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The New  
Hungarian  
Quarterly

- **The Hungarian Revolution of 1919** — *József Lengyel, Lajos Nagy, Zsuzsa Nagy, Miklós Bánffy, János Jemnitz*
- **No Verdict** (part of an autobiography) — *Tibor Déry*
- **Ignác Semmelweis** — *Hans Selye*
- **Towards a New Science Policy** — *Maurice Goldsmith*
- **Sociology of the Photographic Image** — *Enrico Fulchignoni*
- **The Monetary Framework of a Socialist Economy** — *Béla Csikós Nagy*
- **A Day for Modern Art** — *Iván Boldizsár*

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# *The New Hungarian Quarterly*

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# 1919: THE HUNGARIAN REPUBLIC OF COUNCILS

133 DAYS

by

ZSUZSA L. NAGY

## *Proclaiming the Republic of Councils*

On March 21, 1919, after Count Mihály Károlyi and his government had resigned, the united Social-Democratic and Communist Parties formed a government and proclaimed a Republic of Councils. The new government calling themselves the Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council announced as its home programme the liquidation of capitalist private investment and the establishment of socialism. Its foreign programme was one of friendship between the peoples and peace. An alliance with Soviet Russia was concluded and alliances were also offered to the working classes of neighbouring countries.

Béla Kun, leader of the Communist Party of Hungary, became People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, but actually it was he who guided the entire work of the Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council. His leading role was taken for granted by everybody since his person was both at home and abroad the very symbol of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

At that time the members of the Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council, just as Lenin and the Soviet leaders, counted on the Hungarian example being followed by Austria, Germany, the whole of Central Europe, they thought the revolution would spread to the East and become world-wide. This seemed to be confirmed by the restlessness which dominated the Danube basin, by the short-lived dictatorship of the proletariat proclaimed in Bavaria early in April and by the "Hands-off Soviet Russia!" movement which was gaining in strength in the West, and which was accompanied by manifestations of sympathy for the Hungarian Republic of Councils, too.

This notion based on a fundamentally unrealistic estimation of the actual situation was given further emphasis by the lack of resistance to the taking over of power. Workmen and the poor peasants naturally welcomed the

change. But even a large section of the petit bourgeoisie and the middle class and of landowners, all those social strata whose very existence was endangered by the Republic of Councils, received the new situation with a certain sympathy full of expectations. To them the new regime meant above all the rejection of those repeatedly made territorial demands most recently voiced at the Peace Conference in Paris on March 20, and so long as these people saw the Hungarian Republic of Councils as the defender of national interests as they interpreted them, they by and large stood by it.

The Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council was welcomed by the leaders of the Soviet Union, and by left-wing labour organizations in Germany, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Italy. The feeling of isolation, of being surrounded by indifference, which until then had been most depressing, now became much less oppressive.

#### *Steps Taken by the Hungarian Republic of Councils*

The Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council had only three weeks of peace at its disposal, its programme had to be put into effect while a war was fought, extraordinary difficulties were in its way and everyone expected a great deal.

First of all they organized the new army, the Hungarian Red Army. Then to help maintain internal order, the Red Guard was established taking the place of both the former urban police, and the rural gendarmes. Everyone prepared to continue to serve was taken over into these armed bodies.

A new judicial system was established, the Revolutionary Courts which consisted of both lawyers and laymen.

As in Russia Councils became the state's executive organs but as regards personnel, the administration hardly changed. The functions of Parliament were taken over by the National Assembly of Councils. On April 7 the members of the Councils were elected on the basis of a single list, thus the election was in effect a referendum in favour, or against, the new regime. Every man and woman over 18 had a vote, property, educational or any other qualifications were abolished. The result of the election showed that the Council Republic was popular throughout the country.

However, the Gubernatorial Council wanted to give workers, labourers and the poor more than political rights and power. Its economic, social and cultural measures as well as plans which were never realized all aimed to abolish social injustice and its consequences as quickly and finally as possible.

This continued the earlier struggles of Hungarian progressives, of all right-minded members of the educated classes, and therefore enjoyed their support.

Industrial, mining and transport enterprises with more than 20 employees were nationalized. Production commissars were put in charge, and workers' councils were elected to assist them. All in all some 100 000 workers worked in nationalized plants and factories. Banks were nationalized too, and deposits were confiscated. A National Economic Council was established.

