

Fodor shrugged his shoulders and flung out his hands. Horváth refused to recognize the implication.

"Now, tell me honestly. What did you earn with your film last year?"

"Sixty."

"There you are. When can you make that much on a novel or a short story?"

"Never."

Fodor fixed his eyes steadily on Horváth, and went on imagining the film sequence he had conjured up. The chaotic vortex re-appeared, and the shop assistant projected himself with increasing insistence until he filled the whole length and breadth of the screen.

"What can you say with a topical film on a contemporary theme?"

The shop assistant swelled to a close-up, raised his enormous fist and shook it at Horváth.

"Nothing, you idiot!" roared the shop assistant, but Horváth heard not a word.

"I have to admit I envy you making all that much money," he continued, "but I can't help feeling sorry for you at the same time for having to earn it the way you do."

The shop assistant picked up a carving knife and stabbed Horváth to the heart.

Fodor offered Horváth a light.

"Too bad," he said. "And what are you doing at the moment?"

"Translating," said Horváth with profound loathing.

"What?"

"A Turkish novel."

"Any good?"

"Vile."

The moment Horváth left the room Fodor tore up what he had written and threw it into the waste-paper basket. "That's how the film of an amateur begins. A film should begin as a film should begin," he thought. And he thought of many other things, the last of which was coffee. That thought materialized. He made himself coffee with meticulous care, coffee, film, coffee, film, alternating in his mind all the time.

Coffee. A café. The literary café that was his second home. Into the café walked the shop assistant. "Got it!" cried Fodor jubilantly. In a second he was at his desk, putting it down. He stopped. He read it over. Not so good by a long chalk. He ruminated again. The shop assistant entered the café once more. But this time Fodor was there; he jumped up to land the shop assistant a tremendous kick in the backside, which sent him flying smash through the plate glass into the street.

Fodor crumpled up the second sheet of paper and flicked it into the waste-paper basket.

He took a new sheet. He wrote out the title-page in fine, delicate lettering. "Amnesty—Literary script by Tivadar Fodor. Directed by Péter Gergely. Artistic director: Éva Keszei. 1963."

He felt satisfied. He got up and stalked across to the mirror, and stood in front of it for a long while, contemplating his reflection contemplating himself alternately as Tivadar and Fodor.

In the afternoon he took a stroll and went down to the pier. The story was developing itself nicely in his mind.

The beach was empty, except for a young girl dangling her feet in the water. Fodor walked past behind her, then he walked back. He went past her again. He lost the thread of the story. He picked up an entirely different thread.

He sat down beside the girl.

"On holiday?" Fodor asked.

"On holiday."

"Where do you come from?"

"Szombathely." She was charming and attractive and innocent, and her figure was perfect.

In the water they continued the dialogue on a higher level.

"It was you who wrote 'Sunshine in Debrecen'?" she exclaimed with enthusiasm and admiration.

"That's right, my sweet," Fodor said, putting his arm round her.

"And how does one write a film?"

"With one's own hand," Fodor said, but the girl peeled his from her breast.

"And do you know lots of actors and actresses?"

"Yes, I do."

"László Sas, too?"

"Him too."

"Oh, how lucky you are!"

"So I am."

On the beach again: "You're not married, I suppose."

"Of course not," Fodor told her.

"Film writers don't get married, do they?"

"Not much," Fodor said.

The girl was enthusiastic. She had never seen a film script. Fodor took her into the Writers Rest House; up into his room, and showed her one in the making. They spent the whole night studying it.

*

"Scene One," Fodor read. "In front of a prison. Prison gate. Cloudy day, drabness. Silence. The large iron gate of the prison opens. Imre Póczik emerges with a small bag in his hand. He is a lean man of middle height. Pale, sallow face. The prison gate is shut behind him. He makes a few uncertain steps, sighs, looks up at the cloudy sky, stops. Looks back at the prison. Stands, looks, then dropping his head he starts off. Slowly, with tired movements he walks out of the picture."

Fodor drew on his cigarette. He continued. "Scene Two..."

Twenty-two scenes. One week's production. It was a Saturday afternoon. The three of them were sitting in the small room: Gergely, Éva and Fodor.

"It's beginning to take shape," Gergely said when Fodor put down the last fully written page.

"This may very well turn out to be a damn good film," Éva said.

Fodor nodded sagaciously.

"Yes. A real contemporary picture," Gergely went on. "It starts well, but of course this is only the exposition."

"It is," said Fodor.

"What we have got to get clear is the message we want to put across."

He looked at Fodor. There was no sign in Fodor's face of the least message.

Gergely was sitting on Fodor's bed, his hand fumbling aimlessly but not unrewardingly under Fodor's pillow. There was something soft there.

"I think the message is that there's no life without honour," said Éva.

"Exactly," chimed Fodor.

"Out of the question," Gergely said. "I think it is that we mustn't tolerate dishonesty around us. We mustn't be tolerant." His fingers closed on the object and he pulled it out. It was a pair of panties. He waved them in the air.

"Of course, of course," Fodor repeated, removing the panties from Gergely's grasp. "Somehow it must say just that."

"But you can't reconcile the two," Éva said. Gergely followed the route of the panties with bemused interest.

"Yes, they're irreconcilable, somehow," Fodor said. He chucked the panties into the cupboard. Éva seemed tactfully unaware.

"We must get this clear," announced Éva.

"We must get it clear," Fodor agreed.

"I should have thought you'd have got it clear a long time ago," Gergely said.

"I did," said Fodor.

"Then why do you nod first to her and then to me? This business about no life without honour doesn't interest me in the slightest. That's no theme for a film; it's trivial, it's commonplace."

Fodor stood up with a sudden and vigorous movement.

"I can't have you binding my hands," he announced.

"Perish the thought," Éva said. "The more outspoken this film the better."

"I'm free to expose real errors and abuses?" demanded Fodor aggressively, raising his chin.

"You are," Gergely said.

"And you will still make the film?"

"I will. I promise."

Fodor subsided. The big act had not misfired, he had succeeded in diverting their attention from the main difficulty, that he was in total darkness himself.

He sat down.

"All right then, now I'll really slog at it," he said.

Gergely slid his hand under the pillow again. He came up with a slip.

"What on earth do you keep under your pillow?" he said.

Éva could refrain no longer:

"A lingerie boutique."

*

On Sunday morning Mrs. Fodor arrived unexpectedly. Fodor was making coffee for Éva and Gergely was still in bed when he heard her voice in the corridor, asking the caretaker: "Is he working?"

"Oh yes, he's working," the caretaker said.

Fodor rocketed out into the corridor and threw himself before his wife: "Hallo, darling!"

But the joyful reunion did not last long. Mrs. Fodor barged into the room. Éva was fixing the percolator.

The two women greeted each other. Innocent Éva none the less found herself reddening before the patent accusation in Mrs. Fodor's eyes.

"Are you working, too?" Mrs. Fodor asked.

"No, only Tivadar," Éva said as politely as she could.

Mrs. Fodor went to the writing desk:

"Is this all?" she said turning over the leaves.

Fodor was enjoying himself.

"Well, in the first few days you see, one's only trying to get one's bearings in the new environment. . ."

"And how long have you been part of the environment, dear?" said Mrs. Fodor to Éva.

"We arrived yesterday afternoon," Éva said without a too conspicuous emphasis of the plural.

Mrs. Fodor pretended to be surprised:

"Has Gergely come down too?"

Fodor suddenly exploded:

"But of course he has! What do you think?. . ."

"I don't think anything."

Fodor turned to Éva:

"She's jealous of you, that's what. Do explain to her."

Éva blushed again.

"What should I explain?"

Mrs. Fodor saved her answering.

"You're a swine," she said to her husband.

"Yes, swine," Éva agreed.

In came Gergely, in pyjamas, a little surprised to see Mrs. Fodor. He kissed her hand and then sat down.

"A coffee will do me a world of good," he said. Fodor felt it was all too much. The job of sorting them out to Mrs. Fodor was beyond him. Let it rip.

"How did you sleep?" he asked Gergely.

"I have a new idea," Gergely begun.

*

On Sunday evening they all left, Gergely and Éva and Mrs. Fodor. Fodor felt miserable, ugly and incompetent, drained of all energy. He wandered aimlessly about the house.

Down in the basement room among the table tennis players, Horváth interrupted the game to ask:

"Was your director satisfied?"

"Out of his mind with joy," Fodor replied.

"Are we to look forward to another superb Hungarian film?" Horváth's partner, Rakoltzay the essayist, asked.

Fodor wasn't up to another witticism.

"Yes," he said.

Horváth and Rakoltzay resumed the game, plying Fodor with questions while playing.

"How do you get on with film people?" Rakoltzay asked, and without waiting for an answer, continued: "I've only been at the studios once in my life. They wanted me to work for them, but I just sneaked away, if you see what I mean... it was a bit too much... If you want to know what I think, a writer just can't find any common language with them."

Horváth turned to Fodor with sympathy:

"You're doing it for the money, aren't you?"

Fodor threw out his hands and said with resignation: "Everything is true and the opposite of everything is not always true."

*

"You know, somewhere or other Serfőző and Co. are right," Gergely said.

Fodor listened gloomily. "Which means that somewhere or other I've got to rewrite it," he thought. For the script had been finished, and more, had already passed through the first editing.

Gergely resumed:

"A gloomy subject cannot be represented through gloom... As it stands, the picture is too sombre. Somewhere or other the remnants of the bourgeois past have to be implied too. You follow me?"

Fodor followed him, and unhappy as he felt at having to do more work on it, he was also happy to know for certain that the film would now be made. Film and money, a lot of money. He wouldn't have worked in vain.

"We'll loose an artillery barrage on the petty bourgeoisie," he said.

"That's the stuff," Gergely concurred.

He did not go off to the Rest House for this part of the job, he got it done in two days and changed the title to "A Time for Hoping."

The new version was read again and found so satisfactory that the Script Editors Committee was convened to sit in judgement on it.

The Script Editors Committee—Fodor looked forward to it with relish. "One takes in a big enough dose of idiocy to last a lifetime," he thought to himself. "But no matter, I'll sick it all back at them!" By which he meant the newer and newer versions of the script he foresaw in the offing.

The Script Editors Committee consisted of one room, twenty chairs, smoke and people. Male and female, big noises and small fry, friends and enemies. And words, thousands of words, floods of words.

Tokodi, one of the script editors, opened the proceedings. He was angry that the production had been given to Éva for editing instead of himself, but he did not enlarge upon that aspect of the matter. "The subject is excellent, most timely," he pronounced, "it faces a serious and central problem. The whole thing is very much of today because it points up the present main current. There's only one thing that poses a problem, apart from the fact that I find the script little drawn out and less eventful than one could wish, but at the same time it is full of psychological implications and all that, of course... I mean, I don't know if the creators will agree with me... when I say that as far as I can see... and this point should merit reconsideration... er... if only for the success of the film... in a word: is this whole prison business relevant to what the film has to say?"

He stopped, looked down at the table then up, courageously straight into Fodor's eyes. "Just carry on, boy," Fodor thought. "It's not lack of political courage, of course, that makes me say this," Tokodi continued. "I only think that it is not at all clear on purely aesthetic grounds... Now, politics aside, couldn't we achieve the same effect with a hospital? For what is the whole point here? It is that the main character... what's his name now... Petrik, yes Petrik... er... is temporarily ostracized... Now do we need this prison? If I may express my opinion, the theft and the whole business of the other men are also irrelevant... The weight of the ethical message lies somewhere else."

"Excuse me," Gergely interrupted abruptly, "what is involved here is that a man is made to suffer unjustly..."

"He can't be thinking of me, can he?" Fodor murmured under his breath.

"Not ill and still taken to hospital," said Serfőző the deputy director at the far end of the table. From his remark Fodor promptly gathered that the script would have to be rewritten. Again. "Not that that makes the slightest difference," he thought to himself. "The customer is always right."

"Or for instance, a mental hospital," Tokodi said.

Fodor could not repress a burst of laughter. Éva pressed her foot on his under the table. Fodor caught her look and subsided.

"It's got to be rewritten anyway," he whispered to Éva.

Tokodi began again on the harm done by ill-founded pessimism and a negative attitude in certain cases. He went on and on relentlessly and Fodor listened to his harangue impassively. Not for a moment had he expected anybody to try to say anything about what he had actually written. "Not to worry, boys, I'll rewrite it," he thought to himself as he was being earnestly talked into it.

Tokodi had set the tone and the others promptly followed suit. The script was too dark, too pessimistic; it dragged in such sombre subjects as prison and theft in a quite unnecessary and arbitrary way.

Fodor sat silently as one who had nothing to lose. Nor, indeed, had he anything to lose any more. Gergely put up a desperate fight for it but unavailingly. The script was sentenced for rewriting. Gergely was afraid that Fodor could not be persuaded to do the rewriting, but Fodor, however, only affected reluctance, and while abusing the idiots, sat down and rewrote it. "For these cretins, why not?" he thought to himself. "If they won't take what's good. . ."

"The gate of a sanatorium," he wrote. A stocky little jovial man steps out into the sunshine.

The gatekeeper politely opens the door for him. The stocky man wants to tip him a twenty-forint banknote, but the gatekeeper refuses it.

The small fat man, Póczik, makes a few steps towards the waiting taxi, glances back at the sanatorium, the shady trees, then doubles up pressing his hands on his stomach.

The gatekeeper runs to him:

"What's the matter? It doesn't hurt, I hope?"

"Yes. . . the sutures," Póczik says smiling.

"The sutures."

He gets into the taxi which drives away.

The new version meant a new conference with the Script Editors Committee. There was no objection this time. The script was received with unanimous ovation, and went before the management.

The management found the script good, serious and worthy of attention, but called the writer's and director's attention to the fact that though the posing of the problem was correct and timely, the atmosphere was still too pessimistic and negative.

After the conference Serfőző took Gergely and Fodor to his room.

"Look here," he began. "I'm not in a position at the present moment to press this script through... But I must admit quite frankly that in fact the script is not all it should be... Haven't you thought about this juxtaposition of serious illness, the hospital atmosphere, crimes and errors, and all that? Hm?"

Fodor could see Gergely was getting ready to argue again, and he staved it off.

"Well, yes, we did... consider it..."

"Well then," Serfőző said.

Gergely was furious. Fodor, however, remained calm. "It's a sitter from now on," he said, and sat down to the next version.

The entrance of a holiday resort. Magnificent scenery, the beach at Lake Balaton, high summer and glaring colours. Póczik leaves the resort with a young attractive girl on his arm. They stand at the gate for a second, holding each other's hands, they face each other point blank, but with emotion, and Póczik is heard to say:

"Honey, I'll never forget these two weeks!"

Protracted kissing... Póczik starts to go, but does not stop waving his hand. He goes out of the picture still waving.

Serfőző read it:

"I'm delighted, you've found the right form at last. Yes, this is a real comedy theme. I'd only like you to make the fullest use of it now you've hit on it. There's still a lot of waste spots in the film. I'd fill them with music... plenty of music and dancing. Possibly—it's for you to decide, of course—but a vaudeville would bring down the house..."

The last version, a variety show called "Chummies," had a big success at the film studio. Fodor was a daily visitor out there, every day there was something to do, minor revisions of one sort or another, and at last the script was once more ready to go before the management. Gergely was a hundred per cent in agreement with it by now, Éva had no more reservations and Mrs. Gergely hardly any. The management accepted the script and gave Gergely the go-ahead.

Great days followed with Gergely writing the shooting script and organizing the working unit, Fodor receiving his fee and signing a new contract. In the heat of the moment.

He also agreed to take part in the shooting. For which he was to receive an extra fee.

Their mutual esteem for each other grew day by day.

"I hear you're making a comedy," said the famous comedy director, Lamperth, stopping Gergely in the courtyard.

"Yes," Gergely said.

"Who wrote it?"

"Fodor."

Lamperth grimaced.

"Fodor? Is he a writer?"

Gergely shrugged:

"Kind of... he's a very decent chap..."

Lamperth heaved a deep sigh:

"No good film without a good script..."

He had never made one yet.

Meanwhile Fodor sat in his favourite café going through the motions of work. Rakoltzay the essayist stopped by his table:

"Film finished?"

"Yes," Fodor said.

"Who's going to direct it, I forget?"

"Gergely."

"What sort of a chap is he?"

"A very nice fellow," Fodor said, in a voice without any conviction.

"Is he good at his job?"

"He certainly is," said Fodor.

"But not a genius, is he?" Rakoltzay added.

"He certainly isn't," said Fodor.

It was on a Saturday that they set out to look for suitable locations. There were six of them in all including the chauffeur in the station wagon belonging to the studio.

In the front seat beside the chauffeur sat Gergely looking every inch the commander of an expedition. In the back were Téboly the cameraman, Szántó the production manager, Hevesi the first assistant, and Fodor. All conversation, of course, centred on the film.

"My idea," said Téboly the cameraman, "is to play the whole thing dead pan all through."

"Of course, of course, dead pan, that's the thing," said Gergely from the front seat.

"Only the audience is to laugh," said Szántó the production manager.

Hevesi remained practically silent. He congratulated Fodor on the script in a few words, but they were pretty forced, and he delicately adjusted his relation with Gergely to indicate how much he appreciated his abilities and courage in embarking on a so dubious a venture. If the film were a success—and he did not quite exclude the possibility—then Gergely was to be given the exclusive credit. This attitude seemed to him the most

useful to adopt. But he was firmly decided that should he ever reach the haven of directing a film on his own, he would never let Fodor write the script for him nor would he employ Gergely, even as an assistant.

"It's going to be a terrific film," said Szántó.

"A great dead pan film," said Téboly.

Fodor listened to these conversations with a dead pan face, and slowly began to think that he had written an excellent script, in fact a masterpiece. Not that it mattered.

They arrived at the first selected town. In the film Póczik and his love pledged their love at the foot of a hero's memorial and they therefore drew up in the main square, where an old huge linden-tree shaded the heroic statue in the centre from the sun's rays.

"This'll do nicely," Szántó said, because the only thing he cared about was that it should be near the capital and the studio.

"The only snag is the tree!" Téboly the cameraman exclaimed.

"It's in the way," Gergely said.

"That's all right," Szántó said. "We'll have it thrown out."

And he started right away.

The council chairman was difficult to persuade.

"Comrades, that old tree is the pride of the square. . ."

Szántó, however, did not know the word impossible:

"We'll have it replanted. And we'll have a new war memorial erected for you. . ."

"We'll have the town replanned," Téboly said.

"We'll give a new impetus to foreign tourism," Horváth said.

"Put a little life into it," Fodor added.

Only Gergely remained silent. He did not fancy the square, but wanted to see what his working unit was capable of. "Let them do the organizing," he thought.

The council chairman surrendered. With the written permission in his hand Szántó went straight to the barracks of the local rifle regiment and in two minutes' time got ten fresh recruits, who set about felling the tree at once.

"The roots too," Szántó told them.

The main square of the next town had a much more historical atmosphere about it, and it was more to Gergely's liking.

"This is it," he said. "Just the place for pledges of eternal faith."

"Yes, this is a much better spot," Téboly thought.

He got out his camera and made shots from different angles.

"Pity there's no memorial here," Fodor said.

"Never mind, we'll put one up," Hevesi said.

"This is the right place, no doubt about it," Gergely asserted.

Szántó started to go away.

"Where are you going?" Téboly shouted after him.

"To make a telephone call." He was back in ten minutes.

"They'd cut it down," he said. It was clear he hadn't quite given up. On the way home they stopped in the square. In the place of the huge tree there now yawned a bomb-creater.

"The roots had to be blown out," the sergeant told them.

"It makes all the difference," Szántó said suggestively.

"Small time stuff," was Téboly's contribution.

"No good. We'll stick to the other one," said Gergely, with a conclusive wave of the hand.

Szántó shook hands with the sergeant.

"Thank you, comrades!"

They got in the car and drove home.

They also went looking for the small family house with a garden Gergely felt he needed.

They inspected a number of houses and drew up before those that appealed to Gergely.

The owner would receive them with alarm since all Szántó would say was that they had come from the film studio and would like to look at his house. But the owner would appear highly suspicious and though he let the party in, he would be overheard whispering to his wife:

"If you hear me shout, call the police at once."

Téboly would make notes.

"This partition wall has to go... That window there must be bricked up..."

Fodor drew Gergely aside.

"Excuse me, but... er... is all that really necessary?"

"It's *the* scene, Fodor, *the* decisive scene. I must make sure the contrast is brought out, you see... between the honest Póczik's wedding night and that of the depraved Gazsó's, if you see what I mean..."

"I see," Fodor said.

"And it must take place in a modern flat," Gergely said. "Nothing short of that will do the trick."

"And now, of course, a great deal depends on who's going to play the girl," said Fodor. He had a little scheme of his own.

*

It didn't come off. The part was not given to the girl to whom Fodor had promised it. But it was quite unimportant because Fodor found the other actress just as attractive.

The shooting began on location, in the town they had selected. They went down for a week, booking up all the available rooms in the hotel, and Fodor joined them.

He was not particularly interested in the first scene, in a local restaurant. He hung about for a while and then decided to go back to the hotel, changed, and went down to the swimming pool.

On one of the benches lay Kázmér Római the up-and-coming tough guy character. He had a short scene in the film, to be shot that afternoon, and was putting in some self-education by reading the Odes of Horace. Fodor sat down beside him and glanced at the book.

"Great odes, these!" said Római.

Fodor roared uncontrollably.

"What's the joke?" Római asked indignantly.

Fodor gasped with laughter, but couldn't explain.

"Do you think a film like this will give you a monument more enduring than brass?"

"Hardly."

Római put down the book and looked at Fodor.

"Listen... couldn't I be given a few more speeches? Why do I only meet the honest Póczik once?"

"Well, that's how it worked out."

"Too short... that's hardly long enough in which to expose the top sportsmen..."

"We never planned to expose..."

Római did not stop.

"I'm supposed to be the top sportsman in the town. A top sportsman is prominent, is all over the place... It would improve the film... give it a truer ring..."

"Come off it, Római. Need the dough? Want to buy a car? Are you going to Paris? Be honest..."

"I'm buying a flat," Római said.

"That's different. I'll talk to Gergely to give you another two days."

Római jumped to his feet.

"What'll you have to drink?"

"Water," Fodor said, and plunged into the pond.

Alice Hidegh, the female star of the film, arrived at midday. She was unquestionably an eyeful.

"I'm going to fall in love with her," Fodor thought to himself, and proceeded to dance attendance upon her assiduously in the days that followed. "A real love affair, a monumental love affair," he promised himself.

"From now on I'll write all the women's parts only for you," declaimed Fodor in the car as they drove back after a day's shooting.

"I'm *so* sleepy," said Alice, closing her eyes.

"You're absolutely beautiful," said Fodor.

"Me?" Alice said. "I feel like a hag..."

"A hag? Oh no. You're the most beautiful actress in Hungary. You're *the* Hungarian actress."

Alice Hidegh opened her eyes for a passing second:

"Really?" she said.

"I swear to it."

Alice slid back into sleep.

A minute later her eyes opened.

"You married?"

"Yes," Fodor said.

Alice flicked her hand despondently.

"Then you're no good to me," she said.

"Why? Is it a husband you want?"

"Yes. A man who can keep me and then I needn't go on acting... neither films nor theatre nor radio..."

"You want to be a housewife?"

"Yes."

"You want to cook?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes. Boiled noodles with curd and cracklings."

"But I adore you."

"Everybody adores me," Alice said and closed her eyes again. "Only nobody wants to marry me," she added.

The next evening they looked at the rushes in the local cinema.

They had a few sequences projected without the sound.

"Great! Magnificent! Superb!" Hevesi exclaimed in ringing tones. "This is much too good for a Hungarian film!"

Gergely majestically disclaimed it.

"O.K. O.K. A rush is only a rush."

Fodor nodded judiciously.

"Good... quite good," he said to Gergely with not much conviction.

He was overcome with misgiving, left them on the job, and went back to town.

The next day he met Rakoltzay the essayist in the café.

"How's your film working out? I hear they have started shooting."

Fodor answered with superb contempt:

"Just another Hungarian film! I'll have no truck with it!"

*

That evening Gergely had dinner with Hevesi and Téboly.

"The script could have done with a bit more polishing," he said gloomily.

"Fodor's rather slapdash, isn't he..." Téboly said.

"And he has no sense of humour," Hevesi added. "But he always fancies himself at comedy."

Gergely sighed.

There was a distinct smell of disaster in the air.

When the film was finished it was shown to the young intellectuals in the artists' club, followed by a discussion.

The discussion ended unanimously. They had never seen a lousier film.

Gergely pronounced a few thoughtful, diplomatic words. The film of course carried a valuable social message. It was of course politically relevant to the problems of today.

The young intellectuals weren't having any.

Fodor rose:

"Could be the film's not very good. Could be, I say. But one thing's certain: none of you know a damn thing about the cinema, and you're a bunch of bloody illiterates yourselves!"

Which pleased everybody.

The film had a tremendous success with the public.

As after all big events in his life, Fodor rounded off the banquet that followed the showing by drinking heavily. It was getting light when they got home.

They undressed. Fodor wanted a drink.

Then, naked, he sat down on a chair with a glass. Mrs. Fodor opened the window and leaned out for a while.

There was a big silence in the room and two nude people.

Mrs. Fodor, speaking as if talking out into the street, said:

"Tivadar, why are Hungarian films so lousy?"

Apathetic and naked, Fodor looked up.

"Just because."

SÁNDOR WEÖRES

THE SEVENTH GARDEN

Never another garden where the clock
has stopped among the lilies, without hands.
  Time is counted there
no more than shade and starlight hemmed by leaves.
Does he to whom the Angel beckons linger
  still, revisiting
that place of sun whose diary is told
with a bell of stone, oblivion
turning on the marble of the columns?

Even turning face to face, they stand
with backs to us, all whispering afar
  in the garden. Days
to come are left behind if, fallible
and pale, they dare not brave the sun's bright blade.
  Tomorrows will return
if our kerchief should be left in them,
caught on the railings of the copper day
shredded gladly by the spikes of sun.

Drowsy the garden, yet pure sorrow's here,
though who'd not weep for happiness if tears
  could well from dew-washed statues
such as we are... How can I help desiring
you who scorched me? Figure slim as flame,
  lead me from this place
of silence, let me follow after, clutching
at your green sparks, beloved, like an infant
at a loose thread on a mother's dress!

Translated by
Daniel Hoffman

MONKEY-COUNTRY

How many miles to Monkey-Country?
There monkey-fruit grows on the plains
And in the wind the monkey-shutters
Rattle loud monkey-refrains.

Behold the monkey-heroes battle—
On monkey-meadows they contend.
Hark, in monkey-hospital
The monkey-sick weep without end.

Monkey-girls from monkey-teachers
Learn the monkey-alphabet.
In monkey cells the wicked monkeys
Plot their monkey-business yet.

Monkey-wheels turn monkey-gristmills;
There's a lot of monkey-mayonnaise.
To the triumphs of the monkey-mind
A monkey-monument they raise.

Come hear the monkey-monk preach sermons
At the tolling of a monkey-bell—
Some he sends to monkey-Heaven,
Some packs off to monkey-Hell.

Chimpanzees, macaques, gorillas,
Orang-utans, baboons and apes
Read monkey-news in monkey-papers
Over monkey-wine and grapes.

The echoes of their monkey-supper
From the outhouse walls make monkey-sound.
In Monkey-drill the monkey-recruits
March double-quick, then face around.

Monkey-soldiers, terror-stricken,
Grimace in a monkey face;
Monkey hands point monkey weapons
At everyone, in every place.

Translated by
Daniel Hoffman and L. T. András

ECONOMIC REFORM AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC POLICY

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROBLEMS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC MECHANISM

by

JÓZSEF BOGNÁR

The Role of the National Economic Plan Following the Economic Reforms

The reform in the system of directing the economy introduced in Hungary on January 1, 1968 meant essential modifications in previously entertained notions on the role of the national economic plan. In the main, the national economic plan is a politico-economic conception relating to a certain fixed period, expressed by programmes of action that precondition, complement and influence one another. Plans are needed, it is only possible to act efficiently, successfully and with foresight on the basis of coordinated programmes. It has also to be taken into account that in economic life processes with differing time requirements take place. In the short run decisions have to be made to expand production and diversify available choice, on the other hand in the long term the expected demand, say, for highly qualified specialists in 1980 has to be determined. This predictable need is a decisive criterion in making decisions in relation to today's Hungarian educational system. In other words: it is obvious that the market correctly conveys short-range impulses, and firms have to adjust their attitude to the latter. However, it is easy to understand that for the guidance and regulation of medium and long-term economic processes other kinds of methods have to be applied. This is why the necessity for improving long-range planning methods is always topical in Hungary.

In short-range plans alternative development targets have to be determined on the one hand, while, on the other, the economic environment (credit and interest policy, prices, income distribution, release of reserves, system of material incentives, competitive conditions etc.) have to be developed in such a way that the activity of forms should be directed

towards reaching the development targets at issue. The *alternative* character of the development targets should be emphasized because all objectives can be deduced from certain determined situations and suppositions. Consequently, in case of an essential change in the situation or the non-fulfilment of preconditions, targets have to be changed.

Besides determining alternative development targets and forming an economic environment in conformity with the latter, the plan must also include problems and interrelations such as, for example, a dynamic harmony between subsistence economic processes and movements of financial means, development of equilibria conditions, determination of international politico-economic aims, wage and income policy, the expected situation on the labour market, educational questions and problems of scientific research, etc.

Since the major part of accumulation and investments continues to be the concern of the state, the determination of development priorities (social preferences) and questions related to the development of the infrastructure also form part of the plan, i.e. of the politico-economic conception determined for a fixed period of time.

Conceived in this sense, the national economic plan promotes economic growth and helps to develop the economy in the proper proportions and uniformity. It brings about a sound relationship between the movements of the various time-requiring factors, in particular the short and long-range ones. It helps to establish economic equilibrium by delineating the alternative forms of movement of the various factors in all three spheres of activity, namely, on the level of enterprises, that of the national economy, and that of the world economy. This is important, for some economic factors tend to upset the equilibrium in the macro-economic sphere as fast as they release new energies in the micro-economic one. Such an economic plan can contribute to the liquidation of narrow bottlenecks (e.g. in the building industry, transport, etc.) that hinder development. It also prevents decisions making for autarchy which can occur almost as a reflex action and which proved so harmful in the past. It can be flexible when it comes to modifying originally determined operational variants; this certainly is of some importance, for in this quickly changing world the factors which have determined the optimal conditions may suddenly change. Last but not least, the plan allows the abilities and creative powers of the managerial group as a whole to develop freely.

The changes expected from the reforms had to be realized by maintaining relative equilibrium, and/or a certain degree of admissible lack of equilibrium. The actual politico-economic situation had to be taken into

account in view of the fact that the new energies the reform may set going only manifest themselves at a later point of time.

The actual economic structure and technical level decisively influence the present equilibria conditions of the economy. For instance, export contracts concluded in the past have to be honoured and selling prices (bartering relations) acknowledged, although the export structure and marketing of Hungarian goods is to be changed in the future. Therefore, the free scope of movement of the new indirect economic regulators had to be limited.

Despite the fact that firms are autonomous in drawing up their programmes, the production of certain articles had to be proscribed. Because of the considerable amount of uncompleted investments, a part of the amortizations of enterprises had to be used on a central basis.

Within the broad context of general labour questions, enterprises were given the right to settle wages; however, average wages cannot be increased by more than 4 per cent, in 1968. Means of production can be freely imported; however, prior to ordering goods, double the value of the ordered equipment has to be deposited in the bank. Certain official price regulations are being kept up for the time being, although they could have been done away with if equilibria conditions had been more stable.

But the scope of free movement of economic regulators has not been limited in this way on the ground of theoretical considerations. It would be ridiculous to suggest that through these constraints the economy will function more perfectly or that they are needed for the more expedient distribution of economic power and authority. The above-mentioned "safety measures" were exclusively needed because neither the amount of energy to be released by the reform nor the time when the new energies will be actually available can be foreseen precisely.

Economic Reform—Social Reform

Every important economic reform is, at the same time, a social and political reform, too. In the stage of development, the dialogue going on in society and preparations, various political and social power factors focus on the content of and methodological questions connected with the reform. On the other hand, the actual introduction of the reform profoundly influenced the structure of interests, both personal and institutional, which was based on earlier economic relations. The new way of thinking that is gaining ground due to the changes which are embodied in the reform, influences the prospective evolution of political life.

From this point of view, the history of the socialist economy can be divided into two periods of development. In the first, towards the end of the forties, the revolutionary power gradually had to develop economic relations that were in conformity with its main aims. Since rationality deriving from earlier (i.e. capitalist) relations was inadmissible in this period, whereas experience for framing a new kind of rationality was lacking, questions of political supremacy prevailed over economic ones in the sphere of governmental decisions. The rigid priority of political aspects over economic ones remained until the new power structure became completely stabilized. From this time on, the economic situation influenced both political development and the opinion of the great masses of the people regarding the functioning of the system. By and by economic experts and scientists gained sufficient experience and knowledge about the functioning and characteristics of the socialist economy. These specialists were able to compare the concrete development and efficiency of various economic processes with their earlier expectations on the one hand, and with central decisions, on the other. Henceforth, people did not compare their own situation with the past but with the professed aims of the system and the situation of people in other countries.

The second period of economic history gradually develops based on the joint effects of these factors; it is obvious that in this period, many continue to voice views and opinions they had stood for in the earlier period. The political leadership, however, increasingly took into account the requirements of economic life and development. Nobody is so naive as to imagine that life or society will become "apolitical"; however, in a politically consolidated society a narrower area of questions is interrelated with the exercise of power, and at the same time, the content of political interests also changes.

The Role of the Reforms in the Evolution of Socialist Society

Merely the fact in itself that economic reforms were introduced shows that socialist society is able to develop a self-regenerating way of thinking and a system of action—of course, not without contradictions and difficulties. In this context, the problem arises, what role the far-reaching reforms actually have or might have in general, in the progress of socialist society.

In this regard views are far from uniform as yet. In the last analysis one has to start from the fact that in the development of a socialist society and

economy the central power (party and state) play a decisive role. Consequently, all decisions and actions that

—decide the character of changes,

—coordinate them with other social processes,

—determine their legal forms and the

—date and schedule of their introduction, must set out from the government. It is, of course, another matter that the changes must be in agreement with the interests and political understanding of the people.

In the debate many started from the assumption that changes needed in the interest of society and economy can be carried out by continuous, expanding, supplementary and amending decisions issued within the *established political line*, that is, radical reforms were not needed at all. However, experience proved that this assumption was erroneous, even in a mature socialist society. All problems of social and economic development (new cabinet orders, party decisions, etc.), could only be solved within the scope of existing continuing processes if:

—the measures taken were in conformity with the structure of interests developed within society or were to modify it to a slight extent only,

—all important scientific discoveries were produced and put into use in the economy and the technology of the given country, or within the socialist community,

—if there would be no competition between the capitalist and the socialist world, and serious international crises would not occur,

—if the result of all processes as well as the side effects they initiate in society and the economy could be predicted beforehand.

Since these preconditions cannot materialize in the foreseeable future, socialist society will obviously need deep-going and coherent measures in the future too, steps which in some domain of social life (e.g. in the economy) initiate a new era, i.e. give events a different turn in a certain sense.

Some socialist countries (i.e. the People's Republic of China) intend to bring about this change through a revolution within socialist society, by the "great leap forward," or by proceeding from crisis to crisis. However, this method of social development (for simplicity's sake questions of content will now be disregarded) is coupled with a considerable loss of energy, tensions and polarization are worked up into hysteria, and equilibrium can only be restored following various campaigns aimed at correcting what was done. In the period of progress political passions are aroused to such a degree that people act in this atmosphere of fanaticism without keeping their sense of balance and according to a single guiding principle. As a result, such serious social and economic situations arise, that the restoration of a relative

equilibrium becomes an urgent task. At this juncture, the leadership has no other choice but to turn against the very strata that were its allies in the campaign and come to terms with those power factors it earlier wanted to exclude from the sphere of political and economic activity. In other words: having become a campaign for a campaign's sake, its continuation consumes such amounts of energy that surplus energy needed for boosting economic development is not engendered. These large campaigns and counter-campaigns put into question every sort of rational, commonsensical, or spontaneous individual and group behaviour related to social and economic activities. Therefore, administrative measures have to be applied in order to trigger off reactions which individuals and various social groups formerly considered self-evident.

From the aforesaid it logically follows that reforms are introduced in a socialist society with the purpose

—of eliminating delays and continual crises,

—of making considerable and profound progress on a wide field if it is justified,

—of seeing that in the course of progress no greater social and political tensions should arise than absolutely unavoidable.

However, even in case such reforms are introduced it has be taken into account that the earlier developed structure of interests and a part of the institutions as well as public opinion (public thinking) that has developed under the influence of these and other influencing factors will render it difficult for a suitable political atmosphere—an indispensable element in the introduction of reforms—to develop. However, a politically consolidated government that enjoys respect and which carries on a consistent policy is able to cope with these difficulties.

In the case of economic reforms, public opinion can only be convinced about the necessity of making changes if the rate of economic growth is not very fast and the effects of the defectively functioning economy are felt by everybody in some way or other.

The Scope of the Reforms

Reforms are worked out, discussed and introduced amidst political struggles. It is, therefore, very important that the scope (depth and beadth) of the reforms, and the relationship (attitude) of the political and social forces to the changes should be correctly described.

From the viewpoint of the breadth and depth of the new notions (reform),

it is very important that the existing equilibria conditions should not become unbalanced for the sake of relatively slight changes. The disadvantage of too narrow reforms is that the new becomes isolated in the old economic environment. Although limited in their effect, a number of essential changes were carried out in Hungary since 1957, without, however, yielding the expected results. A further drawback of too narrow reforms is that they discredit the idea of the reform itself and may shake confidence in the government's capacity to act.

On the other hand, profound and broad reforms affect the entire domain of a country's social and political life. This phenomenon is related to the increasing interdependence of processes in modern society and the economy, on the one hand, and with the spreading of an ideological way of thinking, on the other. It is well known that ideology creates a relationship between the different aspects of the human mind and, therefore, it is easy to understand that the introduction or rejection of a new politico-economic and economic guiding system will lead to ideological associations. However, in the case of reform movements it has to be taken into account that the followers of the new notions represent but a minority at the beginning. There is, of course, a tremendous difference between belittling the old system in force and criticizing its deficiencies, and assuming responsibility for a new concrete conception, together with all its consequences and risks. Hence, it is not expedient to include in the debate and to expose to social confrontation the practical and theoretical multiplying effects of the changes when the reforming movement is launched, for in this case the battle-lines become confused and this, as a rule, encourages the opponents of the change. There are tens of thousands who agree with the main points of a reform (e.g. with economic changes) or could be won over to the cause, but who fear the cultural, scientific or ideological consequences. It is better to deal with the secondary and accessory consequences when agreement has been reached on basic issues.

The term "depth" of the reform means that within the area in question the reform should range over the entire scope (level) of social activities. For example, an economic reform will become isolated if it is exclusively confined to activities on a national economic or sector level. The entreprise (the microeconomic sphere) must join the reform for two reasons, first, because certain economic decisions might become more correct and flexible under the effect of market impulses and, secondly, because economic organizations interested in the changes are needed when economic power is redistributed.

Attitude of Political and Social Institutions to the Reform

In the following the role of various social and political institutions, and social groups in the preparation and introduction of the reform will be illustrated.

The Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party had a decisive role in the preparation of the Hungarian economic reform. The party is the only political organization that covers the entire complex of social activities. In the first phase of the introductory process it initiated and organized the drawing up of the reform. It encouraged the supporters of the reform to collaborate on the basis of a uniform conception. When it came to turning-points and the future of the reform hung in the balance—for it depended on a few ayes and nays—it took quick and resolute decisions. (A critical moment was reached when the supreme labour committee asked the appropriate authorities whether or not they were willing to give up the idea that the plan should be broken down to an enterprise level.) After the basic conception had been worked out, the party, as the supreme political guiding force, elaborated the details for the organs of the executive power, and devoted itself, henceforth, with all its might to convince public opinion. It was due to the latter that people who were, at first, averse to the idea of a reform or thought that at best half-measures would be taken, took up the cause of the reform.

Of course, the preliminary spadework done in the course of preparations had a strong impact on the party, too. Views were elucidated, and arguments made more convincing, while the new methods applied during the working out of the reform, also had an effect. These methods were recruited from those means of indirect direction which have played a decisive role in leading and influencing the economy since the introduction of the reforms. People, of course, are not identically minded even if they fight for and are enthusiastic for the same cause within one organization: some tended to think in terms of the functioning and future of a socialist society, whereas others had more faith in the state apparatus and in authority. However, after a debate held in an atmosphere of unrestricted freedom, all participants —regardless of their individual attitude and inclinations—accepted the point of view that indirect methods of economic guidance should come to the fore in the future.

The attitude of the state apparatus was somewhat more passive and reserved. That is easy to understand: historical experience proves that state bodies excel in employing and consolidating existing norms, and in making

them consistent with practice rather than in developing conceptions that deviate from the hitherto applied ones. Without a doubt, a considerable part of the economic authority of the state organs has been transferred to the enterprises. Therefore, certain ministries dealing with specific sectors of the economy (e.g. industrial ministries) feared that as a result of the reform existence might become problematical. The Ministry of Finances, the National Planning Office, etc., i.e. functional administrative organs which do not exert control over enterprises, played a more unequivocal and positive role in the preliminary steps.

The response of the managers of enterprises in regard to the reform under preparation was interesting, too. In the past, this stratum strongly criticized excessive centralization, petty supervision by ministries, restrictions imposed on the responsibility of managers, etc. To everyone's surprise, very few took a militant stand at the time the reforms were prepared. A number of factors were responsible for this, i.e. —

—many feared that the government would not dare to carry out such radical reforms and the "absolute rule" of the ministries would come back,

—others feared that the responsibility they were going to be vested with would exceed their properly supported concrete economic power,

—some of the managers, and this refers to the economic units under their leadership as well, were not used to or entirely lost the habit of assuming any kind of responsibility. (It is well known that in a centralized economy, enterprises only have to carry out direct or indirect instructions, thus they are only responsible for the fulfilment of the orders but neither for the result nor for the rationality of the acts.)

However, after the reform had been definitely drafted and accepted this situation changed: market impulses and the economic environment have had their effect, the behaviour of both enterprises and their leaders became gradually transformed owing to these forces.

Public opinion fluctuated considerably in respect to the reform. There was an atmosphere of optimism when the basic principles of the reform were made public in the second half of 1966, however, around the middle of 1967, many worried and passionate opinions were voiced. This is not surprising at all, people generally are interested not only in improvement but also in security. It is true that security meant a middling standard of living whereas the reform promised something better. However, such is the world that people will stick to the saying "a bird in hand is worth two in the bush," particularly in view of the fact that the sacrifices made two decades ago did not produce the promised results.

Over the last decades almost everybody thundered against egalitarian-

ism. Corrupted by the lazy, industrious people work less—it was said—because incomes are about the same. However, when the reform aimed at differentiating incomes by increasing material incentives, it appeared that the often maligned egalitarianism had struck deep roots in our society and in the mentality of the people.

Later the price changes to be expected gave currency to guesses and spread alarm. The situation, however, radically changed when the planned readjustment of prices was made public and appropriate explanatory work was done, and it might be said that at the time the reform was introduced the climate of opinion was sympathetic, despite certain reservations and uncertainties.

Differing Views among the Intelligentsia

The incisive reaction of some prominent figures in cultural life deserves explicit mention for it took us by surprise. It was expected that economists and the technical (including the agrarian!) intelligentsia would accept the reform more readily than intellectuals: writers, artists, a section of the scientists, teachers, etc. This is a matter of course, for the economic and technical intelligentsia is the "beneficiary" of the reform, although they must assume greater risks for the sake of larger incomes. (For example, only 75 per cent of the basic salary of those in top level positions is guaranteed, on the other hand, they can get higher premiums in case of satisfactory profits.) The situation is somewhat more complicated because the intellectuals, who most ardently advocated greater intellectual and creative freedom, were—in a certain sense—the beneficiaries of the publishing, sales and price policy, as established under the old economic mechanism. This state of affairs was "ideologically supported" by views and value judgements according to which works that refine the taste of the general public are evidently sold at a loss. A number of intellectuals were concerned for the moral values that are embodied in the human behaviour of a socialist society and felt that they were endangered by those norms of a rational economy in which the profit motive plays an important role, nor were they willing to subject lasting cultural values to market value judgements and the dangers involved in a commercialized point of view.