Early in April properties of more than one hundred hold (143 acres) were confiscated. These were reorganized into collective agricultural production units, and though they were called cooperatives they actually looked very much like state farms. Within the territory governed from Budapest at that time 7 million hold (10 million acres) were affected. The overwhelming majority of the production commissars put in charge of these cooperatives were, owing to the scarcity of reliable men able to do the job, chosen from among the former landowners or farmers. This, too, contributed to the fact that everyday life in these cooperatives did not change to the extent the Gubernatorial Council might have wished.

The abolishing of the feudal system of large estates, so long overdue was something the bourgeois-democratic revolution had meant to carry out, now it was up to the Republic of Councils. That this step was so late in coming helped to rob Count Károlyi's regime of the support of the poor. Thus the decree passed by the Republic of Councils was of extraordinary significance.

But at the same time the way in which the solution of the problem was attempted was mistaken. The Gubernatorial Council looked at the situation from an economic point of view, and thinking in terms of a world revolution, it was of the opinion that socialism could be put into effect within a very short time, practically in one stroke, without any transition. Consequently no redistribution of land took place, this was explicitly prohibited. The consequences resulting from this were serious in various respects.

This absence of any distribution of land created ever growing tension, and the Gubernatorial Council was unable to overcome the dissatisfaction resulting from disappointment. But the real significance of the problem appeared after the downfall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils: the establishing of the Horthy regime would have been much more difficult if by August 1st, the time the counter-revolutionaries started to recapture power, the former large estates would have been parcelled out, and in the hands of small holders.

The Gubernatorial Council did much towards improving the social situation of workers and village poor. It confirmed the decree of the bourgeois-democratic regime regarding the eight-hours working day; the principle of equal pay for women for equal work became law; the rights and interests of working women, of mothers, of children, and of industrial apprentices were protected and extended by a number of decrees. The extremely high rents were lowered, worker's families with a large number of children and those whose housing conditions were intolerable were housed in requisitioned property.

Much less could be done toward improving food etc. supply. Just because the Hungarian Republic of Councils was proclaimed, the Supreme Economic Council of the Peace Conference continued to maintain the economic blockade against Hungary, and even shut her off from the aid given by the American Relief Administration. Food and manufactured goods only reached the country from abroad if they were smuggled. Because of that the Gubernatorial Council seized the stock of shops, an action from which, earlier, the Károlyi government had shrunk back, and a new distribution system was introduced. Due to these energetic measures the food situation in Hungary did not deteriorate to quite the same extent as in Austria.

In view of Hungarian conditions the nationalizing of all elementary and secondary schools as well as the fact that poor students were enabled to continue their studies at universities was of extraordinary significance. Earlier some 80 per cent of elementary, and about 65 per cent of secondary schools had belonged to the churches. A plan for a uniform and compulsory free eight-form school was worked out. The separation of Church and State functions on an educational level, part of the bourgeois-democratic programme, was also accomplished by the Republic of Councils.

The popularity and attractive power of the social and cultural programme of the Council regime is shown by the fact that the elite of Hungarian intellectuals, writers, artists, and scientists known the world over were amongst those who voluntarily and enthusiastically, took part in carrying it into effect. György Lukács was among the leaders of the Commissariat of Public Education; Jenő Varga assumed responsibilities in guiding economic affairs; Béla Bartók, Zoltán Kodály, Ernő Dohnányi worked in the Directorate of Music. (Bartók finished his ballet "The Miraculous Mandarin" in the summer of 1919; the State Opera House intended to present it in January, 1920). The Writer's Directorate had among its members Mihály Babits, Béla Balázs, Sándor Bródy, Gyula Krúdy and Zsigmond Móricz. Painters and sculptors such as Rippl-Rónai, Márk Vedres, Béla Uitz,

Ferenc Medgyessy, and Károly Kernstok played their part in reeducating public taste; Elemér Vadász the geologist became a university professor at the time, and Karl Mannheim (later professor at the London School of Economics) played an active part in reorganizing scientific life.

*The Hungarian Republic of Councils and the Great Powers*

Prior to March 21st, 1919, Hungary was not on the agenda of the Peace Conference. However, after the Republic of Councils had been proclaimed Hungary promptly became the centre of attention. The reason for this was aptly stated by a British journalist, Ellis Ashmead Bartlett: "It brought the odious doctrines of Moscow within a three hours' journey of Vienna, a day's journey of Berlin and only thirty-six hours of Paris."\*

The question was what to do about Hungary? Her new government was not only Lenin's ally but by its very existence it denied the demands of the Peace Conference. The answer and every estimation of the situation in Hungary, was closely interrelated with the discussion concerning the *methods* to be used in relation to Russia. British and American politicians who grew to doubt the feasibility of brutal, armed intervention considered it most important to prevent the spreading of the revolution, and here Clémenceau, too, agreed with them. Wilson and Lloyd George held the aggressive and greedy French policy responsible for the turn of events in Hungary and feared, as Lloyd George pointed out in a confidential memorandum that Germany would answer the severe peace terms in a similar way.