These problems obviously exist although the differences of opinion are reconcilable; unfortunately, however, the way some intellectuals put things strained the situation to the utmost. The government established a Cultural Fund in order to subsidize valuable works that generally sell at a loss

(e.g. the majority of volumes of poetry). Profits issuing from the publication of works much in demand can now be used for the publications of scientific works, etc. ("Works much in demand" does not mean trashy literature; nineteenth-century classical novels for example find a ready sale.) The new economic mechanism does not want to produce a new ideal type of human being, some sort of *homo oeconomicus*, although rational economic action plays an essential part in the activity of both individual and society.

In this regard the discussion has not been concluded yet for the "bad public feeling" expressed in the pessimism of some of the intellectuals partly turns against the norms of an efficient economy. Once again views gained ground according to which economic and technical progress cannot buy happiness, politicians and economists overestimate its importance. These views must be taken seriously for Hungarian writers and artists always played an important role in influencing the people's way of thinking.

It is to be hoped that later, following a fruitful debate, more balanced value judgements will develop about these questions, too.

The Reform and the Efficient Functioning of the Socialist Economy

It is obvious that, in the future, the various institutions and social groups will form their value judgements about the reform on the basis of concrete social and economic processes. In forming their views preconditions will be of far less importance whereas the concrete impact of the reform will affect them to a far greater extent. Of course, the results of the reform can be qualified in different ways, dependent upon the order of importance attributed to the objectives of the socialist society. The interests of social institutions and groups are also affected in many different ways by the results of the reform. It is conceivable that the functioning of the socialist economy will considerably improve and the living standards of members of the majority of the social groups will rise accordingly, while that of some strata will not improve at all, or to a smaller extent only. Therefore, it may become necessary to introduce complementary measures in close connection with the reform, in order to improve the situation of certain strata (e.g. pensioners, people with modest earnings and those with large families, etc.), independently from others. It appears that socialist society cannot do without a social policy either, and that—in justifiable cases—certain amendments will have to be made in practical income distribution although it theoretically relies on work done.

It is just possible that the future position of institutions and groups will change in regard to the economic reform. These changes might increase the camp of the staunch supporters of the reform, particularly if the functioning of the socialist economy positively improves, while, at the same time, corrective and supplementary steps will probably have to be taken in order to ameliorate the situation of the strata unfavourably affected by the new measures and processes. Of course, such measures require considerable material resources.

It has also to be taken into account that some dispositions and expectations of the reform will not bring about the anticipated results in practice. In such a case the reform will have to be modified and amended. There is nothing to be feared from making corrections for it is known, on the analogy of natural sciences, that in practice nothing works out as it was expected to function on the strength of laboratory experiments. However, it is a condition sine qua non that corrections must be realized within the spirit of the reform, and with all regard to the complicated nature of economic processes.

Naturally, the future of the Hungarian economic reform could be largely influenced by international political events. This is natural in a world whose political history is increasingly unified. Grave international tensions, danger of war, and an increasing armament race can cause a setback in realizing aims embodied in the reform. It is a commonplace that in such situations political and national security aspects come to the fore that do not favour either economic rationality or decentralization of power.

Interaction between the Reform and International Economic Policy

In the following I wish to deal with interdependences and interactions between the economic reform and Hungary's international economic policy.

All aspects of the Hungarian economic reform clearly show that the expansion and development of the Hungarian economy are considerably influenced by international economic relations. This is easy to understand, for exports amount to 40–42 per cent of the national income, more than 50 per cent of industrial raw materials are imported from abroad, and in the last five years the unit increase of the national income brought about 2.1 per cent increase of imports on the average. One of the main points of the reform is an increase in economic efficiency; this is inconceivable

without increasingly and efficiently participating in the international division of labour. Hungary has to increase imports of developed technical items on a wide range and build up export markets for its up-to-date industrial products.

In the last two decades a lively economic cooperation has developed between the European socialist countries. Although the objective economic preconditions were given for this, the development of this process has been accelerated by political discrimination and the embargo the United States of America has initiated. Today, the major part (about 80 per cent) of Hungarian industrial products are exported to and about 66 per cent of the raw materials imported from socialist countries. It is well known that Hungarian industry can earn one rouble at considerably lower costs than one dollar. Comecon, like West-European integration, is a living force and fact from the aspect of the economy of each member country. In this respect one must try to modernize the apparatus of Comecon, its methods of cooperation and those involved in the monetary aspects of trade.

These kinds of changes are needed for two reasons. In the first place, the acceleration of the scientific and technical revolution requires new economic organizational methods and forms within the single countries and in the international politico-economic relations between countries. In the second place, methods of economic guidance are modernized in all socialist countries, a fact which inevitably affects the foreign trade policy of each country. Of course, foreign trade plays a widely differing role in the internal economy of member states. The foreign trade policy of countries where export has a large share within the national income (Hungary, Czechoslovakia) is influenced by the actual guiding methods to a greater extent. In other countries, whose economy is not influenced in such a decisive way by foreign trade, changes in the guiding method do not considerably affect international politico-economic relations. Moreover, there are also differences in the extent of changes of the guiding methods. Despite these differences it can be said that these reforms include many common aims, e.g.:

—over-centralized bureaucratic forms of economic guidance are to be discarded or gradually removed,

—the greater importance and effect of the classical economic categories (e.g. prices, credits, demand, etc.), is acknowledged,

—the sphere of authority of enterprises is to be expanded and their means are to be increased,

—up-to-date methods and forms of economic organization are to be introduced,

—direct relations between producers and consumers are to be established,

—the principle of material interest should assert itself to a far greater extent.

These common aims make it possible and necessary that the methods of cooperation within Comecon should be further developed, although single member states will realize them with different intensity in their specific situation. Of course, it will not be easy to introduce these changes in view of the fact that the new methods will affect the economic life of the single countries in very different ways. Consequently, in many cases some modus vivendi must be found—that may sometimes range over years—allowing individual countries to adapt themselves to the new circumstances. However, it will obviously be to the advantage of every country to introduce specialization of manufactures and methods of cooperation relying on the specialized production of part units, main units and component parts.

For this reason common, though legally independent (bilateral and trilateral) enterprises will have to be established in order to carry out activities and assignments in common.

Enterprises must be given a freer hand in establishing international marketing relationships for the sale of their products. The supply of component parts and services should be arranged between firms directly, on the basis of long-term agreements.

Through the Bank of International Economic Cooperation, credit relations should be improved and regular investment credits granted. Even before multilateral accounting system is introduced, it would be expedient to establish a multilateral financial fund for easing tensions that develop in international trade because of deviations in time, and at the same time would permit a more exhaustive exploitation of foreign trade possibilities.

It is not the aim of this study to describe the modernization of the organization of Comecon in detail. These few ideas, however, had to be mentioned in order to point to the close interaction between the internal economy and the cooperation of socialist countries, which is relevant to the introduction of the economic reform.

New Possibilities in East-West Trade

In addition to emphasizing the role and importance of Comecon it must be pointed out that one of the basic aims of the Hungarian economic reform was and continues to be, to develop economic cooperation and trade with Western countries. In this respect I wish to emphasize that the larger

scope enterprises now enjoy, plus the fact that their mentality and reactions are much more concentrated on selling and marketing, as well as far-reaching changes in the organization of the Hungarian foreign trade, may contribute to a sound increase of trade with Western countries based on the mutual advantage of both partners. Through the economic reform it will be easier to align the trade practices of countries pursuing different types of marketing. Uniform trade technique is out of the question, because identical trade practices affect in a different and sometimes even contrary way national economies operating under different circumstances. However, in a suitable ambiance and among well-disposed partners it ought to be possible that countries of a certain market type should take into account the interests of countries carrying on another type of market economy when they are developing their trade technique.

Weighing the future situation and possibilities of East-West trade it should be pointed out in the first place that there is no going back to the past in any form. Politically it is not feasible because Europe's situation in the world has changed and a new state of equilibrium has developed in Europe. Economically there is no going back because past forms of cooperation and trade practices became obsolete and are not likely to revivify the system of economic relations. Various economic communities have also developed uniting countries of similar market types in the same economic region.

Today's foreign trade is not merely a barter of goods but the exchange and unification of abilities, capacities, possibilities and scientific results with the aim of reaching certain targets. It might be said that the essence of these aims is that the partners should achieve profits they would not be able to obtain without barter and unification. To however large an extent it may be necessary to discontinue, as a first step, political and economic discrimination that increases uncertainty, and to liberalize restrictions, these measures in themselves do not suffice any more to solve all problems. The Comecon countries participate in the foreign trade of the Western world with only 2.6–4 per cent and this share is on the decrease despite increasing trade. Naturally, it would be a mistake to underrate and disregard the possibilities inherent in the traditional barter of goods. There is no doubt that several extremely unfavourable barter agreements and switch-businesses are concluded by the Hungarian economy because of chronic shortage of convertible currency and because of a lack of market knowledge. Traditional trade would also gather momentum if multilateral payments agreements could be reached.

In our days, however, the true dynamism of world trade does not rest

any more on the traditional exchange of commodities but on new methods that have developed during the last one and a half decades. If these new methods were applied in East-West relations, long-term *common interests* would come into being representing a solid basis for economic and political relations.

However, there are certain political preconditions which have to be satisfied before new international politico-economic methods (techniques) in East-West relations can become widely used.

The application of advanced politico-economic trade methods requires certain bilateral guarantees. Unlike a simple exchange of commodities—which, essentially consists of a single, non-recurring short transaction—the benefits of a cooperation in a wider sense take up to 4–6 years to be realized in full. The participants must therefore be sure that the other partner will not change his attitude regarding cooperation during that time. Under such circumstances, it would be expedient if the parties interested would offer guarantees to each other through the European Economic Commission, on which East and West are equally represented, to maintain the economic policy, which is embodied in the fact of cooperation even if international relationships were to change.

In addition to giving mutual guarantees there are several other measures and decisions that would help to develop a suitable situation and the climate of opinion needed for the introduction of the new methods. For example, bilateral and multilateral consultative committees could be established or an East-West Bank founded in order to transact multilateral payments, etc.

Among the new trading methods, *cooperation*, taken in a wide sense, seems most promising. Cooperation on a broad basis means coordinated activities plus the integration of forces (capacities, research bases) on the strength of which the parties interested are able to produce economic results that could not have been attained in the original arrangement, i.e. separately.

Dependent upon actual situations and demands, these kinds of cooperation could include regular consultations on production, credits, joint market research and buying activity and joint scientific research, the common training of specialists and other similar activities.

There is no doubt that common research based on East-West cooperation could bring about many new results. In the European socialist countries, in many well-organized institutions important research is carried on relying on the work of eminent scientists.

When political forces become interested in cultivating and fostering common interests, a far healthier and creative political atmosphere may develop. What remains to be done is the concern of politics, however;

experience shows that a rational political line will take into account true interests and power factors, while it will reject blackmail and attempts to put pressure on others.

For mankind living in an age of dynamic change, it would undoubtedly be very useful and exemplary if the European nations proved that different nations under different social systems were able—after so many bitter struggles in the past—to cooperate in peace and friendship for their own benefit and that of all mankind.

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The main aim of the economic reform is to improve the functioning of the socialist economy. With this in view it removes the brakes that hinder the speeding up of technical development and economic efficiency. The new economic mechanism releases new driving forces so as to reach these aims. Certain limiting measures had to be taken in order to keep up dynamic equilibria conditions during the change. It is to be hoped that sound economic development will permit the elimination of these provisional arrangements.

The reform, as the detailed argument presented shows, has a profound social and economic significance.

It has, however, to be taken into account that developing politico-economic situations and the experiences gained will make it necessary to amend certain elements of the refom. Carried out flexibly, amendments must preserve the spirit and be consistent with the essentials of the reform.

Of course, extensive reforms not only solve problems but create new ones at the same time, and the Hungarian economic reform is not likely to prove an exception to this fundamental rule in the developmental process of human societies. If we look at the Hungarian economic reform in relation to what went before it, it is the result of a long hard struggle and much effort. In relation to the future it is the beginning of a new era.

DANUBE AND HUDSON

Part VI of an American Diary

by

IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR

March 17th

(I go next-door.) In the afternoon I again called on a neighbour, Professor P., this time not in another room in the same hotel, as happened with Arthur Miller, but in the same neighbourhood, at the corner of 24th Street and Eighth Avenue. I had met him in Budapest the year before. He had said what every American says—"If you come to the United States, mind you look me up. I'd like you to lecture at our university." At the time I hadn't dreamed of going to America, so I had only smiled. As soon as I received the Ford Foundation invitation I wrote to him. Six days later I received a telegram from him. "Could you see me 9.30 a.m. March 21 at my apartment, lecture 11 a.m. at City College, lunch with staff 12 a.m., talk afterwards, dinner 7 p.m. at my apartment. Reply prepaid." I had answered "Thank you, will take pyjamas if necessary and sleep there, only tea for breakfast, please, but cable subject of lecture. Reply prepaid."

After such an exchange of telegrams we had become good friends and not just acquaintances. I rang him in the morning and he asked me to come and see him in the afternoon. "Are you staying at the Chelsea? Fine, then you can walk over." I was doing just that, with a short stop, because at the corner of 23rd Street and Eighth Avenue I discovered the first nickel and dime store. I couldn't miss that, I felt. I had thought it would be something like the *Prisunic* in Paris, but it reminded me more of the seedier kind of Woolworth in London. I know, of course, that this is the home country of Woolworth's, but this particular had a different name. You can get anything here from candles to transistorized television sets, but nothing really looked attractive. I did not merely want to make the acquaintance of one of the "nickel and dime stores," an American institution I had read so much about; I wanted to buy a clothes-brush. I had left my small travelling clothes-brush behind in Paris. I asked for a clothes-brush and was received with blank incomprehension. I tried to explain to a dark salesgirl that

I wanted to get specks of dust off my suit. Again I learnt a new word: lint. The dictionary says, and England says as well, that it is a kind of gauze for dressing wounds. In America, however, it is every speck of dust, bit of dandruff, or bit of cotton that sticks to your clothes. "Oh, you don't need a brush for that!" the salesgirl explained. "Scotch tape is what you want. Look, like this." She pulled a good yard of Scotch tape off the spool, cut it, and holding its two ends between two fingers each she pulled it along her dress. It did in fact get rid of every speck of dust. I thanked her and tried it out at home that night. That Scotch tape was not yet an article in familiar use at home was demonstrated by the fact that I got the thing all twisted in and round my hands, and in the end the lint remained all over my jacket and the sticky stuff all over my fingers. I did not give up hope that in a country where the Sears catalogue lists 54,321 articles that can be ordered by mail (don't bother to check the figure, I made it up, but it can't be very far out), a clothes-brush could, would, be finally obtainable. At the end of the third week I found a mongrel brush: a foam rubber pad in a hard plastic frame. It worked for lint but was no good at getting the mud off trousers. Then in Saks, Fifth Avenue, I discovered a poem of a brush made of Indonesian teak and Bavarian wild boar's bristle, but the price would have bought a new pair of trousers for each mud splash. Of course if I had really *lived* in America I could have got one from a door-to-door salesman, but none called at the Chelsea while I was there.

(The first American flat.) Professor P. lived in a new redbrick residential quarter. He said with some pride that it was a cooperative housing estate, and was owned by the tenants' association. Unfortunately not every house had its own porter. I took no particular notice of that remark; only later, when I had been in a few apartment houses, did I realize its significance. In the really fashionable parts of town, that is, on the East Side, along Fifth Avenue and in the other streets that surround Central Park, a uniformed porter stands at the door, usually under an awning that extends as far as the road, as I had seen already within the first half hour of my arrival. Professor P. lived on the less fashionable West Side, where people cannot afford an imposing rear admiral to stand guard at the door. But in the entrance hall here too were wall mirrors, elegant drawing-room furniture, lots of flowers and palms.

The second or third time I found myself in this cooperative house I noticed that the furniture was fastened to the wall by lock and chain. Where they afraid of burglars? In New York? Hadn't I heard—and towards the end of June I saw it for myself—that at spring cleaning time or when moving, people put the pieces of furniture they were bored with or didn't

want any longer out on the pavement for anyone to take away. I know several 1956 Hungarian emigrés who furnished their flats with such discarded pieces of furniture when they first arrived. Later when they went up in the world they followed the same pattern and put their furniture out for other immigrants or the Porto Rican or Negro poor to pick up. They couldn't really be afraid of having their furniture stolen on 24th Street, could they?

Professor P. shook his head. They were afraid of their own children. The youngsters would take the furniture out to the green lawns of the estate, and proceed to jump up and down on it. They pulled it to pieces, played cowboys and Indians with it, and finally left it out in the rain. "But why didn't you stop them?" Professor P. gave me a look and threw up his hands. How could he begin to explain that children could do anything and everything they wanted in America? I was beginning to understand. "The child," I said "is king in America." I had jotted down this little apothegm before I left Hungary. Professor P. did not shake his head, but nodded sagely. "You know, these neat sayings about America are like glasses you put on your nose and then you see everything through them. By the way, there's a better version which says that the U.S.A. is a republic with several million kings: the kids. " 'When found, make a note of it' " he added, "but make sure you put an exclamation mark after it, so you don't forget to find out for yourself what this children's kingdom is really like."

I see that I have been talking about Professor P. for several minutes, although I was just on my way to see him for the first time. This comes from the diary form. A diary, one comes to realize in writing it, is the reverse of the novel and even more of the flash-back technique of the film. Could I perhaps call this the "flash-forward?"

P. lived on the twenty-second floor. His windows faced west, south and east. The view of the Hudson River to the west was much more imposing than the views over the East River one found on the other and more fashionable side of Manhattan. All the great ocean-going ships come up the Hudson.

(The secret of New York.) I went out on the balcony and looked down on the city. I felt as if I had just arrived in New York, and began to see what a vast jungle I had got into, but I could also see its limits; the river and bay to the west and south, and in the east something gleamed in the gaps between the skyscrapers. It was only northwards that I could see no end to the city. From this height I could see what I had only suspected when walking in the depths below, that it was a blend of the regular and irregular,

of the surveyor's geometrical street planning and the contractor's haphazard building activities. The network of streets had been boldly marked out on the map a hundred years ago as if they had foreseen today's traffic rush. The rest had been left to chance and speculation. They had not planned the rows of houses, only the lines of streets. They cared nothing for the appearance of the buildings; that would have infringed the sacred tabu of free enterprise. European cities have grown organically, that is, irregularly, but luckily London has had its Nash, Paris its Haussmann, Pest-Buda its Archduke József and the City Embellishment Committee. These people thought in terms of cities and their regulated growth like good gardeners. The fact that New York has grown systematically along its streets and haphazardly in its buildings explains why it is beautiful and ugly at the same time. And also why it is so foreign.

That is why I felt two contradictory sensations up here, high up for a European heart, familiar for a New York eye; firstly, that I already knew everything here; that I had "done" the city already and there was no need to see it at closer quarters, since it was all the same anyway; and that it was impenetrable and unknowable because any one section did not differ enough from another. Inscrutable because it contained no surprises. The geometrical principle which had brought it into existence had deprived it of its secrets. It repeated itself endlessly in breathtakingly tall, modern houses, all glass, aluminium and resplendence, and beside them, right, left and opposite, one-storied wooden cottages, or two-storied narrow brick houses. Here I could not hope, as I could in Vienna, Paris, London or Buda, that a street might unexpectedly peter out and run into a small square, with old houses, lime trees and benches, where time had come to a stop and I could stop too, stilling for some minutes the inexorable tick of time within me. I discover a square for myself. I sit down on a bench, I make friends with those beside me, I pass through a gateway where a rose bush or an oleander in a tub, a fountain or a loggia wait for me. And from that moment I know that this is a city in which I have a small square and that in that square, for ten minutes, I have been happy.

The P.'s had four rooms, living room, bedroom, study and a smaller room. The kitchen looked over the street as well. I was soon to become familiar with it. His wife came in while we were talking, with a huge, multi-storey shopping trolley. She had got in the food for the week. Did I want to have a look? She put the smaller part of it on the upper shelves of the refrigerator while the greater part of the shopping, meant for the second half of the week, went into the deep freeze, as yet unknown in Hungary. Everything was airtight and attractively prepacked. She watched me watch-

ing her. "See how an American housewife manages." She wasn't really prepared to believe that we had meat packed in polythene bags too, deep-frozen chicken, braised steak and even goulash ready for cooking, that we too ate deepfrozen apricots, raspberries and melons in winter. She looked at me as if to say, my very dear friend, let up! You don't have to make propaganda all the time; we know each other, we know how things are.

(What is a gimmick?) The Professor and I had agreed on the title and date of my lecture: "Eastern and Western trends in current Hungarian literature" on Monday the 21st. And if I liked I could really sleep there. Would I like to see the guest room? He told me something quite fascinating about his summer plans. He was going to Moscow and Leningrad to lecture to American tourists, mainly university people, about the Soviet Union. I thought I had misheard. He, an American professor, was going to the Soviet Union to lecture on the Soviet Union? That was just the gimmick of it. The American tourists would be learning about the history, geography and economics of the country on the spot. This undertaking showed that peaceful coexistence, thank God, was stronger than the cold winds of war. It was a brilliant idea. But what was it he said? Gimmick? You must have a gimmick, they say to greenhorns just off the boat from Europe. You must think of something that puts you across. That's your gimmick. In this book, for instance, my gimmick is that I try to give the impression of recording every minute and every detail. But of course, I have also learnt in America that all that's gimmick isn't gold.

(What do you like best and least about America?) Of course in actual fact I cannot report every minute. If I did I should have to report, and it would be worth while, on what we talked about for an hour at the P's. Vietnam and peaceful coexistence, of course. My American friends were less worried than I was. Nevertheless in the course of it, I asked them, almost casually, whether a) they believed that Oswald was the sole assassin of President Kennedy, and b) what did they like best and least about America?

I took it for granted that P. and his wife would answer the first with a no, and the second, or rather part two of it, with the war in Vietnam. Not at all. They hummed and hawed on the Kennedy murder, yes, there was certainly something wrong there, but it was of no great importance, why did I begin my American trip with this question? If there was anything wrong with the Warren report, it would be cleared up. But it was not at all certain that it had gone wrong in any essential point. What did they like most? They said they would think about it and let me know the next time we met. They did not really take it seriously. And what did they like least? Racial discrimination.

They saw the surprise on my face. Why, they asked, didn't I think it wrong? I told them what answer I had expected. Vietnam. Yes, yes, but that was a temporary thing. I accepted the answer and did not press it further. It was only late at night, when listening back to the day's events on my pocket tape recorder that I stopped my little machine and sat up in bed, into which I had already sunk in utter fatigue. The little grey cells began to work as if I had been dosed with a cup of black coffee. Why, why, why didn't two well-educated, politically well-informed and intelligent Americans consider Vietnam the worst thing? I got out of bed and paced up and down until the snake-charmer next door knocked on the wall. He was right, it was past midnight. It was then that I decided that I would put the same question—what did they like most and least—to every one I met in America.

(A meeting at the corner of Sixth Avenue and 23rd Street.) I put that question that same afternoon to a new American and his wife, my friends who emigrated from Hungary in 1956, but arrived in the United States only two years ago. He could only have heard of my arrival through the secret radar service of the American Hungarians; he had already 'phoned me in the morning at the I.I.E. We had to meet that day. That very day. All right, all right, but what's the hurry? "Because you'll be caught up in a rush of engagements and programmes and new friends, and you'll have no time for the old ones." I laughed at him at the time, but how right he turned out to be later. O.K., let's meet at the Chelsea this afternoon. We had made it half past five and I had got back to the hotel—punctually for once—at half past five, but he had not yet arrived. I went out into 23rd Street and I laughed to myself as I thought that if anybody had told me ten years ago that I would be meeting this friend of mine, let's call him Géza, at the corner of 23rd Street and Seventh Avenue in New York on the 16th March 1966, I'd have had him certified.

Someone thumped me hard on the back. "Why are you standing here, in a street in New York, sniggering away to yourself?" We hugged. "I was just thinking..."

"Wait a bit... So was I!" There was no need to say more. Twice five words told us what we wanted to know about each other. Later we could not talk much because it was the rush hour on the subway. Géza had warned me on the phone that they lived a long way out, but I took this as I would have in Budapest. I too live a long way from the centre of the city, half an hour by bus. Géza laughed. "You will see. Now we shall go under ground." We went down, slipped the token into the small slot, the turnstile revolved, a train had just pulled up at the platform, there was a huge crowd which

pushed and shoved, carrying me forward with them. I was at the door already when Géza pulled me back. "Where are you rushing to?" I scrambled out of the mob. I did not understand. There was only one line here, wasn't there? So why wait? "One line my foot! You mistake the place for Paris."

(A short lesson in subwayology.) Then and there I received a brief lesson in subwayology. There were three lines: BMT, IRT and IND. But there was no point trying to learn the system, it was useless anyway. All one had to watch out for were the letters in front of the first carriage, because E went straight on, F turned and carried one across to Brooklyn or Queens. The letters only appeared on the first carriage and if one missed that, one had better ask before boarding the train, or take the next. But of course the letters only appeared on the IND line, the other two didn't have them and had a board on the side of the first car instead, but there I had to look out because the boards indicated all directions with only one lighted up, and even so it had happened that he had only looked out for the top line and found himself being carried in the wrong direction as far as—well, as far as Szentendre was from the Chain Bridge, or, for the English, London Bridge from Epsom. We would be taking the train as far as 179th Street. What? That was a good thirty stops, and counting two minutes each made that was an hour at least. "For beginners. You'll see that even underground this is not just any old city."

We got out at 42nd Street and changed to a train waiting alongside it. Only then Géza let me into the secret that this was an express train, stopping only four times before 179th Street. As soon as he said it the train crashed forward with such momentum that I had to hold on to my seat. It went at a speed of at least a hundred and twenty kilometres an hour. Géza suggested I should try to go along this route once on the local, and watch how the passengers changed. After the streets with a number over a hundred many Negroes got in. We were passing under Harlem now. "What's it like?" I asked Géza. He did not know. He had never been there. He had no business there. And it was dangerous for white people anyway. Why? What happened to them? Did they eat them? "Not exactly. But they pick a quarrel with them. They knock them down. They snatch their watches and wallets. But surely you don't want me to teach you about the Negro question, do you?" I did not.

(The George Washington Bridge Terminus.) It took ten minutes to the 179th Street, to the George Washington bridge. "Is this where you live?" Géza laughed. "Nobody lives here. Come on." We walked underground along a tunnel which was longer than the one in Paris between one line of the Concorde and the other, without coming out into the street.

Géza dragged me along by the arm. Irén would be waiting for us, and anyway this was not the *real* bus terminus because that was midtown, between Eighth Avenue and the 40th and 41st Streets, I should make a point of seeing it. From this I learnt that we were at the Washington Bridge terminal. I was all excitement because I had read about and seen a picture of it, and knew that it was designed by Pier Luigi Nervi.

We went up one flight by one escalator, then another by another. From there there was a view of the river and the huge bridge. I could not see just the part I remembered best from the picture: the roof of the bus terminus which is like a flock of birds with spread wings about to take off. The wings were those concrete slabs which support the roof in the characteristic Nervi manner. Géza led me to a waiting area fenced off by railings on the upper platform. We stood at the end of a long queue. They were waiting for the 223 bus. Each line had its own place marked out for it, and buses were leaving every half minute for all points of the compass in the world, I mean to say the New York area. I was watching the traffic with amazement, but Géza threw cold water on my enthusiasm. This was nothing to the traffic at the Eighth Avenue terminal!

Our bus came along, we got in and again I had to marvel at something, and Géza laughed to think how he had forgotten that he too had been agoggle when he first saw it. Placed on a low stand beside the driver was a cash-register. Yes, exactly like those in the shops; he used it to give you the ticket. For the first time in three days, I think, I realized just how rich this country is. To have every bus fitted out with a cash-register means that money really does not matter. (While writing this I looked at my notes: the bus terminal cost 145 million dollars. That is a lot of money, but the cash-registers are still more eloquent).

In the meantime it had grown dark. We had met at the corner of Seventh Avenue, gone one avenue west as far as the Eighth, where the IND subway starts, that was five minutes—altogether we had been travelling for more than an hour and a quarter when we got off the bus.

Géza had twice mentioned the name of the town where they lived but I had not got it clearly. Now I saw it on a sign: Nyack. It is an old settlement dating from before the Revolution. We passed a few attractive timber houses. In an automobile dealer's shopwindow was a red "old crock" of a car from 1908. A car was waiting beyond the corner. Irén was sitting inside. The New World had been good to her, she looked slimmer and more beautiful than ever. But why the car? Did they live further out? Only ten minutes by car, nothing. "It's worth it. We'll soon be by the Danube." I did not ask what he meant, I was afraid to cause pain. And

they were right. The Hudson here really looked like the Danube, between Tahi and Visegrád, just before the Bend. I did not see much of it, because by now it was almost completely dark. I rather took their word that it was even more beautiful than the Danube. "But don't believe it—quite."

After the bus journey I specially enjoyed the ride in the car, a nice big Buick station wagon. When did you get it? The day after you got here, didn't you?

"You're asking because you've heard something about it?" Irén turned her eyes sharply on me while driving. I hurriedly indicated she should look ahead and anyway, what should I have heard? And particularly how? In two days? Why, from our dear compatriots who laughed at them, and told stories to all and sundry about how Old-Worldish they had been. And what was wrong with that? "Nothing, but still..." Well, what *had* happened?

They had arrived with very little money. They had never in their life been careful with money, it had just run through their fingers. They had decided that here they would start a new life and give their children a good education, and they had realized it would take a lot of money. So they watched every penny. Their first pieces of furniture were given by friends; they had brought their household linen with them. They saved up for a refrigerator. When they had got the 125 dollars together they went into a store and chose one. What kind of credit-card had they got, the shopkeeper asked. None at all, thank you. They got out their dollars and paid. The shopkeeper was taken aback, but they were proud. No credit for them, thank you. They had no intention of getting into debt. They had heard and read that in America everybody bought everything on credit, and that this was one of the tricks of modern capitalism. The small timer, the worker was tied down because he was induced to buy refrigerators, television sets, household gadgets, cars, cine-cameras, more expensive clothes than he could afford, curtains and brand new kitchen equipment on credit. But not them. They would cut their suit according to their cloth.

When they moved out from New York they could no longer do without a car. The moving, new furniture and a thousand incidentals had eaten up what they had saved over two and a half years. They had only the quarter of the price of a car left. It couldn't be helped. Their good home-grown principles would have to go by the board. They decided to buy the car on credit. They chose the car, tested it, and got an engineer friend of theirs to look it over.

When it came to paying the dealer did not bother to ask whether they had a bank account. It would have been absurd to doubt its existence. All he asked was what credit purchases had recently been financed by their

bank. Géza said proudly that he had never asked for credit, this was an exceptional case. The car dealer looked at them long and wonderingly, as if some strange insect had got into the shop. Anyone who never bought on credit must obviously be in some sort of trouble. Failed to pay their last instalment, very likely, and been blacklisted for further credit. Sorry. He couldn't do business with them.

Géza tried to explain that they did not buy on credit on principle. Worse and worse. A man who did that couldn't be a decent fellow. Must be out to wreck the American economy. "You Communists?" he asked, and showed the two emigrés from Communist Hungary the door. In the end a Hungarian friend of theirs who had been living there for a long time, after laughing at them a whole hour, and after he had rung a dozen friends to tell them the story, talked to a car dealer he knew, and they were at last able to buy the car. Not of course the one we were sitting in, but the one before.

They certainly didn't want to get a bad reputation, or have it whispered in their children's school that they were not creditworthy, so they decided to adopt the American way of life. Might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb, they said, or, in other words, go the whole hog. So I saw a credit card for the first time when Géza took out his wallet right there in the car and pulled out—I can't think of a better expression—a pack of small cards and put them in my hand. They were all credit cards, almost enough for a game of poker. Here were two familiar from advertisements: the American Express and the Diners Club. (By the time I got back to Hungary the light blue badge of the Diners Club could be seen on many hotels and restaurants, for foreigners only for the time being.) Four of the cards were for buying petrol, one from each of the four big companies: Esso, Shell, Gulf, and a fourth I don't remember. Two from supermarket chains, one for hotels, the Howard Jones Motor Inn (I discovered this institution later), one from the United Airlines and another one valid for all airlines. Géza singled out one especially: "This is the most important one: my bank's card. It's valid everywhere."

Then what are the others for?

"It's good to have them."

Then, competing with each other, they began to tell me what a monstruous invention it was, the cunningest of all the tricks of American capitalism. It drew everybody into the consumers society, especially the factory workers, and the lower-paid office employees. It made them feel that they were sharing the benefits of the affluent society, it killed the desire for change in them, let alone any revolutionary feeling. They went on grumbling

and I nodded. I entirely agreed with them. In theory I am also against it, but I like this open Sesame device, even though I know very well that it is based on self-deception, that everything I buy costs a fraction more, and that I'll buy things which I hadn't thought of buying a minute before. Precisely for this reason. If I lived in America I too would have a pack of credit cards. And why, come to that, should it be impossible to introduce this credit system under socialism, when people in Hungary (and in the Soviet Union too) can already buy a long list of goods on credit? I happen to have the same obsolete principles of economy as Géza and Irén, but every friend of mine buys washing machines, refrigerators, television sets, furniture, and cars on 18 to 24 monthly instalments. This involves a lengthy procedure, filling in forms and so forth, but how much simpler it would be if the National Saving Bank issued credit cards. They could indicate on the cards the limit they would allow.

Géza and Irén looked at me, flabbergasted. "Have you gone mad?" Well, may be. The banks would have to be something quite different from what they are in Hungary to-day. And was that so unimaginable? "Listen," I said to Géza and Irén. "When you left very few people had savings accounts. Did you have one? You see. I hadn't either. But in the past year—Irén, please slow down, when you hear this you might end in the ditch—savings totalled twenty billion forints. This means that on an average every family in Hungary had about eight thousand forints in the Bank. Of course I know statistical averages like this don't make sense. Many of them will have several tens of thousands in savings. Why should it be so difficult to change these depositor's books or parts of them into cheque accounts—you know we have no such thing at present—and then, what's the objection to credit cards? There is no shortage of goods in Hungary any more. Only cars, where demand outstrips imports. But apart from that, why should this "Open Sesame" be left to capitalist societies?"

Irén said I was incorrigible. Géza said I was never going to grow up. Thank God.

(On the banks of the "Danube.") They lived in a nice old timber cottage with a handy porch. Irén said this was the last word in English. I did not say I knew, I had read Faulkner. "Do you know how the older generation of Hungarians speak?" She gave an example of the way they used English words with Hungarian case endings in Hungarian speech. The children laughed too. "We don't speak like that, do we?" It was only the smallest child whose voice showed a bit of English intonation. The bigger boy showed me his diving gear. "Is this Danube so deep?" I asked. No, but the boy was a member of the school's oceanographical study group. They were

taken out to sea regularly and were going to Florida at Easter. They got everything free. It was a marvellous thing, and again I felt the effect of wealth, that general affluence which in its particulars covered almost everybody. We exchanged a smile with the parents, Again that "if anybody had said ten years ago..."

(Black and white girls and mothers.) We took a short walk before dinner. I had asked Géza in the car whether he really thought it worth while to travel by bus and subway for three hours every day to and from the library where he worked. Now I understood. The streets were lined with trees, the houses had front gardens, the wind brought the fresh smell of water from the "Danube." A carpet of green grass before each house stretched down to the pavement. As we walked I was aware of missing something I could not quite define. The I realized what it was: no fences anywhere. Was this a Nyack speciality, I asked. One that applied to the whole of America, he replied. "You'll not find a fence round a garden anywhere in a small town or suburb." And it is true, I really did not find one, but from the second or third week onwards I did not look for them, my eyes had got used to their absence. It is a pleasant American custom that neighbours do not cut each other off by fences, and despite the high crime rate they do not seem to be afraid of intruders or burglars.

A group of Negro boys and girls came down the street. They greeted us as they passed, the smaller girl ran up to them, and they talked for a while. They were schoolmates. Irén told me that when they had moved out here the year before and one day she had seen her daughter coming home with a Negro schoolmate, she had asked the child in. The black girl had hesitated, and had then run away and had to be called back. Another time it was raining, she had gone to fetch the child in the car and had offered to give the black girl a lift. The child had glanced at the other Negro children, and chosen to walk home in the rain. Another time she invited her daughter's classmates, two Negroes among them, to tea. They did not come. Irén had got angry, and had gone for them in the car. The mothers did not believe their eyes. Yes, the two girls would come right away, they were neighbours, they were playing together now, all dressed for the party. Irén had frequently called at the Negro child's house but she and the Negro mother had never got further than the porch, and had hardly said more to each other than mutual How are yous.

Why was that? "That's what they are like." Were they afraid of them? "No, they just don't trust us. They don't understand why a white family should want to be friends with black people."

Later I found a more precise answer in William Brink and Louis Harris's

useful and much read book "Negro Revolution in America." In 1964 the co-authors asked five thousand white people from all walks of life in both the southern and northern states on their relationship to Negroes. One of the question was the one I discussed with Géza and his wife: "Do you object your child asking a Negro boy or girl friend to dinner in your home?" In the Southern states 76 per cent of those asked, and 41 per cent in the whole United States, replied yes. Of the many questions only the following two had a higher score: Do you object to a friend or relative marrying a Negro? In the South 91 per cent, in the whole of the United States 84 per cent objected. The greatest objection was elicited by the question: Do you object to your young daughter dating a Negro? Almost all whites were against that, 97 per cent in the South, 90 per cent in the whole country.

We went back to the house where the children had already laid the table. We started to talk about Hungary and forgot the Negroes. They were listing all their friends in Budapest one by one, and everybody who had gone out there. Meanwhile the children were watching television in the other room and also listening to the conversation a little. When that morning's space shot was shown again, we joined them and sat down on the floor beside them. "All America is doing this now." On the floor? "There too. By the way it's bad for the eyes. You should sit a little higher than the middle of the screen." What a lot of new things one learnt here! "Kati, have your Negro classmates got TV sets too?" I asked the girl. She scarcely understood the question. "Why shouldn't they? What do you mean?"

What I meant was that we had the impression at home, and indeed it exists throughout Europe, that the Negroes lived in poverty and oppression, and therefore my question whether they had money to buy a TV set was not unreasonable. I wanted to know everything and tried not to invent a theory for anything, and my greatest desire was not to try and fit my new experiences to my present knowledge and theories. I noted down that Géza had wanted to go down South to work there for the Civil Rights movement with a few of his younger colleagues, but he had been dissuaded. If he had been caught out because of his foreign accent, they would have used him against the others. Later Géza had learnt that this was just a pretext. The young Americans felt ashamed to let an older Hungaro-American see that the Negroes in the southern small towns did not even want to hear about integration. The boys from New York had first to convince them what their rights, were and what was good for them. Why didn't you tell them, I asked Géza, that we had been familiar with the same problem? We had been together in the Hungarian villages in 1945 explaining to the peasants that they must accept the distributed land, blast them, they

shouldn't insist on being asked. "What makes you think I didn't tell them?" Géza asked, and then we did not speak for a while. We felt very happy together, and I was sorry for Géza who had a house of his own and a car and could earn twice as much in one month, if not more, than I in three, and with less work, whose son was taught oceanography for nothing and whose elder daughter was going to a good college the following year.

"The children are very happy here," said Irén.

They heard my question in my silence.

"So are we," Géza said. "I shall be an Associate Professor at B. University next year. A full professor in two more, I hope."

I congratulated him.

We had a lot to talk about. It turned out that I ought to have brought the pyjamas I had joked about at the P.'s. But it did not matter, his pyjamas fitted me perfectly.

(In the Hudson Valley.) In the morning Irén took me back as far as the George Washington Bridge. (George is very important; there is a George-less Washington Bridge too, about the same height as this one, over the small Harlem river.) Over breakfast we had talked and talked; Géza would have been late if he had had to take the bus. But Irén said we would have taken the car in any case. It provided her with a good excuse to leave the house and housework for a bit and go for a drive. And any way she wanted to show me the countryside. She was afraid I should not see as much of it as I should. Though it was the most beautiful country of the world. "Shouldn't you say the most beautiful continent of the world?" Géza corrected her. I doubted both, but they insisted. They had seen it, they knew. The summer after their arrival here they had driven round half the continent. Europeans simply did not look for scenic beauty in America and so they did not find it. But look at the Hudson Valley, for instance. No, not even they could call it the Danube any more around here. It was quite different. It was wide, rolling along among wooded hilly country, it did not wind, nor were its banks as straight as those of the Danube. We turned off the highway—Irén wanted to show me something else. Did I know what a parkway was? It was not simply a highway leading through a park, but a road for passenger cars only, on either side of this one there were no buildings, only woods and meadows, that green which so pleased the eye. This for instance was the Palisades Interstate Parkway. Interstate because it went from New Jersey to New York State. "And is that so important here?"

Géza and Irén exchanged a look. They had felt exactly the same way when they had come out. For us Europeans the United States was one country, true, a big one, but still one country. We were apt to forget what its name said. The United States was really a union of states. State consciousness, the sense of belonging to New Jersey, Texas, Illinois, California, in short, the sense of local patriotism formed an essential constituent of American life. The first generation of immigrants learnt it as a fact; their children felt it.

(*"Like the child to his mother's breast. . ."*) At the George Washington Bridge they suggested that I should not go by underground but take a bus. If I was not in a hurry that was the cheapest way of sightseeing in the world. Sightseeing? More like a Grand Tour. What did they mean? Just look out of the window and you'll see for yourself. The faces, colours and languages of America, Europe, Africa and Asia. "Where are we now?" I asked "in the northermost end of Manhattan island?" Irén got the map out of the glove compartment and showed me that we were at 179th Street, but there was also a 218th, where the little Harlem river hurried to the open arms of the Hudson "like the child to his mother's breast." "Our children will never recognize the quotation. They won't know Petőfi." I comforted them by saying that their children would have a quieter life than we had had. I was convinced of this then, in March 1966. Now, putting this journal into its final form, just two years later, I am not so sure. I do not only have Vietnam in mind, not only Newark and Detroit, the 1967 "long hot summer"—and I am putting it in inverted commas because the phrase has become something of a recurrent rhyme in prose in Europe too; I think the average American citizen has begun to know fear, anxiety, uncertainty: all that he, his father, his grandfather, or his earlier forebears had fled from in Europe. At the end of my unforgettable and exciting months in America, we spent ten days with another younger Hungarian–American couple, distant relatives, in California. Will my wind—or my publishers—hold out to the last minute by minute encounter? I don't know. I shall play safe and pop the story in here.

These had been in America longer, they are technically trained, and they are younger, so they are much better off than the Gézas. They have a very nice house on a hill in Los Angeles. They would certainly not have one like that in Hungary. It was good for the children to romp about the garden. When he said that his face clouded over. "But look down there, on the other side, across that elevated highway, that's Watts. Who knows which hot summer the flames will flare up on this side too?" Yet these too, like the older ones yesterday, answered my first-part question—what did they

liked best in America—with "a secure future for our children." Their life will certainly be easier and freer from material cares than that of my children and grandchildren. And from the bottom of my heart I hope and wish them peace and quiet. Both couples gave the same answer to my second-part question—What did they most dislike—they had no real friends. With the older pair this was only natural. For the younger the problem is harder. I shall come to that later.

(Henry Hudson and his way along the river bank.) I boarded the bus. Under the bridge it swerved a little to the left, towards the centre of Manhattan. The river was still visible, as there were no houses to the right. We went along a kind of upper embankment like the Bem József Embankment in Buda. As soon as I wrote this down I smiled to myself. To make the picture complete I must add that on the lower embankment, close to the water's edge, there is a six-laned highway, the Henry Hudson Parkway, and not a cobbled quay as down by the Danube at home. (Parkway here does not necessarily mean a stretch of green, but that commercial vehicles are not allowed.) When I saw this sign I first realized that the Hudson river was named after a man, and when, later, I told this to my American friends, they were shocked at European ignorance of American history. They were quite justified. What right have we to be shocked if they've never heard of Lajos Kossuth or Jan Sobieski? At such times one's mind flies to the UN or UNESCO. They ought to send books from the East to the West, from the North to South and vice versa, for people to learn the history and literature of other nations. But this is not of course the answer. The real thing is travel and personal contact. The fact that I see a street name written up and that from it I discover that the river Hudson has a Christian name.

That very morning I went to the New York Public Library, and incidentally looked up Hudson in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, which for the past half century now might be more appropriately named Encyclopaedia Americana. Henry Hudson was an English sea captain. In 1609 he was the first to sail up the river, which later bore his name, as far up as Albany, which later became the capital of New York State. The following year his sailors mutinied and set him and eight of his companions adrift on the high seas in a small boat. Every American school boy has learnt the story before he is nine. Henry Hudson's discoveries and his tragic death are part of the common American background, just as Titusz Dugovics's self-sacrificing leap from the wall during the siege of Nándorfehérvár or Bálint Balassa's death under the walls of Esztergom, belong to every Hungarian child. Titusz Dugovics was a simple soldier thirty-six years before the discovery of America—this is really a footnote worked into the text

for the benefit of my American readers—when Nándorfehérvár, today Belgrade, was besieged by the Turks, and János Hunyadi, the Hungarian warrior with as much Serb and Rumanian blood in him as Hungarian, defended it. Dugovics saw a Janissary about to plant the Crescent standard on the rampart of the castle, grappled fiercely with him, and, unable to overcome him, cast himself and his enemy together over the wall to the depths below. Bálint Balassa? He was a poet and soldier. He was killed at the siege of Esztergom ten years before Henry Hudson discovered his river. But first and foremost he was a poet. To whom can I compare him? A little to Villon, a little to Petrarch. Possibly to Ronsard as well. He is the first great Hungarian lyric poet. And the first Hungarian writer to be killed in war. He was compared to Petrarch by Antal Szerb, a fine literary critic of ours, a victim of war four and a half centuries after the discovery of America, when he was murdered by the Nazis. How many American writers have died on the battlefield, or one way or another, through war? I ask this in answer to those in America who wanted to know why we were so worried about the war in Vietnam? Even our nerve ends react to the word war in a different manner. War means something different to us, even in our literary history. For us war has never been something over there. (And this includes the whole of Europe.)

(A statue on the banks of the Hudson.) In the meantime the Henry Hudson Parkway had disappeared from view, together with all thoughts of Bálint Balassa and Titusz Dugovics and Jan Sobieski and Lajos Kossuth. The bus, almost empty, was going along a pleasant wide street. The bus stopped. I looked out. There to the left, stood the statue of Lajos Kossuth. It might have been in Kecskemét or Kiskőrös. It obviously dated from the time all those small towns on the Great Hungarian Plain proudly put them up. Head up, back erect, he gazes into the far distance, oblivious of the small drummer boy, and the old stooping peasant, covered with his sheepskin cloak, at his feet. It is a movingly bad statue. Before patriotic melancholy could overcome me a furry longtailed grey squirrel made me smile. It had just leaped away, above Lajos Kossuth's head. It rocked itself on a branch in high spirits, glad of the spring. The bus still stood. Perhaps the driver was also watching the squirrel. It stared back at us and seemed to say—in Hungarian, naturally—What are you moping about, mate? You've got dollars in your pocket now, haven't you?

Had I not lost time by squirrel-watching I think I should have got off the bus to pay my respects to the statue. The bus driver, however, was not watching the squirrel, and the statue even less. He was trying to fix something on his money-swallowing machine. Then he got it right and the bus

started again. I had just time to catch a glimpse of a wreath with a ribbon in the Hungarian national colours placed on the plinth. Of course, the day before was the Ides of March,* I went forward to the driver and asked him if we were going as far as 42nd Street? "Yeah" he said, and went on chewing gum. The famous New York Public Library is on 42nd Street. I felt I had to go in and see if they had Kossuth's speeches and read what he said when he first arrived here. All at once New York disappeared. I heard the racy articulate Hungarian tongue instead of English. I was back in my history class, hearing Father Balanyi tell us that Kossuth was given a tumultuous welcome by the people of New York, three hundred thousand of them crowding the main street to see and cheer him (this obviously must have been Broadway, on which I was travelling right then, but surely it was a little further south), but that after a few months he literally slunk away from America. I remembered how my thirteen-year-old heart was wounded by that word. Kossuth slinking away! Forty years have passed and I have never looked up how and why he departed. Now was the time for it, on the spot.

In the meantime the bus had filled to overcrowding with short Spanish-speaking men and women. We must have been going through Spanish Harlem, the quarter of the Porto Ricans. At that moment a long-overdue penny dropped: West Side Story. I had never understood why that was the title of the film. What was it the west side of? If you are in New York the answer is clear. The Porto Rican and Yankee boys clashed on the west side of Manhattan Island. Looking out of the window I saw hundreds of Spanish signboards, and advertisements of American films with Spanish subtitles. A few more streets and the white faces disappeared, the English names and film titles returned, but the faces were black. I was in Harlem. This must be the main road through, I thought, because I saw nothing of the crowded slums I had so often visualized, the streets were just as wide as anywhere else. Yes, I must come back here, for a closer look. But how contagious fear was! If Géza had not spoken as he did last night I should have got off now and walked. As it was I did not dare.

The straight line of Broadway is broken at 77th Street, from here it continues southwards in a gentle sweep, crossing Ninth Avenue, which is called Columbus Avenue north of 57th Street. At Columbus Circle it reaches the south-western tip of Central Park; at the top of 42nd Street at Times Square it crosses Seventh Avenue; at 34th Street on Herald Square Sixth Avenue; at my street the 23rd Fifth Avenue, but from 14th

* The day the 1848 Revolution broke out in Pest-Buda, the name coined to distinguish the two towns that were joined as Budapest in 1873.

to the southernmost end of Manhattan, the Battery, it again runs in a straight north-south direction, but by then it is the streets which have begun to meander, because they were built before the advent of the checkerboard system. I made all this out from the map on my knees, and I only report it because later I frequently lost my way, being misled by Broadway, even in the network of parallel straight streets: they were magic hours as I did not always know beforehand where I would end up, and that is a most superbly enjoyable experience in a foreign city.

I looked up. We had just stopped at Columbus Circle. I was tempted for a second to have a close look at the new Lincoln Center. But no, I postponed it. First I must see New York whole. If nothing else this bus ride convinced me that it would be difficult, perhaps impossible. I'd like to discover the beauties behind its uglinesses, to taste its real flavour, to get to love it a little before visiting the sights recommended by the official tourist guides.

The ride had taken one hour as far as 42nd Street. I got off, dodging the overwhelming traffic. Another little disappointment; I had anticipated tall and graceful buildings here, but what I found instead was a bustling bazaar with ugly improvised posters and shops selling pornographic books. I hurried towards Fifth Avenue, since I discovered from the map that the New York Public Library was there. I was only ten paces away from 42nd Street, but I found myself in a different world.

(The poet's park.) A square in New York. That is, a genuine small park, with trees, benches, and grass coming up here and there, and gravel paths among the green patches. It was only one block away, as I had already learnt to say, but that was enough to shut out the street noises like a padded door. There was a small statue in the middle. William Cullen Bryant, I had never heard the name before. He must have been a poet, there was a poem engraved on the plinth, unmistakably early nineteenth century, all about the tempests in the heart, the storms of passion and the stately tranquillity of the ocean. It was colder than the day before, but I sat down on a bench. I did not do anything. People hurried past me. Many came into the park, but nobody stopped, they hurried as they hurried in the streets. The first man to stroll that way was a young Negro. He had no overcoat on though there was a biting wind. He wore a dark brown jacket, trousers the colour of corn, a striped shirt; he was as elegant as an elegant Oxford undergraduate. He walked in a curious manner, as if he were taking steps on a cloud. I seemed to be watching a slowed-down film. He did not look in front of him, but away into the distance. He stumbled on the edge of the grass. As he drew level, he smiled at me, as if to speak, but he passed on gazing

beyond my head. I did not know then, being very much of a novice in New York (and *very* is the operative word here), that he was beatifically drugged.

I decided to go on towards the Library. The main entrance faced Fifth Avenue. It is a beautiful Renaissance building dating from 1910, in as much as a 1910 Renaissance building can be beautiful. It is guarded by two huge stone lions.

Does any American know which is the city in the world with the second highest number of lions, for naturally the first is Venice? Budapest. The two oldest and finest pairs of lions are at the two ends of the Chain Bridge and their birth year cannot be forgotten: 1848.

But the cause of my feeling at home at the feet of the lions of the Public Library was that my own house is guarded by two, in Budapest. Mine, moreover, are the only pair of lions in the world which have blue eyes, thanks to my children painting them when they were small.

(Kossuth in New York.) At the entrance I learnt from a small notice that three million books were kept there, two thousand librarians and other staff were employed, and the library was used by eight thousand people a day. I went up to the third floor, into the catalogue room, straight up to the letter K. There was a drawerful of index cards under Kossuth. Despite all the many books in English I chose one in Hungarian. "Kossuth in America." I found a seat in the reading room, and while waiting for it I looked up the entry under Henry Hudson in the "Dictionary of American Biography."

At last the volume arrived and I promptly turned up the date of his arrival in New York: December 6th 1851. Three hundred thousand in the street was no exaggeration by my history master, there were really that number thronging Broadway to see Lajos Kossuth in the braided black frock coat worn by the Hungarian gentry on formal occasions, with an ostrich-feathered hard hat on his head. The enthusiasm, they said, was boundless. I went on reading. It was here Kossuth's star reached its zenith in the international sky; it was here that it set. The second part of this information is missing from our national consciousness. Gyula Illyés has written Kossuth's tragedy at home, on the last night of the War of Independence, when "we could have been a burning torch," but who is going to write the drama of this American half year, after he sailed the following July? While he was in America, fêted and adulated, the Vienna police uncovered a plot at home; they arrested and executed Mihály Pataki, his personal courier, and subsequently they rolled up the whole plot, arresting his sister, Zsuzsanna, as well. The leader of the conspiracy in Vienna, Colonel May, set fire to the paillasse on his bunk in the prison cell and burnt himself like a Buddhist

monk in Vietnam a century later. He killed himself not as a protest but in gallant self-sacrifice, fearing that under torture his body might prove weaker than his spirit and that he might betray his companions. I had to travel to the other end of the world to learn of this dramatic event in the great tragedy of the Hungarian War of Independence. Bullets, prison, grief and despair for the Hungarians at home. That was one of the lowest points in our national existence, while Hungary's "Regent," Hungary's leader, was being fêted by the American people, the newspapers, the Senate, the Government and the President. Kossuth had been expecting a collection running into millions of dollars, but the money came in driblets and most of it was mishandled and dined away. The emigré leadership in Paris and London turned against Kossuth, who had never been as lonely as when he was being fêted by a people which already at that time numbered fifty million. And yes, alas, it was quite true, he did sneak away, on July 13th, 1852. He was seen off at the harbour by no more than seven Hungarians.

It is a pity that this lesson is not taught in Hungarian schools.

(The prairie and the Plain.) It was only when I passed the two lions again on the way out that it occurred to me that I had not looked up Bryant's poems. Never mind, next time would do, for I meant to pay frequent visits to this library anyway. I never managed to go there again. New people, new friends, new discussions, new sights to see, the old tiredness. This was my first and last visit there. As a result it was only later, in the small Schenectady Union College library, that I learnt that the New York Public Library and the Washington Library of Congress were more than libraries in the traditional sense. This mutation in their functions was due to the Xerox revolution, the very name of which I first heard in America, the age of dry copying, the advent of cheap duplication, what Master McLuhan has called the end of the Gutenberg era. But at that time, on March 17th, I had not even heard McLuhan's name. For that I had to wait four days till my first lecture at a university.

Bryant's name was to come back more than once in New York, as I often went to rest for five minutes on that bench in the park, especially in the summer heat. But in fact I have only discovered Bryant now, at home, while I am writing about him. I only had to take out my copy of "An Anthology of North American Poets,"* which my young friend Miklós Vajda edited at a not-so-distant desk in the editorial offices of The New Hungarian Quarterly, and look up William Cullen Bryant. Three of his poems are included. It is a pity that I did not know "Hymn of the City" while in America. He wrote about the New York of a hundred years ago:

* Reviewed by Levente Osztovits on p. 199 of this issue.

— here, amidst the crowd
Through the great city road,
With everlasting murmur deep and loud—
Choking the ways that wind
'Mongst the proud piles, the work of human kind.

It is not a good poem, but then there is not much poetry about big cities. In the biographical notice I read that "To a Waterfowl" is his best known poem, but that could have been written anywhere. Fortunately there is a longer poem of his called "The Prairies" in the anthology. I do not know what American literary critics think of it, but it is a great poem and a long one. It could not have been written anywhere but America, nor by anybody but an American. Bryant was conscious of this himself. He began his poem:

These are the Gardens of the Desert, these
The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name—
The Prairies. I behold them for the first,
And my heart swells, whiles the dilated sight
Takes in the encirling vastness. Lo! they stretch
In airy undulations, far away,
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,
Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
And motionless forever.—

In it he sings the praises of the prairie, that is, in that country, of the plains, and that is just as rare as poetry about the great city in comparison with the many poems written ecstatically about the sea, or those that prostrate themselves before the glory of mountains or in praise of nature. I am reminded of Petőfi's poems about the Great Plain. I wonder if American students and teachers who respect Bryant can appreciate these lines by Petőfi: "Down in that Great Plain, in that country flat as a calm sea, that is where I am at home, that is my world."

Whenever I am abroad the gag that lies on our national tongue weighs heavily on me, and the hope revives that the world may some day discover Hungarian lyric verse. That a new genius might be born who, even through the intermediary of a translation, can sense Petőfi's true greatness and liberate his eagle spirit from his linguistic prison: translating him so that he does not sound as he does in the lines quoted, and in all translations up till now, early nineteenth century sloshy, syrupy doggerel.

I went back to the small park and waved to Bryant like an old acquaintance. At that time I did not know—I have only just found out, that he was half a colleague. Not because I too wrote poetry when I was young, nor because he later tried his hand at the novel and the play, but because he was a passionate editor. In the park lunch was in full swing. I looked round to find out where they had got their sandwiches and coffee. I could see as many as four drugstores and snack bars in 42nd Street at a single glance, but from two of them the customers spilled over into the street. I went to the third but could not get in, and then I gave up and instead of trying the fourth I took a bus as far as 24th Street, not far from the Chelsea, and went to call on my old friend E. the painter.

(A Hungarian painter in New York.) On the afternoon of my second day I left my room and went downstairs. My head was still dizzy from the many new impressions and the six-hour difference in local times. In the lift two old residents of the hotel were talking about some snake, it had a belly ache, they said, and I thought I had hallucinations. I stepped out and bumped into a man with light eyes, hair going grey and a face like a child's. "Sorry" I said. "Iván!" he said—in Hungarian. "What the devil brought you here?"

"An aeroplane. But who are you?" The words were no sooner out of my mouth than I recognized him. You could have knocked me down. It was E. the painter. Only thirty-six hours earlier I had called up my wife in Budapest from my mother-in-law's flat in Paris. We were going to be separated for two months, since she would only follow me at the beginning of May, and it would be rather a costly business to telephone home from America. My wife does not have any faith in the safety of air travel. She did not say so, of course, but I knew anyway. Grandmother, the children, the grandchild, all well, good-bye then, and take care of yourself. I had almost hung up when she said: "You remember E.? As far as I know he lives somewhere in America. Do look him up, I'd like to know how he's doing." I said all right I would insert an ad in the New York Times. What town does he live in? Josette of course did not know, and laughed at her own absurdity.

"But what are *you* doing here at the Chelsea?" Very simple. When he first arrived in America he had lived at the Chelsea for a year. He had been passing on his way home, his flat was only two blocks away. It was only because he had seen old Z. through the door that he had thought of dropping in and asking him how he was. He had come in the door and I had stepped out of the lift. We had not seen each other for twenty years. If I had aged in the same way, then E. must also have been shocked at seeing me. But

it was certainly not this that brought tears to his eyes. "Come on up to us. Now, right away." At that particular moment I could not but now—I was going to drop in as if the twenty years had never been. Twenty-four years before he had painted a portrait of my wife. It was a dark-toned painting with a gloomy atmosphere, as much resembling the year of its making, 1942, as the young married woman. But as the years passed we had come to like it more and more, and recently I had photographed it. It is not only misfortunes that do not come singly; just occasionally happy coincidences come together: I had a print in my wallet. How pleased he would be.

(A well-appointed studio in a peculiar house.) I found the house with difficulty. I should never have believed that there were, that there could be, houses like that in the heart of New York, and not in a side street, but in one of the avenues. The house was one-storey high, which as I was soon to learn was called two-storey here, counting the ground floor as the first. It had originally been a timber house, painted deep red. Three windows opened on to the street but none of them was E.'s, they were those of a doctor's consulting rooms who did not himself live there. The ground floor was occupied by an ironmonger's, and the stairs were steep as a ladder. The E.'s had only one room there, which also served him as studio. It is true it was very spacious and they had miraculously divided it with screens and curtains and alcoves and made it cosily livable. But who will believe in Budapest that the lavatory of a New York apartment was out in the corridor? E.'s wife was not at home, as she was the permanent breadwinner in the family, because... but let's have lunch first. We enjoyed cooking it enormously, just as in the days when we had both been single, and we ate scrambled eggs with bacon and onions with relish. True, in our bachelor days we had not had salmon to start with, nor that strange, crumbly snow-white cheese which is called cottage cheese here. It is a transatlantic relation of our mild spring ewe's milk cheese, but it is tastier. I fell in love with it first go and for the whole four months could never have enough of it. Later on I got to know various kinds, the fatter one with larger curds, and the less fat one with small curds. And in our younger days we would have certainly have thought anyone an idiot who had coffee, not after lunch, but with it, thin coffee in a big cup, instead of either water or wine-and-soda. "How can you stand it, my poor friend?" I asked him. "Go on, laugh. You'll be doing the same in two weeks' time." (It took less than a week.)

The walls of the studio were hung with newly painted pictures, one was in hand on the easel, rows of canvasses were propped along the walls, colour photographs of mosaics, ethereal and yet hard, were there mounted in an album. You only had to turn back the table cloth on which I had eaten the

cottage cheese to reveal a mosaic by the master of the house. It was so fascinating that I felt like asking him for it. I was pleased at this prolific creativity. "Creativity? Oh, come off it! I don't like that word. I'm slaving." I tried to explain that writing or painting was only easy for amateurs, but E. was not arguing about words. He was forced to work very hard, and he did not earn enough money. "That being so, you might just as well have stayed at home." We had known each other for long enough for us to give and take a few home truths. "But here, you see, I can paint whatever I like. Would you people accept these abstract paintings?" I for one like them, I said, but certainly you'd have a lot of fighting to do for them. In the long run they would be shown. "In the long run? When?" I could not answer, and was reluctant to counter with what he had just told me, that in ten years he had had two exhibitions in America: one in a midwestern city and another recently at a university near New York. He found it hard to make his painting pay, he made a living with his mosaics. One New York school is decorated with his mosaics, another was in the making. Everything had gone well with him until he fell ill. His tumour had been successfully removed, but his former connections had dwindled. "They don't like sick people here. I have the feeling that ever since they have been afraid of me. I know it is stupid of me, but I get fewer invitations and fewer people come if we invite them."

He showed me his paintings, including those propped with their faces against the wall. E. has succeeded in the most difficult thing of all: to develop an individual within an abstract style. He works with deep green or blue backgrounds and his plastic light coloured structures are not at all representational, they do not recall human or animal or vegetable, and least of all geometrical, forms, and yet they do not strike you as abstract either. If I were an art critic I would call it objective abstraction. Ten years ago they would have been anathemized in Hungary, but works more abstract than these get their citizenship nowadays. E. doesn't really believe me; he only knows what his American-American compatriots know; as far as they are concerned in the East-European countries work had bogged down at socialist realism.

After lunch we had real coffee after all. I should have liked to have found out as much as I could about E.'s life here, the American art-world, art-patronage in general, but after a couple of flat answers I saw that we would first have to talk about Hungary. It is a pity I could not record our conversation on tape; I had to answer the same explicit and implicit questions a dozen or rather a hundred times over, whenever I was with Hungaro-Americans. E.'s life shows with all the simplicity of a cautionary tale what

a Hungarian artist gains and what he loses by going to America. No one interferes with the direction, style, form or content of his art. He can create—"slave away at"—what he wishes and what he can. His freedom of expression has no limits. However, he does not earn his living any more easily than he would in Hungary. With the same amount of talent, effort and work he would be a well-known artist in a smaller country, such as Hungary. True, he would have to fight more vigorously for this freedom of expression, but he would not be as lonely as in New York. This is not merely the conclusion I came to later that night, we said it out loud at the time, we discussed it that day and many times later. We agreed. If he could teach at however small a university or third-rate college, he said, he would straightaway be much better off. "But to do that I should have to have been born here or have come out when I was younger."

"Why, how much would you get?" I asked. He named the sum straight off, one could see he had often thought about it. Eight thousand dollars at least. Maybe ten. Good Heavens. For the first time I found myself face to face with an American income, true, only a wishful one this time. Eight thousand dollars was three hundred thousand forints, or, counting in months, which is the more usual method in Hungary, twenty four thousand forints a month. "Listen, old man. If I could earn half of that, I shouldn't have any headaches either." That is true friendship: I could not listen to his complaint and confession and not pay him back with mine. That put both of us into a good mood. "Have you ever had any bourbon? No?" He poured me two fingers, I lifted the glass to my lips but he caught my hand. "Wait. You can't drink it without water." He added about as much soda. "Undrinkable stuff all the same," I told him. "Diluted, sweetish slop." "Finish it. Then rub your tongue against your palate." Yes, it is a bit more bearable this way. E. was amused by me. "You have to come to a Hungarian house of course to taste the original American whisky. Do you want some more?" He was right, it was getting more drinkable.

(Hotel Pierre.) I spent most of the remaining part of the afternoon on a bus. I was foolish enough to go from 23rd Street as far up as 61st Street to the Hotel Pierre. When the president of the New York branch of P.E.N. had invited me to the Club's regular monthly cocktail party, Hotel Pierre had sounded to me just like any old hotel name, the Hilton or Chelsea for instance. E. had looked up to heaven when he heard it. What class! And what prices! "You see, I have lived in New York for ten years now, but I never dared to set foot in it. And you who only arrived three days ago..."

There were many policemen and a big to-do around the hotel. I was sent away from the main entrance on Fifth Avenue. It then occurred to me that

I had read in the morning papers that the Duke of Edinburgh was here and was staying at the Pierre. In 61st Street, at the third entrance, a policeman was at last willing to talk to me. "P.E.N. Club? What's that?" (I was to hear that question many more times in the coming weeks when I happened to remark that I was going to attend P.E.N.'s International Congress in New York in June.) "*P, e, n,*" I spelt it for him. Writers' club." The policeman shrugged, "Go on." I went down a long corridor with the show cases of expensive Paris, London and New York jewellers, leather merchants and perfumery shops on both sides.

But the cocktail party proved a waste of time. The local Niemandovitch Nobodies had arranged to meet under the auspices of P.E.N. I saw only one writer, and he happened to be a man I had known when he still lived in Budapest. I could not help laughing. I had scarcely spoken to anyone but Hungarians all day. They were not at all surprised. U., the writer, said that some Hungarians visiting their relatives in America never met any Americans in the two months they were there, even though they could speak English. U. had once spent a month going from one city to another, meeting only Hungarians. True, he had wanted to write a book about them. But at any rate he warned me against letting myself be caught up in the "Hungarian roundabout"; once I was in it I would find it hard to get out of it. Would I just the same spend the evening with him and eat in Greenwich Village?

(Going to the Village.) We went down in front of the hotel where the Fifth Avenue bus stopped. I started for the stop. But U. caught my arm. "Are you crazy? You don't want to go by bus, do you? It's a twenty-minute ride." Well, we weren't in a hurry, were we, and anyway I was not particularly hungry yet. He did not understand. He signalled to a cab, we got in. "It's only a fool who tries to save money by not taking a cab," he lectured, "Buses jolt and they take longer and you can get the 'flu in them." "But they're cheaper," I muttered. "Come, come, these are the remnants of a European upbringing," he retorted.

This was my first night in the Village. (U.'s wise instruction: "If you want them to know in New York that you are from out of town say Greenwich before Village, and say Avenue of the Americas instead of Sixth Avenue...") "Thanks." Well, then, my first visit to the Village didn't exactly come off. I had been reading so much about it in recent American literature, Norman Mailer and another Norman, Podhoretz, and in the *New Yorker*, that I was full of expectations. I knew of course that it was not a village, still I had expected something countrified, more like a small town. I had had Óbuda in mind, or Montmartre, not its night life but its relative

quiet—not of course today's tourist-ridden Montmartre, but that of my student days, or rather, to be quite frank, that of a time even further back, beautified by distance, the steep hill of French literature and Utrillo's pictures, the embowered garden of the *Lapin Agile*, and the windmill which had been mere scenery even then. I was therefore unjust to the Village when I looked round with disappointment. The streets did not make a checkerboard pattern as they did further north on Manhattan Island; many of them were lower, with English type front gardens, but on the whole had an artificial air about it.

(Sham-folklore.) We got out of the cab and turned into a street. The window of the first shop was full of souvenirs. I found out later that the second, the third and the fifth and even the tenth were cultivating some kind of Greenwich Village sham-folklore, showing some Mexican Indian influence and psychedelic colours. I first heard this new word from U. By the time I returned to Hungary my children already knew it. Two years later (I am adding this to the completed manuscript of my journal), in the summer of 1966, in the Siberian Akademgorod, a young painter showed me his work and told me that recently he had been experimenting with psychedelic colours. He was thinking of colours and forms which appear under the influence of certain drugs, either consciously or in the subconscious, but the young Siberian artist himself knew nothing at all about these drugs. The new art of decoration is out to produce supernatural colour effects, especially in posters and shop windows. It reminds me of *art nouveau* and it is interesting that it has became fashionable when a revival of *art nouveau* is also the vogue. Youngsters in Hungary who are lovers of beat music also decorate their rooms with *art nouveau* drawings, and use *art nouveau* designs in their posters. They also fetch down grandmother's iron and porcelain lampshade which we had banished to the attic in disgust.

While settling down to a table in the upper room of a huge barn-like restaurant, the Village Gate, I took out my map of New York and was surprised to see that the numbered streets which always ran parallel north of this place suddenly went crazy here. West 12th Street, for example, now runs parallel, now at right angles, to West 4th. It was also only now that I realized what every native New Yorker takes for granted, that the real New York continues south of the Village, and what's more that is the most genuine New York, Wall Street and its neighbourhood. It is "downtown," the town of "man-made canyons" mentioned so often in early travel books.

An attractive young girl waited at our table. I had a good look at her. U., who felt great in his role of host, said she was not a professional waitress, she was much more likely to be a college or drama student. As we

were talking in Hungarian she could not follow what was being said about her. Later she managed to pour some celery soup over me, then she could not prize off the cap of the beer bottle, then she spilled the sauce on the tablecloth and finally she forgot to bring a spoon with the coffee. At that point she said that we must forgive her, but—"you are my first customers." We wished her luck and she smiled. U. was right of course; she was a drama student, and she had already appeared in an off-Broadway theatre in the neighbourhood.

Once more I have to correct a misconception of mine. I had known that the big, more or less official (not of course in any sense state-run) theatres were on Broadway around 42nd Street. They operated on the principle of assured box office successes. And then there were, or so I had thought, the off-Broadway theatres, experimental workshops, small temples of art. Right, but I had thought that off-Broadway meant the sidestreets off Broadway and never realized that off could be such a long way off. Most of the off-Broadway theatres are here, between East 4th Street and Second Avenue. U. told me that the biggest current hit was a musical, "The Man of Mancha," based—God help us!—on Cervantes' Don Quixote. I should make a point of not missing it. Later I tried several times to get a ticket but did not succeed. Two years later I saw it in the Piccadilly Theatre in London. I still do not understand why almost all my American friends enthused about it.

(Who goes into the park at night?) We walked home. I had only been in New York three days but the winding little streets were already soothing to the eye. Many shops were open, most of them selling their knitted, woven, glazed and painted wares in the basements of English-looking houses. Some of these articles might have been interesting or even valuable. It was impossible to tell because cheap mass-produced trash spilled over everything. The night was cool, and the afternoon sunshine had absorbed the mist. The blowing wind brought the smell of spring from the direction of a square. Was it the famous Washington Square, I asked U. Let's go there. U., promptly said I must be mad, one did not go into a park at night. This generic "one" caused me some anxiety. I had frequently read about the dangers of going into Central Park where one might be knocked down, and have one's wallet taken, or not taken, and be simply beaten up because one was white. Or black. Could that really be true? I confess I had never believed these stories. I had imagined them to be ham-handed anti-Americal propaganda. And, that is what most Europeans think of them, western and eastern Europeans alike. After my return home I told friends about this first night in Greenwich Village and that later one when, not in Central

Park, but in a smaller one no larger than Petőfi Square in Budapest, where Fifth Avenue and Broadway meet at the height of 23rd Street, two youths had come up to me and asked the time in a voice that made me say good-bye to my wrist-watch on the spot, and additionally bless my caution in not bringing more than five dollars with me. But I felt sorry for my old leather wallet. I got away with it, and I owed that to me saying that it was dark and I could not see the watch. Se they turned their flashlight on. I had only wanted to play for time, but I was lucky: the flashlight was answered by a piercing searchlight, a police car pulled up, the two youths took to their heels, but not before one of them found time to kick me in the shin. I still nurse the mark. One of my friends in Hungary to whom I related the tale was about to visit a relative in New York. I could tell by his nose that he did not believe a word I said, and I could also detect surprise in his eyes: why did I think it necessary to repeat such silly hearsay that was nothing but propaganda? Since they liberated him from his wallet in Central Park West he doesn't think it so silly.

(Those who are high.) Consequently I only got to know Washington Square three months later during the International P.E.N. Congress. In this warm spring evening boys and girls were standing about the street, the boys in jackets and the inevitable jeans and pullovers, some of them in odd-looking broad-brimmed hats. I could see no skirts on any of the girls, only all kinds of light-coloured jeans which were scribbled on. What I should have liked to do most of all would have been to sit on the kerb and read jeans. Many of them had ponchos round their necks. U. insisted that they wove them themselves. Some of the couples leant against the walls, entangled in prolonged and perpendicular sexual embraces. I hurried past these entwined couples; I really can't stand demonstrative love and tenderness in public.

We turned a corner; different kinds of figures were propped up against the walls, lonely figures, staring vacantly before them. Drunk? U. shook his head. I should have a closer look, and not put on an act of being less well-informed than I really was, U. protested. It was scarcely conceivable that I should not have guessed, even if I had never actually seen a drug addict. "Well of course I had suspected it" I said, and explained that I had decided that if I wanted really to get to know America, instead of trying to find justification or refutation for all my existing preconceptions, then I had better appear, even to myself, less well-informed than I actually was. U., who had known me long enough, said he found it hard to think of me as Candide, but let it be. But honestly, had I really never seen a man high on drugs?

I was asked that often during my stay in America. Though U. had left

Hungary a long time before, he took my word for it that this new plague had not broken through our frontiers, but my American-born friends found this hard to believe. "Is it punished so severely that no one dares to?" they asked. "What do they do to them? Execute them? Send them to camps? Or are they beaten up by the police?" They found it difficult to believe that there was no demand for drugs in Hungary and the other socialist countries, and hardly any in the west European countries with the exception of England, more difficult than I found it to believe the reasons for the widespread use of drugs in America.

I stopped, and my embarrassment was even greater than at the sight of that earlier unabashed love-making. I could not bring myself to go closer to the Nirvana of those leaning figures. Previously I had felt embarrassed as a man, now I felt embarrassed as a human being. "You have to get used to it. Go and look at them," U. encouraged me. He stepped closer and I followed. We looked into the face of one of them. His smile was fixed but vacant. His eyes seemed upturned as if at the climax of sexual ecstasy. He was a middle-aged man in a dark overcoat, hatless, his shirt collar open. "Heroin," U. commented, adding, "He's high." His lower lip was sagging, his mouth half open with the tongue showing. There was a defencelessness about him as if he were a sleeping child.

What does *high* mean? "He's just given himself a fix," U. obliged. I was amazed at his expertise in matters such as these. Nothing to be amazed at. Drug taking is such a problem in America that the papers are always writing about it and every self-respecting intellectual picks up the dope jargon. Heroin, by the way, is the biggest evil. "Unless it is marijuana," I chipped in. Now I wanted to seem better informed than I was, U. teased me; nothing of the sort. Marijuana was less dangerous than heroin. Heroin, like all derivatives of opium, was addictive. Addicts must have their "shot" at any cost—and this can be taken literally since the price of one kilogramm of heroin is the equivalent of 250 kilograms of gold—and as a result they frequently became criminals or prostitutes, undermined their health, ruined their family and were generally a problem to society. The effect of marijuana was simply to free the taker from inhibitions, and was less harmful to health, but its greater peril lay in the fact that the pot addict fought and behaved violently under the influence of the drug, and even murdered in his uninhibited state of intoxication.

(Tranquillizers and stimulants.) U. was enjoying my ignorance. Every freshman knew more about these things than an old European. We went into a small drugstore—apart from aspirin and contraceptives no other drugs are on sale, but as much orange juice and coffee and coca-cola as you can take—

and there U. proceeded to give me a lecture. The real problem of American society was not so much heroin and the other hard drugs. No matter if addicts in America were far more numerous than in Europe, the figure was still negligible and came within the broader concept of delinquency, and as such it represented a phenomenon outside the general stream of society. Later I looked up the statistics. *Time and Life* had issued a special number called "The Drug Takers" in which it was reported that every three thousand and five hundredth American took heroin or some similar drug. That is about fifty thousand people altogether, I do not doubt the correctness of the figure, but it seems to me that in that case drug taking must go hand in hand with exhibitionism; I am sure I saw at least one per cent of the fifty thousand in those four months.

A greater danger to society, he declared, if only because it is expanding and exerts its evil effects within the general stream of society, and is accepted and recognized, is the taking of various kinds of tranquillizers and stimulants. It is not someone taking a sleeping pill because he finds it difficult to go to sleep or a caffeine tablet if his mind needs a shake up in the morning that is the problem. It is rather that millions of Americans are in the habit of soothing their nerves with great, sometimes inconceivably great, numbers of tranquillizers, and that this habit may develop into addiction. They do not know how many they have taken, they mistake the dose which is already too large, or perhaps swallow more deliberately, to get it all over. It is still not known which of these possibilities caused the death of Marilyn Monroe. Did I know, I was asked, that that woman, envied by tens of millions of women, regularly took twenty tranquillizing pills a day?

I also looked up these statistics and saw that thirteen thousand million doses of tranquillizers and stimulants are sold in the United States annually. This means that on an average 65 pills are consumed yearly by every member of the community, though naturally not all take them regularly. And the hallucigenic drugs are even more dangerous. I must have heard about LSD. I answered, no, and I must beg my readers not to be surprised. This was in the beginning of 1966, and LSD had only appeared in America a few years earlier. It was during my stay that the papers reported Dr. Leary's adventures. U. did not know much more, it seemed. He was content to compare it with mescalin, as described by Aldous Huxley.

(Later I heard and read a great deal about LSD and I talked to a student who had taken it. Once I was urged to go with them on a "trip." I shall not write any more about it in this journal as I am convinced that LSD's bark is worse than its bite; it has been puffed up by the press, and though everybody was then talking about it, its spread is small compared to the other

drugs. And I have one other reason. It may be true that a faithful picture of present-day America cannot leave out drugs, but it is equally true that, however it may surprise or even shock a friend or visitor from Eastern Europe, this whole problem is not a determining factor in America today.)

(Why they do it.) Why do they do it? "Because it's good," U. said, but he did not believe it and was only taking the easy way out. Why are eighty per cent of the heroin takers men under thirty? Why are two out of every three Negro or Porto Rican? Why do half of all serious drugtakers live—and here the answer seems to present itself—in the slums of New York?

In the American public view the main reason for heroin addiction lies in a bad family background, a drunken or weak-willed father who cannot provide an ideal image for his son, or the family-supporting mother who does not want to lose her son, and therefore indulges him and condones his first heroin tablet or marijuana cigarette, and later even gives him money to buy them. To my mind those social research workers are closer to the truth who seek the causes in what has become a vogue word in Anglo-American sociology—frustration, so hard to render exactly into Hungarian. In a society in which the cardinal commandment continues to be "you can get everything if you want to," in a society which continues to worship the fading starlight of competitive liberalism, successful in the age of Jackson, as if it were still the sun at its meridian, lack of success is impossible to bear. The poor of the slums of New York have the smallest chance to make good, to be successful, particularly if they are black, or nearly black Porto Ricans.

For addicts of tranquillizing and pep pills the question is different. Why they take them is not difficult to understand for anyone from one side of the Atlantic to the other side of the Urals. But why on such an infinitely greater scale in America? I think the answer is provided in another very American sociological expression, the permissive society. And this seems to apply to heroin addicts too. The illicit traffic in, and consequently addiction to, heroin has defied efforts to stamp it out, because they do not really want to stamp it out. In America almost everything is permitted; and what is forbidden is possible.

NO VERDICT*

by

TIBOR DÉRY

It is only the middle of August, the height of summer, but here and there already crumbling leaves lie on the ground at my feet, it is as though they had passed out of my own body. They wind their way out from under my skin, my nails, my heart, only to fall on the white pebbles of the narrow path in front of our house. I hear their rustling—my breathing in the past. In a bend of the path, behind the smaller glass verandah, a flowering oleander stands in a pot, at the other end some hollyhocks, already cut back: it was here that it was given to me to walk today, the 16th of August 1967, in peaceful sunshine, deep into the shadow of our large chestnut-tree and stumbling out of it ten steps later. To the right, on the lawn, the lawn-mower and the garden-hose prove that I am still comparatively fit and that we succeeded in keeping the lawn going during four months of drought. Though last night I dreamt that I was buried alive; I liked it, I could lie on my left, just as in my bed.

Along the pebbled path, arranged in two alternating semicircles, there is a bed of zinnias and one of African marigolds which triumphantly explode again and again in the sun. And a good way below them, in another semicircle, is Lake Balaton. Summer, my love, my home which I have found again, it is not right that you should leave me. The more or less sclerotic brain cells face the past blinking half-blindly—nothing but the present is left for them. Anything beyond it, all those semicircles are empty. Walking to and fro between the hollyhocks and the oleander and even as far as the holly where, over the hedge, you can see the distant steeple of the Catholic church of Arács, old age—with crumbled leaves falling off his tongue—can still clutch with his two bony hands after the flight of the cabbage-butterfly right now floating before his nose; and with his fluttering shirt-

* We are here publishing two excerpts from Tibor Déry's forthcoming autobiography, "No verdict": the introductory passage and another chapter. Further excerpts will follow in our next number.

sleeves and his few wind-blown hairs he even follows it swimming towards the glass verandah. Don't ask, for how long! It is known that life is short.

The garden in front of the house is triangular in shape, with a balustrade of white cement columns running along its sides. The two rows meet at the apex of the triangle and form a proper prow. The prow points directly at the lake, towards the south-east, towards Siófok, although at least a hundred metres above water level. But it is said that at night, when those in the house are not looking, the ship is held down by thin threads of cricket song from plunging in a frenzied dive to its death. From the waves of my blood plasma down into the other eternal fluid; but then—from a height of a hundred metres, and without a slip and the customary bottle of champagne? It is also said that when nights are dark our white house stands up as a sail. My grasp of reality being deficient, I don't contradict. A sharp, cold wind blows from the gasp in the hills, a good wind, so let's sail. *Navigare necesse est, sed vivere non est necesse.* Every man on board, those from Balatonfüred, Csopak, Lovas, Paloznak, Alsó- and Felsőörs, from my right those of Örvényes and Udvari and let's have those from Somogy County too—all the skeletons! We have plenty of room on this large ship, even with the rattle of our bones. Destination—Siófok—as I said. It cannot be missed, the lighted row of hotels is readily discernible; at the most, we may perhaps meet a gang of fishermen on their way to their home port, like an image reflected by a mirror, returning to the mirror it has left.

The night is fearful, long waves are rolling towards the bay of Fűzfő. And where's the skeleton of the smallest cabin-boy? The one whom the shipwrecked sailors carve up first, roast, and eat on the rolling wreck, according to the French folk song? He is crouching high in the crow's-nest on top of the mainmast, like a monkey, cursing the merciless heavens in the dialect of Somogy. But his lower jaw works loose and falls with a loud splash from the crow's-nest into the water. The other skeletons in the crew do their work without saying a word, every now and then one or the other of them begins to run and with ribs rattling does three ceremonial laps round the deck. In honour of Lake Balaton? Or in honour of Siófok harbour which eventually will receive our restless ashes? If only the captain, I myself, would not scream and crack my dry joints and knock against the bridge with my tubercular ankle and shout unearthly orders in an ear-splitting voice, while bent over the log-book; the crew, even including those from Alsóörs, seems maddened by it, they throw beer bottles into the water which become the prey of fishes; all the murderers and self-murderers, but even those who died a peaceful death lean across the rails and compliment creation with foaming mouths. They gnash their teeth and show such

riotous passion that it is to be feared that the water-pipes in our bathroom will burst by the commotion in the body of the ship. The wind blows ever harder—that is our luck tonight! The first anvil-shaped cloud comes from behind the Bakony mountains swimming on the sky with its tousled hair. "Weather on the way, cap'n!"—the skeleton at the wheel calls and points westwards with his maimed knuckle. "Turn her into the wind," I say, "and strike sail!" And I stand there, looking at the country folk as their carefully groping fingers force their dislocated vertebrae back into place, and, reaching through the abdominal cavity, try to stick the displaced cartilage back on with their own spit. Unfortunately the marrow has leaked away a long time ago. The lungs are also gone, together with the sweet, fragrant air full of pollen. They are rummaging silently beneath, on the deck, watching each other with their empty eyepits, through which the moon is shining. The ship sails on. Alas, we have to die!

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Next morning the resurrection, as usual. The house suffered no damage. I walk across the garden—it's my daily inspection tour controlling the whirling of summer which zealously extracts from our garden all the volatile honey of happiness. The oleander is the first to exhale a fragrance, it is also the first to get some water, before our breakfast. The other flowers as well, as far as I can tell, are in full colour after a healthy night's rest. I walk along the beds. A quick survey, and here, at the front of the house looking on to the Balaton, I have only to see whether giving all that water yesterday and the day before yesterday was of use to the lilac hedge. I have actually used several hundred litres of water for this purpose, not without some remorse, since Füred also suffers from a water shortage. And our motor's power consumption, I think with anxious wrinkles on my forehead—we are spending a lot, more than I'm earning these days.

"Perhaps that's why you are a heartbeat or two better than someone or other of your fellow-creatures, because you raise your hat to the defeated. You don't exploit the right of the stronger. The sight of the victim does not inspire you to finish him off."

"Could that perhaps be culture?"

"You mean, opposition to nature? No!"

"Pity?"

"There is none in nature!"

"Well?"

"You want an answer? I won't give it!"

"Then why are you writing?"

"If only I knew! Perhaps to put questions which cannot be answered. The struggle for the unattainable answer: perhaps that's culture."

I am absorbed in thoughts like this, while—walking along the lilac hedge—I try to measure the damage I have done to humanity by the irresponsible wasting of water, and the profit the unworthy lilac shrubs have made out of this damage. Still wilting yesterday, the leaves have straightened themselves, it is as if they become smooth too, and even their green seems to be more alive. The sort of feeling stirs within me as in a conscientious nurse when her patient leaves hospital. Or which I have, when—after a lengthy polishing—a fine sentence rounds itself under my pen. In one word: the stupid satisfaction of work well done. But caught in his heart, like a hook, though still unnoticed, doubt—that great gift of culture. (Is the sentence really good? And what are good sentences good for?... so it begins without any conceivable escape.)