But the French military leaders (Field-Marshal Foch and General Franchet d'Esperey, the commander-in-chief of the Allied Forces in the Balkans) urged prompt military intervention. The Czecho-Slovak and the Rumanian government, in the hope that under the guise of fighting the revolution they would also be able to attain their own special aims, offered military aid against the revolution in Hungary already at the end of March. The Yugoslav government rejected participation in that operation.

However, for the time being the "Big Three" decided on a gradual withdrawal of their own troops from Soviet Russia; the French were forced to evacuate Odessa, they considered Clémenceau's programme of a *cordon sanitaire* more feasible though they did not refrain from supporting the counter-revolution in either Soviet Russia or Hungary.

\* Ellis Ashmead Bartlett: *The Tragedy of Central Europe*. London, 1923, p. 65

### *The Smuts Mission*

Thus Béla Kun's note of March 24th which emphasized Hungary's peaceful aims in foreign affairs and suggested a special mission to Hungary for the purpose of settling all questions in dispute proved to be well timed, when thanks to Italian diplomats, it arrived in Paris.

Pichon, the French foreign minister, considered negotiations absolutely impossible for he feared that next time they would be forced to sit down at a table with Lenin. Wilson and Lloyd George, however, who had sent W. C. Bullitt to Moscow not much earlier, wished to keep themselves informed and they approved of talks though they also did not intend to make any concessions to the Hungarian regime. Against predominantly French opposition Lloyd George warned that one should not deal with Hungary as with Russia, one Russia was enough. For the time being this point of view proved the stronger. Therefore General Jan Ch. Smuts was commissioned to conduct negotiations in Budapest.

What the bourgeois-democratic regime and Mihály Károlyi personally had been unable to attain, was now achieved by the Republic of Councils. This was the way many Allied diplomats and military leaders saw the situation: a considerable part of them looked on even the mere sending of a mission as a dangerous concession. They feared that the great powers would establish permanent relations with revolutionary Hungary, and they believed that the Peace Conference had strengthened the situation of the Revolutionary Gubernatorial Council.

General Smuts negotiated in Budapest on April 4th and 5th. During this time he never left his special train and rejected the hotel accommodation offered to him. Smuts treated the proposals made by the Hungarian delegation with remarkable understanding and he argued in their favour even after his return to Paris and later too. He insisted, however, on the establishment of a neutral zone as demanded by the Great Powers in their Note of March 20 though Smuts wanted to mark the zone border in a way more favourable to the Hungarians. Béla Kun suggested the calling of a conference to discuss the problems of the Danubian basin, to be attended by all interested parties and under the aegis of the Great Powers, he asked that Hungary be represented at the Peace Conference, and in that case he was willing to discuss a neutral zone, too. (The representatives of the Central Powers were not permitted to take part in the preparing the peace treaties, they were merely invited to accept the final conditions, and to sign the treaty; this applied in 1920, to a Hungary which was then already ruled by Admiral Horthy). Smuts could not guarantee that if the troops of

the Republic of Councils were to withdraw from the neutral zone, his own proposals would be accepted by the Peace Conference. He was in a position to conclude an agreement only if the demands of the Great Powers were accepted unconditionally.

The Gubernatorial Council hoped that the negotiations would continue. But Smuts left Budapest with unexpected speed, and given the essentially changed conditions that prevailed after the middle of April the Peace Conference thought a continuation of the talks unnecessary.

The discussion whether the Gubernatorial Council acted correctly, whether it would not have been more sensible to accept the conditions of the Entente since the demarcation of the neutral zone recommended by Smuts looked very much like the Trianon frontiers, has continued to this day. Looking back, Mihály Károlyi and some members of the Gubernatorial Council as well as numerous historians have argued that an agreement would have been more useful since it could have stabilized the position of the revolution. This also seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the Smuts mission meant that the military attack against Hungary, whose exact date had been set, was postponed.

There was scarcely any discussion about this question in April 1919, the Gubernatorial Council accepted Béla Kun's point of view. In view of the mood of the masses at that time it would have been hard to accept merely slightly better conditions than those which had played such a great role in the downfall of the Károlyi regime. One important factor of the popularity of the Hungarian Republic of Councils (though not quite of the importance given to it by some then or later) was the rejection of those imperialistic and unjust demands of the Peace Conference which threatened the existence of the nation and its legitimate interests. Though General Smuts had gone, nothing pointed to the fact that there was no hope for a continuation of the talks, at least not if you looked at the situation from Budapest at that time. One could even argue, given the revolution which had broken out in Bavaria, that negotiations would take place in more favourable conditions, and that the Entente would be readier to make concessions.

### *Military Intervention*

In the middle of April, however, when the Peace Conference should have decided on the proposals submitted by General Smuts they were concerned with other problems (the Italian question, the Far East, etc.). For a time the Hungarian case was taken off the agenda. This was exploited by those who

favoured intervention. On April 16th the Rumanian Army crossed the demarcation line from the South East. The Hungarian Red Army whose organization was not yet completed was forced to retreat in view of the superior forces of the enemy. In addition to this the commanding officer of what was known as the Székely Army Corps which formed the nucleus of the defense had come to an agreement with the Rumanian commanders: they laid down their arms, and thus the road to Budapest was practically open. On the next day, April 23rd, the Czecho-Slovak Army also attacked from the North. The two attacking armies soon joined forces, and the Hungarian Republic of Councils was caught in a pincer movement. By the end of April the situation had become critical.

A country that had been at war for four years, whose economy was in a mess, which was damaged by a blockade, a country whose new social order had only a month before began to establish itself, was now forced to take up arms alone and isolated, against the far superior forces of the interventionists who, what is more, enjoyed the support of the Entente. From her ally, Soviet Russia, Hungary was separated by a wide and deep area occupied by hostile forces. And obviously she could not reckon on any military aid from Austria, the only country with which she maintained diplomatic relations.

Many people thought the resignation of the Gubernatorial Council would be merely a question of days. But the attack strengthened internal unity: the revolution and the defense of the country were so closely inter-linked that workmen, students and regular officers of the old army responded to recruiting appeals enthusiastically and *en masse*.

At the same time Béla Kun and the Gubernatorial Council also tried to gain time by diplomatic manoeuvres, hoping to halt the attack. The Council sent an appeal to President Wilson and to the governments of the neighbouring countries but it was also prepared to use, as far as possible, the mediation offered by members of the American and Italian military missions. Those hoped that they could achieve a reshaping of the Gubernatorial Council, the gradual "developing back" of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

May Day was celebrated for the first time as a state holiday, there were colourful ceremonies, both in Budapest and in the country, but the Gubernatorial Council and of the Budapest Workers' Council sat all night trying to find a solution. Some of the Social-Democratic members of the Gubernatorial Council were ready to accept the conditions of the mediators. But the Workers' Council decided that all forces should be mobilized for the defense of the country and the revolution.

Conditions were favourable for carrying out this decision. The Soviet government reacted with determination, the Peace Conference requested that the Rumanians stop and the Rumanians had attained their immediate aims (the occupation of the territory promised Rumania in the Bucharest Treaty of Alliance of 1916). The Rumanian army therefore stopped at the river Tisza. But even so they were only 100 kilometres from Budapest.

### *The Organization of the Counter-Revolution*

Aristocrats, landowners, capitalists, high-ranking civil servants and army officers had started to organize already at the time of the Károlyi-regime; some of them left the country already then, the bulk after March 21st. After the military attack they became much more active.

In Vienna a counter-revolutionary committee was formed. It was headed by Count István Bethlen and Count Pál Teleki was an active member, both of them were to become prime ministers of Hungary between the wars. In Szeged (in South Hungary) then occupied by the French army, the first counterrevolutionary government was formed also in May, headed by Count Gyula Károlyi who also became a Prime-Minister. In the same town Captain Gyula Gömbös, another future Prime-Minister, began to organize military support for the counter-revolution. The so-called National Army was formed and in June, 1919, Rear-Admiral Miklós Horthy was entrusted with its command; some months later he was to become Regent.

Already at that time numerous conflicts arose between these two counter-revolutionary groups; these significantly affected the political struggle and the fight for power even in the Horthy period between the two world wars. Still, in 1919, they were united in doing all they could to speed up the downfall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. They also attempted to enlist the support of the Allies.