How do I outwit myself? By laughing at my defeats. Let's stick to the garden: if a flower, let's say a single stinkwort, breaks out of the established order and emigrates from the flowerbed right into the middle of the white pebbled path, and in the morning, when I step out of the verandah, I find it there—lonely and foolish and defenceless—unfolding its small yellow petals. It's the image of my bygone youth. I look backwards—do I understand it, or not...? If you find a piece of bread on the highway, you pick it up and put it on the side of the road; what was it that picked me up from squalor and protected me till now? One carefully steps over the little rebel flower, one lets its simple fate be fulfilled according to its own obstinate mind—or rather according to the uncontrollable genial mind of nature... And how should it end? Under the feet of common sense, as is befitting?

Or let's take another example from the garden: yesterday, maybe in the evening, or still during the day, a cricket found its way into my room. During the night, when I was already half asleep, I jumped because, little as it is, it made a tremendous noise, like me in my long lost youth, waking even my wife, asleep in the next room. Whether it was frightened and made its ear-splitting noise because of that, or whether it was asking for help from outside, or was it in this strange world saying its piece the way it had done for hundreds of years—who knows? I laughed, it had outwitted us. It did not stop its noise till dawn and it was impossible to find it by the light of the ceiling lamp and even by that of the torch, for as soon as it felt the light or heard my steps, it stopped. Next morning we discovered it, its small, black body hidden in the axil of a geranium leaf.

I stop at the corner of the house where the narrow white-pebbled path turns back to the cellar and the garage, and I cast a last absent-minded look at the wind-tousled troubled lake beneath while I say to myself: ever since I can remember, there was but a single theme which really occupied my mind, my nerves, my passions both in life and in art: the gesture of farewell, that is: preparation for death. And still I managed to keep going till seventy-three?

Isn't there something fishy about this?

I don't regret the passing of my youth, my wretched memory has lost the greater part anyway, obviously more or less deliberately. Nor do I know, or only to a certain extent, that feeling of melancholy which most people have when looking backward, at least I don't glory in it. I am not afraid of death or, more precisely, being a light-headed and frivolous creature, I do not care about it, perhaps I do not even believe in it, although the death notices of my contemporaries remind me of it, one after the other. My imagination is not good enough, or perhaps it is too vague or too half-hearted to allow me to imagine my own death. (Nevertheless I try to save money, to the extent at least that my carelessness with it lets me, so that my family should have something after I die.) Thus, I shed no tears for my past—for that half-wasted past—nor am I afraid of death. In one word, for the idea that what exists, will be no more. Is that so extraordinary? The equilibrium due to wise old age? Which is upset by a sleepless night or a badly heated room? By a dispute in the next room? By the eczema of his dog? Which is upset by a lie read in the newspaper? Taking notice of the huge and complex mechanism of this world, lubricated with blood and tears, it is still shaken by the creaking of the smallest wheel, and produces its smiles only as long as everything goes well? God bless you, merry and mild old age!

I have often said good-bye. Those whom I left behind mostly failed to realize it, while I turned the knife in my side for years with ridiculous zeal. Fortunately, my forgetfulness closed the wounds sooner or later, together with the knife, hence my comparatively calm conscience. But when the scar is torn open, shame pours out like pus. Fortunately again, it soon stops, my body fluids have already run dry; I get more and more indifferent towards others and towards my own past as well, I actually can't remember when I cried for the last time. Maybe it was in 1957, in prison, feeling sorry for myself.

As I mentioned before, I am seventy-three. In that time, humanity has piled up a quantity of things to be ashamed of, large enough to upset the world, provided this globe were responsive to moral and rational argument.

In my own personal life, I contributed my share, in pace, quantity and quality to this zealous activity of my kind. However, since I try to establish my scale of values according to moral standards—particularly since things have been working out better for me (but I shouldn't slander myself: I have always tried to do this)—so, in short, since I am a moralist in both my private and public life I consider myself to be many times more guilty than the majority of my contemporaries, in fact than most of the people I know, who find it easier to live according to their less high and therefore more humane standards. I am less lenient with my own errors, but fortunately, here too, my forgetfulness helps. I mention as an example that I don't bear any anger in myself against anybody because of the three hard years spent in prison, neither against those who delivered judgment nor against those who carried it out; and I felt like that from the moment I left the prison at Vác, and got into the cab, sitting next to my wife, on the way home. And even if—during those three years—I was sometimes overcome with anger, disgust and horror, I extinguished them on the spot even before I had time to forget them. Is it cowardice, or half-heartedness? A spongy character perhaps? But right to this day—provided I dig out my memories—I have never forgotten the moments when, in the court-room, when sentence was pronounced, in prison or in the prison-hospital, I behaved in an unmanly way according to my own scale of values; the blood still rushes to my face. That much as an excuse. It isn't much.

And what about a final examination of accounts, today or tomorrow? I won't do it. I am unwilling to draw the unavoidable conclusions. What for? Should I upset the equilibrium which I achieved so painfully? For the profit of others? You cannot help others that way, even though you handed them over the experiences of a lifetime. For my own profit? It's too late. If I am able to maintain my present state of equilibrium without being upset by a twist of history or an unexpected accident in my private life, then I shall possibly do no harm to anybody any more. But I have no desire to face and then to answer the question, what harm I did to others and to myself in my youth, my sweet youth, and later, in the prime of my life. With my sensitivity of old age, I couldn't bear it. To put it more precisely, that is, more honestly, I couldn't endure it unless I were made indifferent by old age, holding me with its two narcotic hands as I started for the witness box to put myself the question. In the shadow of my imminent or remote death, my inquisitiveness decreases all the time, my circles get ever tighter. A sound-proof glass plate gradually glides between myself and the world.

So I walk back, behind the house, along the flowerbed under the two

maple-trees I love so much. On my right I pass three red carved granite blocks with air-holes for a cellar, which people around the Balaton call *soul holes*, and which in Hungarian comes near to being a pun on breathing, which we put there—pushing, lifting these works of art, weighing several hundredweight, with the help of levers—so that guests should have something to ask about. Now follow three low steps, then a white gravel-walk gently ascending, which leads me to a further set of steps, behind the garage and, up towards the right, under the pink arc of a rambler rose, into the larger back garden; where at that time, during my morning inspection tour, there is much pleasure which can be registered, though less than sorrow. It is here I smoke my daily cigar, or at least half of it. Behind the high lilac hedge of the garden are the vineyards. In a melodious order they march slowly up the slope of Tamáshegy, accompanied by nut and almond-trees, towards the small forest which hides the peak of the hill from me, which in turn conceals the range of the Bakony mountains. There is but a single house above us, some way away; a little white house, from the open window of which a fair wind occasionally brings us the sound of a piano. Some hundred yards further, level with the white house, a wooden weekend-house was built last year, but only its roof can be seen above the crowns of the trees.

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It was in our old Budapest flat in Báthory Street—where a large paper warehouse took fire in the yard—from the open corridor of the third floor I could inspect the first sea of flames in my life, which was followed within half a century by Budapest set repeatedly alight, the last sea of flames as far as I am concerned, I hope—when I was three or four years old, that in my parents' absence, I discovered the key of the pantry and swallowed a few preserved cherries which I took out of an open jar. Next day my mother found their stones in my stool. I received a moral education, my father, though a lawyer, was an honest man, my mother blushed even in her old age when she told a lie, so asking me for an explanation couldn't be avoided. However, I think my mother burst out laughing during the interrogation (do I remember it like this, or did she tell me the story later?) at the sight of my astonished face: how did they find out that I had stolen them? We led a regular middle-class life, but we certainly didn't count the cherries left in an opened jar. According to her virtuous though positivistic disposition, my mother did not misuse the situation by referring to God's inspiration or the all-knowing maternal heart; softly, in plain words, she explained to me the relationship between cherry stones and

logic—in the same way in which she much later enlightened me on sexual questions. Perhaps—perhaps?—this was the origin of my subsequent and frequent rebellions against logic, which made me fall into sin so often by abstract, that is, unnatural outbreaks.

As a reminder for myself too: I mention this early little incident in my life as typical of my education, though, of course, in absolute uncertainty about the role—if any—it assumed in the further development of my personality. Whatever did happen, and whatever is happening with and around me today, I can only approximate its importance, its reason and its aim; my overall, or let's say, sterile reservations—in the scales of a never-resting balance—prevent me, thank God, from passing any kind of judgment. I may feel drawn towards one side or the other, but I take up no position, except in my moods of passion—but these I reject. Thank God, I say again, the *cunctator* cannot act as a model in our age which rushes by resolutely with the speed of light, where the aeroplanes passing the sound barrier hurt only our ear-drums, and not too much either, since we have turned deaf. Nevertheless, in this relative calm above the lake, I can still imagine the astonished face of the little boy when his unsuspecting deceptive conscience was first confronted with reality, the criminal depths of which are almost as unfamiliar to me today as they were then. It was the crisis-model for the accidents of my subsequent life.

— —

A tree-frog is talking on the tree above me. The area around the garden is a drought-stricken desert, so they are gathering here, where they can smell the scent of abundant daily irrigation. In the evening, when we open one of the doors towards the garden, we do it most carefully and slowly, so as not to crush any one of the gang sitting in front of our threshold; and at times like this, turning their tails on us with their strained, long hind legs they jump aside in a star pattern and disappear in the dark. But they are most lively in daytime too, occasionally they don't stop jabbering even for a quarter of an hour. I wish I could express my thoughts as fluently! I am still sitting here, under the prunus, still sitting at the beginning of my inspection tour, trying to express the inexpressible—our hopeless love of life and our senseless horror of death.

It is only around the end of August, but on the crest of the hill above the little white house rust is already eating into the forest, while the nut-tree in front of the house—it can be seen from here—has lost its leaves through the drought. Fortunately the vast vineyards on the slope are still green,

except for some poorly tilled light-coloured strips, which affront me as much as—looking back on them—the abortive, barren phases of my life.

The fertility of human life is also a moral category. Obviously the most ancient one, and in its primitive form—childbirth—the most charming and heart-stirring. That of productive work too, as long as its rhythm is proportionate; this sense of proportion of ours was upset by our "progressing" civilization—I say it quietly so the apostles of progress with their artificial kidneys and hearts and electronic brains won't hear me. When is human life sterile? Instead of a definition: when it fails to give satisfaction. Even the idler lives a productive life, if his idleness makes him happy and does not hurt others. Of course, not according to social standards, but, after all, these are but of secondary validity.

Sterility is a distortion of our life rhythm. But then—I ask, rocking placidly in my uncertainty—are those moments sterile when we lose ourselves?

I was able to experience such moments in two different ways: in love and in gambling. These were the only two traps which stopped the cerebral activity of my censor, operating day and night, tiresome, exasperating and tedious. Love is a socially licensed luxury of our life, but gambling? Glancing backward, even in my present uncertainty, I think these recurrent gambling bouts of my life, these acute spasms of losing myself have been sterile both in relation to my work and my happiness; that is what the intellect suggests, but is it all-knowing? Gambling was my drink, my marijuana. One of the worrying symptoms of senescence is my growing loss of interest in cards. As many as six months may pass before I sit down to play poker with two friends and my wife, and by dawn I am worn out.

It took me five or six minutes to get from our flat in Wesselényi utca, where my father committed suicide, to the Otthon Club of writers and journalists in Esterházy (today: Pushkin) utca. Since, worse luck, the baccarat-room only opened at six o'clock in the evening, I had to pass the time in the smaller card-rooms with the regular routine games, which I certainly played rather poorly, and of course I lost; but in reality, I was only interested in gambling—not in the least in the journalists who were there. From the lofty peak of my literary pride I didn't care to notice their unimportant scribbling in return they won my money with innocent hearts, but as soon as I turned the corner into Esterházy utca, my legs and my stomach began to tremble.

Oh what a large number of my dead come out from these cardrooms now across the lawn towards the lilac hedge, where they disappear one by one in the wind-beaten green dusk. Are they perhaps inspecting the vine-

yards on the other side of the hedge through the sockets of their eyes, gauging the vintage to be expected? He struck it rich, they're sure to say to each other. This vineyard also belongs to him?—No, he's only going to buy it next year.—If he lives to see it!—Oh, he'll live to be a hundred!—We took the boy for a mug, and now the laugh is on him!

I am actually a long way from laughing at them, at their small skeletons passing by invisibly, all of them carrying on them some of my dust, as fallible and sinful as the one they manured our acres with. I watch these more or less charming scoundrels, impostors, blackmailers, adventurers, the small ones and the big ones, the cream and the scum of Budapest journalism, and I feel ashamed that, in secret, I still have a higher opinion of myself than of them. Was I more useful, or less harmful? Who knows? Maybe, there's no definite answer to this. What I have accomplished so far and what I am still going to accomplish will be blown to the winds by the next century. Nevertheless I hope to have learned better than they did how to reject my appropriate tables of the law and to show more humility towards mankind. Since I hardly believe that I shall need their society in the future, I can honour them from afar without any major risk.

And must my dead be honoured anyway! *Nihil nisi bene?*... By no means—one may speak ill of them more straightforwardly than of the living who still need forbearance. Of that dear little Uncle Erdős, for instance, at the head of the funeral march, whose skeleton is obviously just as unwashed as he was in his lifetime, but probably less smelly than his smoke-pickled mouth was, with the cigar-stump hanging from his black teeth, his dirty-nailed hand, his greasy jacket which seemed to have absorbed all the stench of the hell of humility.

The small parasites of the gaming room were divided into two main categories: the cheeky hoodlums and the humble mendicant friars. Uncle Erdős belonged to the latter. At two or three in the afternoon he came shuffling in his muddy elastic-sided boots to the *Otthon*, where he met the charwomen on the staircase, who were leaving after finishing their work; and at four or five or six in the morning he shuffled out of it, with the stump in his mouth, one step behind the last dead-broke gambler shown out by the staff with cordial yet energetically urging looks. In that time, Uncle Erdős had earned enough for his afternoon and evening coffee, and he even had one or two crowns to take home for his other needs.

I ask myself, how it was possible that I never exchanged as much as a word with this dear little curious skeleton? Was it possible that my passion for gambling controlled my curiosity to that extent? Did he have a wife, and a family? I met him daily, sometimes he was sitting for hours

behind me as a "tactful" kibbitzer, who disappeared without being told, if I had bad luck, apparently never regretting the time he invested in me, and I never questioned him about his life outside the "combat area." He was renowned as a "bad kibbitzer," there were gamblers who stopped playing while he passed by their table, others preferred to give him a chip worth two crowns on condition he took up his quarters at the other end of the room. As far as I know, Uncle Erdős never rebelled, he was like a humble old clerk bearing the caprices of the bosses with patience. Peace to his little tormented soul!

The "modest ones" were in a minority; they were mostly old men, with a career unknown to me behind them and an early death ahead of them. They lived peacefully around us, and lived on us. The other main group was the more numerous gang of humbugs who concealed the failure of their lives behind a self-confident behaviour, they even had a sense of humour and occasionally stood on their hind legs when facing their bread-givers; of course, they tapped them for far higher amounts and finally earned much more than the humble old ones. They ordered fine dinners which they ate —sometimes on credit—mostly on the sly in some less frequented room of the Club, and scratched their way towards their future grave with far fewer working hours than people in offices, though with no less effort, yet apparently as free men. Some of them were of a more or less advanced age, but most of them were young and cocky and they coiled their existence around the necks of their victims with irresistible zest.

To chase them off, as bad kibbitzers? Out of the question, their self-assurance wouldn't permit it. They were either offended or they began to argue. The "kibbitzer-money" was their due, they were ruthless in recovering it after a winning stake, irrespective of the fact that the victim has already lost ten times as much or was going to lose that much more. If he resisted—for the victims were not born today either, at least not all of them—even their mother's honour was fair game in the days to come, until the next "kibbitzer-money" was paid. Pardon was granted only to a few bigwigs, to members of the Club staff, to "big" pressmen, to respectable Club guests such as public figures, businessmen, police officials and to those members of the profession who were stronger and more dangerous even than they and who were known to be able to break their thin neck at any moment without any major effort. This is why they were pitiable even in their triumphant moments when they stepped out on the pavement of Esterházy utca in the morning, with a banknote of twenty or fifty crowns in their pocket, a self-sufficient smile in the wrinkles of their soul and a deadly tiredness on their face.

Enwrapped in tobacco smoke, their skeletons are marching through the sunlit lawn towards the lilac hedge behind which they are going to vanish for ever from the frivolous memory of mankind. They are enwrapped in that very same, nearly fifty-year-old tobacco smoke in the whirls of which we were sitting, twelve of us, around the big green baccarat table, with Uncle Erdős among us who was ready to cede his place for one pengő in cash, and young Móric Tóbiás with his trimmed moustache who did it as a favour, for a winning stake of five pengős, in favour of some late-comer with a fatter wallet. Of course, none of them could know who was actually the victim of the other, neither the "tapped" one, nor young Tóbiás with his cocksure smile. It could happen that the ceded place scored eight and the man with the fat wallet left with his wallet still fatter, while poor Tóbiás as a standing player, lost his shirt somewhere around the table; on the other hand, it occurred frequently that the victim lost his last penny on the place he had bought, while Tóbiás with a sneering smile watched his unsteady departure from afar.

He came to Budapest as a Transylvanian refugee, to the best of my recollection, together with his family, but whether he had any other livelihood besides the gambling table, I couldn't tell. I didn't talk to him about private matters, just as little as I did to Uncle Erdős. Within the Club he lived a comparatively orderly life, he was always carefully shaved, neatly dressed, his brown eyes were shining when he arrived and when he left; he rarely stayed later than eight or nine o'clock in the baccarat-room. During that time he regularly earned the 20–30 pengős he—and his family?—needed. Whether he ever brought any capital of his own to start the game with, was not known; true enough that when the bankers happened to be on the winning side and the punters fell out one after the other, little Tóbiás, with his moustache bristling, swore in a subdued voice, but audibly, at the other end of the room, in such a nerve-wracking way or complained about his bad luck so pritifully that there was always at least one of the winning bankers who restored to him, from the heap of chips, the sum which young Tóbiás was supposed to have lost in his bank, that is, more than double of what he had in cash when he came.

He was most resourceful not only in matters of extortion, but also as a gambler. When he saw that the bank was winning, while the punters had a black day, he made a sharp turn and became co-banker himself. "What about a partnership, dear governor?" he whispered to the banker and offered him a chip of two pengős. Supposing that the bank started with two hundred and, after some winning coups, withdrew with two thousand, Tóbiás had already won his daily twenty. If the banker lost a few coups at

the beginning and had to "renew" several times, Tóbiás disappeared for a while from the baccarat-room. To find him and make him fork out his stake would have been just as hopeless as to find a mole in his underground gangway.

All in all, this came to a total of 600–800–1,000 pengős a month—some ten years later Attila József would have been happy to earn two hundred.* Why do I still look without resentment, though with some contempt and with as much pity on this vociferous, handsome moustached little skeleton who was able to change his distant-born highland wit so skilfully into the shiftiness of Budapest gambling dens. You poor chap—I say to myself—you could have done very well in an ordinary honest job, if your fate had not proved stronger than yourself. Did you feel all right when, after your daily success, you left the baccarat-room with 20 or 30 pengős in your pocket—never later than eight or nine o'clock—had your dinner alone in the dining-room of the Club and then went to the room for routine games for ten cheap hands of "casino," of course only with someone less competent than yourself. With me, for instance, who, by that time, had already lost those few hundreds I was able to mobilize for that day at the price of unspeakable torment, together with a further two or three hundred borrowed from Miksa, the hoarse croupier. The act of handing over to Tóbiás the last five or six pengős that were left in my pocket provoked a genuine feeling of relief: the satisfaction of complete defeat and final humiliation. The only way to crown it was to owe the price of my supper and coffee to the headwaiter.

Nevertheless, I don't think little Tóbiás was happy, happiness being understood as the attainable state of equilibrium of the soul. No more than the other ten or twenty little moles, short of any other living, but bound more securely by the gambling rooms of the *Otthon* than were the peasants by the soil—the day-labourer getting 80 fillérs or 1 pengő a day, or the workers, the unemployed intellectuals and the inhabitants of the railway trucks by the city. Of course, I won't deceive myself: most of my dead from the *Otthon* came out the unavoidable refuse of gambling dens, and it was certainly not the state of the nation, unemployment, terrorist groups nor red-baiting and anti-Semitism which led them astray; just as I too didn't run through my paternal inheritance—the legal share of the apartment house in Wesselényi utca—out of despair provoked by wages of 80 fillérs a day. My depravity was not initiated by the tragic aspects of reality, it had a reason, as I mentioned, that was more superficial and more profound at the same time: the loss of an illusion. It is not to be investigated here, how far youthful naïveté and heedlessness, as well as lack of informa-

* Reference to a well-known line by the poet Attila József (1905–1937).

tion about the world, contributed to the way the illusion was conceived, to which by the way more significant and better trained minds have often fallen victim. Irrespective of its rightness, every great loss shakes the very foundations of one's soul. Now I think that if I try hard, I might overtake at eighty the twenty-years-olds of today, as far as common sense and knowledge of men and of the world are concerned. Like them, I begin to read the newspapers on their last page, at the sports column. Like them, I despise the credulity, the loquacity and the sentimentality of their fathers—of myself. But I still have a lot to learn.

The fact that my escape from the shock led me precisely to cards was, of course, due to an inborn disposition too. I was still a student at the Commercial College, when I was already playing pontoon under the desk, particularly during religious instruction; after school, we often sat on the benches on nearby Parliament Square to continue to gamble; as early as that, I acquired the necessary funds in a cross-eyed way, every now and then stealing a crown from my father's wallet. Yet, however suspiciously and even malevolently I regard myself, I didn't belong to the category of real gamblers: gambling was primarily a medium of escape—a craven sort of escape, I admit, recurring in other difficult phases of my life too; and I was addicted to it as fiercely and stubbornly, with the same stern sense of duty, as I was to the other and far greater passion of my life, writing. Another way of escape, if you like to put it like that.

So we were sitting, twelve punters, around the egg-shaped baccarat table, on our numbered seats; the thirteenth, in the middle seat, the banker, who had acquired by auction the right to hold the bank; opposite to him was Miksa, the hoarse croupier, the only solid and disciplined citizen among us, with a long, thin sword-shaped wooden implement in his hand for dealing the cards and handling the chips. He pulled out the cards from a longish little "coffin" standing in front of him. At one of the tapering ends of the table, on a somewhat higher seat offering an overall view of the whole scene, there was an umpire, usually a little black sports journalist called Olti; as far as I know and remember, he spent six to eight hours daily there for decades, obviously for a salary paid by the Club. It is not worth mentioning that every now and then he also received a chip from a winning banker as a proof of attention; let's hope that his fair awards were not affected by it.

Behind our seats, in rows of threes and fours, topsy-turvy struggling for a breath of air like deportees in a cattle truck, there were the host of the damned, without any seat left; as a matter of fact, they were mostly not at all eager to get a seat, since they dropped in only for one or two "sure" coups they were going to fish out of a lucky punter series, often at the price

of one or two hours of nervous waiting. Everybody smoked. The smoke streamed around the ceiling lamps like marsh vapour. Lungs inhaled smoke instead of breath. On top of it, the sour sweaty smell of anxiety. The alternating rhythm of noise and silence, like heartbeats: when cards were dealt the silence was comparable to that preceding the delivery of judgment—even behind the padded door one could hear an oath or an outburst of laughter from the next room; then, at the sight of the turned up cards, there followed such a sigh from the heart, a dilatation of lungs, stomach and bowels, a strain of the vocal chords that in this suddenly rising noise you could hear the words of your immediate neighbour.

"Six points for the bank!" said the croupier hoarsely.

Then the hated sound—the wooden sword rakes round the table to prevent the stakes being taken back, after all Olti cannot have his eyes everywhere; the chips glide jingling to Miksa. He arranges them in small heaps and rows, according to their colour; meanwhile my poor little dead give vent to their repressed passion, in a subdued voice or aloud, ragingly or courteously, abusing their own stupidity or the losing "hand" or the banker or fate. At the same time, they prepare for the next coup, pulling out of their sweaty pocket the last bit of cash left, or trying to coax out of the neighbour's wallet the last possible loan of ten or twenty pengős with the oath—"you'll get it tomorrow, I swear it on my mother's life." The banker has just scored eleven, one after the other; trees cannot grow up to the sky, after all.

"He may just as well go up to twenty-one. You won't stop him! One simply doesn't play in a banker's series!"

"How could I know?"

"And what do you think, why didn't I stake as much as a single copper on his second coup?!"

"Now go on, only twenty pengős... I swear..."

"What do you take me for, my boy? You don't mean to say, that you will give it back tomorrow?..."

The standing rows grow thinner, the people escape from the banker's series and go either into the neighbouring room, to the more sedate pocket of the "routine" players, for a minor loan, or down to the cloakroom, out on to the street, never to come back again to this goddamned place, that is, not later than tomorrow. One of the two Mandler twins kicks the chair angrily and runs out of the room. I think one of the two, or perhaps both of them, were working for the *Pester Lloyd** and they looked so much like

* Semi-official daily paper (1854–1944), published in German. Published primarily to inform foreign opinion, it was also much read in Hungary.

each other that they could not be told apart unless they were together; in case of embarrassing debts either of them could safely absent himself for a few days knowing for sure that the creditor was going to try to recover his money from the other. Móric Tóbiás is running to and fro around the table with dishevelled hair, cursing in hissing tones, although he is most likely engaged in the bank too with two pengős, so that his losses, if any, have been reimbursed already twenty times over. Fat Rábi watches the upset crowd, smiling over his whole huge face; immediately before the end of the Commune he fled to Austria, near Savanyúkút, and passed a night in the attic above our flat. He never played; he couldn't afford it, he said, because the Club barber took away all his money for shaving the extensive surface of his face. Hardly more skinny was the pleasant "fat Lukács," police reporter of—or was it *Világ Újság?*—who, on the contrary, was a most passionate gambler; he is running out of the room now, directly to the W.C., to the old cleaner who, for one pengő, allows herself to be touched under her skirt—according to a gamblers' superstition this is as good as life insurance. Farther on, towards the end of the room, Titusz Várkonyi, a correspondent of *Világ*, is baying from his sick lungs with a tragical expression on his face; the doctors said he ought to have been in the grave long ago, but he obviously prefers to spend his time in the smoke-bath of the *Otthon*. Everyone knows that in the morning, when he leaves for his flat in Kelenföld—one of the last to go home—he takes his money in chips so as not to spend it during the day; it is even said that he hides them in a hole in the ground in his garden, to stop his wife laying hands on them and having them cashed at the pay-office of the *Otthon*. Karinthy and Kosztolányi* stand behind me—rare visitors to the *Otthon*. Kosztolányi has already lost all his money. "Give me another ten," he whispers to Karinthy, "I'll try once more." But Karinthy is inexorable. Since I am sitting with my back turned to them, I cannot see Kosztolányi's nervous round face exhibiting to the world his childish despair with more frankness than mine.

"Ten pengős more please, for the last time. . ."

"I won't," says Karinthy. "You are going to lose it anyway."

"I won't lose it. I shall win, on my word of honour!" says Kosztolányi. A unique pledge even in the implausible history of gambling, one worthy of poets and prophets.

Neither a poet nor a prophet, I did not believe that I would win. But what was it that I believed?

* Frigyes Karinthy and Dezső Kosztolányi were two of the most important writers of the period between the wars.

The room is seething. At the news of the long bank series which spreads in a moment through all rooms of the *Otthon* other curious people turn up, unselfish connoisseurs interested in the spectacle only; gamblers waiting for the end of the banker's luck and beginning to play when the punter —according to the theory of probability—hits back; in the front line there are the bigger and smaller bargain-hunters gathering around the "basket" of the withdrawing banker, with their hands stretched out, such as Uncle Erdős with the cigar-stump in his mouth, or those suggesting a loan saying that their whole salary has gone to the dogs in the bank, or those again who stand wordless with the stern face of a creditor, waiting for the banker to refund them at last the 1,000–2,000–5,000 pengős he owed them for weeks or possibly for months, usurious interest included. I notice the self-satisfied face of Sándor Incze, the editor of *Színházi Élet*, a connoisseur enjoying the sight with a delight in art, without playing himself; his own business is a safer one: he was the first in Hungary to retail the virtues, charms and private lives of actresses in newsprint. The greasy ruddy face of Sándor Nádas, editor of *Pesti Futár*, also shines in the picture; he isn't playing either, concealed blackmailing being a safer livelihood than open risks. Vilmos Tarján, the famous reporter of *Az Est*, stands next to him, with a monocle in his eye. It was he who before the proclamation of the Commune had written a famous report on the Remand Prison—where, some decades later, I also spent a more or less long time on two separate occasions—in which he told of the beating up of Béla Kun and his fellow prisoners. The description of Kun's bleeding shaved head provoked the sympathy of the public and was thus—according to Sándor Nádas—indirectly responsible for the rise to power of the Communists. The two newspapermen had such a quarrel on this subject once that the whole *Otthon* rang with the sword clash. Andor Peterdi is is also here, the poet of *Népszava;* he plays rarely and with little money, but unfortunately dislikes losing on this earth, where man is doomed to lose. And here I see Imre Békesi, the financial columnist, almost as fat as I saw him two years later, in Vienna, in the emigration, where he gained an international reputation for Hungarian journalism; his shameless blackmailing in his Viennese paper *Die Börse* attained a qualitative and quantitative level high enough to be recorded by the pen of Karl Kraus, the greatest satirist of our century.

And I see them... The procession is still moving towards the lilac hedge, enwrapped in a cloud of tobacco smoke impermeable even to the virginal morning sunshine of the Balaton.

"Give me those miserable twenty pengős!"

"I've told you already, not to play in a banker's series."

"And what if the bank withdraws?!"

"Let him go! It's not my money he carries off!"

"And then you get a new banker, with two hundred pengős, and I, on a No. eleven seat, won't get any of it! You can ruff as you like, no use!"

"Why did you play in the banker's series?"

"Because I'm not as clever as you are. Now give me those miserable twenty pengős, will you?!"

Sudden silence. Even the Almighty in heaven holds his breath, although he ought to know. The croupier was already dealing.

A hoarse voice: "Eight for the punter!"

Little Tóbiás with the close-cropped moustache alarms the banker with lively gestures. After a long bank series, any experienced banker will withdraw after the first losing coup, or else the bled punters soon swallow back the winnings. It is clear by now, that Tóbiás has a share in the bank, he nervously plucks his moustache. The banker makes a sign to the croupier.

The hoarse voice: "The basket please!"

The cashier brings the big basket. It is filled with chips to overflowing; banknotes on top. The banker is already pushing back his chair and, with the basket in his arms, he is off to a distant table, a long procession of kibbitzers, followers and tax gatherers at his heels—Uncle Erdős in the rear—who are going to help him in the intoxicating work of sorting the chips and working out the winnings, while keeping an eye on him. Meanwhile the auction for the new bank has already started—one never knews, perhaps the series is going, you never can tell... Tarján gets the bank. A voice: "I'm admitted, governor?" Tarján puts his monocle in his eye. "One half?" "Too much. A quarter." "All right, let's see the cash!" Tarján says, as he sits down in the banker's chair. "Put the money for three renewals here on the table!" "You think I'll skip off?" "One never knows!"

Tarján abandoned journalism some time later and took over the management of the Café New York, then subsequently that of another and of a third restaurant; I don't know why he changed occupations.

I don't regret the time I spent gambling and at roulette tables, perhaps I needed to play—for several reasons. In several phases of my life I have been overcome with an unappeasable hunger for cards, once for a shorter and once for a longer time. I played in the Casino of the Lido, in Venice, but had enough after a night, although I was winning; in Baden near Vienna I played for two nights and hadn't any money left for the third one; in Monte Carlo I gambled away my fine future as a stamp-dealer; two or three times I appeared with varying luck in Bad Homburg near Frankfurt. Of

course it was in Budapest that I played most often and for the longest time, in the *Otthon*, sometimes in the *Fészek*, but in less respectable circles as well. In the *Otthon* I served my time during two major gambling periods, rather distant in time from one another; maybe the actors are muddled up in this backward look. As I grow older, the brake of self-control is steadily improving, other impulses are calming down as well. On the rare occasions that I play roulette, I am able to leave not only as a winner, but as a loser as well, with some money left in my pocket, if—in my wise opinion—I've lost enough; it may even happen that I have time and money and still I prefer to return to my hotel, watching the floodlit river Main from my window, instead of going to the Casino. I needed to play only—is it self-justification?—when, for one reason or another, I wasn't working; looking back on my life seems to confirm this.

The real gambler never sits down with the intention to win. He only wants to win back. Indirectly, I might put it like this: he wants to get his own back for some injury he has suffered, maybe for his whole miscarried life. Each successfully ended night is a victory, true, only a temporary one, because next day it demands to be continued for the sake of final justification. He may win the next day and the third day too—he's in great shape—but he will finally be defeated, you can only retaliate when you're hurt, things can't be made well again. Not unhappy love, nor sexual inadequacy. Humiliations in life—whether they are practical blows in your career or in your work, or even if they hit you merely in your consciousness through mocking your ambition—cannot be endured unless you hit back, even though you are sure of defeat. The real gambler knows in advance that he is going to fail, and hits back all the more furiously. We might ask now, why do I spend so much energy in defining the figure of the gambler and in analysing his psychology: it is because I think that gambling, like the category of the particular in aesthetics, discloses a psychological focus permitting one to draw valid conclusions about the general morphology of the human soul and furthermore about social existence. In my opinion extraordinary circumstances, such as war, danger to life, prison, force the original pattern of the soul to the surface, disentangling it from the skin layers of civilization (which are equally developed by the human soul); in the same way, I think, the gambler shows man clearly as he is. It is a lesson, if you wish to put it that way; although, looking at no more than our twentieth century, I cannot find that these lessons were of any use to us—unless perhaps they helped us qualitatively and quantitatively to perfect methods of exterminating and injuring the human race. I remember a Greek myth from my childhood, it was about the rivalry of two smiths. One of them

manufactured swords, the other armour. However hard the armour, treated as it was with mysterious agents, the swords were always sharper and split it, the last one together with the armourer's head.

The real gambler protects himself with a fence of superstitions against the world of everyday logic; I think this might show once more that he sinks back into, or rises from, layers of prehistoric man, at least while the game goes on. I have already mentioned some superstitions, they are general. That about the bad kibbitzer or, in prehistoric language, about the harmful demon is international, I have met it even in Monte Carlo. But there were private superstitions too, of course. Only sit down at the baccarat table cleanly shaven! Piss before beginning to play! If an antipathetic "hand" takes the cards, don't stake anything on it! Step over the threshold of the Club with your right foot first or else you will be certain to lose all your money; if you forgot, you had better turn round and come back in an hour! Don't pay debts while playing, even if you have your pockets full of chips and the creditor is down. Nor should you give a loan during the game, that is, don't play against your own money, because it will take vengeance. Arriving at the corner of Esterházy utca, mark time three times before continuing on your way. To sleep with a woman before playing involves danger to life, whereas touching the sexual organs of a woman with an indifferent heart is sure to bring you luck. Eat moderately, before you start playing, but certainly do not eat boiled beef! And I could go on! The private superstitions obviously take their origin from a consensus of fortuitous individual experiences, while the public ones arise from the subterranean knowledge of a community; both refer back to the primeval forest. Fortunately, the habit of human sacrifice was not practised in the *Otthon*, nor did we cut the throat of a first-born living kid at an altar erected near the entrance of the baccarat-room, before beginning to play. A sign of progress, anyway!

What else is the sum total of superstitions than an anxious attempt at defence against unknown forces greater than myself? I must add that unfortunately it is my opinion that all our future knowledge, from the Earth and to the other side of the Moon, will be inadequate to protect us against the fear of the unknown, in the last resort against the fear of death. Our defence will perhaps have a more civilized aspect, its averting gestures will perhaps be more rarely needed—although even this is doubtful, see Auschwitz, Vietnam, A-bomb, etc.—but the irrational element cannot be definitely eliminated from the life of the individual, nor that of society. Just watch the gambler, the man exposed to danger, in his stripped state of mind: he presents a portrait of the primitive savage in permanent danger.

His gestures are incoherent, he is on edge and irritable, he smells danger everywhere, he reacts to alleged injuries with excessive outbursts of passion since he feels hurt because of his whole threatened existence; he rejects obvious explanations since their merely logical content fails to satisfy him, he does not accept any strange advice since it originates from a sphere other than his own; all the gamblers present are his potential enemies, his whole environment is suspect, because a bank series may jump at him out of its jungle. He is cunning and vindictive: the arms of defencelessness. His foresight ends together with the game; the question "what of the morrow?" is answered by anxiety, the way a savage reacts to the continuous threats of his demons. Nobody but his tribal sorcerer, with the fierce superstitions he inspires, can save him.

Of course, I am not talking about the disciplined professional gamblers who have learned every psychological trick of their trade and accomplish their work as calmly as a hangman does the hanging. There are few of them; it's no easy job and requires nerves of steel and a great reserve of power. They do not belong to the so-called "great" players, to the apparent masters of the Club; they are so-called "petty" gamblers who nevertheless earn their daily-weekly-monthly living with absolute certainty and, in addition to their working capital, put aside a certain amount for their old age as well. Of course, there is nothing positive to be known about this, no more than about those petty political agents and spies—not the Asevs and the Richard Sorges—who retire without sensation, prison and death sentence, conscious of an honestly accomplished job.

So I think I really do not regret the time idled away in gambling, the only thing I regret is my wasted honour. However, the two kinds of waste are probably meshed like cog-wheels. With nothing but gambling, without the pressure of immorality I would probably not have been able to climb up into that dimensionless state of self-loss, of self-rejection and of self-destruction I seem to have needed from time to time. The loss of money alone was not a stake high enough to win my salvation and was raised only by the threat of criminal proceedings to a level where it cut to the quick. No, I certainly never cared about money, and I noticed only a few years ago, in my old age, that it is of value and of some use, since the slow decline of my powers makes me feel more and more responsible for others. The question of how to pay for my lunch that day or my rent the next did not bother me when I was young, no more than how my lungs took breath: air exists always and everywhere. If I recall the immoralities of my gambling periods, what really gives me pain is the fact that they were shifty, petty little crimes: endless lies, pawning of borrowed goods, and although

I even took to thieving, I only stole from the family as cowards do, that is, from my defenceless mother, relying upon the shelter of her self-denying love and protecting the theft even against her, by means of lies. Even today I feel ashamed, many years after it happened, if I think about my pretended suicide; my mother couldn't know that a suicide could only be committed or feigned, but not tried.

Should I advance in my defence that only a basically honest soul can recognize a crime, independent of the Ten Commandments prescribed by society? I have referred before to the penal code—perhaps it was out of place. The spheres of virtue and crime vary according to historical periods; in wartime or commanded by an idea, even assassination is permitted. I think there is but one crime which is always a crime; the abuse of the confidence of others. This is what I practised. So, for instance, there was hardly any risk of being reported to the police because of the typewriters I borrowed on various pretexts from my friends and then left in the pawnshop even beyond the day I promised to return them; all the more shameful to have exploited their friendship, counting on this. To preserve the appearance of honesty I still tried all I could to keep my word. If I was unable to raise enough money to redeem a machine, I asked for another from another friend, pawned this one and took out the other, running to and fro with panting lungs, with the double burden of fear and remorse on my back. This excitement—the know-how of tomorrow's money-making—redoubled at the baccarat table the thrill of gambling, for I knew without admitting it even to myself that I was sure to lose all my money by dawn.

Pushing my chips from the right to the left, and back, counting my money to see how long it would last, and looking anxiously for a friend to be tapped for a loan, I gradually fell into a state of something like a trance, where I could lose all contact with palpable and calculable reality. I was stunned by the maniac rhythm of alternate losing and winning. My sense of equilibrium was upset. If I happened to win, I grinned idiotically and felt myself the king of life, if I lost, I was abruptly overpowered with dreary hopelessness. The difference of air pressure due to this fall affected not only my nerves, but my guts as well, and it happened that I had to run to the lavatory every five minutes. Far from being depressed, I was actually exalted by physical indisposition. I felt more and more helpless, and thus rose higher and higher into that frame of mind next to lunacy where you finally let yourself go altogether and begin to float, with every kind of rational thinking switched off. I became intoxicated with loss and despair. In my usual state, my intellect keeps me under dictatorial control, now it was split by schizophrenia: I simultaneously wanted to win

and to lose, to lose everything, so that the pain should come to an end. This was the stage I reached after several hours of hard work, and I threw myself out into the empty void: I wished not only that my mother were dead, to spare her the pain of my disintegration, but also the utter annihilation of my very existence, of all my memories, so as to leave no trace of my painful consciousness on this earth. It wasn't only my money, the stake put on the line, the last chips I wanted to lose, but my very self. But, according to gambling superstitions, you never lose your last money, so I was winning, and the torment was prolonged for another ten or twenty minutes. As the only sign of my instinct for self-preservation, when I returned home, lying in my bed with the quilt pulled over my head, and my knees, like those of a foetus, pulled up to my navel, I imagined in the warm darkness that I was again resting in the womb of my mother; the hallucination was so vivid that I actually believed that I heard the humming noise of blood circulating within the abdominal wall. But I was unwilling to be reborn.

In the morning, after waking up, the sober and more painful part of work was ahead. I had an appointment in the Café Kör on Teréz körút with a usurer who seemed to be willing to buy my share of the inheritance which consisted of a mortgage on the apartment house in Wesselényi utca, or to grant me a loan. By 1919 I was already of age, so I had the right to do this without my mother's permission or that of the court. He was already the third or fourth usurer I turned to; his predecessors were always willing to grant the loan, and then asked me for some money for life insurance, stampduty, medical examination and finally withdrew to their greatest regret. This one seemed to be more reliable, I still remember his friendly huge nose. From the café we actually went to a small private bank, then, after having filled out innumerable blanks, to the insurance company to take out a life insurance policy. From there I was sent again to a doctor, although I already possessed three or four medical certificates complying with regulations. "If I bring it tomorrow," I asked hopefully, "can I get the money?"

"You mean, Sir, if you bring the insurance policy?"

"The insurance policy..."

"You'll get it. Not later than a week after having paid the first instalment."

That's one week! Then back to the bank! Another week, at least. I was on the verge of yielding to despair.

For two weeks—what am I supposed to play with! It was practically impossible to raise new money, since all my friends were poor; wealthy

relatives, such as my Polish-born Uncle Deiches (who changed his name to Delmár), Court interpreter and head-clerk of the Nasici Wood Company (he is dead, and his wife, Aunt Jenny, too), were out of the question since my mother was bound to hear about it; every available typewriter was already in the pawnshop waiting to be redeemed, while the prescription of staying away from the *Otthon* for a single day, let alone two weeks, seemed quite unacceptable. I could possibly have raised twenty or thirty pengős, but as the morphine addict takes steadily increasing doses so did I, I was unable to dope myself with "small" gambling, no to mention that, according to my own superstitions and to common sense as well, you had no chance of winning unless you invested a sufficiently high working capital. With a thousand pengős in your pocket and playing cautiously, with low stakes, you can win, or to be more precise, you have a fair chance of winning five or even ten pengős at the price of exhausting brain work and laborious physical effort—but is it worth while? For somebody, whose stomach and conscience were oppressed by an accumulated loss of ten thousand pengős, a large proportion of which were debts? And then, I repeat: I was not playing to win.

But anyway: what could I have done with my infected time, from 3 p.m. to the morning, without plunging into the smoke of the *Otthon* and into the swarming culture of its gamblers? It was enough to hear their murmuring and hoarse coughing down in the cloakroom, and my liver, my gizzard and my stomach were trembling with excitement.

The only chance: Miksa, the hoarse croupier. I often asked him for, and actually received, loans of several hundred pengős, at the price of a high interest—or rather, for heavy tips, and I always took care to pay if back precisely at the promised time. But now, being at the end of my resources, I had owed him a largish sum for a pretty long time. Miksa most accurately knew the credit standing and the trustworthiness of every *Otthon* member. I thought, the former was exhausted, and the latter worn out.