The members of the military missions kept by the Great Powers had no illusions as to the objectives of Hungarian counter-revolutionaries. More than once they themselves criticized their conservative, reactionary, monarchistic and antisemitic attitude, and their irredentism. In June Eduard Beneš, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia at the time, in a memorandum called the attention of the Peace Conference to the dangers arising from support given to the Hungarian counter-revolution.

Still, this was the force upon which the Entente relied against the Hungarian Republic of Councils, and which it considered the lesser evil on comparison with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Soon the counter-revolutionaries in Vienna and in Szeged established contact with similar, smaller groups formed within the area ruled from Budapest, and quite frequently members of the Entente Mission residing in the country acted as go-betweens.

#### *A Successful Counter-Attack*

By the beginning of May the endeavours of the Gubernatorial Council and the enthusiasm of the overwhelming majority of the population had re-organized the army. A special, international regiment was formed by Russian, Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Austrian, and Yugoslav volunteers.

Aurél Stromfeld, a staff officer in the Austro-Hungarian army, now became Chief of Staff of the Red Army. Thanks to his brilliant organizing ability, his profound military knowledge and his popularity, he succeeded in launching a counter-attack against the Czechoslovak Army by the middle of May. At the end of that month the soldiers fought still on the territory under the control of the Hungarian Republic of Councils but from June onward already in Slovakia where one after the other they occupied the towns including Kassa (Košice), and areas which had been within the borders of Hungary before the war.

The dynamic advance of the Hungarian Red Army was also fed by the hope that after breaking apart the ring of Czecho-Slovak and Rumanian troops they would succeed in establishing direct military contact with the Soviet Red Army in the North-East. This would have opened up unforeseeable opportunities for both.

The fact that the ideas of the Hungarian Republic of Councils were extremely popular in Slovakia helped. The Czecho-Slovak Republic had only just come into being, the relationship between the Czech and the Slovak nation was not firmly settled, and this affected the morale of Czecho-Slovak troops.

On June 16, to crown military successes, a Slovak Republic of Councils was proclaimed.

Understandably all this caused extreme surprise and consternation in Paris and in Prague, too. The government in Prague and the leaders of the Czecho-Slovak Army demanded immediate and decisive military aid from Paris. They warned of the "horrible" prospect of a Soviet Republic in Prague. While the Czecho-Slovak units were fighting against Hungary and the revolution guided by an Italian military mission numerous Italian firms, and even official agencies, supplied Hungary with weapons, munition, and

other goods. The Czechs sharply attacked the Italians because of this. Italy had no more sympathy for the Gubernatorial Council than any other of her Allies. But Italian interests desired a lessening of French influence in the Danubian basin. So they helped the Republic of Councils just as they tried to establish contact with the counter-revolutionaries in Szeged, with the purpose of circumventing the French.

The Peace Conference which, not formally but tacitly, consented to the intervention, tried in view of the unexpected Hungarian successes, to put the responsibility partly on the French military leaders, and partly on the Czecho-Slovak and the Rumanian government. This not only led to heated discussion, it also damaged relations between the Great Powers and their smaller allies.

Not one of the Great Powers was willing to interfere in Hungary with its own army: they could not take this upon themselves for home policy reasons. At the same time stopping the Hungarian advance became urgent, not only in view of the situation in Czecho-Slovakia but also because at the end of June they wished to present the peace conditions to Germany, and the Great Powers strongly feared that these would not be accepted without protest. Thus the moment had come for Clémenceau (who by the way had frequently been in opposition to his own, conservative generals) to take the matter in his own hands, and to repair by diplomatic means what the military had botched.

### *Diplomatic War*

The successes of the Hungarian Red Army led to extraordinary enthusiasm throughout the country. In spite of this many signs showed that country and people had arrived at the very limit of their resources, and that the Gubernatorial Council had to pay more attention to internal consolidation.

At the time of the counter-attack, a counter-revolutionary uprising broke out in the Western part of the country. This was supported by a railway-men's strike. In this way the counter-revolutionaries tried to cut off army supplies, and to create disorder. Tibor Szamuely, who was responsible for the administration of martial law, was in charge, and the uprising was suppressed quickly and energetically. However, the aftereffects of these actions only added to the growing difficulties arising from the economic blockade and the problems of supply. The peasant owners were not prepared to take their surplus food to the markets and to sell them for the new money issued by the government. They looked on the emergency

measures which were the result of the war situation (obligatory delivery, requisitioning, etc.) as grievances. The relations between town and village became strained, dissatisfaction weakened the prestige of the government.

Signs of fatigue began to show among the members of the Army which had been formed on the basis of voluntary enlistment. They felt that they were committing themselves to great sacrifices while the "dodgers" in the hinterland did nothing towards the defense of the country. All this was given weight by the still vivid experience of the burdens and trials of four long years of war. As a result of the intervention, consolidation, or a normalization of life was again postponed to the unforeseeable future.

Conflicts concerning the methods used by the government came to the surface at this point, though they existed from the very beginning. Communists and Social-Democrats were not always in agreement. At the Party Congress in June, the Social-Democratic opposition led by Zsigmond Kunfi demanded less dictatorial methods and tried to push the Communists into the background. The shift in the balance of power since March was shown by the fact that the Communists could attain even a compromise solution only after lengthy debates.

This was the situation when Clémenceau's Note arrived on June 7. It promised to invite the Gubernatorial Council to the Peace Conference in exchange for a stop in the advance of the Hungarian Red Army. This Note which contained only slight and uncertain concessions was rejected by the Gubernatorial Council.

On June 13 Clémenceau sent another Note to the Council. In this he promised that if the Hungarian Red Army would withdraw from the Northern territories, the Rumanian troops in the Eastern part of Hungary would evacuate the Trans-Tisza area. The Gubernatorial Council and the Party Committee considering the situation of the army and the hinterland, and the possibility that the region beyond the Tisza where large supplies of food were available might get back under Hungarian control, accepted the proposal that very day.

The session of the National Convention of Councils following upon that (this dealt with the economic, military and international situation of the country, it drafted and accepted the Constitution of the Hungarian Republic of Councils) was dominated by the discussion of the Note received from the Peace Conference. Numerous delegates expressed their fears: whether the Peace Conference would keep its promise, whether it was morally or politically permissible that the Hungarian Red Army should withdraw leaving the Slovak Republic of Councils to its fate, that they lay down arms at a time when Soviet Russia was still fighting?

The fears were justified for the Council of the Four had not discussed the evacuation with Rumania, nor had it given any guarantees to the Hungarians. The power relationships, however, despite the successes of the Hungarian Red Army, were undoubtedly favourable to the Entente; the Entente could base their policy not only on their enormous military superiority, they could also make use of the fact that the revolution in Europe had failed to spread, and that Soviet Russia, because of the civil war, was unable to offer military aid to Hungary.

The Gubernatorial Council needed a temporary armistice, and a marshalling of its strength because on June 24th the counter-revolution no longer content with local, provincial action tried to seize Budapest itself. Members of the Military Mission of Allied Powers in Budapest helped to prepare this, just as the members of their respective Vienna Mission had earlier supported other counter-revolutionary operations.

Thus at the end of June the armies of the Hungarian Red Army started to withdraw from the Northern territories.

### *The Downfall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils*

The withdrawal, the evacuation of territories which had been liberated in a hard fight, without any apparent reason, had an unfavourable effect both on the soldiers and on the population. A considerable section of the officer corps did not agree with this decision and resigned; amongst them the Chief-of-Staff, Stromfeld, and so did the Commander-in-Chief Vilmos Böhm. Those social strata which had accepted the Republic of Councils not because of its social and political programme but because they expected that the new order would defend the old frontiers now turned against it openly and *en masse*.

The trade union leaders who up to that point had stayed modestly in the background, assuming no functions, now propagated the view that after a reshaping of the government and a "toning-down" of the dictatorship it would be possible to come to terms with the Entente, that the blockade would be raised then, and thus every essential problem would be solved.

The position of the Gubernatorial Council was truly weakened, and more difficult. Mainly because the Rumanian troops were not willing to evacuate the Trans-Tisza region. They officially informed the Peace Conference to this intent on July 2nd. Though for prestige reasons the Great Powers were angry that they could not give effect to their promise, they applied no sanctions whatever against Rumania. For, in their eyes, the situation was already

essentially under control. On June 28th their greatest problem, the German Peace Treaty, was solved without any conflict; the German delegation accepted it without any resistance, no revolution took place in Germany. The United States started to withdraw from European affairs; even Lloyd George no longer took part in the work of the Peace Conference. And Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary and the political line he represented did not consider Hungarian problems as important as the Rumanian oil fields. Clémenceau held that the wisest policy would be to wait and see, for the Gubernatorial Council had now reached a dead end. Though a plan for a military attack mobilizing larger forces than the previous one and intended to sweep away the Hungarian Republic of Councils, once and for all, was on the agenda, preparations were made difficult by various kinds of conflicts, and Clémenceau did not press the issue.