He was living in Rózsák tere, as far as I can remember, or somewhere near there. He stepped out of his bed to open the door and he was wearing long white underpants. Would he be willing to lend me five hundred crowns?... I was going to receive my share of my inheritance within a fortnight... (I have but a vague recollection of the numerical extent of the sums mentioned here or elsewhere. I couldn't say even approximately whether my inheritance amounted to 10, 20 or 30 thousand pengős. At any rate, it would have been enough for several years of comfortable life and work.)

Miksa knew the world, he was equally good at weighing up the credit

and the honesty of his clients. He estimated the latter higher than the former, the trustworthiness of the debtor being, in his eyes, a better mortgage than his bank deposit. But he was also a sound businessman and didn't hesitate to invest money in dubious enterprises if his business interests required it: more than once, without a flicker, he paid thousands to a banker, whose luck was against him, who—an influential member of the Club—might endanger his position as a croupier. On other occasions he was generous, although he knew that the pocket involved had a hole in it, but he also knew that his debtor had such an important job that in the end he was bound to pay his debts in order to avoid a scandal, even if he had to embezzle the money. I also received the five hundred pengős I asked for, although I had no public function whatsoever. However, all the time we were talking, he didn't put on trousers over his long white underpants.

With the five hundred in my pocket, I had the feeling of being saved! Refreshed in soul and body, I sat down to dinner with my mother and brother, and when my mother complained about rising prices, for instance that the price of salami was again raised by a fillér, I thought—full of sympathy and kindness—that I would soon dispel all her worries and sorrows. At that moment, I couldn't even imagine the footstool near the window, opposite to my seat at the table, from which my father pulled himself up to the window-sill just half a year before. In my newly gained euphoria I was as unmindful of having neither the possibility nor even the hope of normal money-making, as I was of the fact that I didn't write as much as a line for more than a year—that is, what I had secretly staked my life on faded away in my hands, putting up less resistance than thin air. The state of public affairs, the abject poverty all over the country I couldn't help hearing about, the White Terror detachments, one of which arrested me too, the disintegration of the Hapsburg empire, the probable dismemberment of the country after the peace treaty of Versailles—all this chirped behind my back like uninteresting news from some remote continent. I was exclusively preoccupied with the afternoon and the night to come, with the sound five hundred pengős in my pocket; here and there, my debts and some pawned typewriters uneasily growled in the antechamber of my conscience, that was all.

I was going to play carefully, with discipline. I will keep my starting stakes low, so that I will still have cash for recovery in case of losing. With cool-headed, unprecedented discipline I shall not take part in any bank series, but I shall back the subsequent punter tricks with the maximum stakes. I shall keep my presence of mind if I happen to lose temporarily, but if I win—for instance, if my five hundred pengős are doubled—

I will get up in good time. Enough is as good as a feast... Although the upper limit of winnings might be put at three times the starting capital—it's really not an exceptional performance to win a thousand with five hundred. Time will show. There are bank days, when every bank withdraws, and there are punter days when they go to the wall; I shall cleverly adapt myself to the character of the day. You can win on a bank day too if you keep a level head, and you may grow rich on a punter's day if you follow your inspiration.

And I must not forget that I cannot raise any more money for two weeks, until I have touched the loan on my inheritance!

I was in the Club at about three o'clock. From three to six, when the baccarat was due to begin, I decided to act as a kibbitzer in the room for the routine games; I wished to sit down at the baccarat table with a clear head and my capital intact. But superstition also had its share in my decision. It was not only my capital I wanted to spare, but my good luck as well, I did not want to wear it away before its time for the sake of petty winnings of five or ten pengős.

"Ten games of casino, one pengő each?"

Little Tóbiás, with his trimmed moustache, smiled at me modestly, and beckoned to the waiter. A cleaned pack of cards or a new one? Tóbiás knew that he was going to win, and since the winner has to pay for the cards, he ordered a cleaned pack, which is much cheaper. I was annoyed that he took me for granted: today was going to be my winning day!

"A new one, please!" I said to the waiter.

"Why waste the money?"

"It's worth it to me."

Of course, we did not play ten games but, following my request, another ten too, and of course Tóbiás had to pay for the expensive cards. That was my net profit: the malicious joy. But—my self-confidence was slightly injured and one of the 100-pengő bills was leaky as I made my way to the baccarat table. The petty loss of six or eight pengős weighs ten times its own weight on the micro-balance of the soul.

Fortunately I got my favourite place, No. 1, to the right of the banker; it was the most spacious one and I was the first to see the turned up cards. My memory has some difficulty in recalling some of the names from the roll of bankers; they were mostly rich "laymen" who, for a longer or shorter time, got infected with the passion of gambling; they came to the Club for some months, they sometimes won, and lost more often, and then stayed away. There was a hat merchant, a director of a child-welfare organization, the proprietor of a newspaper, a manager of a leather works,

Dani Pécsi, proprietor of a turf newspaper and even of some racers, and Tarján, the only professional journalist I can remember. They included good players, with a lucky hand, and others who never made it; if such a man sat down in the banker's chair, the whole *tableau*, cheering with the smell of victory in their nostrils, murmured thanksgiving prayers.

This time too, the first banker was again an unlucky capitalist, X, the hat merchant, whose advertisements could be found in every newspaper in those times. The first card dealt was for No. 1, that is, for me; if I won, the banker dealt the cards again to me until I lost. Then came No. 2, and No. 3, according to the same scheme of alternating losing and winning. The cards wander round the table, maybe a hundred times a night.

I had the reputation of being a "bad hand." Though even in my wildest gambling periods I tried to preserve myself from the infection of superstitions by evenly feeding the small flame of my intellect, my weakened nerves were not always able to protect themselves efficiently. The anguished savage was reborn in my bowels, and, lost in the lamplit, smoky jungle of the *Otthon*, appealed for help to common magic: Save me! Why must I perish? What is my sin? Veiled in the maniac dimness of gambling and struggling with the question "being or non-being," I thought that the evil spirits were attacking nobody but me—but why?! What did I do to offend them? Others are winning and losing, and I am always losing?

I had no confidence in my hand either. I played the first coup with a low sum, let's say five crowns. Being a "big" player, I couldn't afford a lower stake on my own hand without compromising the ridiculous respect in which I was held. Later, when I shall have gone to the dogs, even stakes of 1 pengő will be admitted, since the gamblers, with their well-known kind-heartedness, feel sorry for the loser and like him: he is losing for them. Gloating is reserved for the downfall of the flukey ones, with sneering, and angling behind a hand held in front of their mouth.

The hoarse voice: "Eight for the bank!"

This loss might be considered as a win: I have backed my own hand with the lowest possible stake, rooting, as it were, against myself. I had a good scent, so my self-confidence increased. Now take care, I said to myself, soberly, with a cool head! Maybe it's the beginning of a banker's series! Nevertheless I staked 5 pengős again, only a small stake, for it's a risky thing not to be in for a possible winning coup—it's too difficult afterwards to catch up with oneself.

The hoarse voice: "Six for the punter!"

Again I did well! The loss was squared! Now, the point is this: will there be an intermittent game, with the regular alternate change of a

banker's and of a punter's coup (you can win on that too, provided you realize the rhythm in proper time), or was a punter's series beginning already? With a view to the banker's universally known bad luck, I voted for the latter. However, I remained cautious and backed the augury with 10 pengős only.

The hoarse voice: "Three for the punter!"

The banker's hand was so bad that one could win against it even with three. So I doubled my stake for the next coup and put another ten pengős to it. We won again. And this winning coup was the starting-point of my misfortune and of all my subsequent losses.

The bank cannot pay more money than it actually holds. The payments begin always at the "hand," in the present case at No. 2, and continue with Nos. 3, 4, etc. So my place, the one behind the hand, was the last to be paid off. But—there was no money left in the bank by that time.

I didn't receive my winnings of 30 pengős. The banker renewed. No. 2 made another six successful coups and although I backed every one, I didn't see as much as a farthing of my winnings. After the eighth, losing coup No. 3 scored four times and again the bank was cleared out before I was paid out. By right, a win of a thousand pengős should have already been mine, for if I had a better seat, I could have backed the two winning series with double stakes.

The banker broke down and left; he lost something like 8,000 pengős, I didn't win a farthing. I was used to misfortune, I was annoyed, but my gambler's discipline sustained no major cracks. And so it remained when the following, luckier banker revenged his predecessor. I sat there as a rock. If I couldn't take part in that this one shouldn't catch me out either.

Strange to say, I have actually learned a great deal of self-discipline in this nerve-racking and upsetting occupation, with self-destruction, the disintegration of my personality and the anaesthetization of my conscience as its subconscious aim and practical result. I ended practically every day with the loss of all my money, but during the first ten or twelve working hours, particularly at the beginning, I defended myself with exemplary moral strength against the very thing I was longing for. With a truly wonderful patience and endurance I was engaged in winning, knowing for sure that I was going to lose. For hours I performed unique spiritual exercises, real acrobatics—losing all but the last pengő, and pushing ahead again from that very last pengő. Sharp-sighted partners didn't fail to notice this. The energy expended in preparing my daily final agony would have been sufficient for freezing the Balaton in midsummer.

By that midnight I had already won three hundred pengős. At 1 a.m.

my winnings were gone. I had to start all over again, already exhausted. My discipline slackened, my joints cracked. It wasn't the gambling room which whirled around me, I was dissolved in its smoke. The remorse: why didn't I stop, when I was winning? I played with always higher stakes, and I lost. I staked my last chip of a hundred pengős on one chance: let's put an end to it! I already got up from my place, which, for eight hours, was hell and paradise for me; the last traces of self-respect—that amalgam of pride and humility melting away by layers during the last months—were utterly burnt out. I recall it exactly, since it repeated itself every day: my whole organism asked only one question: Why go on living? I had only one feeling left in my body: extermination.

The hoarse voice: "Nine for the punter!"

I left the stake. Double or quits.

The hoarse voice: "Nine for the punter!"

I again had four hundred pengős. I sat back. At two after midnight I found my last pengő in my trouser pocket. With the last effort of my brain and my nerves I managed to get up to forty. I staked them together and lost them. Half an hour later I was still sitting in the neighbouring room, sipping a cup of milky coffee which I didn't pay for.

*

I can't tell any more what stopped me. Was it that I couldn't raise any more money after having lost my inheritance? Or that I had had enough of this self-torment? I mean, that vacuum of the soul of mysterious origin, impossible to analyse, comparable to the air pockets of radio waves, which I had to fill, was at last filled up, and I was able to continue to organize my life. As external factors I would mention my love for Olga, and the unbearable atmosphere of the White Terror, which forbade me to work. So I came to Vienna.

GYÖRGY SOMLYÓ

TALE ABOUT THESE AND THOSE

(Always only) this face these clothes this thought
among this furniture with these books in these arms
this lamp this paper this typewriter this hand this voice
this evening this morning this day this night
this air these trees these stars
these memories these desires these reflexes these words

(Why not) those words those desires those reflexes those memories
that motherland those streets that journey
that feeling that body that action those movements
that room that pen that bed those dreams
that day that winter that year that minute
that fate that spectacle that fragrance that goodbye
that thought those clothes that face

Translated by
Edwin Morgan

TALE ABOUT THE MORNING AND THE EVENING

With you I sleep and with you I waken
Unrigged and repeated miracle
Every day's "on the third day"

In front of me you dress in front of me you undress
Morning and evening
like morning like evening
The morning is always the same
morning
There is no *other* evening
only *evening* exists

And while I sleep with you and waken with you
Each day is wiped away again
Each day gone down into the past
Since I have slept with you and wakened with you

Steady-state is my present time

Only the heavenly body at its zenith
Is a safe star in my sky
mornings you rise from the mist
Evenings it is always in my bed you set
Your nakedness fixes my time for me

My dissolute minutes are bound in the chain
Of the days of your body and the nights of your body

First morning journey of my nerves and
Last evening journey

Climate of my character

Geometry of my Einsteinian space

Hurrying moon in my carriage window

Limit number of my variables

In my end is your beginning

You are what I am always becoming
I you

Translated by
Edwin Morgan

DIALOGUE AND DEBATE

LAJOS MARÓTI

MORAVIA'S ADVENTURE IN CHINA

"B: Is it true that you've been to China?
A: Yes, it is.
B: What impressed you most in China?
A: Poverty.
. . . . . .
B: What sentiments did their poverty arouse in you?
A: A feeling of relief..."

Not long ago Alberto Moravia travelled in China and published a book on his experiences in October 1967: *LA RIVOLUZIONE CULTURALE IN CINA ovvero Il Convitato di pietra* (Bompiani, Milano 1967, 197 pp.) It is a disconcerting work despite the fact that the author's programme included no extraordinary adventures. It consisted of sight-seeing tours and walks in Peking, art, conversations, a visit to a working-class family and so on. It is true, that in Peking Red Guardsmen in a procession, and wall-newspapers containing denunciations and appeals provide the background for walks, conversations and excursions; however, we learn nothing more about the cultural revolution than we know already from newspaper reports. What really makes Moravia's Chinese travel diary a disconcerting piece of writing is the author's intellectual and spiritual metamorphosis.

Moravia's principal source of experience in China was the Mao-cult. The subtitle also points to this fact: one evening he and his travelling companion Dacia Marini were asked to a formal dinner at one of the few still existing Chinese restaurants, to have, of course, roast-duck à la Pekinese. Since none of the hosts turned up at the dinner party, the two of them had their dinner in private and ate the special dishes in one of the boxes while outside a loud-speaker, making an infernal noise, kept bellowing Mao quotations. A huge, gilded Mao-statue was in the entrance-hall of the restaurant, and when the author and his companion went past it, his writer's imagination made him think of Don Giovanni: in the present case he, Moravia, representing Don Giovanni, the symbol of Western civilization, dined with the Governor alias President Mao's statue. The author tells of the Maoist personal cult and dogmatism in a series of splendid observations, he reveals its inevitably religious features and shows that any expression of views becomes calcified even on the level of private conversation. The author's conversation with a Chinese writer assisted by three interpreters illustrates the aforesaid: each of them held a selection of Mao-citations in their hand; to any of Moravia's questions his Chinese colleague answered by looking up a passage, and after having pointed to it read it out aloud. Then Moravia searched through his collection of quotations, chose the appropriate antithesis, produced and read it out, and so on.

The "Great Leap Forward," at the bottom of which there is the primitive mass movement of the people's communes and the people's foundries, led to that economic dead-end which—in Moravia's view—is the fundamental cause of the cultural revolution. Its essence, or at least one of its main points, is the rigid anti-Sovietism which is directly due to Mao-Tse-Tung's disillusionment, i.e. to the fact that he expected the Soviet Union, the world's second largest industrial power to share its experts, economic resources, in brief, its wealth with bankrupt China just for the sake of revolutionary solidarity. After Stalin's death Mao expected to become the main ideologist of the socialist camp. However, "... Mao's voluntaristic and grass roots romanticism did not meet with any understanding or solidarity in the Soviet Union"—Moravia writes. Krushchev recalled the Soviet technicians from China. In Mao's view this measure was "merely a developed country's jealousy of its own wealth, and malignant hostility against a poor country... Although an absurdity, it was—and this should be stressed—from their own point of view absolutely logical that they counted the Soviet Union among the western and capitalist countries..."

So far Moravia explicitly puts a distance between himself and the views expounded. In the following, however, an interesting metamorphosis takes place, and after having read the book one is prone to think that Alberto Moravia subscribes to the view that the Soviet Union is nothing more than one of the great powers of the western block and that the irritation of the Chinese people can be understood and is, perhaps, even justified. Moravia jumps at every opportunity to tell the Russians some home truths even at the risk of making some foolish remarks. For example, he concludes his citation-conversation with the Chinese writer as follows: "China, say the Chinese, must rid itself of Soviet influence. In my opinion, it must, first of all, rid itself of socialist realism..."

Moravia's opinion, or rather change of opinion, appears most clearly from the Introduction to the book. Written in the form a dialogue, the introductory chapter is, essentially, a didactic exposition of humanitarian theory, voicing principles unusual nowadays. The interlocuters are *A*, the traveller, that is, Moravia who expounds the new theory and *B*, his partner, a sort of *advocatus diaboli*, who represents prosaic common sense.

The starting point of the discussion between *A* and *B* is China's poverty, which roused such a feeling of relief in Moravia, for it means that on the one hand, rich people do not exist any more in China, while on the other, people are in possession of the essential means of life only (these, however, they possess). It is a sight for sore eyes, because wealth and the excess of surplus goods dehumanizes inasmuch as it deflects man from the meaning of his existence which is "to develop himself within spatial and temporal limits set by himself." Thus, Moravia sees China's misery as a fortunate realization of a desirable, although, maybe, only temporary, Utopia and all the more since, nowadays, both capitalist societies in the West and the Communists attempt to provide the members of society with an overflowing superabundance, and by so doing distort man through "riches," who—argues Moravia in the dialogue—becomes degraded to a consumer for consumption's sake of the goods produced in such overabundance and variety. Consumers are nothing but intestines: just like primitive organisms which consist of mouth, intestinal canal and anus, their only function is to gobble, digest and ease their bowels. It does not matter what they feed on; it is a matter of indifference what kind of earth a rain-worm squeezes through its intestinal duct. "Now, if you are shocked by the terms rain-worm and intestines... should we rather say, the consumer is the connecting link between production and consumption"—Moravia writes.

A human link, but a link all the same, and nothing more. Equally the producer is a link between consumption and production. When all is said and done the producer and the consumer represent the fore part and back part of the rain-worm... If every producer was not a consumer at the same time he would starve to death; on the other hand, in both capitalist and communist countries there are consumers who do not produce; consumption is what really characterizes consumers, hence it might be said that the final outcome of modern civilization is consumption, that is, excrement... Excrement! The body gets rid of the remnants of the digestive process. More is consumed of a greater variety of stuff than possible; the consumer's ideal is consumption itself and, accordingly, he does everything to be up to the mark of his ideal. The final outcome is shit. The consumer society is a producer of excrement..."

In Moravia's view, in an affluent society everybody is a mere manure producer in regard to all aspects of life, including, of course, culture too. The consumption mania is incited, covered, and increased by the production mania. But how is the maniac boosting of production to be explained?

"A: ...the world of production and consumption is so simple. Seen from the outside there is a single idea or rather a single driving force behind the illusory variety.

B: What? The concept of profit?

A: No, it's not the concept of profit. It's something else. A new idea or rather a new impulse that did not exist a while ago.

B: All this is very intriguing. What is it?

A: In the extremely quick circulation of money which goes together with the production–consumption cycle, profit takes second place: it is not the target any more, only the means in order to allow for the continuity of the cycle. No, it's not profits but something else that set the wheels of the excrement-producing consumer industry in motion.

B: What?

A: It's difficult to define. It might be called the effort to achieve productive capacity in a technical civilization? Productivity..."

In its mysterious and at the same time wanton fury to increase production, technical civilization, essentially, vies with nature. At this stage, having become man's second nature—one might as well say, by taking charge of nature's functions—technical civilization definitely became a burden on mankind. Moravia devotes pages full of prophetical zeal to show how every activity of the excrement-producing rain-worm man of the consumer society i.e. love, birth, life and death, takes on a technical character. The technicalization of death brings about the unlimited productivity increase of the "conveyor" mass production of man. And the atomic bomb, the only effective means in limiting the over-multiplication of mankind, has appeared; war is but the superconsumer of material and chiefly of man, in case the normal equilibrium of the production–consumption cycle becomes unbalanced, and is, in this respect, a necessary part of the consumer society.

Now what can be done at this juncture? Moravia is not at a loss for answer; the only way out of the vicious cycle of production and consumption for its own sake is poverty. That is why today's China is an ideal, for it has arrived at a Utopian state. The poverty it has taken upon itself weakens the magic power of assembly lines and mass production, provided that in addition to discontinuing the superabundant production of goods the overflow of the production of man is also stopped. This also can be put into practice. By chastity. Nothing could be simpler than the logic of the programme (as it is set forth by B in the preface): a poor man does not consume, hence, there is no need for him to produce. He who leads a chaste life does not fill the world with progeny and thus robs the consumer so-

ciety, in the final analysis, of its raison d'être, the necessity to satisfy the needs of the masses. No children, no masses; no masses, no production and consumption... Now what has A, alias Moravia, to say in reply? "It's marvellous that you caught on at once... It is only virginity that is able to put a brake on this circulation and put a stop to over-population and overproduction together with all its dull consequences, wars, famine and misery. Nothing but chastity and, of course, poverty..."

Poverty and chastity, fasting and padlocked chastity belts—these are Moravia's remedies for the illnesses of the modern world. I can visualize the enormous monastic order (or rather boarding-school) of global proportions in which homosexuality will obviously gain prestige and masturbation will be the everyday practice of virtue, where wise foresight will only allow people of different sexes to meet if they are sterilized, and all straying thoughts, if such should present themselves at all which is highly improbable in view of severe fasting, will entail kneeling in a corner. When you come to think of it, one ought to praise him for making a new start as a humorist. Reading the book for the first time, one is inclined to think that, because of the sarcasm in the narration, the ideas included in the "Introduction" should not be taken too seriously. Maybe, the author was only pulling our leg and that his evil and grotesque thoughts were only written *pour épater le bourgeois?* However, if somebody eats only one meal a day for years and that a handful of carrots or some boiled rice, one cannot compliment him on his figure, and it would be tactless rudeness to lecture him on the advantages of vegetarianism in the prevention of senile cerebral sclerosis. Besides, it seems that Moravia wants to be taken seriously. Well, let's try it in this way.

I'll begin with the interpretation of the facts made available. There is no denying it—China is a poor country. Unfortunately, it is not at all certain whether because, or in spite of, this "poverty" everybody has the "prime necessities." What is strictly necessary is perhaps available in Peking, the latter however, is not China. Furthermore, in China there are, allegedly, no rich people. First, I'm not inclined to believe, not even if Moravia tells me, that the living standard of civil servants and, say, Shanghai dockers, and in particular of Yak shepherds for the latter, too are Chinese citizens, is the same; secondly, in China over a million capitalists are recorded, and we are told that they have a share in the profits of their former enterprises. And with regard to Chinese conditions being ideal—well, in this respect the opinion of the Chinese people is of importance and Moravia must suspect what that is.

Maybe Moravia thinks that today's China is ideal from the point of view of the human race as a whole? I think there are few people who underestimate the latent tensions between developed countries and underdeveloped ones containing far larger masses of people, particularly in view of the fact that in addition to imminent starvation the latter are also faced with another alternative, i.e. the possibility of atomic death. In fact, in China, atomic armament is going on, rendered more serious by sabre-rattling declarations and seemingly "realistic," though in my view misleading statements according to which China has the best chances for surviving an eventual atomic war. Now, how can Moravia reconcile the fact that certain Chinese leaders sound the note of war, moreover of atomic war, with his theory that wars are only the inevitable consequence of an overgrowth in the production–consumption cycle? The fact that there already were wars at a time when the consumer society did not exist was deliberately disregarded because in the "Introduction" Moravia takes the view, as regards such reasoning, that he doesn't care a hoot what history says. Reverting to the original subject, i.e. the tensions between poor and rich countries, the consequences would be

unthinkable if Moravia's theory—according to which penury in China was an ideal condition—would gain ground among the people concerned. They would consider it outrageous cynicism—and they would be right.

From a remark it finally appears that China is after all only a pretext. Then what is it really all about? It seems that the immediate cause is Moravia's definite antipathy to the industrialized consumer society which degrades its members through the abundance it provides to such an extent that they do not even feel the desire "for self-expression, although this is the sense of man's earthly existence."

In Moravia's world the affluent or consumer society and state hover over the people as a sort of mysterious power or irrational force. In our times, affluence has undoubtedly become a kind of emphasized social ideal. Without judging this symptom *a priori* as desirable or undesirable, we have to recognise that the communities of Europe and North America attempt to realize it with just about identical methods, i.e. by producing an abundance of material goods. Equally, there is no doubt that this affluence—however surprising it may be—does not always and in every way tend towards human perfection (undoubtedly, there is some truth in Moravia's sarcastic remarks on the culture of mass consumption: despite considerable consumption, the consumers continue to be underfed). The question to be cleared up is whether these distortions are caused by the abundant or over-abundant supply of goods to the members of these societies and/or citizens of states, or if by any chance there are other factors too that have a part in them? Through careful examination of the books experts have written on this subject it appears that the consumer spectrum of the consumer society is not distorted "automatically." For example, an eloquent proof is the weight and importance the advertising industry plays in the economic life of the USA: it is certain that businessmen do not leave anything to chance but persuade the consumer in accordance with their own best interests. If in this system the purpose of production is not the satisfaction of social requirements and the consumption of useful commodities does not necessarily bring about a quantitative development in man's needs, the basic cause of this can only be to ensure enterpreneurial profit. (Thus, the development of the "consumer" is derived from the character of the capitalist system.) Moravia tries to prove in his book that in the automatism of the consumer society not profit but productivity is the main point, and that rivalry between nature and technical civilization and other similarly irrational elements are the driving force, however, all this mumbo-jumbo of confused ideas is only idle talk. The point in question is profit.

Moravia, however ignores this motive; in his view not social relations but affluence and the degree to which members of society are supplied—irrespective of what kind of society it is—ferments the distorting effects. Thus, every society distorts man, for it attempts to provide its members with an abundance of material goods; in this respect there is no difference between capitalist and socialist states, it is six of one and half a dozen of the Soviet Union and the United States alike. This remark is the more surprising from Moravia who a decade earlier, after his visit to the Soviet Union, held a different opinion:

"More than once I had the opportunity to address the public in the Soviet Union and when the audience was invited to offer its comments, one of the most frequently raised questions was: 'Will you please criticize the Soviet Union,' and: 'What did you dislike in the Soviet Union?' In reply to this question I usually said that the assortment of consumer goods is not as diversified nor as good a quality as it ought to be and could be. The audience generally agreed with this opinion. Due to the fact that commodity production is as yet insufficient as regards

quality, variety and quantity, town life in the Soviet Union gives one the impression of large working-class suburbs. . ." (*Un mese in USSR*, Bompiani, 1958).

Does Moravia's theory hold water, and is it true that a rich and varied choice of consumption goods necessarily dehumanizes in that it removes man from the true sense of life, that is, of self-development. "Self-development," as the object and sense of life—it seems as if Moravia compulsorily wanted to endow the entire human race with the aims of a special type of man (should the term "self-development" however cover a wide sphere of possibilities, his statement would be pointless). However, let us assume for a moment that it is so. It cannot be understood even then why the provision of goods should be in conflict with these aims? The state of near-starvation seems to be a far greater hindrance, for a hungry man does not produce but concentrates on his rumbling stomach. At the turning lathe, a workman, obviously, cannot "reveal himself" while producing the five hundred thousand and first screw which is precisely identical to the previously turned out five hundred thousand ones. But why should he reveal himself at the bench? It is the function of automatic lathes to produce screws whereas our man, after having worked out the reduced working time of four hours daily, can paint water-colours at home during the remaining twenty hours—if he feels an irresistible impulse for self-expression (of course he should paint for domestic use only, because, I guess, there are about as many dilettantes as world-redeemers). Besides, in Moravia's view, the ideal state of a non-consumer society has been realized in China; he had a talk with a colleague there, and the views the latter expounded on the world as a whole were interfused with quotations taken from a little red book. This is a rather peculiar way of self-expression.

Moravia tried to arrive at a right understanding of China—and one tries to understand him. The attentive reader cannot help noticing that the more Moravia goes on expounding his thoughts in the Introduction, the more his indignation increases against the over-technicalization of the modern way of life: sexual intercourse is performed mechanically, and the sterile and disciplined "industrial" methods of technology underlie childbirth, the survival of infants as well as their course of life and their annihilation by the technically adequate aotmic bomb, etc. It looks as if Moravia's annoyance is not directed against the type of man earlier referred to as the excrement-producing intestine, but against what helps him to come into being: "mass production" itself, that is, modern industrialism. If so, Moravia's antipathy against the consumer type of man is only one kind of manifestation of the indignation aroused by the increasingly impersonal technical organization which is due to the development of industrial society, and provokes rightful anger not only in him but in many of us. At this point, Moravia—although steering another course—falls in with the mass of West-European and North-American intellectuals and students who came to the conclusion that the best course to take would be to abandon modern technology as such (generally, on seeing certain of its dehumanizing by-effects or threats). Just as if it were merely a question of renouncing smoking, because it is injurious to health.

Needless to say that all this is monstrously naive. Sometimes, technical development outstrips the requirements of the age: for example, a few decades ago the motorcar was in fact a luxury, tomorrow, however (and in some parts of the world already today) it is an indispensable means of everyday life and meets real and very essential needs. Equally, it is true that under modern industrialism, stepped up technology compulsorily sets the pace of consumption. In the final analysis, technology is not a luxury of the human race but a constraint, the hard compulsion for the bread, clothing and energy needs of three thousand five hundred million

people that will amount to a round seven thousand million by the end of the century. Moravia went into the question more thoroughly than the average Luddites of our times and emphasized the compulsory character of technical civilization; in his thinking over-population and overproduction are intertwined. Moreover, he proves that if the amount of goods society offers is inadequate, there is no alternative but poverty and chastity of one's own free will. Is the conclusion absurd? Of course, it is because the premise "Give up technology!" is nonsense, too. One might as well consider the Introduction as a spectacular argument *ad absurdum*, in order to prove how absurd the mentality of the "opponents" of modern technical civilization is. However, I'm not convinced that this was Moravia's intention.

Moravia's uneasiness with respect to technical civilization has far more to do with his poverty-theory than with the Chinese reality. His travel diary leaves no shadow of doubt that Moravia was not unequivocally enthusiastic about what he had seen, certainly not to a sufficient degree to explain the radical *volte-face* of a person who was a zealous backer of affluence a few years ago.

Spectacular though it may be, this change of opinion at an angle of 180 degrees is not very convincing, and the defiantly flippant tone of the Introduction of the Chinese diary arouses doubts whether he was shaken at all. It is spectacular (this attribute can be taken literally for the dialogue of the "Introduction" is performed every evening in a theatre in Rome). But for whom is this spectacle meant? It is highly improbable that the author would want to convince the Chinese people that their present condition is far and away the best, for the people there hold an opinion of their own and, besides, it is not probable that in addition to a selection of Mao's quotations the Chinese will now be given Moravia too. Hence, this spectacle is obviously meant to impress his own society, the reader or his own conscience. At this point, Moravia's peculiar book, full of inconsistencies, becomes a characteristic and noteworthy symptom of our age.

Moravia has felt, has indeed fully experienced the western intellectuals' frequently mentioned vague feeling of malaise. He sought to find a way out in today's China, although the approach to the answer is wrong. Moravia's attitude represents the same philosophical crisis, the spiritual crisis of a considerable part of the western intelligentsia, such as for example, the practical jokes of the Italian students called the "Birds," or—on a wider and more serious level—the French student riots. Many of the Italian "Birds" are the offspring of wealthy parents, who unexpectedly invade members of the Italian leftist intelligentsia and try to convince them that they are not revolutionists but petty bourgeois. The "Birds" too, buttress their arguments with Mao quotations.

Moravia and his companions, members of the older generation of leftist intellectuals, reached the same deadlock from different direction. They did not learn from the experiences of the socialist countries, and did not become aware of the errors and crimes of dogmatism, sectarianism and the personality cult, and in their ideological crisis they are now seeking salvation in another personality cult with typically pseudo-revolutionary vehemence.

The significance of Moravia's book lies in the fact that it is precisely the reverse of what the aim of this great writer ought to have been: he pointed out the path people should not take who are anxious to achieve real social changes. Moravia has carried a certain political way of thought *ad absurdum*. He thoroughly thought through what the "Birds" and other young people could not or did not dare to examine more carefully, and by so doing he might have contributed to decrease the feeling of uneasiness. Moravia's book is a document of the intellectual failure of an epoque and a group.

INTERVIEW

LUKÁCS ON COEXISTENCE

An interview given to István Simon the poet and the critic, Ervin Gyertyán. István Simon is the editor of Kortárs, *a Budapest monthly in whose May 1968 issue the interview printed below first appeared.*

—Lenin was first to put forward and work out the implications of the notion that coexistence is a historical necessity. The 20th Congress revived this, as well as many other Leninist ideas. What does this notion mean today? Has it in any way changed its meaning in relation to earlier times and ideas? Do its politico-historical assumptions agree with the earlier situation, or have they perhaps changed in some way meanwhile?

—Let me start by referring to a talk I gave at the Political Academy in 1956 where I said coexistence was the new form of the class-struggle, but that for it, as for all class-struggles, the Leninist principle of who-whom keeps its validity. But we can now no longer ignore the essential fact which is at the back of all coexistence, namely, the uninterrupted contact between cultures which cannot be stopped by either war or prohibition. Look, for instance, at the use Barbusse made of Liebknecht's stand in his novel despite Franco-German enmity, or the time when the Western powers prepared to attack the Soviet Union, when they did not recognize it, but nevertheless the *Potemkin* film swept Europe and created tremendous excitement among intellectuals. In other words, there was contact.

Following the 20th Congress—and this was something new—American policy in the first place was forced to recognize that the policy of the roll back—that of reversing the consequences of the World War by parading military superiority—had miscarried and that because of the nuclear stalemate they had to look for a certain kind of long or short-term, peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union. A most peculiar situation arises from this; on the one hand the nuclear stalemate makes a world war extremely unlikely, on the other all the causes of war—such as imperialist interference, the liberation of colonial peoples, etc.—continue to exist. Because of this there is continuous tension, which they try to control so that nonetheless it should not lead to a world war. It is in such an atmosphere

that coexistence comes into being, which also implies that cultural contact grows all the time, though the various kinds of political, economic, and cultural antagonism between the socialist and non-socialist world do not cease to exist. That is why in my opinion, and this was my opinion already in 1956, the problem of coexistence can only be considered as a new form of the international class-struggle. This does not mean that one has to be brutal or abusive to the opposition, or that one has to falsify what they say, on the contrary, just as in war success depends on good aim and accurate weapons, so in the field of cultural coexistence one can only achieve genuine results with cultural achievements of the first order.

There is no reason why our own papers shouldn't report that Dr. X. Y. obtained 32 awards in America—but the truth is that Bartók really means a triumph for Hungary, while I for one doubt that the works of some that are proclaimed modern, mean such a triumph. Only truly important cultural achievements can obtain lasting victories in coexistence—I am only speaking of cultural and not economic achievements, in connection with which other problems arise—in other words what is important from our point of view, and that for victory in the class-struggle, is that the widest range of forces possible should be won over in the non-socialist states, and that these strata should feel that an existence worthy of man can be realized better within socialism than within capitalism. It is for this victory that we really ought to struggle, this is what we have to fight out in coexistence.

—How can intellectual victory and superiority of ideas, which one can realistically expect, also influence the chances and results in economic competition?

—Well, here too the problem differs according to the period. It was most astonishing in the twenties that the bad state of the Soviet economy had no decisive influence on the appeal of Soviet culture. People felt simply about that socialism that it was able to provide a better answer for the problems in their lives than capitalism. Years ago I read a German bourgeois historian of literature who, discussing the literature of the twenties, maintained that the Soviet Union was the basis of that stream in literature which can truly be identified with the opposition, and by that he did not mean communist literature, but writers such as the Brecht or Becher of those days, and what is more, that that mood profoundly affected German bourgeois literature as well. Now, he says, since many were disillusioned with socialism, the German literary opposition has become homeless and orphaned. This, coming as it does from someone not belonging to our camp, is a most interesting concession. In the twenties the élite of the revolutionary intellectuals—I spoke of Becher and Brecht a moment ago,

but I could also have said Arnold Zweig, Anna Seghers, Eluard or Picasso—turned communist. Today, looking at the outstanding younger authors, we can't find as many communists among them. Why? It is true, the Soviet Union is continuously slandered. But in the twenties it was probably slandered even more. One cannot say there is more of it now. Here we have to exercise self-criticism and examine our own case, we have to ask ourselves why what we write has not the effect it had in the twenties. And here we have to get back to the liquidation of the personality cult, since it was in the Stalinist period that European intellectuals lost their faith in the *bona fides* of communists, that they no longer believed that what the communists told them was true. I shall only instance a simple case: what can a man in the West think about a history of the Party in which 1917 is discussed without mentioning Trotsky's name or role. It is an absurdity: I am really far from supporting Trotsky in any way. But to deny that Trotsky played an important role in the events of 1917 would also mean that from now on no word of ours on history would be given credit.

—You consider the liquidation of the personality cult in our intellectual life to be a fundamental criterion for our victory in coexistence. Can one concretely connect the general development of democracy with the recognition that coexistence is necessary?

—They are certainly connected with each other, and we have already reached the stage of recognizing the necessity for coexistence, and that coexistence can as little be controlled in a bureaucratic way as, for instance, public opinion at home. Because in point of fact one cannot really control public opinion. To stop one woman telling another that they wrote in praise of this film, but it is a bad film, don't go and see it, well, there is no way of forbidding it. Whoever watches the Hungarian situation knows, to give an example, that the success of films is almost completely independent of what the press prints. Public opinion spreads on this sort of gossip level. In the West it is even less possible to hinder the development of this critical public opinion—there is of course and we have to be aware of this too—also an anti-bolshevist public opinion only interested in defaming us, but there are also honest men who sympathize with socialism, whose confidence is most valuable, but who will not let themselves be manipulated by us.

—The post-war cold war theories all went bankrupt without exception. Now all those political ideas which attempt to mirror and express the true situation appear without assurance, without being worked out, with hesitation. It seems to

me that it is important from our point of view that our policies should be governed by conscious, theoretically well-founded notions, since this has always been characteristic of the working-class movement. What do you think?

—You are quite right. The situation has changed considerably, one might say that the ideology of the American Way of Life is in a state of collapse, both as regards the war in Vietnam and the race issue at home. The situation is similar in England and elsewhere too. The question is, to what extent shall we be able to suppress this and provide a new ideology if, to take just one example, our political economy consists of writing new commentaries to Lenin's *Imperialism*, and if we still go on waiting for the big crisis in America. Such a political economy cannot have any sort of effect since it contradicts the facts. Our position will be respected if we are able to explain today's economic facts with Marxist methods. I firmly believe this is possible.

That is not the way to give any sort of answer to the questions connected with the crisis abroad. We must not be pretentious or immodest, but we must recognize that however badly they malign socialism abroad, nevertheless everybody who is dissatisfied with capitalism either from an economic, or a political, or a cultural point of view, instinctively turns towards us, in the hope of getting an intelligent answer. Now if those waiting for a response get a bureaucratic answer, born out of tactical considerations prevailing at the moment, or the works of a pseudo-writer put forward by us, it is clear that respect for socialism will lessen, and the sort of mood will develop, or rather, unfortunately, has already developed in the West, even amongst those who do not defend capitalism, because they cannot defend it any longer, where they are likely to say that the human situation as such is hopeless, that neither capitalism nor socialism are able to provide an answer. We are largely responsible for this, and the demands of this responsibility prescribe the way along which we must progress. A double step becomes essential, in method back to Marx, in practice forward to a Marxist explanation of present events. If we can do this we shall be victorious in the fight connected with coexistence, if not it is inevitable that we will suffer a defeat. Our self-examination must be directed to this end. There are two different kinds of reasoning, which are frequently fused. The bureaucrats think that somewhat improved and modernized dogmas can achieve this result. The other trend which instinctively appeared when circumstances relaxed somewhat after the 20th Congress, led to people adopting the most stupid Western fashions without restraint. There are some even now who believe they can produce a Marxist renaissance and effective results by taking the most stupid bureaucratic ideas and feeding

them into a computer, instead of merely getting them typed. We have to get rid of both these false extremes. This is an important question in Hungary as well, because, especially since the 22nd Congress, I have observed that there is a secret, implicit alliance between the dogmatists on the one side, and the uncritical modernists on the other. The final result is that many announce that Becket and Ionesco are the only really great writers, and at the same time they bow their heads before bureaucrats who only yesterday were so uncritically enthusiastic, and—and this is interesting—in the history of literature for instance they go back by way of János Horváth right to Elemér Császár.* In this way Becket's disciples are in harmony with Elemér Császár's. And then some are surprised that no one is impressed.

—One nevertheless feels that interest in Marxism is growing throughout the world. Since the 20th Congress a new, thinking stratum has been looking for a way out along the lines of coexistence, so that with the help of the Marxist method they would be able to produce an unequivocal answer for the future.

—This is undoubtedly so. My own experience is witness to this. When, in 1956, I first left the country to attend an international congress, I met friends from way back. In general the mood was reminiscent of the way Montesquieu writes in the *Lettres persanes:* The gentleman is a Persian? How can someone be a Persian? Meaning, how can someone who is otherwise an educated man be a Marxist, since Marxism is one of those nineteenth-century ideologies that have long ago been outmoded. This mood is dying out, interest in Marxism grows in the West but one ought to add at the same time that the rejection of dogmatism also grows stronger. I get countless letters in which people in the West write: "Marxism interests me very much, but not your 'official' Marxism."

—But Professor Lukács, surely you are against these new tendencies. Under the banner of Marxism various ideas have seen the light of day, which most probable, cannot be unequivocally accepted as Marxist. This seeking age has considerably widened the idea of what Marxism is, it has created many more borderline cases between genuine and pseudo-theories.

—Look, I've had some experience of this. But it is impossible to create a movement in such a way that every question is decided beforehand. We can't say any more before we get going than that we must return to the principles of Marxism, and that now the time has come when men will experiment and discuss all problems. I would be the first to protest if my

* Two influential literary historians in the period between the wars.

views were turned into some sort of official doctrine, though I am convinced that I am right. But I would nevertheless consider it dangerous in terms of a proper development.

—There is such a tendency in Hungarian intellectual life, though I don't think that those who can be said to be close to you are involved.

—Whenever I have had the opportunity to speak to those in authority I have always maintained the position that they should give freedom of speech to this Marxist point of view; let them recognize my position as one particular opinion within Marxism, and let us look at possibilities in such a way that an important period precisely for the theoretical struggle to rehabilitate the reputation of Marxism has started, in which everyone of goodwill must be given freedom of speech, and we shall have to trust history to see which views will finally establish themselves firmly as real Marxist views. By the way, if we do this, the mere fact in itself would raise our reputation in the West. Do not let us forget that if we suppress certain trends on the one hand this lessens our reputation abroad, on the other it gives the forbidden a false importance. To tell the truth, not a soul would care a damn about them if they were not forbidden. Things which are objectionable also get a sort of rarity value because they are forbidden, and they are received with enthusiasm because they come from the West. But nowadays, when *Nagyvilág* has the possibility to translate anything, it is becoming obvious that the Hungarian public is beginning to differentiate between good short stories and bad short stories; they no longer simply divide them into those from the West, and those written at home.

Coexistence and with it the end of bans could also bring about a more objective point of view, and the widespread opinion that everything in the West is better than at home will end. Because this simply isn't true. People in the West are well aware what dangers are involved in some of those things we acclaim and before which we kowtow. In order that all the forces of the class-struggle should be liberated within coexistence, proletarian democracy must be reestablished in the cultural field. That is a precondition if we seriously want to be ahead in coexistence and achieve results.

—I meant to ask two questions but one, what kind of attitude we should take when it comes to controversial products of western culture, has been answered. The other still needs illumination, and it touches the most essential problems of our age, and of the working-class movement. In what way is our age still backward when it comes to the liquidation of dogmatism, in what way has the historical process of socialist self-criticism not yet been completed? How do you see these problems?

—The fundamental problem, where Stalin stood Marxism on its head, was that the laws of socialism had developed within Marxism, and the laws governing the road to socialism, but only in a most generalized sense, within this, in each period, the leading politicians worked out a strategy, and within this strategy certain tactics that governed each individual move, which naturally changed continuously according to the circumstances. Stalin stood this on its head. From his point of view it was the tactics of the moment that counted. He adjusted strategy to tactics, and then he adjusted the prospects of socialism to strategy. He declared that within socialism the class-struggle was becoming sharper all the time, but this was not a general observation, it was only a trick which he had worked out to legitimize the big show trials. The trials came first, then a theory was created to fit them... It happens even today that certain tactics first appear, then a strategy and general theory to fit them is produced. The value of such general theories is nil.