The Gubernatorial Council and the population awaited the world-wide demonstration *against* the intervention and *for* the Hungarian Republic of Councils, planned for July 20 in vain, it proved impossible to organize precisely in the home countries of the Great Powers. The hopes of March did not come true, the revolution did not spread, the Hungarian Republic of Councils remained isolated. The situation after the withdrawal by the Hungarian Red Army was politically and morally considerably worse than it had been even early in May, and became untenable in the long run from the aspect of both home and foreign politics.

The Gubernatorial Council therefore sent Vilmos Böhm to Vienna to sound the intentions of the Entente, and to find out under what conditions an agreement could possibly be reached. Instead of waiting it approved the plans for a counter-attack along the Tisza which, whatever its outcome Ferenc Julier, the new Chief-of-Staff meant to use for his own purposes against the Béla Kun government. This attack, started on July 20th, was meant to force the Rumanian army to withdraw according to the decision of the Peace Conference. But the attack was not properly prepared, neither militarily nor politically, and Rumanian generals were warned about it in good time. Thus in spite of initial successes, and sporadic rear-guard fighting that lasted right into August the Hungarian Red Army was slowly wiped out. A counter-attack similar to that in May could not be repeated, and by launching the offensive the Gubernatorial Council had, even if unwillingly, only speeded up the downfall of the Hungarian Republic of Councils.

The Peace Conference was not prepared to negotiate with the Gubernatorial Council about the halting of the Rumanian advance. The conditions which were presented in Vienna, and which Böhm was ready to accept,

demanded in the first place that the Hungarian government be reformed, and that the dictatorship be abolished.

Béla Kun and the overwhelming majority of the members of the Gubernatorial Council were not prepared to accept these conditions. On August 1st they resigned, handing over power to a government formed by trade union leaders. Despite this the Rumanian army continued its advance and on August 3rd entered Budapest. Some members of the Gubernatorial Council were granted political asylum in Austria, and a considerable section of that new and gifted intellectual leadership which had come into prominence both in Budapest and in the country at the time of the revolution now emigrated. Those who stayed were decimated by the quickly spreading counter-revolutionary terror.

The Hungarian Republic of Councils had lasted 133 days. During this brief period, and under unbelievably difficult conditions, it had tried to rejuvenate the obsolete economic and social order of the country, to complete the work of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, and to carry it further. In one small country surrounded by enemies and isolated from her sole ally, organized workers stood up to the entire capitalist system. It simultaneously declared war on social and national oppression, hoping that the peoples of the Danube basin, by establishing a "brotherly alliance of dictatorships of the proletariat" could soon relieve themselves of this double burden. The international balance of power did not permit the realization of this programme. Due to the downfall of the bourgeois-democratic revolution there was no way, either, for the country to return at least to conditions prevailing in October 1918. The policy of the Great Powers and the future Little Entente, and the fear of revolution helped the counter-revolution lead by Admiral Horthy. As a result not only the international labour movement, and the Left in Hungary suffered a serious defeat but the bourgeois-democratic opposition was also weakened to an extraordinary degree, and thus all those forces which could have successfully opposed the counter-revolutionary regime.

MAY 1919

Short story

by

LAJOS NAGY

István Petur bowed low to the party. All he said was "Good-bye. I'll be back in an hour at the latest," and he left, closing the door firmly behind him.

The room was silent after his departure. There were four men and a woman sitting round a square table: they stared before them in confusion, trying to avoid each other's glances. The thoughts of all three were centred on one and the same point; they had forgotten the gloomy problem of the future awaiting them and all the others whose situation they felt to be the same as their own. The point was a bit of unpleasantness that had arisen a short while before, only ten minutes or so, the sort of thing they liked to describe as an incident or an episode. Speaking very sharply, István Petur had said to another man at the party, whom he had met that evening: "Hold your tongue and don't talk rubbish!"

That was how the incident began and since the only reaction it aroused was an uneasy blush on the part of the individual insulted, that was more or less how it ended, if the explosion of anger that followed can be excluded. After the moment's astonishment shown by the others István Petur continued his passionate harangue, addressing his words to the host. He knew for certain, he declared, that the scoundrels would no longer be around town the following night. They were going to be kicked out the very next morning. And they would run like hell, because they were cowardly scum, and any man Jack of them caught or captured would be skinned alive. He then remarked that he would have to leave to make sure that everything was in readiness, and off he went.