Of course, it is easy to say about Stalin's theses, say the one about the class-struggle becoming ever sharper, that they are not true, but if we do not follow them through we get involved in most serious problems. Take one historical example. When there was opposition between Trotsky and Stalin on the Chinese issue, Stalin declared that China was a feudal State, and faced with feudalism the same tactics applied as in Russia, in one word, in order to keep his tactical superiority he removed all questions of the eastern mode of production from Marxist theory and so made it impossible for Marxists to understand developments in Asia. And such an important thing as that plus which Marxism meant, namely the theory of the eastern mode of production, when it came to understanding the revolt of colonial peoples, was altogether lost to the world's Marxists. I should like to add in parenthesis, as it were, that given the stage of development at that period, Marx never dealt with the development of the peoples of Africa. If we follow a strictly Marxist line of thought, we might well ask, where is it written that the peoples of Africa must necessarily develop according to the European model, or the Asian model? Why should there not be African relations within modes of production in addition to those of Europe and Asia. And if we want to help the developing nations of the Third World, then Marxist help would be, if we could explain to them what their real position is, and what their prospects of development are. And about this we know no more than the Westerners. And if we want to play a leading role in that world, and it would only be natural that we should have a leading role, then Marxist research in this respect is absolutely essential too. And there are also the questions involved in Western capitalism

which Western capitalist economists cannot answer, and with a few minor exceptions, we have not even attempted to answer them either, and if we have then our analysis is not thorough enough.

—What you have said is very clear as regards economics, but perhaps you could complete what you have said in relation to intellectual problems.

—Yes, I stuck to economics since there perhaps evidence is clearer and less debatable than elsewhere. But of course this refers to all intellectual fields. Let me give an example whose echo is still audible today. In the Stalin–Zhdanov period the history of thought was arranged as if there had been pre-Marxist thought, then a huge jump, and lo and behold Marxism was there. But the essential plus of Marxism is that it made everything that was valuable in 2,000 years of European development its own—I did not say this, Lenin said it, in the course of the debates of the 1920s—in other words this essential aspect of Marxism was once again altogether forgotten. One cannot argue with either existentialism or with neo-positivism by simply saying it is all nonsense, or that it is counter-revolutionary. This reminds me of what was said against me in the fifties, that I was trying to find excuses for counter-revolutionary existentialism because I connected the birth of French existentialism with the resistance movement. But the connection is undoubtedly a fact. All the same, because I established this fact I was condemned as an opportunist. The counter-revolutionary existentialists are, by the way, not in the least counter-revolutionary, in the Algerian question for instance they behaved in a very Left manner. You know very well that I was already opposing existentialism in 1947. But the problems can only have their proper effect if I recognize the relatively progressive character of those criticized, if I recognize that they arose in connection with the resistance, and so on. In this way an objective discussion might develop, and perhaps we can persuade somebody that we are right. But if we go to the extreme and see them as pure counter-revolutionaries, then we won't get anywhere, and if we go to the other extreme and accept existentialism uncritically, then we won't get anywhere either. We should then find ourselves in the grotesque situation of a Hungarian young man fleeing from Marxism to Heidegger or Sartre, while Sartre is at the same time discovering that there are certain problems in existentialism from which he tries to find a way out in the direction of Marxism, which is of course something which the Budapest young man doesn't do. In this way grotesque and ridiculous situations arise which can only be changed if we return to the Marxist method and if we look at what is going on in the West with a critical attitude, as Marxism dictates, and if we do not believe

that we are taking a step forward simply by using computers while still continuing with Stalinist oversimplified planning.

I have already mentioned Bartók as an example of someone who conquered the world. But I am convinced that socialist culture produces many values which could have a similar significance. Not to mention the way the great values of the old culture could be employed to good effect in the struggle that goes on on the side of coexistence, if they were only properly used. For instance, what a weapon the magnificent development in Russian nineteenth-century literature from Pushkin to Chekhov, could be, seeing that that literature was basically a democratic fight for freedom. Today, in Europe and America, people are very much aware of the non-democratic character of manipulated democracy. This problem, I think, will play a tremendous part in the coming years. Not that Western states will suddenly embark on the road to socialist revolution, this is a ridiculous notion, but that a dissatisfaction with manipulated democracy because of its non-democratic character is showing itself in ever widening circles and they will try and pioneer a way towards genuine democracy. We could be the leading ideologists of a movement like that, but not while in the West there is subtle economic manipulation, while here there are those who want to go on with bureaucratic manipulation, or perhaps just with prettifying things a little on the surface. I hope you will not be annoyed with me for speaking straight from the shoulder, but this must be said, and acted upon, or else we cannot be victorious in the class-war within coexistence.

—I take it then, Professor Lukács, that your position is that that there should be freedom for and struggle between the various trends within Marxism.

—It is my conviction, and I also said it in the ontology, that man is a responsive being. Whatever has been created by human culture so far has never been motivated by an internal psychological or goodness knows what other reason, but right from the beginning what has happened is that people have tried to provide an answer for certain questions which arose within society. What we call human culture is the succession of these answers. Much of this culture has disappeared again because it was only an answer relevant to something that concerned its own day, or the answer was out of place. But certain things have kept their validity to this day. If someone reads those lines in the *Iliad* today where Priam goes to Achilles to ask for the return of Hector's body, that conversation between them when Achilles returns the body is, from a moral point of view, exemplary even today.

And this does not only apply to poetry. If you look at the history of

science you discover that most of the major discoveries were made by several people at the same time. Even today it is an open question whether Newton or Leibniz discovered the differential and integral calculus, and all those who know the history of that period know that Pascal was pretty close to this discovery too, and others also. Why? Because productive relations at the time indicated the need for a new physics. The new physics on the other hand, the sort of physics associated with Galileo, which put movement at the centre of physics, demanded a new mathematics to measure movement. And this need set several men, such as Newton or Leibniz, on the road to finding this new mathematics. They found it, but very likely thirty or forty others also looked for it at the same time. At the present moment a proper understanding of Marxism is something that has arisen as a social need, and from America to Siberia all sorts of people want to satisfy this need. And which of these theories will prove to be satisfactory, and which won't, well, none of us know of any criterion to establish this other than mutual criticism. But there is no tribunal of last resort which can declare that X is right, nor can it possibly exist.

It is therefore my opinion that this is how we must proceed in every field, and especially in those where it is most difficult to establish prior criteria. A new kind of literature is in process of development today. And this new literature, as I argued in my article dealing with Solzhenitsyn cannot be created without criticism of the dogmatic period. After all there is no one in Hungary over thirty today whose whole life and character is not bound up with the crucial question of his conduct during that period. Without this one cannot, in a work of literature, properly describe his present character or actions. Let us remember that Balzac in the first place described the period of the Restoration. Whoever knows Balzac's work is aware that in each case Balzac reached back to the period of the Empire, and in the case of older men trying to find out what they had done even before that, to the Revolution. Because the position the character took up largely depended on the way he had behaved during the Revolution. This sounds perfectly natural, but you will remember how they picked on me because of this thought of mine. Our literature is full of problems like this, and so is literature as such, and since such problems can be solved, they must be solved.

The point is that I don't believe there is such a thing as a play whose success or failure could overthrow the People's Republic, or even shake it. It is ridiculous to maintain that trouble is caused not by the mistakes which were committed, but by the reaction to them, and what's more a literary or artistic reaction. This question is closely connected with coexistence,

because there is much in the socialist countries which hinders those things which are here, and which are good, having their proper effect. Any literary work can appear in the wrong light if a bureaucratic way of dealing with it is brought to bear. And a wrong sort of equation in international public opinion which to a certain extent reduces Solzhenitsyn to a common political denominator with Pasternak, though in fact Solzhenitsyn is diametrically opposed to Pasternak. He should have the opposite effect, and he would too, if that inappropriate practice did not exist which quite artificially makes the two opposites one. There is no reason why we should hinder the coexistence of various trends, accompanied by serious discussions between them. One cannot reconcile everybody with everybody else, though nowadays it would appear there are no differences at all within our camp. This is not a solution either, this is only another manipulation. We need sharp discussions, discussions which have no administrative ends. We have to reach that stage in cultural life, if we want to get results in the struggle within coexistence.

—It is common knowledge that coexistence has opponents too, and not only amongst the various extremists, hawks, and neo-fascists in the capitalist countries. We have lately had the Chinese example. And unfortunately, while we talk about coexistence a cruel war is being fought in Vietnam, though right through the world a struggle is going on against it. Professor Lukács, what do you think about the ideologies which oppose coexistence, the way we ought to fight them, and the prospects of such a struggle? Perhaps also in relation to Vietnam.

—This is a very complicated question. Perhaps you will remember I said right at the beginning that the particular characteristics of nuclear war hinder the outbreak of a third world war, but they do not abolish the causes of war. The United States have not stopped being an imperialist power just because they are afraid of nuclear war. You have perhaps noticed how carefully American policy deals with the role of the Soviet Union, even with that of China, in the Vietnam war. If there were no nuclear weapons world war would have broken out over Vietnam long ago. We are now in such a position that the balance is never stable and there is no doubt that we must fight America's Vietnam policy with determination and as a matter of principle. What is it all about in fact? Ever since British influence grew in India in the eighteenth century it has been the essential policy of every colonizing power to ally itself with the most reactionary strata of the country concerned, and to supress local liberation movements with their help. If you now take a look at the Americans' Vietnam policy, you will find a literal repetition of the policy of Warren Hastings and others in the

eighteenth century, because colonizers, if they want to colonize, have to be brutal, they can't do anything else. In my opinion the Vietnam question does not in the first place concern the manner in which the people of Vietnam are to be united, but the fact that in Vietnam they are fighting to see if those peoples which are now liberating themselves will, or will not, attain the right to manage their own affairs. Much that we can't see now must be arranged. That merely tactical way of thinking which calls those peoples which sympathize with us progressive, and the others not—on the contrary, they are called reactionary—will get us nowhere. Forgive me but in many cases one lot is as little socialist as the other; the truth is that many new problems arise in these countries, whose solution will take many years, perhaps centuries. We have only to remember that the frontiers of today's African states were determined by the interests of the former colonial powers. Amongst these peoples the idea of a nation and the existence of the nation has not yet taken shape. Colonization carved up neighbouring tribes whose ways of life were similar. Whether the Somalis living in Kenya will unite with other Somalis must be left to the Somali people. No one else can solve that. One ought to face American colonial policy with a policy of democratic self-determination throughout the world. If we make up for what was not done in the Stalinist period, and carry on serious scientific work, then we will be in a position to give these peoples economic and political advice. Advice that makes sense, not something thought up in this or that European capital, but which truly expresses the economic development of that particular people. Here is a chance to play a much larger part in world history than we have done so far. And this is true not only of the colonial peoples, but also of those in Europe and America. Because right now an opposition is in process of coming into being both in Europe and in America. These oppositions are often distinguished by what can be defined as a Chinese character. In form they remind one of American happenings, as far as their political content is concerned they are to a great extent under the influence of Chinese ideology. Why? Lenin wrote in 1903 in "What is to be done?" that anarchism, which was pretty influential in his time, was a punishment for our own opportunist mistakes. I am convinced that with this Lenin expressed a general, serious and farreaching truth. The Chinese influence which has spread throughout Europe is a punishment for our tactical lack of principle, and our dogmatism. An enthusiastic 18-year-old American or other Western young man cannot, in today's complicated international situation, find an answer to his own questions, which express his feelings of opposition, so he thinks that Mao will give them to him. What I want to say is, for instance, that liquidating

the old mistakes, and going back to the original Marxist methods will not only directly strengthen the power of our influence abroad, but it will also put us into a position at home to mobilize certain resources which, properly transmitted, will have an effect abroad too. I am sure you know what I mean. If we liquidate the old mistakes, if we stop making principles out of tactics, and if we derive tactics from Marxist principles, then this will have its effects on culture, and what's more, beyond culture, in many political fields.

—Not long ago it was said that what we need is six or eight Vietnams. We have long been familiar with the Chinese notion that following a Great War a new civilization will arise in a relatively short period. Doesn't this notion, and in general that—I cannot think of a better word at the moment—adventurism and extreme radicalism, which understandingly enough finds plenty of sustenance in the misery of the Third World, endanger coexistence?

—I don't think that a serious danger threatens it, though it is true that people somehow don't want to recognize that an entirely new situation has developed as a result of nuclear weapons. Let me demonstrate this entirely new situation in the following way: if we give guns in wars of the past a range of 10 kms and someone invented a gun with a range of 15 kms, then he could with that destroy the guns with a range of 10 kms and obtain victory without big sacrifices. This is not the position in nuclear war. In nuclear war both sides are more or less destroyed. That is why rational calculation tells us that a nuclear war between the major powers is not a real possibility. Thus for example the American press does not even mention that American aeroplanes in Vietnam are destroyed by Soviet missiles. The Americans behave as if they didn't notice. These facts are most important, because they show that today wars are fought within certain set limits, and that for example the fact that there are partisan wars in South America does not mean that they must lead to a world-wide conflict. I want to add that I am somewhat sceptical about this theory of six or eight Vietnams, since a real partisan war is not the result of pure will. A partisan war comes into being if wide strata, predominantly peasants, recognize that they cannot live any longer the way they have lived, and that they prefer to risk their lives rather than put up with their fate any longer. If this condition does not exist, then certainly there will be a few heroic, honest men, but you cannot start the struggle with a partisan war, you can only finish it that way. A partisan war can be therefore nothing but a general bourgeois revolution, perhaps the cover for a bourgeois revolution which is being transformed into a socialist one. I think that this revolution is on

the agenda in South America, and I think it will happen too, but not that a small group gathering round a hero starts a partisan war, but rather that movements for the reform of the situation of the peasantry and other lower classes come into being, which then are transformed into revolutions, and in those revolutions partisan struggles will play an important role.

Here we are not just concerned with a rising of the peoples and colonial oppression; but this is a more general question which is connected today with our cultural problems. In today's manipulated capitalism wages have risen, and working hours have gone down, and at the same time the life of the working classes has become even more meaningless than in the time of the worst capitalist oppression.

—In the fight within coexistence, understood as a modified class-struggle, our role is decisive precisely because humanity can see no road other than socialism leading to a meaningful life, or hope for such a life. Even if we socialists only say this rather diffidently.

—We are beginning to be beyond this. The whole of Western literature suggests that men have lost their faith in the possibility of living a meaningful life in the circumstances obtaining today. But I cannot believe that men will forever renounce the right to demand a meaningful life. I am not such a pessimist. But until we are in a position to confront this meaningless capitalist life with a meaningful one in a way which is clear, this intellectual movement finds it difficult to get going. When we started I spoke about the twenties. Why did German intellectuals, for instance, sympathize with starving Russia? Because they were deeply convinced that while they were leading a meaningless life, those over there in Russia might perhaps be starving, but they were fighting and living for things which made sense. One cannot of course publicize this crudely. Writing articles saying that life is meaningful in this way or that is in vain, it wouldn't get me anywhere. When the peasant and the worker become aware that when they work for themselves, they work for the world, when personal success goes hand in hand with a feeling of establishing a meaningful life, then we can show a way out of the Western cul-de-sac, the capitalist cul-de-sac, to those who are already expecting this from us today. I think this is connected with all questions of art and philosophy, and in the future this problem will come to the fore, I am not saying the day after tomorrow, but after five years, after ten years. We have to be prepared for the moment when, in an altogether changed world, under altogether changed circumstances, we must be in a position to represent Marxism effectively, the only theory which knows a sure way out from these social contradictions.

SURVEYS

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

SIR AUREL STEIN'S CORRESPONDENCE

Twenty-five years have passed since Sir Aurel Stein's death, but until now posterity has not really carried out what his fellow men owe to a great explorer. In the course of a number of expeditions Sir Aurel collected a huge quantity of material in the deserts of Central Asia, in Iran, and in Irak, and at the cost of superhuman efforts he managed to get it to New Delhi, to Srinagar, to Lahore, to London and to the University of Harvard. The time that has passed has not proved long enough to process and arrange it, and to make full scientific use of it. But there is also much that is valuable and as yet undiscovered in the mass of manuscript letters which, in accordance with the wish expressed in Sir Aurel's will, are now in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. These letters throw light not only on his own work and his scientific and personal development, but also on a whole age, in which both geography and archaeology flourished. As we turn the pages of the Stein Correspondence, kept in the Oriental Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, a whole galaxy of turn of the century scientists and explorers passes in front of our eyes. Paul Pelliot and Sylvain Levi, E. J. Rapson and Sir Henry Rawlinson, Denison Ross and Edouard Chavannes, Sven Hedin and Otto Bühler, Rudolf von Roth and P. S. Allen, and Bernard Berenson too, were all part of the circle of friends and colleagues with whom Sir Aurel corresponded and kept in touch throughout a long life-time. Not only as a scientist and scholar, but also as someone whose interests were extremely wide. It is particularly noteworthy from a Hungarian point of view that there were many Hungarians amongst them, serving as evidence of the close ties which Sir Aurel kept up with Hungary, the country where he was born, right to the end of his life. What I should like to do in what follows is draw attention to some of these letters which, though I have selected them because of their relevance to Hungary, are also evidence for Sir Aurel's way of working and thinking as such. The 25th anniversary of his death—he died in Kabul on the 26th of October 1943—provides an appropriate opportunity.

"The discovery" of Sándor Kőrösi Csoma

Sir Aurel Stein was a member of a cultured and well to do Budapest family. His uncle, Dr Ignác Hirschler, was historian of literature, his cousin Ernst Stein was an expert in ancient history and a professor at the University of Louvain. Ignác Goldziher, the internationally known Hungarian Islamic scholar, was an old friend of the family who aroused Stein's interest in Asiatic studies when the latter was still a schoolboy. Stein was educated first at the Dresden "Kreuz-

Schule," then at the Lutheran Grammar School in Budapest, and he later studied at the universities of Vienna, Leipzig and Tübingen, where he attended lectures by the leading Persian and Sanskrit scholars of the time. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Tübingen, and following that Ágoston Trefort, the Hungarian Minister for Education, personally arranged that Stein should be given a State scholarship which permitted him to spend 1884 and 1885 in London, Oxford and Cambridge. He returned home to do his National Service and was extraordinarily lucky to have a brilliant cartographer, Captain Károly Kuess, as his commander, to whom he owed his knowledge of topography and cartography which was most useful later during his expeditions.

When Stein returned to England he was put in touch with Colonel Theodore Duka R.A.M.C. and his family. Colonel Duka was of Hungarian origin. In his youth he had taken part in the 1848/9 War of Independence and fought against the Hapsburgs. He was aide-de-camp to Arthur Görgey, the Commander-in-Chief; following the surrender at Világos he lived in hiding for some time and then fled abroad. He was given asylum in England, he studied medicine there and then for some time he served in the R.A.M.C. in India. While in Calcutta Duka obtained a number of documents which referred to Sándor Kőrösi Csoma, the Hungarian Orientalist. Kőrösi Csoma had set out to find peoples related to the Hungarians in Asia. He did not succeed, but he did succeed in producing the first Tibetan dictionary and grammar instead. His life had been full of ups and downs and he had died in Darjeeling in 1842. Once Duka had obtained these documents he resolved that Kőrösi Csoma who had been forgotten by then, should be restored to his proper place. Duka spared neither time nor expense in his efforts to find and collect various documents (manuscripts and letters), that referred to Kőrösi Csoma. Later in England, after Duka had retired, he had written Kőrösi Csoma's biography, and he had edited and published Kőrösi Csoma's studies.

Duka's friendship and support was to prove most important in Stein's life in more than one respect. It was in Duka's hospitable house that Stein met Sir Henry Rawlinson, whose recommendation later made it possible for Stein to be appointed to the teaching staff of the University of Lahore, which meant that at last Stein could go to the area where he dearly wished to work. At the same time Duka had aroused Stein's interest in Kőrösi Csoma, his predecessor, in whose "discovery" Stein also actively participated. An item in the Stein correspondence, dated June 7th 1910 is a letter of thanks written by Gusztáv Heinrich, the Secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, expressing his gratitude to Stein, in the name of the Academy, for the part he played in the Academy getting one of Kőrösi Csoma's letters from A. T. Wilson.

Almost the whole of the correspondence between Theodore Duka and Stein turns on Kőrösi Csoma. Thus Duka writes on June 26th 1906:

"...The third Csoma *ünnepély*" (celebration. The reader must remember that though the letter was in English, both writer and recipient were of Hungarian origin.) "has been celebrated the last week in April, Thúry József has delivered the oration taking for his subject the Turkish languages of Central Asia... Thúry published a letter hitherto unknown... Mr Kipling wrote to me... stating that he finds he cannot carry out the idea of the Medaillon. He may though at some future time carry out the proposal of St. Hilaire as to a worthy monument to the memory of Csoma..."

The Mr Kipling who is thus included amongst the "discoverers" of Kőrösi Csoma is none other than Lockwood Kipling, the Director of the Lahore School and Museum of Applied Arts, Rudyard Kipling's father, who was later, during Stein's stay in Lahore, one of Stein's friends. It was through Kip-

ling that Stein got to know Lionel Charles Dunsterville, the writer and soldier who became part of the history of literature as the original *Stalky*. Dunsterville gave his memoirs, which he published in 1928, the title of *Stalky's Reminiscences* and he dedicated the book to Sir Aurel Stein.

The last letter from Duka quoted here reached Stein in the Lop-nor desert. Turdi, the mail-carrier who has become immortal thanks to Stein's travel books, took it there, on foot, covering a distance of over 500 miles across the murderous salt desert. Duka wrote:

"I have not acknowledged your very welcome letter from Khotan of 19th Sept at once because I thought its contents should be made known to our Academy before anybody else, so I translated and sent it to our mutual friend Szily Kálmán (the librarian of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.) Here is an extract from his letter:

'Thank you for sending me Stein's letter, we will publish it in the Academy Bulletin... The Academy decided just at its sitting yesterday, that it will order a bust of Kőrösi Csoma in accordance with your suggestion...' This is interesting news, therefore I hasten to inform you of it, you also had old Csoma's memory at heart as you know to appreciate his struggle and sufferings in the pioneer work he has done and which were at first laughed at and then nearly forgotten because he did not discover a Magyar-speaking race there, about Manchuria and Tibet!"

The Stein–Vámbéry "intrigue"

Hungary has certainly played a much greater part in the results achieved by geographical and archaeological research in the closing period of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century than her modest resources would lead one to suppose. The 1877 to 1882 Béla Széchenyi Hungarian East-Asian expedition was one of the most significant scientific enterprises of the age, especially because of Lajos Lóczy, the geologist and geographer who took part. He published the results of his research in 1886 as *A Kínai Birodalom természeti viszonyainak leírása* ("A description of the natural conditions prevailing in the Chinese Empire").

Lóczy's research drew Stein's attention —amongst other things—to the significance of the the Tun-huang cave temples, therefore it is not surprising that even amongst the vicissitudes of desert travel, he did not forget Lóczy, whom he informed about the results of his expedition in a detailed letter.

In a long personal letter to Ignác Goldziher, the fatherly friend and Islamic scholar mentioned earlier, Stein also wrote about this trip. The letter is dated June 30th 1907.

"Since I left Khotan last September, I have carried out research all the way, for approx. 4,000 kms. Everywhere, from the eastern end of the Taklamakan, the desert of Lop-nor, where I spent the severest part of winter, right to here, China's north-western frontier regions rich results rewarded the trouble I took. I worked in so many different places that it would be in vain to try and go into details in this letter. I reported briefly on the material and on geographical details in reports I sent to the Royal Geographic Society, extracts from which were also published in the Times. I travelled from the valley of the Oxus right to the western gates of the Great Wall of China. So far I have got twelve cases full of manuscripts and documents in the following modes of writing and languages: Sanskrit, Central Asian, Brahmin, Tibetan, Chinese, Uighur, and Khotanese. With the Chinese documents written on wood or silk, about two thousand of which I dug up west of the Tu-huang along the boundary wall built across the desert, we safely arrived at the end of the Second Century B.C. But the Indian and Kharosthi material also stretches back to the earliest centuries A.D.

"It gave me great satisfaction that the last

months' work in the Tunhuang area took place in country whose first proper examination was accomplished by a Hungarian expedition. My friend Lóczy first drew my attention to the grotto temples of the Thousand Buddhas, and I know he will be glad that their examination increased our collection by much and valuable material. I hope that the time will come when I shall be able to relate in person what I experienced there... We were all really put to the test by the winter and the spring campaigns. Compared with the Lop-nor and the Kumtagh desert, camping in the winterly Taklamakan seemed almost a pleasant experience. Climatic conditions above it are rugged, and besides the daily NE winds the cold that goes down to minus 30 degrees Centigrade is most noticeable. The need to carry water, that is ice, for my many labourers, in one place the distance was about 170 kms also gave rise to a lot of worry. Now I am travelling towards Kanchou among the higher mountain chains of the Nan-san. In the autumn I shall probably go towards the north-eastern parts of Turkestan, and there I shall plan another winter research in the desert. I am hardly likely to get to Europe before the autumn of next year. Then I shall have to get the government to give me the time to process the results, which won't be easy, there is no academy or other scientific support behind me..."

Stein also kept Ármin Vámbéry informed in a number of letters. Vámbéry was a member of the older generation of Hungarian Asian scholars. Vámbéry's travels in Central Asia, which he had undertaken in most difficult circumstances, had considerably affected the young Stein. Vámbéry answered one of Stein's reports in a letter dated February 25th 1907.

"...your letter written in the Endere ruins has really gladdened your friends here, since the great success which has crowned your trouble is our common pride. It is superfluous for me to say that I feel happier than most about the result of your trip, since I can see in them the achievements of a true brother-in-arms, and when I read about you in the papers, I think of that young man with joy whom my late friend, your uncle, introduced in Welsberg. At that time I certainly would not have thought that the schoolboy would turn into one of the finest traveller explorers of Asia and the old world, who would bring so much that was interesting from the past to the light of day... Thank you for the interest with which you read *Küzdelmeim* ("My Struggles"). I suppose it did not even mention half the doing without and suffering of my life. Now that the twilight of my life is getting closer, I look back on my stormy past with a certain satisfaction. You too will be like this some day, and you will be able to say proudly: I did not go to all that trouble in vain..."

For the time being Stein had not yet reached a stage in his life when he could take stock of what he had achieved. After he had returned to London with the rich material collected by his expedition, he had to fight hard and at length to secure the proper conditions for the processing and storing in museums of what he had collected. He had already written to responsible men at the British Museum while still in Central Asia in order to prepare for the reception of his material. A letter written by C. H. Read, the head of the Museum's Department of British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography, in which he reports about seeing Sir Edward Thompson director of the Museum bears witness to this. It seems that all of Stein's trouble was in vain, though according to a draft of a letter found amongst his papers he even asked for Lord Curzon's help, who had shown considerable interest in his research. All the same the British Museum were only going to provide a basement storeroom for this material which had been collected at the price of superhuman effort.

This is when events took an extraordinary turn. Stein in London turned to Ármin

Vámbéry who lived in Budapest, and asked for his help. Stein knew Vámbéry had good connections at the Court of St. James.

"...I have had for the last two months to struggle against a proposal... to store the collection in a sort of cellar, which I consider not only wholly unsuited for the purpose but likely to prove injurious for the many delicate art objects, ancient paintings on silk, etc.... but I am greatly in doubt whether we shall succeed in averting that threatened imprisonment of my collection... If you could really make an attempt to secure His Majesty's visit while the collection is in the Natural History Museum I should feel deeply grateful..."

Vámbéry replied: "...Of course I shall try all means at my disposal to avert the danger in sight and my first step was to write to a friend of mine at Court asking him to direct His Majesty's attention towards the objects of art in your collection. If H.M. the King manifests his desire to pay a visit to the Museum, my friend will inform me beforehand and I shall let you know at once the result of my demarches..."

The well-intentioned "intrigue" was unfortunately unsuccessful. The planned Royal visit did not take place and Stein did not succeed in securing better accomodation for his material. The large selection from Sir Aurel Stein's material which is at present on exhibition in the Museum's Central Asian Rooms, has obviously been placed there at a later date.

Stein and Hungary

Sir Aurel Stein's works comprise many volumes. In the course of a working life of more than half a century he wrote and edited a multitude of scientific works, and in addition he published a number of travel books meant for a wider public. It is only his correspondence though which throws real light on his extraordinary and complex personality. Many of his contemporaries considered him a stiff, withdrawn, eccentric man, perhaps also because he never had a permanent home, and really only considered his "Kabul tent" that, in which he camped now on Mount Mohand Marg, now in one or the other of the Central Asian deserts, perhaps also because he never took a European travelling companion with him on his expeditions, he was always accompanied by Indian, Turkic or Chinese companions. It appears from the correspondence kept at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences though, that this solitude seeking man actually clung to men and ideals throughout his whole life. His friendship with Percy Stafford Allen, with F. H. Andrews or with Thomas Walker Arnold lasted to the end of bound lives. Deep human links tied him to his Indian *pandit* colleagues. When the scholar Govind Kaul, with whom he had collaborated on several occasions, e.g. on the editing and English translation of Kalhana's "Rajatarangini," died, Stein wrote a moving memorial. Even when many thousands of miles away he did what he could for his travelling companions—Uighur carriers or Sikh N.C.O.s—from the Surveying Corps. According to the evidence of a faded carbon copy of a letter, he even tried to ease the punishment of a faker of antiques whom he had unmasked in a brilliantly executed "desert investigation."

As is well known Stein became a naturalized British subject at an early stage of his career. On the other hand he kept up an interest in Hungary, and especially in Hungarian Oriental studies, and he often expressed it. Already at the beginning of his career, while he was working in London, Oxford and Cambridge, he repeatedly published in Hungarian scientific periodicals, and later too, from Lahore, he also sent his studies to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, which had elected him a Corresponding Member on the recommendation of Ignác Goldziher and Ármin Vámbéry as early as 1895. Two years later, in 1897 he gave his inaugural address in which he spoke

of the role in Indian history of the White Huns and similar tribes.

From then on he kept up the connection with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences right to the end of his life. He frequently wrote to Kálmán Szily, the Librarian of the Academy, whom he regularly kept informed about his work. Interesting in connection with their relationship is Szily's letter dated October 30th 1907:

"...I greatly enjoyed reading the extracts from your letter to Goldziher which the *Budapesti Hírlap* published. Twelve cases full of manuscript material from the early centuries A.D.! What an enrichment of science, and that a Hungarian should have achieved this success... Though I was prepared for them, I was nevertheless moved as I read your lines: 'I took steps that my definitive publications regarding Ancient Khotan should reach the Academy.' I remembered how gratefully you had once mentioned in my presence the library of the Academy in which you read and learnt so much in your youth... But I have greater wishes! The library of the Academy should have everything that could be described as Hungarica. Works written by Hungarians in foreign languages, which are thus meant for the whole world are amongst the most valuable Hungarica. We will speak about this on the occasion when you will tell us of your experiences here at home, in person..."

It seems that this planned conversation was held on the occasion of Stein's visit to Budapest. From then on Stein never failed to send the Hungarian Academy of Sciences a copy of whatever he published, and later he also expressed the wish in his will that his two-thousand volume working library which contained mainly books on Indian and Central Asian linguistics and archaeology, should also be deposited at the Academy after his death. He wrote to Szily in 1922: "Many pleasant memories of my youth are connected with the beautiful library of the Academy... Apart from the paternal home I spent my happiest hours there, and it was there that I began my studies to become an orientalist taking pains to learn the Sanskrit grammar etc...." It was in the spirit of these thoughts and sentiments that he declared in his will: "I give all my books... to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences at Budapest, to be added to its library in token of my grateful remembrance of the help I received from the latter as a student and of the encouragement which the Academy accorded me as one of its members."

It was a sign of extraordinary magnanimity that Sir Aurel Stein did not even alter his will during the Second World War, when Hungary and Great Britain were at war with each other and a large number of Stein's relations were persecuted by fascism and forced to emigrate. The bequest which had been deposited in a safe place for the duration of the war finally reached the Hungarian Academy of Sciences after peace was concluded, where it now forms a section of the Oriental Library, which is indispensable to Hungarian and foreign orientalists alike. This is also where the Stein correspondence is kept. The above few extracts from it are published now, on the 25th anniversary of his death, to serve a great scholar's memory, and in the hope that all of it will some day receive the attention it deserves.

A TRANSYLVANIAN UNITARIAN OVERSEAS

Sándor Bölöni Farkas (1795–1842) was a Transylvanian nobleman, best known in Hungarian literature for a travel diary he kept on his journey to the United States in 1831. His journey took him elsewhere too but those parts of his diary were not published in his lifetime. The British section appeared only in 1966, as an appendix to the fifth edition of the *North American Journey*.

The American travel diary is the first Hungarian eyewitness report on the United States. It was a tremendous success in its time and was republished several times since its first appearance in 1834. No travel-book in the first half of the nineteenth century had a greater influence on Hungarian opinion. Besides giving an enthusiastic description of a free country on the other side of the Atlantic, it published the full text of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the State of New Hampshire, and the duties and rights of the President.

At the time the Hungarian public could choose among two personal travel-books and three geographical handbooks on Britain. This may explain why Bölöni Farkas did not publish the British section. Contemporary Hungarian periodicals printed a number of articles on developments in Britain.

The Pro-British League of Transylvanian Aristocrats

Sándor Bölöni Farkas was a close friend of Baron Miklós Wesselényi, one of the leading politicians of the Reform Age in Transylvania. Wesselényi had been brought up in an atmosphere of freemasonry; he fought for the liberation of the serfs, and the rights of Rumanians and Slavs in Hungary. He had suggested that the Hapsburg empire be transformed into a federal monarchy, but fundamentally he believed in a vast republic of Danubian nations.

In 1828 Wesselényi's visit to Britain in the company of Count István Széchenyi, the great Hungarian reformer, enormously stimulated interest in British politics, economics and culture. Within a few years Wesselényi had brought together quite a number of Transylvanian magnates and gentry interested in the introduction of British-type reforms. Their activities were the subject of reports by the Austrian secret police who imagined that they had formed a plot, headed by Wesselényi.

Britain

Bölöni Farkas and Count Béldi, another Transylvanian in whose company he travelled, reached London via the Thames estuary on April 19, 1831, and left to sail for the United States on July 24. They toured the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland: they went to Woolwich and Greenwich, Epsom, St. Albans, Doncaster, New Malton, Newcastle and Edinburgh. From there they went on to the Highlands. From Glasgow they sailed for Belfast and Dublin, returning to Liverpool on June 9, and travelling via Manchester and Birmingham they arrived back in London in time to see the opening of the Reform Parliament.

"England has the peculiarity that money or personal efforts cannot open all doors before you; in most of the cases you need letters of introduction to get to your goal," Bölöni Farkas wrote. He had left home with letters of introduction from both Wesselényi and Széchenyi.

Prince Pál Esterházy, Austrian Ambassador in London from 1815 to 1842, received his fellow-countryman most cordially. From 1825 on Esterházy had established close contacts with the radical reformers and he arranged for the Hungarian visitors to meet them. When after twenty-seven

years in London he was recalled in 1842, Queen Victoria complained about his departure in her diary, saying that he was a diplomat who knew how to maintain good relations with both the Tories and the Whigs.

The Transylvanian visitors soon met Sir John Bowring, who in 1830 had published the first English-language Hungarian anthology, *The Poetry of the Magyars*. Bowring had contact with several Hungarian writers. Gábor Döbrentei, the Transylvanian editor and translator of Shakespeare and Ossian, had supplied him with material.

Bölöni Farkas came to know several leading radicals. Sir Francis Burdett had been elected to Parliament with a reform programme and was returned again in 1812 and 1818. Bölöni Farkas attended his campaign and the election in Westminster, Burdett's constituency. He met John Cam Hobhouse, Byron's friend and a champion of Greek freedom. He also got to know John Gale Jones, a friend of Coleridge's.

As a Transylvanian Bölöni Farkas had Unitarian connections. They introduced him to other Unitarians: John Kenwick, Professor of History at Manchester College, York, and a teacher of John Bowring; Joseph Hunter, a historian, editor and Shakespearean scholar; and professor James Yates, a former Unitarian clergyman who became a member of the recently founded London University.

From the point of view of literary history the most interesting personality among Bölöni Farkas's new acquaintances was John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, the chief critic of *Blackwood Magazine*, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, biographer of Burns and Scott, friend of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and well known as the adversary of Keats and Shelley.

In Ireland they were shown around by Isaac Weldt, whose travel-book was the first lengthy work on America to be translated into Hungarian. First in Paris, then in London, Bölöni Farkas met Admiral Dodrington, the hero of the battle of Navarino.

Social contrasts

On his arrival in Britain Bölöni Farkas found himself in the midst of the campaign for the Reform Parliament. Having been an eye-witness of the February Revolution in Paris and the national risings in Brussels, he detected a revolutionary atmosphere in Britain too,

"If we consider the causes that led to the first revolution in France, almost all of them can be found in Britain. The hostility between the aristocracy and the populace has reached a critical degree, the latter being burdened by heavy taxes and oppressed by a handful of aristocrats—it is perhaps only the realization of the Reform Bill that can save the nation from such dramatic transformation. The aristocracy is devouring the wealth of the entire nation, the rest for the most part either go begging or die of starvation. It is enough to observe a few streets of London and all the differences strike the eye. In the main streets you see aristocrats drive past surrounded by every kind of luxury, in the company of servants dressed in golden liveries; hardly do you turn the corner and go a hundred paces into a back street and you are overwhelmed by rags, misery, and starving, desperate people.

"The theory of Britain's Constitution is singularly attractive, and those who do not know the present situation of the nation may very well believe that liberty, prosperity and the individual happiness of every citizen are in full bloom there. But this Consitution favours only a small fraction of the nation, the majority being excluded from the prosperity and benefits the Constitution seems to promise."

Inside and outside Parliament

From the North Bölöni Farkas hurried back to London for the opening of the Reform Parliament.

"The opening of Parliament in Britain is

always a memorable occasion... There is much brilliance and much to be remembered in this ceremony, but much hocus-pocus too and meaningless festive splendour. The nation and the King both know full well that this splendid comedy has no bearing on the Government nor on the happiness of the people, but the British, maintaining in many ways their old customs, maintain this ceremony too."

Bölöni Farkas wished to gain a real insight into the machinery and proceedings of Parliament, so as often as possible he watched the debates in the House of Commons and in the House of Lords. As a Unitarian and a stranger, he felt sometimes shocked by the frivolous manners of members.

"I looked around the hall where so many notable reports have been delivered and where so many remarkable men have appeared, where the British Constitution is elaborated, and where every sound resounds all over Europe and is echoed all over the world. The room where the Commons meet is not as luxurious, not as large nor as comfortable as the French Chamber. The members sit on gradually rising benches round about, dressed in all kinds of garb... Pantaloons, tails, jackets, boots, pumps, stockings—members dress as they please.

"When someone says something of importance, and even more if his speech is disliked, members become noisy, so much so that often the one talking has to stop. The astonishment of the foreigner grows when he notices that most of the members do not seem to listen, some read, others whisper, younger members keep fidgeting and waving their sticks, the older members doze off during a long-drawn speech. The Upper House also lacks the attentiveness you would have thought to find here."

On the world's first railway

Bölöni Farkas was spellbound by the industrial and technical developments in London. London, Southwark, Blackfriars and Vauxhall Bridges, St. Catherine and London docks, the Tunnel, Regent's Canal, the Gas Works, the flour mills, the Arsenal Shipyard, Artillery Barracks, Marine Barracks and Royal Military Repository at Woolwich all offered excellent opportunities for expressing his enthusiasm. He was very much in favour of Classicist architecture and greatly opposed to the neo-Gothic style, but his greatest experience was to be the first Hungarian ever to ride on the first passenger railway, between Liverpool and Manchester:

"At four o'clock in the afternoon we went out by coach to the railway, on the steam-coach road. The steam-coach is the triumph of the human brain. As we reached the start of the steam-coach road, ten omnibus-like wagons stood linked together in a wide, long hall. One cannot imagine how this large and long machine can go by itself. At the very front stood the steam-wagon, with its tall, oven-like chimney, and linked to it, the other wagons, chained together end to end. In every wagon were four sofas for sixteen people, and at the end of the cars sofas for two people. About a hundred and thirty of us were sitting in the wagons. I stayed on top in order to see more clearly.

"As soon as every passenger had taken his place, the bell became silent, the steam began to roar from the first wagon and within half a minute the wheels of the wagons began to turn... The wheels rolled everywhere along iron rails. Right at the start of our journey a cutting a mile long had been made between rocks and cliffs, and where there was a valley, the road was carried high up, so that the track all the way from Liverpool to Manchester was on level ground. Here and there were bridges crossing over the track. Elsewhere, rivers and canals flowed beneath it. One does not know whether to wonder at this gigantic project, at the enormous expense of it or at the flight of the steam-wagon, which rolls so swiftly that as one looks at the ground it is

impossible to distinguish one object from another. The steam-wagon does this thirty and a half English mile journey in about one hour, sometimes in 57 or 58 minutes. A bird cannot fly as fast as this.

We arrived in Manchester. What a strange pleasure it is to get from one city to another in practically no time! The steam-wagon is being extended from Manchester in so many directions that it is foreseen that in ten years a traveller will be able to travel all over Britain by it in fifteen hours."

Horses

Bölöni Farkas was a friend of Wesselényi, the great horse-breeder and owner of the best stud of Transylvania, and Count Béldi, whose companion Farkas was, was on the lookout for fine horses. Bölöni Farkas was astonished to find how much horses were the object of common concern in Britain:

"The British are preoccupied with four main subjects and their energy, everyday conversation, knowledge and almost every thought is concentrated on these four subjects: commerce, politics, religion and horse-breeding. A large part of the nation is concerned mostly with horses. Riding and horse-breeding is such a passion with the British that anyone who has not been to the Lincolnshire or Yorkshire races or to studs obviously knows nothing about it.

When history gives an account of the outstanding periods of the older nations, their wars, their manly occupations and pastimes, horses always play a notable role. Riding is an essential part of the matter. It is impossible to imagine this manly and scientific nation without horses, and if its maritime life and similar circumstances do much to give the whole nation such a manly character, the love and practice of riding certainly contributes a great deal as well..."

Homes and Customs

Bölöni Farkas visited several historical mansions, and was surprised to find rich picture collections and libraries in them. Contrary to the practice in Hungary, farm buildings and stables were set back behind the main building and hidden by the park. In the cities he was highly taken with the increasing number of reading rooms with newspapers and periodicals. But even the homes of middle-class people did not usually lack libraries. The new habit of a tea-party with tea, cakes, punch and a cosy chat appealed to him greatly. He liked the idea of a visitors' book, but did not approve of setting an exact time for a reception. He thought highly of the interest shown by ladies in attending all kinds of cultural and scientific occasions. He was glad to note a love of gardening. Regent's Park, Hyde Park and the Green Park as well as parts of the Thames valley were included in his walks: "The English are neither castle-builders nor sentimental, and still they think highly of a fine view and are ready to do a lot for it. They are willing to live in elevated places for the sake of the beautiful panorama. When enjoying a magnificent view, we seem to be conscious of the full value of our moral existence, and throw off every disharmony in our sluggish soul, thereby rising above the troubles of life and feeling closer to our fellow men."

America

Bölöni Farkas and Béldi left Britain on July 24. They stayed in the United States until November 23, and reached Le Havre on December 14. In the meantime they tried to see as much as possible. Their tour included (from New York to New York): West Point, Harvard, Concord, Burlington, the Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Portland, Springfield, Economy, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Washington, Mount Vernon and Philadelphia.

They managed a trip to Canada as well: they visited Montreal, Quebec and York.

Personal Relations

Bölöni Farkas and Béldi received letters of introduction from their English friends, so they could get into touch with a number of well-known American politicians, scholars and artists as well. They were received by President Jackson, the seventh president of the United States. "We arrived exactly at the appointed hour at the house of the President. Two gentlemen, sitting on the sofa, were also waiting. The reception room is not at all big and lacks every luxury... I was waiting for the man who was elected by the free will of thirteen million citizens to the highest official rank, and who was raised above them not by reason of his origin and wealth, or by a caprice of fortune, but because of his own personal merits. After a short time the President, Mr. Jackson, arrived. He is a tall, kind-looking old gentleman, with grey hair, clad in simple black clothes without any distinguishing sign. As he entered, we rose to meet him, told him our names and nationality and that we were extremely eager to see him. He shook hands with us in a friendly manner, sat down and bade us do the same. Then he introduced us to the other gentlemen who were present. We spent almost half an hour with him and we had to tell him about our country and our journey. Then our discussion turned to American subjects; we praised their institutions and he seemed to be very pleased at our good opinion. His kind manners made us almost forget that we were talking to the first man among thirteen million Americans. In the meantime, several others arrived and the President greeted them with simple kindness as if they were guests coming to an ordinary middle-class family. At our parting, he again shook hands and invited us to visit him again should we come back to the Congress."

Among the important personalities they met were Robert Charles Winthrop, the president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and a friend of Daniel Webster; Stephen van Ransselaer, the president of the Erie Canal Committee, who gave Bölöni Farkas very thorough information on the American canal-system; Alexander Hill Everett, editor, historian and diplomat; John James Audubon, the painter and ornithologist; Henry Ware, professor at Harvard, the head of the American Unitarian Association; and Charles Carrol, a revolutionary politician, who had known Benjamin Franklin, one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Religion and Social Equality

Bölöni Farkas was deeply impressed by religious freedom in Britain and later in the U.S.: "Changes of faith are judged in Europe by different criteria from those obtaining in Britain or in America. For obvious reasons a change of religion in Europe is taken as a sign of unsteady character; while English and American people are convinced that, just as a man can change and improve his political opinions with the growth of his knowledge, it is equally necessary in matters of conscience to find with the progress of the human spirit ever more reasonable ideas, so elevating the principles of religion to a perfection that will keep mind and conscience in harmony and may offer peace and solace to all."

On their arrival in the United States Bölöni Farkas was full of hopes and fears whether the Union would be able to realize the principle of equality: "All the things that take the traveller's breath away in the first days of his stay in America resemble what one reads with youthful imagination in a fairy-tale. The faces, the garments, the customs and the language, religion and laws, the products and open nature—all this makes one fully conscious of the new world. Even more sur-

prising is the fact that all the many appearences and forms which, we believe, are essential to our life in Europe, have no trace here anywhere. A foreigner will try in vain to find people of high rank, powerful magistrates, officials—all these persons are merely simple citizens! He looks in vain for better-class families, for a higher or lower nobility—they are merely simple citizens! The clergy and the military, the police and the judges, the scientists and bankers—they are merely simple citizens, exactly like each other. Even more incomprehensible to a foreigner is what he sees about religion, that among the 48 religions none is the ruling one, and all possess the same rights! That the clergy does not constitute an order, and that there is no regular army! There are no privileges, there is no nobility! There are no titles, medals, guilds or secret police! How important are all these things, one by one, to a foreigner!"

American Homes

Visiting homes of eminent personalities he found that wealthy citizens of Boston, in their houses and meals, live according to a style similar to that of the French and the British of higher rank. "Those who believe that the amenities of life acquired or obtainable by wealth might undermine Republican principles and that the glitter of aristocracy might turn their heads, can justly fear that a people living among all the comfort life can offer will not be able to preserve its independence for long."

He found libraries in each home and was again fascinated: "Among the many sights in America it also surprised me to find libraries even in the smallest towns, at least at their town halls. However small the population of a place may be, without fail a library can be found at the community house with books dealing at least with domestic affairs. The love of books is so great in private persons too that even in the houses of the poor, if nothing else, the Constitution, the Bible, and the history and geography of the U.S.A. can be found. In the houses of the more well-to-do people a library with nicely-bound books belongs to the furniture of the house everywhere. Besides, at least one newspaper is part of the essential necessities of the house."

On the Steamship

The greatest experience for him was the widespread use of the steamship. They crossed the Atlantic in a packet-boat, and often used steamships going along the coasts and the new canals. As the railway was in Britain, so the steamship in the United States was the object of their admiration:

"Thirty years ago all the things that are a common sight today would have been considered an absurdity, and since the Americans, the first inventors of the steamboat, have greatly eclipsed Europe in everything concerning the handling and use of steam, it is very likely that in this respect they will achieve higher perfection still. Their steam plants are much more advanced than those of the British, and in this field, too, they make new inventions every day. Their steamboats already resemble small-size frigates, which are built with a splendour, taste and comfort that can nowhere be seen in Europe. Above their normal deck there is yet another one (the promenade) which is an entirely American invention and allows 20–25 couples to walk about on it in comfort. The inside of these boats is as gorgeous as the rooms of any jewellery-loving lady. The staircases are covered with Turkish carpets, the doors and furniture are of mahogany, the fireplaces have marble mantelpieces; the columns support gilded cupolas; the walls are hung with landscapes painted by famous masters; silk and satin hangings adorn the beds, and on practically each boat there is a small library."

*

Bölöni Farkas had always had to face certain deep-rooted contradictions in his life: he was a Hungarian in the Hapsburg Empire, a Szekler among Hungarians, propertiless among noblemen, a Unitarian among Calvinists and Catholics, and a man-of-letters among bureaucrats. He was inclined towards sharp judgement and radical criticism. His diary is the first extensive, well-written, detailed travel-book in a series of Hungarian descriptions written by Reform politicians. He had a good Hungarian prose style and was among the first to use the current idiom of his day in his writings.

The politicians of the Reform Era and of the War of Independence of 1848–49 were very much influenced by Bölöni Farkas. Kossuth used his text of the Declaration of Independence when preparing his declaration of Independence of April 14, 1849 dethroning the Hapsburgs.

ISTVÁN GÁL

FROM OUR NEXT NUMBERS

SOCIOLOGY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE
Enrico Fulchignoni

THE DAY WE WENT INTO THE FORUM
Lajos Korolovszki

STIMULATORY AND INHIBITORY FACTORS
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THE POLITICAL POSSIBILITY OF WORLD ECONOMIC PLANNING
Egon Kemenes

BOOKS AND AUTHORS

THE LONG AND THE SHORT AND THE SHORTEST

Five volumes of short stories lie before me on the desk. A twofold chance has piled them into one heap; first, the chance that all of them were published recently; secondly, the chance which made me pick them from recent publications.

The living writers may quite fairly be called middle-aged. The youngest of them is Csurka with his thirty-odd years, the oldest Örkény, aged fifty-six. I want to start with him not because of his age but because the work. One Minute Short Stories, Magvető Publishing House, is extremely good. Until fairly recently Örkény was writing good short stories in a traditional style. Then, quite suddenly, he had an overwhelming success with his novel of the absurd, "*The Tóths*," and with the comedy based on it. The change of tone was great, and rather surprising, but now, thinking it over again—as one does with literature—one recognizes the preparations which led up to this novel: for some of the one-minute short stories under review here were written by Örkény over ten years ago. Only at that time we looked on them as witty and entertaining little anecdotes; it is only now that they take on importance in the context of the later one-minute short stories. István Örkény has at last reached the peak of his career.

These one-minute stories (some were published in *The New Hungarian Quarterly* No. 29.) for the most part deal with the quirks and absurdities of human nature. Sometimes they are grotesque, sometimes they are formal short stories in miniature, anecdotes in which the absurd has no place, or only appears in the point of the story or in the very fact that there is no explicit point. The dead man rises again after a hundred years and happily chats away with the people visiting the cemetery: time and again he asks what the news is but each time gets the same answer: nothing new, nothing interesting. The bread-delivery waggon drives into the prisoners' camp, the prisoners make a rush for it and in the end neither horse nor waggon, only the empty underbody, the chain, the buckle and the ring are left. The client of the undertaker makes arrangements for his funeral and his grave. Built of concrete, provided with an air pipe, and with electricity, so that it won't be dark. A horse-race in which the runners are lawyers. A bargaining with a streetwalker at night with an Italian vocabulary limited to art terms of the Renaissance period.

One of his critics referred to pop art in connection with the volume. With good reason. In some of his one minute short stories Örkény only quotes. He quotes the travelling conditions to be found on the back of the tramway ticket—without comment. He quotes the regulations governing military execution. And the official documents take

on the same quality of the absurd as his most absurd short stories. And none the less real and terrible for that. Because Örkény's world is terrible enough, chiefly because there is so much nonsense in it. We do not need violence and blood to express the world's brutality and violence. To do this stupidity and indifference are enough. In one of Örkény's short stories two Hungarian army officers spend their time on the Russian front dreaming of women. Dull and uninterested, every day they drive Russian women out to build the railroad. Elsewhere again the driver by chance buys next day's newspaper and reads in it that he had met with a fatal accident. In order not to be late for the movies he speeds along the highway and is killed precisely as he read in the next day's paper.

These short stories are for the most part built on a single idea each. But they were not written for the sake of the idea. These short, amusing tales are in fact serious. Some of them say things about men that remind me of what G. B. Shaw said of Mark Twain, to the effect that if men took what he said seriously they would lynch him; others have a finely lyrical quality as for instance "*How long does a tree live?*" which saves Örkény from being adjudged a pessimist.

The book by Iván Mándy Old-Time Movies,* like most of the Mándy volumes, is a separate collection of considerable value. Mándy is one of our best short story writers although the critics have been unwilling to acknowledge his importance until now. He has always been an extremely esoteric writer with his self-made laws, independent, unclassifiable under any literary groups or schools, and often attacked precisely on that basis by critics unable to comprehend what he has to say. Literary prizes have not come his way, with the exception of his prize-winning short story of 1946, which as an eighteen-year-old self-designated writer I read, re-read, and read again with rapture and envy. I wanted to discover the secret of its magic. But I don't think that even to-day I have actually pinned it down. I only feel that it is there, I feel its changes, its developments, its growing enrichment.

In his new book, which can be described as a volume of short stories only for want of a better phrase, for there is hardly anything in it which reflects this rigorous and disciplined literary genre, he has succeeded in creating a peculiar, scarcely definable, almost unimaginable amalgam of the emotions of the child and the adult's nostalgia. One would have no difficulty in drawing the frontiers of Mándy's world on a map: with a touch of exaggeration, it is a certain square in a certain ordinary and poor district of Budapest (from which the colourful, interesting and sadly sordid second-hand market has since been banished), and perhaps a few streets around the square. Or rather, the people who live there, in the battered, bleak, food-smelling, poorish tenement houses where everybody knows everybody, where no one faces great tragedy, only the pressure of loneliness, the awareness of futility, the incalculability of conflicting human purposes. Even if it is not the most attractive and successful of his books Mándy's novel "*On the Edge of the Playing Ground*" is undoubtedly the most compact formulation of this world. Perhaps, by a bold association of ideas, one might claim that it is the Hungarian counterpart of "*The Old Man and the Sea*," at least in the common picture of human effort and the allegory of creation. Only the sea of Mándy's unfortunate hero, who finds shelter in almshouses, is the football field and he never dreams of lions. His highest flight is a good goal-keeper whom, however, he never succeeded in procuring for his favourite team. Here in this district existed those little movie-houses with which the present volume is connected. Their names have changed since then; narrow, long tunnels, seldom more than six to eight seats to a row in which, during the inter-

* *Régi idők mozija*, Magvető Publishing House, Budapest, 1968.

val, the old women attendants sprayed auditorium and audience together with cheap scent. Those movie-houses in which the little boy who lived in the room of a wretched hotel with his father, felt so much at home. Those movies where Norma Shearer, Cedric Hardwicke, Lilian Gish, Gloria Swanson and the others were the stars. Vikings sailed, cowboys rode at top speed, Chaplin shambled across the screen. "The woman stood in the middle of the room with a hat shaped like a mill-wheel, a wrap and a shawl... The curtain of the open window fluttered, and she clutched at her heart. She staggered, her hat slid to the back of her head, her hair tumbled loose. The fluttering curtain. Outside the darkness of the night. The woman sank onto a chair and stared in front of her... And then a man rose from an opposite chair. The chair had been empty, but nonetheless there rose from it a grey haired man with bushy eyebrows. In which film was it? In which cinema did he see it? The Bodograf movie-house, Salle B? Surely it was at the Bodograf... the woman stumbled among stones, elephants. This other scene sprang to his mind. The film broke, the showing was suspended. What could it have been called? What kind of a film was it? What happened to the woman who went on stumbling, to the old man with the bushy eyebrows, to the stone elephants with the twisting trunks? Bodograf movie-house, Salle B."

This quotation is from the author's introduction to the book. I think it is a good demonstration of at least one aspect of the book, the nostalgia that imbues it. The kind of nostalgia which is aroused by vanished objects, and lost places. This is, however, only one aspect, though constant, of Mándy's short stories. The other is the real life lived by that lost boy, the miserable hotel room, with the unpaid rent, the naive hopes and easily seen through tales spun by the father, the penniless journalist, the other movie enthusiast. These flashes of real life, however, only appear for a moment. In *"With father at the movies"* such a moment appears. He didn't turn towards him, as they sat there in the seats with backs to them, numbers eight and nine on the left side. He only watched the boy from the corner of his eye in the drizzling white light. For a moment he touched his shoulder, asking—"Can you see properly, old man?" This however is only the background, the explanation, just as this short story of a few lines is neither in its tone nor in its length characteristic of the stories as a whole. Only it is important, so to speak, together with other flashes if real life, in epitomizing the whole. The rest of the book is the transposition, the fusion of the films into the boy's real life, or his real life into film. The dialogues of famous actors, continuing as it were the film, Garbo's loves in the film are obviously her loves in real life, and the new partner means infidelity and heart-ache. Pat basely betrays the kind Patachon. At times they address the boy, staring from the posters in the lounge of the movie-house. They chat with him, they complain to him. Pola Negri arches her eyebrows, Rudolph Valentino the sheikh's son turns his horse with a star on its forehead towards him, and Lewis Stone, the grey-haired colonel, upbraids him fiercely, forbidding him all movie-houses. But when the boy runs out into the real street, there outside, among the tenement houses, stands the stubby little bay horse and the boy clambers up his back with a loud cry: "Fly with the sheikh's son!" At other times he is Z the black rider or Rin-tin-tin. In the dark auditorium of the Roxy picture-house, Norma Shearer throws him down a ball. But when the boy wants to transpose his dream film life into his real life he meets with disappointment. The weary and depraved indifference of Clive Brook conquers the heart of Kay Francis; the heart of little, snivelling ten-year-old Eva Muralik from round the corner cannot be conquered so. For refuge remains the world of the movies, and the stories narrated by the old projectionist about Cecil B. de Mille

who retreated into the mountains with his cowboys because Jeff Colorado with his sheriffs chased him up there, and since that time the Cecil B. de Mille films are not the true ones, the real ones are made up in the mountains and nobody sees them...

Looking at the subject-matter of the stories, it is clear that Mándy's world is highly esoteric. Perhaps not even he can remember the names of most of these old actors, the titles of the films he had seen. But the separate world of the child—and the world described in the novels about children —are inevitably esoteric, whether they are old-time movies or Angria and Gondal. What is essential to these worlds is their emotional and poetic saturation. This is what makes this volume of short stories such an excellent book. It could in fact equally be regarded as a novel without a connected plot, in which the boy passes through his own dream country to reality. Or disappointment, which here is inevitably the same thing.

About fifteen years ago—even if not with such envious rapture as I read the first Mándy short story—yet nonetheless with great pleasure, I read István Csurka's first novel, written when he was still a mere boy. It was bold and it was original. From that time on I frequently found occasion to acclaim the development of his streak of wry irony, and his brilliant originality. I must admit, however, that I read *The horse is a human being too,** with alternate bouts of irritation and amusement. His natural tone is ironic—a sort of self-irony. In this previous volume of short stories this ironic tone of his was still mixed with the traditionally and dramatically constructed short story form, but his best stories were already ironic in attitude. Important and independent talent will find its way of expression in any case, Csurka consequently sets the background of his stories in places he personally frequents, the racecourse, the card-table and other not very elevated places of that sort. The best short story of his previous volume *(Inner World of a Betting Man)* was inspired by the race-track and his best play *(Who will be the loser?)* by the card-table. So I do not mind him exaggerating and creating a contemporary Bohemian world in Pest in his new volume. But I regret his inability to say the same sort of startling, unsparing things as he said before. His new volume is like a entomological collection of foolish Bohemians and Bohemian fools. It was the insects in the latter category that inspired the best writing of the volume, the small scenes in which the dialogue dazzles us with its ironic nonsense. Such are the *Technics of Existence, The Two Rheumatics, Ecce Homo.* Csurka writes magnificently, more faultlessly and with greater sparkle and brilliance than he did in his former volume, but on what exactly, one cannot say. There are only situations here, and dialogues which border on mental disorder.

His Bohemians provide much less surprise. Unless we are surprised by the fact that the mentality of a betting man emerges again in the short story designed as the basis of a film which gives its title to the book, considerably toned dawn—for film requirements—re-hashed with a simple little plot. But this film short story is at least amusing in its details. The short story *"What's New in Budapest?"* however, inevitably reminded me of one of Csurka's excellent short stories with the title which is already a saying in Budapest today: *Why are Hungarian films so lousy?* (See this story on p. 49 of this number—*Editor.*)

Included in Csurka's volume is his very amusing comedy *The Iron Tooth of Time* which deals with the country-wide success of a convalescent home set up by a pseudo-physician and a practising pickpocket. It is a good, caustic comedy, and had a great success on the stage.

But unfortunately these pieces have a good deal of what, with a few exceptions, can only be described as "fill-ups," at times superficial, grotesque stories which often do

* *A ló is ember*, Szépirodalmi Publishing House, Budapest, 1968.

not rise above cabaret or comic paper level. Turning to László Kamondy's new book *Adam's father**, the fact that a sufficient number of stories have accumulated to make up a volume is in itself a pleasure. Kamondy, a very gifted story-teller (see his short story "*The Encounter*" in The N.H.Q. no. 7) appears to have dried up during the last five years. He has written very little, and even what he wrote seemed for the most part uncertain and forced. As if he had lost his voice. These stories bear witness, not necessarily to the discovery, but at least to the strenous search for his real voice. He cannot, he will not any longer write in the traditional manner, he is attempting fresher, more exciting forms of expression. I am left, however, with the feeling that he has not yet found the one that suits him. One of his "new" styles is in fact very old: the ironic, satirical tone, which was set in its international pattern long ago: the provincial town, the general stupidity of the characters and a mock solemn, pseudo-serious ironic style. I must admit that I do not like traditional satiric-humorous stories. I have a feeling that the prose is pressed into the strait-jacket of a stereotyped and long-dead literary genre, and the content is liable to be petty and commonplace. In Kamondy's case as well. Two long short stories are written in this tone, *Adam's father* and *Atheists in love*. The first is the story of a small town girl who becames pregnant, with all the gossip and stupidity prompted by the surroundings and the genre. It is a short story that could have been written—leaving one or two details out of consideration—as much as fifty years ago. Although small towns even today are no less addicted to gossip and condemnation than they used to be, and even today the illegitimate child is not given moral recognition, in the terms of this story the problem is just not interesting. And the same applies to the young atheist couple trying to please their parents, who on the one side are bigoted Calvinists and on the other devoted Catholics. It is perhaps not even easy to find such religious conflicts in Hungary today and even when such conflicts are found they are uninteresting for the literary craftsman; greater ideological clashes take place here than such a petty-minded, denominational quarrel. Two outdated themes, a genre which has exhausted its possibilities a long time ago: I do not believe Kamondy has found himself here.

The lengthiest short story, of almost 100 pages, of the volume is likewise ironic. "Round and Round a Thursday". This is, however, already considerably more promising. A husband who, so he believes, killed his wife with a saucepan, gives himself up to the police. The wife survives, but the police officer with a penchant for psychology continues the investigation just the same. He questions everybody, and in the course of the questioning, even if no crime comes to light, misunderstandings and infidelities do. The dialogue and the description, hovering on the border-line between the realistic and the absurd, could indeed take place in real life but for the fact that here the characters, all monomaniac in tendency, conduct their conversations in terms of complete—and very amusing—improbability. For this delicate balance between realism and the absurd one is inclined to forgive the inferior slapstick comedy elements which are present as well. This kind of absurd humour was introduced into Hungarian literature by István Örkény with his novel *The Tóths*. There is no reason why Kamondy should not attempt it as well. But where Örkény, through the grotesque and realistic-absurd situation, reveals the grim underlying theme, the oppression and servitude of the well-meaning little man, Kamondy, as far as I could see, had nothing of general or great significance to say. I believe that this philosophical genre must be accompanied by some philosophical content, not just bits of ideas.

A few of the more traditional type of short stories in the book are by no means bad, although they are somewhat tired and

* *Ádám apja*, Szépirodalmi Publishing House, Budapest, 1968.

mannered when compared with the old, admirable Kamondy, short stories of earlier times. There is one really good short story amongst them, a children's story *The Two little Roosters* and another, *The Barriers of Prohibition*, with a gruesomely excellent love-scene.

*The Fall of Flocsek** is István Örley's first publication in book form. He died twenty-three years ago, when a stray bomb killed him at the age of thirty-two during the siege of Budapest. His work had appeared in pre-war periodicals, which were already being ignored by the younger generation of writers. The dim legend of his personality was preserved by recollection; the legend of the young artillery officer from the gentry class who discarded his uniform and became a journalist, an assistant editor; the legend of the exacting writer, the exacting editor, the exacting critic. These recollections and anecdotes about him kept his peculiar personality alive. It is only now, however, that we can read what he wrote for the first time, those of us, at least, who because of the times and our own ignorance failed to turn the pages of those old periodicals.

The legend about him never included a claim that he had left great works behind him. It only said that he was very capable. And this collection bears out the legend in both respects. An extraordinarily sensitive young writer emerges; it is this sensitivity that is the most attractive attribute of his first short stories. It would be unjust to demand originality of tone and content in the works of a budding author. What, however, is clear is that already then the writer was not at ease in his environment. The gentry world of balls and tennis-parties was not for him. In his later short stories he faces more and more peculiarly his inevitable loneliness, in a more and more individual manner, without self-pity. In the person of a military cadet he does precisely that in one of his best short stories, *Carnival time*. It is already clear in this tale that he can relax neither in the environment of the family nor the military school. Perhaps he does not want to. With an air of indifference or pain he avoids all kinds of visual delights, success, taking interest in the world. In the later short stories this loneliness is the loneliness of love-affairs. For him the fulfilment of any kind of love only serves to prove that the whole thing is dull, senseless and unnecessary. The beautiful young women turn into silly and unpleasant geese before our very eyes, not because they were so or were not so in the initial stage of the affair, but because the man's—Örley's—reflexes of self-defence, of hopeless loneliness make them so. And what is so engaging and in our days so rare: these short stories are not narcissistic; he is as ruthless to himself as a fictional character as to the rest of the world. Örley does what a writer should always do: he uses himself as the subject-matter of an experiment, as the victim of the vivisection, and what is important to him is not to justify himself but to reveal and to understand through himself the reasons of human behaviour.

IMRE SZÁSZ

* *A Flocsek bukása*, Magvető Publishing House, Budapest, 1968.

TÊTE-À-TÊTE WITH AMERICAN LITERATURE

A History of Literature and Three Anthologies

In the beginning there was Hemingway. For two decades he was, to the average and the educated reader in Hungary, *the* American writer. The "lost" hero engaged in a sporting contest in the very shadow of death was *the* American hero. The deliberately laconic style which observed the strict rules of the iceberg theory, and the appropriate construction of dialogue was *the* style of American prose.

In Hungary Hemingway not only created and captivated a reading public, he also formed writers. From about 1957 onward there was scarcely a single issue of a Hungarian literary magazine where we did not encounter one or two Hemingwayesque short stories. A considerable section of present Hungarian short-story writers between thirty and forty consider him their master. No need for irony: the beneficial effect of this bearded giant and sportsman who at that time practically alone represented modern world literature is undeniable. For Hungarian prose, which tends to over-explanation and over-writing, the inspiration of this ascetic style that aimed at puritanical self-discipline and reduction to the most essential elements was definitely useful.

Faulkner, on the other hand, despite his numerous works translated into Hungarian, has been to this day unable to really pierce the wall of indifference. Henry James remains an obscure name. Of Melville only legends are told, he is scarcely read, of his *Moby Dick* merely a shortened version for the young has been published.

From among the newer names Salinger was the first to arrive (we already have Salinger-followers, too: the short-story writers between twenty and thirty). Capote's *In Cold Blood* was a striking success. Mailer's grandiose *The Naked and the Dead* disappeared within a few days from the bookshops. Updike and Bellow proved to be a delicacy for a more restricted and sophisticated stratum of the readers. Flannery O'Connor and Joseph Heller are due to appear this year. Two books by Malamud will be published in 1969. Mary MacCarthy is the third in the series of women writers, following Carson McCullers and Katherine Anne Porter. Interest has been shown in the forthcoming publication of Oscar Lewis' *Children of Sanchez*, Kenneth B. Clark's *Dark Ghetto* and Vance Packard's *Status Seekers*, to mention some *non-fiction* also.

In the last five years the interest of both Hungarian publishers and of readers in American literature has increased. And rightly so. There is no doubt that at present the most forceful and the most popular literature is written in the United States. However, this vivid interest has not only not been properly prepared for by academic criticism in Hungary, the latter has not even followed it. When reading book reviews or pieces of criticism one can measure how uncertain judgement and evaluation are, how disproportionately, how timidly the critic places a writer, or relates him to others. At Hungarian universities the teaching of American culture is but a modest appendix to the methodical process of getting acquainted with English literature.

To make good this lack of elementary information, the *History of American Literature** by László Országh, a work of pioneering significance, has now been published. Today Professor Országh might be considered the sole "professional" scholar of American language and literature in Hungary. This book crowns his career as a university teacher and scholar: the first comprehensive history of American literature in this country.

The greatest virtue of Országh's work is

* László Országh: *Az amerikai irodalom története. ("History of American Literature.")* Budapest, 1967, Gondolat Publishing House, 436 pp.

his clear, calm and objective tone, the richness and self-assurance of the way in which he communicates information. And the modesty which from the very start reckoned with the fact that here a genre is revived which these days is thoroughly despised, and under-estimated. The school of the history of ideas, the "New Criticism" or the structuralist critics will evidently reject Országh's method, that chain-like linking together of writers' portraits, some extensive, some brief, embedded in general social, economic and national development, set down among the major dates. They are bound to miss an analysis of the major themes dominating various periods, and the specifically American experience; they are likely to object that an aesthetic point of view or the "close-reading" approach itself had been pushed into the background in favour of the exposition and evaluation of contents and of ideology.

Undoubtedly this is a traditional history of literature: László Országh kept in mind the needs of university students and the uninformed general public when summing up the results of several decades of work in this book, modest in its impersonality and hiding his evidently existing preferences behind complete objectivity. And since up to now no work of similar character, i.e. a standard work in Hungarian, existed, he has rendered a much bigger service to the popularizing of American literary culture in Hungary than if he had followed this or that avant-gardist point of view, producing a much more spectacular, exciting, a deeper and yet more one-sided history. He did better work this way in providing more general information and clarifying the subject. With the aid of his book the opportunities for elementary information are given. His history of literature represents, as we hope, the beginning of a faster development in the study of American language and literature in Hungary.

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Comprehensive anthologies compiled with a particular theme or genre in view actually serve the same purpose as the history of literature mentioned above: they help towards a fuller acquaintance with a given genre or movement, and over and above this they offer an insight into the inner life of a nationa literature.

In the last twelve months three anthologies of American literature have been published achieving both professional and public success. Each of them was selected from different points of view, each of them has a different range; one is rather specialized, whereas the subject of the second is American poetry in its entirety. The third anthology is aimed not even at some sort of totality within the genre: it merely wishes to offer excellent reading material, *just that*. Yet their function and result is the same: they successfully arouse interest in American literature.

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When only a few poems, one or two pieces of prose had been published in Hungarian, such an accumulation of legends developed that it was no wonder that *Howl*,* a selection of beat writing, was sold out within a few days, and the same happened with its second edition. Since then some of the slang expressions which appeared in the translation have become the speech habits of a generation. And what is even more essential: some of our young poets were really inspired by Ginsberg and Corso. In one or two cases this latter effect has proved to be fertile, too: the more closed and restricted forms of traditional Hungarian poetry have been beneficially loosened by these spontaneous verses which sometimes (or rather, in most of the cases) are drowned in an anarchy of thought and form.

This particularly great interest was

* *Üvöltés. ("Howl")* Confessions of the Beat Generation. (Selected and introduced by Mihály Sükösd.) Budapest, 1967, Európa Publishing House, 327 pp.

evidently also furthered by the fact that an acquaintance with the attitude and the way of life of the beatniks, thanks to popular magazines, preceded the anthology. The delay in the appearance of the howling generation of Ginsberg and others on the Hungarian literary scene merely furthered the growth of a kind of myth surrounding them, based more than once upon erroneous information. And an odd paradox: by the time that Hungary was ready to receive this "art," in America its significance already belonged to the past: the leading spokesmen of the beat generation had become hoarse, their long hair and beard had started to turn grey, and it turned out that their literature had been merely a peripheral phenomenon, it was more important as a document than as art. Ginsberg, Kerouac and the others—today they appear to be merely burst and deflated talents.

And yet, what could young Hungarian readers who live in a social structure entirely different from the American one appreciate in the representatives of the beat literature? The animal joy of free breathing and shouting, letting the voice free, its greatness and its force; the heart-warming sensation of spitting on the negative petit-bourgeois norms, and the protest against the meek conformism of the older generation, i.e. they participated in that world-wide unrest which has already gone far beyond the bounds of the *beat* generation, in that rebellious irritation felt over the failure to make use of the energies which, depending on the actual social formation, can be either a positive or a destructive force, from the point of view of creating a new and higher moral world view.

What went into the volume was excellently chosen by Mihály Sükösd. The most impressive work is found among the poems: two brilliant, primitively flowing confessions by Allen Ginsberg, "Howl," and "Kaddish," stirringly conveying with their sweeping torrent of words, the very essence of a generation, its awareness of life; and the elegy of a child's sadness, yearning for a pure, peaceful, unsuffled and practically vegetative existence in "The Supermarket in California." Corso too, is impressive; in his "Marriage" his non-conformism is paired with brilliant irony. In addition to weightier poems by Lamantia, Ferlinghetti's verses which are intellectual by Hungarian standards, O'Hara's rough "odes," and the poems of the Buddhists Whalen and McLure, which impress rather as mere oddities, piquant in their repelling strangeness, Kerouac is represented by three "Mexico City Blues," and Snyder as well as Loewinsohn by one poem each. The total picture is not bad, on the contrary: the selection concentrates on value rather than on producing effects.

The nine prose writers do not make such a relatively favourable impression. Though Kerouac's three pieces are definitely impressive, the vivid part from *The Subterraneans* is also a splendid illustration of a way of life; and the *Manhattan Sketches* is a model of the best kind of impressionistic prose, too. A section from the indigestible *The Naked Lunch* by Burroughs convinces us of nothing: it is a frightening document. Hubert Selby junior's short story "Another Day, Another Dollar," on the other hand, is a writing of nearly classic compactness. In the first act of Jack Gelber's *The Connection* one perceives, in addition to Pirandellian experiment, the characteristic beat theme, here in a somewhat enervated and primitive form: the impulse to shake off the burden of settled forms. Seymour Krim's soul-shaking essay ("The Insanity Bit"), the surrealistic experiments of Rumaker, Diane Di Prima, and Dan Propper illuminate one or the other basic experience, basic anxiety of the beat and the hipster attitude, now in a forcefully grotesque, then again in matted, autotelic pictures and situations.

In the section "Workshop" Charles Olson's programmatic essay "Projective Verse" indicates problems of principle of a much wider range, and the selector evidently

projects this writing before us as the background of a more universal poetic movement, which restores breathing and the spoken language to their ancient place, producing numerous clever arguments in its basic theses, yet exaggerated, revolutionary, confused and loud-mouthed in its logical order. One confession each by Kerouac, Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti help to explain the ideological and formal viewpoints of beat literature.

The volume was prepared as a document, no other purpose could have been imagined. It is hard to accept a kinship of principle with these writers, to share their aesthetic principles. The voice of this generation, howling and yearning from among the "lonely masses" for a full, self-perfecting existential condition provides food for thought, and in more than one of its moments it forces certain recognitions upon us.

The drawback in the reception of this volume was that many among the unsuspecting and uninformed readers identified American literature with this movement. Even among Hungarian poets Ginsberg is in the last resort more highly respected than, let us say, the scarcely known Robert Lowell. Jack Kerouac is considered a better and more typically American writer than William Styron. The volume has therefore had ambiguous results, moreover, instead of dissipating a myth it has created one.

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The anthology of American novellas *The Ballad of the Sad Café** was published in an edition of 77,000, as a volume in the most popular Hungarian paperback series. It contains seven excellent long stories by seven authors, from Henry James to John Updike. The overall picture, the overall effect is enthralling: this volume, variegated in its material, style and intonation, is outstanding among similar anthologies published in recent years.

The opening piece already promises much. Henry James' novella "The Turn of the Screw" is now published for the first time in Hungarian, and no work of his could render better service to this Flaubert and Turgenev of American literature to enable him at least to take his proper place in the eyes of the Hungarian public. This great master of psychological realism and a minutely precise art, dexterously bridges the gap between high art and good reading in this long story, a gap more than once made into a fetish with reference to him in particular. The enthrallingly mysterious and mysteriously enthralling psychological "thriller" carries in itself also the basically Jamesian world of problems; for the interplay of the emotional relations between the governess and her charges, of jealousy, of the mechanism of a complex and pointed system of misunderstandings, of the psychological complications resulting from inferiority and superiority: this is what takes place on the ghost level of the story, brilliantly interlinked with horror elements, as inner and essential action. This artistic synthesis of the Gothic tradition of American literature, carried out with profound psychological skill, may count on success in Hungary for the very reason that the two giants of this tradition who wrote in the nineteenth century: Hawthorne and Poe, are to this day among the widest read American authors in Hungary.

Edith Wharton's renaissance as experienced in the United States obviously drew the attention of the compiler, Sarolta Valkay, to this great writer. Only one of her works had previously been published in Hungary, and that back in 1903, "Twilight Sleep" which incidentally is among her least important ones. "Ethan Frome," included in the present volume, seizes the reader with its freshness and the sombre beauty of its

* *A szomorú kávéház balladája.* (*"The Ballad of the Sad Café."*) American novellas. (Selected by Sarolta Valkay.) Budapest, 1968, Európa Publishing House, 757 pp.

tragedy of fate. The moral crisis of Ethan crushed by the pressure of social conventions, hopelessly skidding toward catastrophe, is with masterly purpose included in the strict, traditional composition; the economical and dialectical relation between internal and external action, the puritanical purity of style and yet, the fine, underplayed nobility exactly fits the essentially sentimental story, in one word, the conscious rendering, a method of telling a story that has no need to take use of coincidences: all this immediately reveals the influence of her master and friend, Henry James.

The Great Gatsby just cannot be discovered often enough. I could count on the fingers of one hand those miracles in American literature that might be measured by its standard, *Billy Budd*, *The Bear*, *Miss Lonelyhearts*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, these come to mind promptly as worthy fellows. Scott Fitzgerald is separated from Henry James and Edith Wharton by one world war, and an entire generation. In their case, despite the tragical shock, there is still a stable social and moral framework, despite the mistaken judgements a sure capacity for orientation and a possibility to reorient themselves, a sensation and perception of reality which only temporarily faltered, whereas here, in *The Great Gatsby*, the dream breaks into reality, blurring its sure coordinates into uncertain outlines, and the Jamesian, Whartonian thesis stands on its head: here they do not sin against reality but reality itself sins seriously—against the dream. In the test tube of broken youth, of broken vitality, the simple barbaric essence is distilled by a writer's method, that is the failure of the "American dream," i.e. of the unrestricted self-assertion of the personality.

The way Scott Fitzgerald gives one passing moment the aura of greatness belongs to the very peaks of achievement within American literature. Romantic beauty and an out of date attitude, the self-deluding interplay of illusion and reality, on the ruins of a twentieth-century myth, lead to the creation of a figure of mythical force.

"So we drove on toward death through the cooling twilight," this sentence is practically a compact image of all that takes place in the pages of *The Great Gatsby*. Every single word of it is a key word: (1) "drove": the motion pattern of the Gatsbyan way of life; (2) "twilight": the blurred, uncertain reality, the illusion of disappearing restrictions and barriers: the dream-created condition on the border between day and night in which Gatsby lives, and which is at the same time; (3) "cooling": i.e. becoming non-inhabitable, announcing the approach of the night, of (4) "death": of that sole and final certainty toward which the Gatsby style "drove" of necessity. And finally, (5) "we" means an entire generation, the "lost generation" sharing Gatsby's fate and at the same time the whole story is set in other interconnections: i.e. a new legend, a new myth is born.

Faulkner's "The Old Man" is not one of his most important works, particularly not taken independently, torn out from the volume *Wild Palms*, where it fulfills a mirror-like function. And yet I understand the compiler: as an introduction to Faulkner there is scarcely a more suitable work from the pen of the great Southern writer. In "The Old Man" the real Faulkner is found, too: the way the life of the two convicts is saved; the ruthless play of Nature, the morally renewing force of interdependence and vital danger: all this coalesces into a monumental and massive vision.

The three last authors in the volume are among the most prominent representatives of American prose after the Second World War. Most certainly here the selection was particularly difficult: in judging contemporary literature the norms are less certain, and the system of values is still far from crystallized.

Even if we could mention another twenty similarly significant names there is no question as to the rank of the three writers

selected here nor as regards the outstanding level of the three novellas.

In "The Ballad of the Sad Café" Carson McCullers, whose sadly premature death shook her Hungarian admirers, has produced the masterpiece of her life. This story is perfect: it is nearly non-analysable. Like some phenomenon of nature, its beauty lies so much in itself, and *is* so much itself that the whole thing can collapse with one word of careless analysis. Carson McCullers, in a simple and delicate voice describes the fatal loneliness in the relation of lover and loved, yet, toward the end of the novella she solves the dissonance in the relationship between man and man, in the harmony of some sort of gentle "till death does us part."

William Styron whom I consider, since his *The Confessions of Nat Turner*, the most robust talent of American literature, the writer with the most intensive inner world, produced a splendid existentialist parable in his story "The Long March"; it is really a *tour de force* because it is capable of filling with vitality, with vivid life and passion of man hanging by his legs in orbit, into nothingness. Styron is obviously influenced not only by Faulkner of *The Fable* but also Sartre, and Camus. This lengthy short story reveals one of the most specific and also greatest virtues of the American novel: the claim to totality in depicting existence. Because of that this parable-like story is able to mobilize simultaneously in a conscious *and* an emotional way.

Perhaps the most serene and homogeneous experience is represented by Updike in those two works of his which he himself obviously would rank after *The Centaur* or the disillusioningly empty *Couples* with its affected mannerisms: "Poorhouse Fair," and "Of the Farm." In the present volume the former has been included, as the final *pastorale* movement of his impressive symphony of long stories: the day of the veteran heroes of the "Poorhouse Fair" does not insist on rising to mythical heights. With this story Updike establishes his connection with one of the finest and most beautiful branches of American literature: with the realistic tradition portraying the micro-reality of everyday life, which he renews with a magic art and a fresh outlook, the gentle attitude of the young man looking back with compassion to the loved past of a childhood later crippled for life. Here there is no trace of that schizophrenia of style and theme which characterizes most of his late works. The over-sophisticated mannerisms of the writers of *The New Yorker* are here neutralized by the best virtues of that school: the clarity and purity of the inner essence and of the style.

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"This modest selection is no more than a chart of American poetry though it was prepared on a proper scale, at least as far as the rather deficient supply of relevant books in Hungary permitted, of course with obvious personal limitations," writes Miklós Vajda the compiler and editor, in the preface to the *Anthology of North American Poets.** And later on: "I believe all of us carry within ourselves a number of erroneous, false, even distorted and ridiculous conceptions of America. If this volume rectifies but a few of them and helps a little toward a sound recognition of the intellectual aspect of a great country, it has largely attained its purpose."

There is the usual, or, I might say, "obligatory" modesty and pride hiding behind it, a pride which is not particularly hidden, a pride which rightly follows from the pioneering nature of the performance, and on this occasion we accept from this duet of modesty and pride the latter as the *leitmotif* readily and without any reservations. I believe Miklós Vajda, the editor, compiler and writer of notes and biographies, has

* *Észak-amerikai költők antológiája. ("Anthology of North American Poets.")* Selected, edited and introduced by Miklós Vajda who also wrote the biographies.) Budapest, 1966, Kozmosz Books, 539 pp.

rendered a major service, one of the most important in the last twenty years: from the darkness of utter unfamiliarity, and this is no exaggeration, he has conjured up great poetry. The volume is a true revelation, there is no other word for it.

To the great Hungarian poets of the tens and twenties of this century, and this means at the same time to the best translators, American poetry was represented by Edgar Allan Poe, and Poe had been discovered for them, too (who had been raised on the nourishing milk of French decadence), by Baudelaire. "The Raven" became a "national poem": more than a dozen Hungarian translations exist of it, all done in competition with one another, and all of them magnificent. This absolute musical, consciously composed visionary poetry fulfilled an inspiring and fermenting role, at the same time nearly fatally shutting the door on other trends of American poetry, on its by no means less significant representatives. Walt Whitman only received the "Hungarian laurel wreath" in these last ten years when a meticulous edition of his collected poems was published. Pál Tábori's anthology *(New American Poetry)* published in 1935, however fine and bold an undertaking it was, remained without echo or effect.

Now it seems this volume by Miklós Vajda has at last pierced through the wall of indifference, it perhaps might start a series of further selections, and even of individual volumes.

The volume begins with Anne Bradstreet and ends with Kirby Doyle, all in all 87 poets are represented in 269 poems. A disturbing richness from which, when confronting it with the achievements of Hungarian poetry, with the actual or imagined possibilities, the following impressions arise:

The non-comparably original, pre-imagistic poetry of Emily Dickinson which points far beyond her age to the basic loneliness of existence. [The Hungarian translations fall far below the original text.]

Amy Lowell's brilliantly executed inner monologue, this famous anthology piece: the "Patterns" is a twin-wonder of pure poetry and *verse libre*, in which there is no trace of any sort of anaemic *l'art pour l'art* formalism (in this context so often "artiness" is mentioned, using the term pejoratively) but only the "awareness" of an emotional, psychological condition in the form of precise, and just because of that also emotionally suggestive pictures;

Ezra Pound's "Canto LXXXI," this moving confession in the congenial translation by the eminent Hungarian poet, Sándor Weöres;

The basic pieces of the poetry of Archibald MacLeish which are instructive examples, among others, of how a poem can be *engagé*, and yet remain a *poem;*

Robert Lowell's "The Death of the Sheriff," this great and sad poem which, on the occasion of an insignificant event, conjures up a cosmic drama out of the chaos of everyday life and its mental and psychic nothingness;

John Ciardi's "Elegy" (his only poem in this volume), movingly simple and standing out from among its surroundings by its very "traditionalism," a poem of Keatsian beauty. I could go on to list my subjective experiences on several pages more: Hart Crane, E. E. Cummings, Wallace Stevens, Kenneth Patchen, from now on it can be hoped that these names wil not be alien to the ears of the Hungarian friends of poetry, and of American literature.

Without questioning for one moment the importance of this volume edited by Miklós Vajda, and without disregarding the difficulties unavoidably arising in the course of his work it must be said that he presents too many poets, with comparatively too few poems for each of them, for first acquaintance, thus causing a certain confusion and chaos. It is extremely difficult and risky, nearly a hopeless undertaking to judge a poet on the basis of two or three verses, especially when the staff of translators, struggling with

a task of a nature entirely different from their previous practice, is not always quite equal to it. The major power lines of American poetry of the twentieth century have already developed: perhaps it would have been easier to distinguish them if Vajda would have presented only the most important poets of the various movements but with many more poems in each case. The nine poems by Ezra Pound are definitely too few when considering his importance. How can one bring Marianne Moore and Edmund Wilson down to practically the same qualitative denominator, if one takes the space given as a guide? Allen Tate and Tennessee Williams who, as a poet, is third-rate? Does one single piece by Robert Penn Warren, Charles Olson and, particularly, Richard Wilbur inform us at least to some extent about the world and the value of the respective poet?

I complain about the wealth of names, and about the comparative numerical distribution of the poems. From among the more recent poets I truly regret the lack of but two: of Ann Sexton and James Merrill who has ripened in the last years into poets of significance.

But I must stress that as compared to the real significance of this volume these objections are merely fault-finding. The kaleidoscope-like anthology can elicit nothing but joy in the reader. Vajda's preface is a better guide to the poetry of the last century. Splendid little miniature essays on contemporary poets are included, though in isolation, among the Biographical Notes, likewise by Vajda.

LEVENTE OSZTOVITS

FROM OUR NEXT NUMBERS

BIBLIOTHECA CORVINIANA
Dezső Keresztury

GUILLEVIC'S HUNGARIAN POETS
György Rónay

IDIOMIC THOUGHTS
Paul Aston

A NEW HUNGARIAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA
Zoltán Halász

SCHOLARSHIP AND ITS PITFALLS
Lajos Vargyas

FOLK BALLADS

ARTS

CURRENT EXHIBITIONS

Bokros Birman, sculptor

The exhibitions of the István Museum* in Székesfehérvár offer at one and the same time an experience in art and information. They are arranged according to a careful schedule, in essence surveying the progress of modern Hungarian art, registering major trends and presenting the work of artists. This time one of the most original personalities of the Hungarian art scene between the two world wars, Dezső Bokros Birman, was introduced to the general public.

Bokros Birman (1889–1965) was the leading Hungarian Expressionist. He did not start as an Expressionist but ruthless Hungarian reality forced him to follow this dramatic and emotional method. Modern Hungarian sculpture tended to follow the path trod by Maillol, or Neo-Classicism. Both Ferenc Medgyessy and Béni Ferenczy, the two leading Hungarian sculptors of that age, were part of the classical sculptural tradition, Medgyessy giving this tradition a taste of folk-realism, while Ferenczy showed psychological sensitivity.

At the start Bokros Birman's career suggested a similar direction. His works were characterized by compact plastic forms, and a closed composition. Like to Medgyessy the initial influences were Egypt, the Assyrians, and Michelangelo. His nudes are vital, animal figures, and his early Self-portrait with Hat (1924) spoke of himself in the lapidary form language of statues of Egyptian Pharaohs. Well-considered composition, folksy sculptural language: this is the road of Maillol, of Medgyessy and of Béni Ferenczy, though the severity of that early self-portrait, its ruthless self-examination already indicate that in Bokros Birman forces are also at work that are contradictory to the classic ideal of beauty, the cheerful harmony of natural tranquillity.

Bokros Birman belonged with the kind of artists who are responsive to social problems. Without ever stepping out of the world of sculpture and turning to literary, illustrative methods his art nevertheless echoed the movements of social reality. In his autobiography he wrote that the plastic experience of his childhood was the human hand, viewing the playful hands of his cousin he experienced the first sculptural emotion of his life: "...I looked wonderingly at, and saw the separateness of his fingers, my eyes were filled with their exciting, strange and mobile playfulness, these fingers with their funny, frolicking movements in the air space, with their separate corporality: their effect was to stimulate me by their plastic essence. My mind sucked up once and for all this

* For a detailed review of the Museum's activities see Zoltán Halász: "Alba Regia in the Age of Electronics" in No. 29 of *The New Hungarian Quarterly*.

three-dimensional picture... In 1917 I modelled the figure of a small boy sitting, a boy looking at the index finger of his upraised right hand, just as Leonardo's Young St. John. The experience of the fingers accompanied me right to that day. These pictures and visions spoke of narcissism; it was the stage of the soul looking into itself, searching for itself, the soul gropingly searching for its individuality drove its roots into the depth.

"These pictures and plastic visions ripened, yellowed, and fell off, but their roots grew stronger.

"My *l'art pour l'art* period, when I attempted to be an individualist, more or less came to an end with this. What I produced from that time onward was a connecting of the human figure with the given historic experience of the day, of today.

"My figure kneeling on all fours is a vision of the War of 1914. My Don Quixote is the principal victim of the First World War: the clumsy citizen fighting against windmills; my next sculptures: the Workman, the Miner of Pécs, the Navvy, the Road-Paver, the Invalid derived out, in their material essence, from the socialist world view."

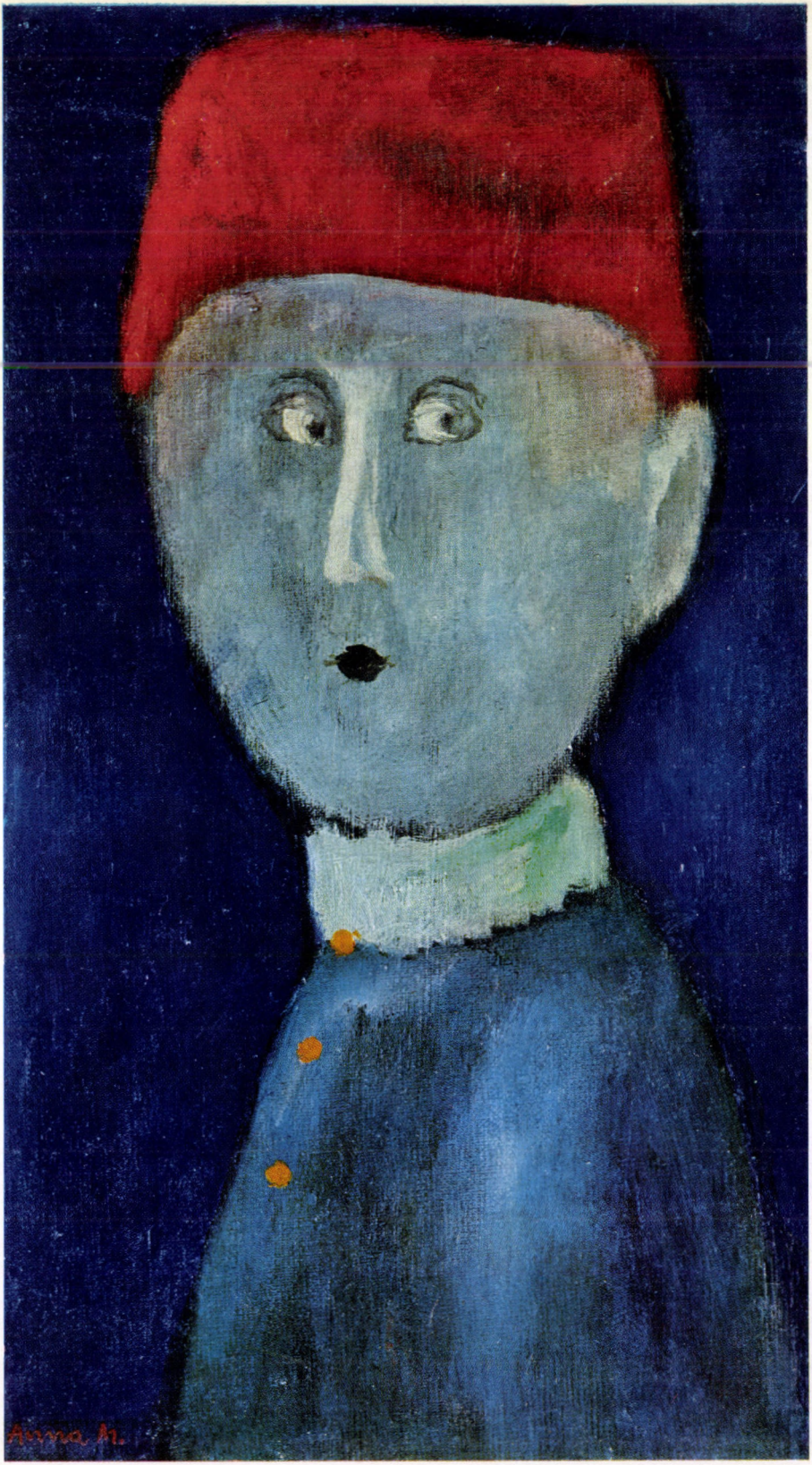
Thus toward the end of the twenties Bokros Birman woke up to the fact that that full-blooded health which characterized his early small bronzes, or that majestic monumentality which exudes from his Self-portrait was unable to express the feelings of a progressive artist who lived through the Hungarian reality of the middle thirties. An external experience gave him the final push: in 1936 he modelled the Miner Looking into the Sun in honour of the miners of Pécs who had been on strike for days on end in the underground galleries. The stupefying real force of the subject could not be conveyed in classical forms. His elementary anger and his sympathy could be interpreted only with the aid of a style that by the very excitement of its modelling, of its revolt against the traditional concept of beauty, by stressing the distorted and the singular, already directly suggests a tragic and dramatic experience. And this he found in the style of Expressionism. The pitted and pockmarked, jagged modelling of the haggard nude of the miner looking into the sun after living like a mole seems to anticipate the nerve-like sculpture of Giacometti.

Besides the Miner Looking into the Sun several other works, too, indicated the change in Bokros Birman's style. Though the formal language of his statue of Don Quixote modelled some years earlier still showed a kinship with his Self-portrait with Hat the attitude of this statue was already different, the self-assurance of that early self-portrait had disappeared.

The major works in his Expressionist style were born in the forties. At that time he modelled a series of Expressionist small bronzes portraying the horrors of the war years and their humiliation: these are the most tragically inspired works in Hungarian sculpture. Suffering, broken and mangled figures that had gone through the inferno, the invalids of that anti-human world, now appeared in his art instead of the triumphant, animal eroticism of his earlier nudes, bursting with health. It is distorted and disproportioned, with pock-marked patterns. This dramatic form characterizes the mature period of the sculptor, from the forties up to his death.

The art of Bokros Birman represents a particular flavour within Hungarian sculpture. Whereas the larger part of Hungarians at the time worked at the sculptural transposition of classical harmony, of human purity, he himself faced the inferno chosing a style springing forth from this very experience, a style differing from classical harmony and capable of expressing disharmony. Thus his art is also a moral example showing that the artist who wants to be in relation with his own age is bound to follow the changes taking place in this age even if they may carry anti-artistic overtones. Bokros Birman dared to smash to

MARGIT ANNA: ANGEL (OIL, 50×40 CMS, 1967)


Anna M.

MARGIT ANNA: RIDERS (OIL, 40×45 CMS, 1967)

MARGIT ANNA: THE WHITE HOUSE (OIL, 18×28 CMS, 1954)

pieces the classical ideal of beauty because he felt that it had become an empty form, and he confronted that "ideal" with the truth.

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Margit Anna, painter

A significant artistic event of the spring season was the exhibition of Margit Anna in the Ernst Museum in Budapest. The painter, one of the typical representatives of a European School which played a great part in modern Hungarian art, had her last one-man show back in 1948. Those conversant with modern Hungarian art know, however, how she has developed artistically since that time, how her style has become truly individual in these two last decades. The present exhibition offers only a small selection from her work of the end of the forties, the bulk of the exhibited material is paintings of the fifties and sixties.

Margit Anna was considered a gifted artist already at the beginning of her career. At that time her style was akin to that of her husband, Imre Ámos, the eminent avant-gardist who was murdered by the fascists. After a short Post-Impressionist period the art of Chagall, and her personal friendship with the painter deeply impressed her. This set free her artistic vision, and from that time onward she dared to depict the world of her subtle fantasy. Beginning with the experience of Chagall the artistic projection of a dreamlike entrancement, the sometimes playful overgrowth of fantasy, then again the anguish welling up from the very depth of the soul played a larger and larger part in her art. The Post-Impressionistic vision was replaced by an associative way of representation.

But Chagall's art only had the effect of opening her eyes, she did not become his follower. Her art is linked with many more threads to the great dreamer of modern Hungarian art at the beginning of the century: Lajos Gulácsy. Gulácsy's psychosis-imbued art is one of the most original products of the modern Hungarian style. It was coloured first by the effect of English Pre-Raphaelism, then the psychically broken painter who struggled with his inner demons and visions arrived at the threshold of Surrealism. Margit Anna responded sensitively to Gulácsy's world of symbols, lyric and neurotic at the same time, to his over-refined form language. Also in her work, especially in her pastels and her water-colours, the nostalgic memory of Art Nouveau, and the symbol-suggesting range of themes of Surrealism, its absurd interrelations, flashed forth simultaneously. The very titles of the paintings of that period are characteristic: Ophelia, Clown, White-haired Girl, Art Nouveau, Rococo, Rose, Veiled Woman; the innocent recollection of times long gone is mingled, in these works, with a deep inner anguish, with memories of tragedies. Behind the pure form, the finely meandering lines, anguish and grief is hidden.

Nearly simultaneously with this Art Nouveau-Surrealistic series the virginally pure world of children's drawings and of folk art appeared in the art of Margit Anna. Gingerbread dolls, the requisites of peasant life, mysterious regions, lonely cottages: it was their pictorial metamorphosis which she searched for. These paintings with their primitive style are dominated by a sound now playful, and then again symbol-suggesting yet hidden behind a mask of naivety. But in the depth of this primitiveness there is a profound artistic certainty, an aesthetic sovereignty. Even if she formally differs from them this type of her paintings is closest to the Surrealist branch of the Szentendre School, to the range of problems present in the art of Dezső Kornis and Endre Bálint.

The products of the last one and a half years, Margit Anna's most recent period, keep a certain kinship with the Neo-Primitive style, yet also bear witness to a renewal of her art. These paintings are overwhelmingly one-figure compositions: Girl with Violoncello, Blue Doll, Leonora, Beata,

Red-haired Doll, Head of a Girl, Angel, Muse, Bride. What she sought for in her earlier primitive-style phase now, in this new series, has become pictorial reality. These works are characterized by the overwhelming pictorial joy, the gaiety, and at the same time the almost religious humility, a delight in colours loud enough to be close to gaudiness and yet offering a deep colour experience, a competent draughtsmanship and a flavour of folk art. In this series the spirit of folk art is truly raised to the level of high art, the spirit of "market-fair art"; ancient peasant art pushed to the periphery here, all of a sudden, flares up into new life. In the nervous features of one or the other face, in their eyes especially, there is still a memory of that world of anxiety which characterized that phase of hers which was permeated by reminiscences of Gulácsy, now above all that vital force, that plebeian merriment is at work which was characteristic of the art of the circus: of the *commedia dell'arte*. Margit Anna has travelled a long way. In her new period she has digested all her preceding search for ways, she is aesthetically self-assured and yet inherently naive, rich in forms and invention, capable of singing guilelessly in the language of colours. With this series she has risen into the front rank of contemporary Hungarian art.

LAJOS NÉMETH

METALCRAFTS AT THE TIME OF THE HUNGARIAN CONQUEST

The peoples of medieval Europe came to know the Hungarians, who had made raids on Europe from the East, in connection with these very raids. Tenth century West European sources reveal to us the picture they had of the Magyars, descriptions from which one may infer that the marauding, heathen Hungarians did not love beauty or honour art. This opinion, which had gained ground all over Europe, may account for the fact that although scholars were attracted by the peculiar originality of the Hungarian heritage from the time of the Magyar conquest, for a long time they refused to believe that the objects had been made by Hungarians. According to their view the martial Hungarian spirit ran counter to domestic industry and to the quiet practice of crafts and trade.

Not long ago Hungarian art treasures from the Middle Ages were exhibited in London, and prior to this in Paris. * From the earliest section of this exhibition the visitor could form an idea about the singular art of the Hungarians at the end of the ninth century. These works of art, showing a high level of craftsmanship, not only suggest that the views formed about the conquering Magyar hardly stand the test of thorough scrutiny but they also contribute to the emergence of a new and clarified picture about them.

Historical research in Hungary has only in recent decades summarized the details lately discovered about the way of life of Hungarians at the time of the Conquest. By now we have realized that the Magyar people of the late ninth century did not include only warriors who raided distant countries and herdsmen who remained at home and freely roamed with their animals. There is incontestable proof that as early as the time of the conquest this society was well organized, and that the powerful leaders commanded not only warlike soldiers

* See the articles by Nikolaus Pevsner and Iván Boldizsár in No. 29. of The N.H.Q.

but also people bound to render them services, moreover that this latter group included not only herdsmen and fishermen but also tillers of the soil and even smiths, carpenters, potters, metalworkers, etc. They had to produce great quantities of iron indispensable for equipping the combatants, who, no doubt, played the most significant part in the life of the Hungarians. Thus it is not surprising that when the Magyars settled their princes made sure that iron foundries were working and the crude iron stored and distributed. The quantity of precious metal taken as booty during the marauding campaigns or obtained from Western rulers, moreover, the silver of the mines that had operated in the north-western uplands from earliest times on, supplied enough material for Hungarian metalcraft, which had great traditions to look back upon, to survive, and, later, to develop. The well-trained craftsmen, gold and silversmiths, who were artists in the way they worked, catered for the love of pomp of the great. These people of rank strove to emphasize their distinction by their whole appearance.

The tombs of the Magyars of the time of the conquest preserved remains of metalcraft particularly in the form of garment accessories. Objects buried with men: belts, purse-plates, weapons and jewels all bear witness to the art of a people with a vivid imagination, a rich body of beliefs and a penchant for lavish decoration.

Belt and purse as status symbols

Like other oriental peoples the Magyars too initiated boys to manhood in the course of a solemn ritual by putting a belt around their waist. The belt indicated the rank of a free man with full rights and was not simpler or more ornate according to the taste of the wearer alone, but also according to his rank and social standing. The typical oriental belt, whose one side came down to the knee, served to support a weapon. The material—gold, silver or bronze—their denseness, the size and decoration of the studs indicated the step the wearer occupied on the social ladder. Even in the late Middle Ages this kind of belt was a characteristic of ornate Byzantine attire. It looked like a metal band encircling a caftan of brocade. On most of the decorations—inspired by the same spirit but composed in a great variety—the design shows a single bunch of palmettes, sometimes only in the outlines but, in most cases, in the decoration too, which, on the finest belts, was subsequently embellished with metalcraftsmen's finishing touches. In these palmette motifs, often very sketchy, a recurring element of the ancient Magyars' system of symbols is concealed: the symbol of the ancient tree of life, which in Sassanid art had been simplified into bunch of leaves. The Hungarians may have attributed a magic power to the trees of life encircling their bodies: these small trees, saturated with the food and drink of life, these procreators and protectors of life sheltered the wearer against all dangers.

On the magnificent belt the weapons of a distinguished man, his sabre decorated in keeping with his rank, and his wallet were suspended. The wallet, this receptacle for his flint, steel etc., indicated the wearer's rank even more than the belt; we have good reason to suppose that this object was definitely a mark of dignity. The purse itself was made a textile fabric or of leather and the broad surface of its front flap was decorated with coloured embroidery, with appliqué ornaments, with beads and fringes. Pieces made of leather were embellished with embossed decorations, with patterns produced by hot punches, with coloured slotted trimming and inlay. The thicker and more rigid front part of wallets made of leather was the part studded with metal ornaments. In the East the type of wallets which was found in the Hungarian remains is also widespread. From being structural elements at first metal mounts became more

and more purely decorative. In addition to the mount for closing the purse, ornamental ones were fastened to the four corners and finally the catch itself became merely a decoration. The number of mounts on the front flap rose. A wallet ornament was brought to light from one of the tombs of the time of the conquest on which the mounts to be fastened to the centre, to the top and to the edges of the front flap of the wallet nearly overlapped, and the surface of leather hardly showed between them.

This course of increasing sumptuousness, as outlined above, reached its zenith right at the time of the conquest, when the purses of the most distinguished personages were decorated with a plate of precious metal covering the whole surface of the flap instead of the former cast mounts. The thin silver plate, which was easier to elaborate, was covered with delicate designs, every detail of which was wrought with fastidious care. So characteristic are these wallet-plates of the Magyars at the time of the conquest that their art is frequently called the art of purse-plates. This name is justified because these objects made by ancient silversmiths are specific to the Hungarians of those times. So far twenty have been found in the Carpathian Basin, and, apart from a few unadorned or simpler plates, every one of them is of a different design, testifying to an abundance of ideas, a rich fantasy and ingenuity in structure and technical proficiency on the craftsmen's part.

If we analyze their complex patterns we can recognize traces on most plates of the principles according to which the former textile and leather purses were decorated. The network of palmettes, which could be continued endlessly, evoke the design of earlier woven and embroidered patterns. On another one a vertical stripe is reminiscent of the closing strap and again on another the square ornament in the centre of the plate conjures up the former mount, which served as a catch. Precious stones were often set in the middle and the four corners of centrally composed designs and on one of the most beautiful plates these five points of the pattern are emphasized with marked bosses.

One of the strange and mysterious plates is outstanding with respect to its form, material and pattern even among these unique pieces, which differ very much from one another. The whole surface of the copper plate is richly gilt—not only the background and the undercut parts as is the case with all other plates—obviously with a view to creating the impression of a plate of pure gold. Instead of the complex plant pattern of the other plates a tree of life, composed of four bunches of palmettes, rises on this one; the scroll-like, elongated leaves divide the surface into separate fields. A Byzantine cross supported by the central leaf of the bottom bunch of the tree of life is placed in the middle of the plate. This strange combination of Christian and pagan symbols—of old and new symbols of protection—is enhanced further by the demoniac rampant beasts flanking the tree of life and the cross; in one of the animal figures the characteristic peacock-dragon (senmurv) of Persian mythology can be recognized.

This monster, with a dog's or a wolf's head, two paws with talons, large wings and a spread peacock's tail is a well known figure on colourful Sassanid silk fabrics and in the work of Byzantine weavers, which continued the tradition of the Sassanids.

The other beast is also a fabulous, supernatural monster: a quadruped, winged unicorn with a raised tail. Tiny circles with which the background is densely punched emphasize the design, which is framed by a stripe running around the edge of the plate and which consists of bunches of palmettes. This singular object suggests that even before the mass conversions at the turn of the millenium Christianity had reached the Hungarians, perhaps at times preceding their settlement in the Carpathian Basin.

Hungarian silversmiths

It has long been a point of issue whether the most beautiful products of metalcraft from the time of the conquest were made locally by craftsmen belonging to the confederation of Hungarian tribes, or else had originated in the central Dnieper area, being perhaps purchased from foreigners and taken along to the new country. The fact that with the exception of the single plate of Galgóc all the others were discovered in the eastern part of Hungary, particularly along the upper reaches of the river Tisza, i.e. along one of the main routes of the Magyars' penetration, superficially supported the latter opinion. But lately a third purse-plate has been found close to the western borders of Hungary showing that these objects do not indicate the route where the Magyars entered the country but that a Hungarian ethnic group practising a certain type of metalcraft had settled around the two entries to the country. Only one purse-plate, different from the Hungarian ones, was found in a territory outside the Carpathian Basin: in a Cheremissian burial place, and they are related to the Magyars. The lack of foreign parallels also proves that purse-plates could not have found their way to the Carpathian Basin in the 10th century as a result of trade.

However, it was the discovery of a seemingly insignificant purse-plate, decorated with incisions with a magical meaning, that has provided a conclusive proof of the wallet-plate being produced locally. The silver plate, much smaller than the usual plates, was found in the grave of a young man who must have gained a position entitling him to wear a purse with a plate not long before he died, so the plate—of dimensions to fit his figure—must certainly have been made for him in the new country. Another circumstance contesting the theory of foreign origin is the fact that the graves with wallet-plates cannot be connected with the first generation of immigrants. There is one wallet-plate that could only have originated from the last third of the 10th century, i.e. from a period nearly a whole century after the conquest, as is proved by the sabre-hilted sword, whose date can be fixed exactly, which was found in the grave.

Silver and gold sabres

Not only the purse decorated with an ornate plate but an exquisitely wrought sabre, too, was suspended on the belt of a distinguished man. The belt was also embellished according to the wearer's rank. The sabre in itself was an object indicating rank, it was only worn by notabilities, by leaders of the army, of armed units, and their officers; simple warriors were equipped with bows and arrows. Concerning form and dimensions all sabres from the time of the conquest were made according to the same model but variety was aimed at in the decoration of the hilt, the hilt-guard, the scabbard and, particularly, of the ears for the straps. Even simpler pieces were decorated specially and individually. The guards belonged to an identical type, but they were cast in different forms and decorated with different ornaments; some pieces were adorned with silver inlays of various designs. A leaf pattern was incised on a hilt-guard cast of silver. But hilt and strap-ear decorations of carved bone were also customary. In other cases the lower part and the tip of the hilt, the strap-ears and parts of the scabbard were also covered with thin metal plates. On the precious metal scabbard of the most beautiful and ornate sabre, presumably belonging to the prince, the same precise silversmith work can be discerned as on the purse-plates and other fine garment accessories. The sabre, with silver mounts, on the hilt and strap-ears of which the finest composition of palmettes, adapted to the given surface can be found, the peak of metalcraft from the time of the conquest, was unearthed from a tomb with a wallet-plate.

The sabre covered with thin gold plate decorated with palmette designs may have been produced in the same workshop. It must have belonged to a very high dignitary indeed and was found in fragments in a destroyed grave. It is known as the Sabre of Geszteréd, the closest parallel to the princely weapon known as Charlemagne's Sword and preserved today at the Schatzkammer in Vienna. Earlier hypothesis about the origin of that sword, according to which it found its way to Charlemagne's Aix-la-Chapelle court either as a gift of Harun-al-Rashid, Caliph of Baghdad, or else in the course of the campaigns of the Frankish king against the Avars, have been refuted one after the other, and it is incontestable that the sword was made much later than Charlemagne's period (768–814). Ever since the end of the 19th century Hungarian scholars have considered the sword of Vienna, because of its essential features, to be of Hungarian origin, only the time when it was made is still debated. In the opinion of some, the princely gold sword was made east of the Carpathians for Prince Álmos, before the conquest, or for his young successor Árpád. According to others it was produced in the 10th century in the Carpathian basin. Although a Hungarian sword could have got to the neighbouring German imperial court in a number of ways the fact that the piece has been grouped with the imperial insignia and jealously guarded for several centuries suggests that it may be identical with a sword of legendary fame originating from the royal treasury of Hungary and mentioned in an 11th century German source. The chronicler Lambert of Hersfeld relates that the wife of King András I of Hungary, the Russian princess Anastasia gave an exquisitely wrought sword to Otto von Nordheim, commander of the Bavarian forces, as a recognition for his help to her son in his struggle for the throne. It was the sword of Attila, the great king of the Huns, which he had received from the god of warriors. In the myths the miraculous sword of the gods will serve only its chosen owner, for whom it has been destined by the gods, but it will bring about the ruin of any unworthy wearer. This idea can be discerned between the chronicler's lines for he describes how this fateful weapon destroyed several of its owners, causing their disastrous death.

Leading scholars outside Hungary today acknowledge the Hungarian origin of the sword. Among the finds of the time of the Magyar conquest discovered in Hungary an increasing number of objects were unearthed which are of decisive significance beside the swords of Geszteréd and Tarcal. A linking of the mount at the opening of the scabbard and of the strap-ear can to be found on a number of other swords hitherto unpublished. The stylistic elements that gave rise to most doubts, viz. a composition in which the plaited ribbon design and the palmette are intertwined, can be seen on other objects of the period of the conquest too. On a bracelet a meandering scroll branching into leaves of palmettes almost identical with the copper inlay of the blade of the Vienna sword can be found; the background of both is decorated with identical punches. The pair of fabulous monsters growing out of the end of the scroll reminds us of the animal figures on the purse-plate of Bezdéd.

Silversmiths' works with palmette designs of the same style adorned the clothes worn by men of rank: the tip of a cap as well as different pieces of jewellery; the same designs appear on the carved bone decorations on quivers, and on parts of horse-harness, even on stirrups and bits made of iron.

Jewels, hair ornaments

Naturally, women's apparel was even more lavish than that of men. Above their shifts, embroidered with beads or with spangles sewn on to them, they wore caftans bordered with square mounts or with floral patterns. The caftan was gathered in on the

waist by a belt on which metal ornaments were suspended. Ornaments similar to the trimmings of the caftan bordered their headgear and caps and their boots were also studded with nails with ornate heads. Their jewels, too, were more sumptuous than those of the men: they wore a greater numbers of earrings, bracelets and rings. The harnesses of the women's horses were also conspicuously better decorated, sometimes they had gilt silver mounts the size of a palm on the straps.

It is a custom known in many parts of the world and alive in the East even today that women decorate their hair with different trinkets: beads, pierced coins, etc. Similar ornaments can be found in women's graves of the time of the conquest: simple metal rings to be plaited in the hair, and polished shells or beads that all formed part of the headdress. The most showy ornaments were the metal discs, worn in pairs. They were either cast or else thin, disc-shaped silver plates were embellished with silversmiths' work. Among the cast pieces there are some of artistic value, finished subsequently by master craftsmen, on the other hand some of the discs made of thin plates are only decorated with stylized leaves, with rows of dots or circular incisions. It can be frequently observed that the same design is represented on discs produced with different techniques. Trees of life interpreted in the same style, bunches of palmettes branching forth from the centre and the fantastic animal figures of the world of the Orient are amongst the designs. We can find among them pieces testifying to a high level of draughtsmanship and others produced with so perfect a technical skill that they are certainly not inferior to the most beautiful purse-plates.

A similar approach to the tree of life design can be found on the east discs of Sárospatak and on those made of thin plate and excavated at Anarcs. It is with a superior surety of touch that the rich foliage of the tree of life is composed to fit the circular field, enabling the widespread leaves curl against and ocassionally blend with the frame. So heavily do the lower leaves hang down that they seem to be loaded with the weight of fruit. Following the dictate of tradition the trunk is bifurcated at the bottom and it is at this slit that the life-giving sap of the tree springs forth.

Pairs of discs decorated with figures are particularly fascinating. They are not life-like representations but manifestations of a singular transformation in which the artist turns the shapes of the body into vegetal elements and composes his mysterious animal figures of these elements.

A number of hair ornaments were discovered in a woman's grave, which proved extraordinarily rich in material: a pair of shell discs, with a mother-of-pearl sheen, and a handful of coloured beads threaded on to them; a number of spangles in the form of bulls' heads decorating suspending straps and a pair made of silver gilt with open-work decoration. In the latter the striped frame surrounds a four footed animal, which is interwoven with vegetal forms. Its buoyant body gives the impression of curving leaves, its head hangs down on the tapering neck as if suspended on a pedicel and its open mouth is like the calyx of a flower. The crest and the erect tail are intertwined with the foliage of the tree of life rising behind the animal, the roots ramify beneath the animals' belly. The whole surface of the body is veined like a leaf; a spine, following the curve of the body, runs along the hollowed out fields. The unknown master succeeded to perfection in blending the two basic elements: the animal and vegetable figure. A back plate is rivetted to the open-work disc; originally there may have been a coloured sheet between the two to set off the lines of the gilt ornament. The design of another open work disc is even more complex and sophisticated in its composition; the figure of a quadruped collapsing on its knees can hardly be discerned from among the profusion of luxuriant vines.

Another masterly example of the representation of an animal turned into a vegetal design can be found in one of the finest pairs of Hungarian discs, found at Aldebrő. The head of the slender quadruped is one single, squat palmette leaf, whose ends are turned inwards; the upright tail looks like the stem of a plant and branches out into a bunch of leaves completely filling the field as do the feet, which branch out into vines. The silver design is set off by a gilt, recessed background.

Although transformed in a peculiar manner in the style of purse-plates the pair of discs found at Rakamaz conjures up the character of beasts of prey to be found in Iranian silversmiths' works. With its spread wings this bird is closer to realistic representation; only the shading of its plumage, the way the ends of its wings and tail are elaborated and, more than anything else, the curve of its crest, are reminiscent of the palmette style. The lines of the feet, in which the bird holds two smaller water-fowl, show a composition akin to that of floral designs. It holds a twig with palmette leaves in its beak, symbolising primeval vegetation.

*

Even the above, sketchy description is proof that the Persian Gardizi described what he really saw: "The Magyars are handsome and goodlooking. Their clothes are made of brocade. Their weapons are studded with silver and are inlaid with pearls."

Certainly, the clan aristocracy not only decorated their clothes and weapons but lived in surroundings in a manner worthy of their rank. The only extant collection of remains gives an idea of the pomp of princely courts: the 23 gold vessels found in the vicinity of the castle of the chieftain Ajtony.

The silver and goldsmiths of the Magyars at the time of the conquest were inspired by the art of Iran and of the Caucasus, which at that time represented the highest artistic standards in the eastern part of Europe, and by Mohammedan and Byzantine works of art in which these styles were continued. They may have taken the elements of their designs mostly from brocades and rugs, but adapted them by their individual manner of composition to the surfaces to be decorated. However, even if we consider the similarity between the two systems of designs it is remarkable that they only adopted from the arts they had taken as their models such elements as could be interpreted in terms of their own world concept and myths. The fragments of the myths and legends of the ancient Magyars also show the "topless tree" of the universe, the animal ancestors with miraculous powers, as well as all the supernatural beings of whom the shamans told in their ecstasy. Due to these elements this art—in spite of all related features—can be separated from other similar ones. With its individual qualities it forms an independent whole which is specifically Hungarian.

István Dienes

Disc-shaped ornament found at Rakamaz

Part of a purse-plate found at Tiszabezdéd

A purse-plate found at Szolyvár

Overleaf:

The pattern of a purse-plate found at Galgóc

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

For over five years I have regularly read your paper. I am in full agreement with your principal aim, a better understanding between East and West, and I have myself given a great deal of thought to it and to the means which further them and reduce tension.

Firm principles, strong convictions, absolute doctrines are the building blocks of ideologies and their handmaiden, orthodox churches and politics.

The main ingredients of a great character—top virtue in our society—are a brave stance, firm principles and strong convictions. The braver, the stronger, the firmer, the better.

To be flexible, compromising, supine, connotes weakness, deviousness, an diminution of virtue, literally compromising to character. The American Round Table exemplifies the dilemma. Men of different views debate an issue. The audience does get the benefit of the opinion of two or more sides, but whoever heard of a meeting of minds between the debaters, however brilliant the argument or fragile the counter argument? It is unthinkable.

An impassioned speaker or preacher will assail you with the ultimate and eternal reason of his argument, will in fact assign you to eternity by calling you to the barricades to fight and die for his convictions. A religious martyr and a war hero represent after all the quintessence of virtue.

Man is stuck with his virtue. Attempts to compromise with it are convulsive and inconclusive. You tangle with doctrines at the risk of heresy. Dogma is not negotiable. Witness Rome's forlorn attempts toward ecumenism and liberalization in spite of the recent dramatic authority of the Vicar of Christ, the infighting between the orthodox and less pragmatic factions in China or our own American tentative domestic opposition to patriotic democracy, the freedom fight at the drop of any however distant military hat, at any and anyone's expense, culminating if necessary in the freedom of the insects from all mankind. The more the underpinnings and theoretical framework of an ideology, the more absolute the theory, the less is it subject to question or compromise. The adherent, the believer, must adhere and believe. To question is a contradiction in terms and must be resisted by the ideological hierarchy. Rightly so from its point of view. Compromise erodes the doctrine.

It appears, therefore, that the only alternative to firm principles and particularly to strong convictions triggering a continuous ebb and flow of revolution and counter-revolution in church, statecraft or any discipline—is flexibility, mutual understanding, willingness to see both or more sides of any issue, to give this ability status, to elevate it to virtue, to teach it and preach it towards attaining as common a denominator as possible and desirable, to shift from absolute to relative values, as if, to apply to social values, to change from Newtonian laws to the theory of relativity.

Unfortunately, social laws are not established by mathematical equations. Moreover, the shift from absolute to relative truths is radical enough to require something of the order of conversion through both reason and emotion. Conversion from one set of beliefs to another is difficult enough and is entrusted to missionaries—religious or political—imbued by exceptional zeal and self-sacrifice, but at least the missionary is able to offer for one dogma another, a circumscribed frame of reference to rely on. How much more radical and difficult is the conversion to free inquiry into all values? Not, of course, a simple overthrow of established mores, a free abandoning of all the shackles of ordered society. A constructive

inquiry motivated not by skepticism, not by negating traditional values. Quite the contrary, a discipline which attempts to discover the worth of inimical points of view, transmuting dislike, aversion, hate and contempt into understanding through an open mind, obtaining a change of heart without the need to rely on the so seldom attained charity of turning the other cheek. The guiding principle of this discipline is the recognition that men who have established major philosophical, religious and even political trends, who have attained somewhat of a prophetic status, have trained their minds on learning and examination, frequently cleansed their soul by selfless pursuits to the point of revelation. The revelations may be delusions, the conclusions of their thoughts may be completely erroneous and even harmful, but more likely than not, they contain kernels of merit deserving of attention and care, giving us the more justification to reject the chaff.

This discipline is, of course, based on freedom of thought, the avowed principle of Western Democracy, but as the principle of equal rights to all United States citizens has remained hollow for many so long, freedom of thought must be implemented in order to become meaningful. Not only should we respect the other's right to his opinion, we should also consider its validity, and more significantly, we should decline anyone's authority to impose on us a set of opinions regardless of their noble disguise, be it religious or political authority.

Recent history shows that even opinions endorsed by the democratic process of the ballot can be freely reversed by executive authority and then fed into the propaganda machine which grinds out the desired consensus. The din of communication media can freeze an entire nation into insensitivity to its noblest ideals.

Liberal thought, an open mind is no denial of the need of a social contract, or order and harmony. It requires them, but it must insist on a structure with exchangeable parts, a contract with ever negotiable terms, on order whose coordinates are not fixed and harmony which tolerates discordant notes, on truths which are not immutable and much less, eternal.

As difficult as such goals appear, it is comforting that in one great discipline outside of science, the theory of the relativity of values is gaining increasing recognition—in the world of arts and letters. An eye which feasts on Giotto, Rembrandt, or Caravaggio may blink at Kokoshka, Pollock or Motherwell or an African primitive. An ear attuned to Vivaldi or Schubert may feel somewhat shattered by Schoenberg or a computer symphony, Shelley or Schiller may convey more harmony than Joyce, Cummings or Grass. You may prefer Shakespeare to Becket, but few and steadily diminishing are the voices which don't recognize merit in all of them or at least try to understand and appreciate.

Could it be that the diminishing prejudice in the arts and letters, the relative quiescence among western churches versus the crescendo in the ideological and political arena are due to an increasing scale of virtue on one hand and growing propaganda or brainwashing—depending on who practices it—in the latter.

Let us beware and resist it, let us think it terms of the relativity of all values, as a beginning towards the practice of a difficult discipline, probably indispensable to the survival of man.

André Gabor

Chicago, Ill.

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

BÍRÓ, Yvette. Film expert and critic, our regular film reviewer. Graduated in French at Eötvös University, she is now a research worker at the Budapest Institute of Cinematography and editor of the bi-monthly *Filmkultúra*, published by the Institute. Has written a book on the dramatic structure of the film, and another on film language. See her reviews and articles in Nos. 21, 22, 27, 29, 30, and 31.

BOGNÁR, József (b. 1917). A frequent contributor to The N.H.Q. See his previous contributions in Nos. 7, 11, 16, 20, 21, 23, 26, 28, and "Stable Cooperation in an Unstable World" in No. 29 of The N.H.Q.

CSERES, Tibor (b. 1915). Novelist and short story writer, a contributing editor of *Élet és Irodalom*, a Budapest literary weekly. The majority of his novels and stories deal with past and present village life, and his experiences in the Second World War. See a part of his novel "Cold Days" in No. 21.

CSURKA, István (b. 1934). Novelist and playwright. Studied at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Budapest. Has published several volumes of short stories, two novels and a number of plays, two of which have been successfully produced to date. See his short story "The Wanderer of the Deep" in No. 7 of The N.H.Q.

DÉRY, Tibor (b. 1894). Writer. His most important works are the trilogy *Befejezetlen mondat* ("The Unfinished Sentence"), written between 1934 and 1938 but published only in 1945 (also in German, Italian and American translations); the two-volume *Felelet* ("Answer") 1950 and 1952, also in German and Italian; *G. A. úr X-ben* ("Mr. G. A. in X"), two chapters from which appeared in our No. 10; also in French, English and German translations; and *A kiközösítő* ("The Excommunicator"), written in 1964 (see a chapter in No. 20). He has also written plays and short stories; the latter, and his short novel *Niki* (1956) were published in a dozen languages. The excerpts we publish in this issue are from *Ítélet nincs* ("No verdict") his autobiography in progress.

DIENES, István (b. 1929). Archeologist. Works at present at the Medieval Collection of the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest, his special field of study being the period of the Hungarian conquest. He helped to organize the recent Hungarian art exhibitions in Paris and London.

GÁL, István (b. 1912). Literary historian, cultural adviser to the British Embassy in Budapest. Has written numerous books and articles on Anglo-Hungarian relations: *Angol–Magyar történelmi kapcsolatok* ("Anglo-Hungarian Historical Ties"); Hungary and the Anglo-Saxon World; *Magyarország, Anglia és Amerika* ("Hungary, England and America"), etc. Is now engaged in studies on Hungary's cultural contacts with 19th century Britain. See also his "Walter Crane in Hungary" in No. 19, and "Shelley Plain" in No. 28 of The N.H.Q.

HALÁSZ, Zoltán (b. 1914). Journalist and writer, deputy Editor of The N.H.Q. Among other works published a biography of Sir Aurel Stein in 1966. See also his contributions in Nos. 11, 14, 17, 21, 26, 29, and 31 of The N.H.Q.

JANCSÓ, Miklós (b. 1921). Film director. Studied first law and ethnography, then graduated at the Budapest Academy of Theatre and Cinematography in 1950. Also spent some time studying in Moscow. Started his career as a director of newsreel. His first film, *A harangok Rómába mennek* ("The Bells Go to Rome") was made in 1958. Main films: *Oldás és kötés* ("Cantata"), *Így jöttem* ("This Was My Path"), *Szegénylegények*

("The Round-Up"), *Csillagosok, katonák* ("The Red and the White"), and *Csend és kiáltás* ("Silence and Cry").

KOVÁCS, András (b. 1925). Film director. Graduated from the Budapest Academy of Theatre and Cinematography in 1950. Headed the Script Editing Department of the Budapest Hunnia Film Studios. His first film *Zápor* ("Shower") was made in 1960. Main films: *Nehéz emberek* ("Difficult People"), *Hideg napok* ("Cold Days"), *Falak* ("Walls").

MARÓTI, Lajos (b. 1930). Poet, novelist and essayist, a physicist by training, at present working as publisher's reader in the science department of *Gondolat* Publishing House in Budapest. Has published two volumes of poems, translations of Italian poetry, three volumes of essays and a novel about his experiences as a Benedictine novice. See also his "Limits of Parnassus" in No. 12, "A Panorama of Contemporary Ideas" in No. 17, "Two Cultures and Ways of Thinking in Contemporary America" in No. 20, and "McLuhan's Media" in No. 29, of The N.H.Q.

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OSZTOVICS, Levente (b. 1940). Critic, literary historian. Graduated at Eötvös University in Budapest in English and Hungarian. A reader at *Európa* Publishing house in Budapest and part time playreader of the repertory theatre company at Kecskemét. Has published essays and criticism on English and American literature and compiled, edited and introduced a two volume anthology of modern American drama in 1967 (reviewed in No. 29).

SOMLYÓ, György (b. 1920). Poet. Besides volumes of poetry has written a number of essays on modern poetry, and translated many French, English, South and North American poets, both classical and modern. A French selection of his poems was published by Seuil in Paris. The two poems printed here appeared in his recent volume of prose poems, *Mese a mesék ellen* ("Tale Against Tales," 1967.) See also "Beyond the Beyond" in No. 9, "Children of War" in No. 17, "The Solution of the Insoluble" in No. 22, a short introduction to the poems of Milán Füst in No. 31, as well as his poem "Instead of a Credo" in No. 23 of The N.H.Q.

SZÁSZ, Imre (b. 1927). Novelist and translator. Studied English and Hungarian at Eötvös University and Eötvös College in Budapest. Began his writing career with a successful historical novel. His works include novels, short stories and children's books. Has translated many English and American authors, amongst them Shakespeare and Hemingway. See also "Nocturnal Acquaintance" in No. 5, "Hungarian Short Stories in English" in No. 11, "The Comedians of the City" in No. 19, and "To Please Whom?" in No. 29 of The N.H.Q.

WEÖRES, Sándor (b. 1913). Poet and translator. Studied at the universities of Pécs and Budapest, worked for a time as librarian and edited a literary journal. The poems printed here represent two different trends in his work: the playfully ironical light verse and the methaphysical. Both appeared in his recent volume *Merülő Szaturnusz* ("Saturn Submerging"). See also his poem "Internus," in Edwin Morgan's translation, in No. 23 of The N.H.Q.

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