The man who had been insulted had come from Budapest on a couple of weeks' visit to the small town, because of the better food there. His name was Vályi-Verasek and he was a painter. He was a neurotic young man, sensitive and shy, with an excellent sense of psychology; at the moment of

the insult he immediately assessed the difference in strength between himself and the man insulting him, calculated the possibilities, and comprehended that the best thing to do was to keep quiet. Without knowing anything of substance about István Petur, except his name and what he had seen and heard of him in the last hour, he realized that he was facing a man of uncontrollable passions. He remained sitting in the deep armchair after the insult, moving slightly away from the table, without uttering a word. He felt that any moment he could sink into the earth for shame, and indeed wished he could, why should such a damned gutless jellyfish cumber the earth!

The general silence of one or two minutes that followed Petur's departure was broken by Mátyás Duhay, the host. He spoke in a gentle, almost caressing voice to Vályi-Verasek.

"Take no notice of him. Act as if you hadn't heard him. You know, I was terrified at the thought you'd say something to him. And then God help you! He's quite prepared to strike one—anyone—for a quite simple question, or for no reason at all. He's a real savage. You mustn't contradict him and it's no use attempting to. All of us have had to let similar insults go."

Dr. Karakó, the chief medical officer of the town, waved his hand with a smile.

"Oh. I don't even take any notice of him. I simply think he's mad, that's all."

Duhay went on:

"I tell you he's a wild animal. But only when he goes into one of his furies—otherwise he's the best-hearted man I've ever known. He'll do anything, any favour for his friends. He'll give his last penny to someone in need. He'll stand up for anyone who's got into trouble, or been unjustly treated. And the fact that he treats people unjustly himself is simply because of his ungovernable temper."

Vályi-Verasek muttered uncomfortably:

"Don't let's go on. It's not worth talking about."

Mrs. Duhay, the hostess, also interrupted:

"Quite right. Let's drop it. He was excited and he didn't even consider whom he was talking to; take it he addressed his remarks to me and not to you," and she laughed.

But Duhay was unable to drop it.

"You wait, by the time he comes back he'll be sorry, and try to make up. If he wants to he can be very kind. But if someone contradicts him, he goes for him without compunction. You know he's already killed a man?"

The woman, in an attempt to defend him, protested:

"Well, it wasn't exactly killing, you ought to explain, because it was in a duel."

"Yes. Absolutely fantastic, he split the man's head in two with his sword. Literally split it in two. And he doesn't feel bad about it. It cropped up once, and all he said was that 'he was an impudent fellow, he'd been insolent, it served him right'."

As if frightened by the danger which had confronted him, even when over, Vályi-Verasek asked with wide-open eyes:

"But who is he after all?"

The chief medical officer wanted to make short work of it.

"Just a typical Hungarian gentleman. Wild, unruly, with an undisciplined temper, a man who does whatever he wants because he thinks he's allowed to do anything. But if I cared to, I'd also qualify him as mad."

"When you get to know him," Duhay went on, "you'll realize that he's an extremely interesting character. You can find similar figures in Jókai's novels, but they're a bit idealized, since they are always the champions of justice, noble characters facing evil with indomitable courage, and so on, while in real life these heroes are rather different from their prototypes in romantic novels, in fact, to put it bluntly, they are selfish and aggressive bullies. All I say is that they are interesting, or at least Petur is."

"What does he do?" asked Vályi-Verasek.

"He's a landowner," answered the hostess.

Duhay added:

"A landowner on his way down."

The chief medical officer:

"Well on his way."

Duhay:

"He's pretty well right down now. He had an estate of more than two thousand acres in this district, but he's squandered every bit of it. He wasted it on women, drink and gypsy music, the usual gentry tradition, you know. He was known as the hardest liver in the whole county. I think he holds the world record for drinking and dissipation. There were lots of legends told about him before the war, and the difference between them and other legends is that these were all true. There's a legend that he drank ten liters of wine without getting up from his seat, and you can bet he really drank eleven. He used to dine every evening at the 'Rezek,' and when it closed he would leave with his boon companions and the Gypsies to carry on in a—well, inn, until the morning. . ."

Vályi-Verasek:

"And the inn, I suppose, is a highly moral institution!"

The chief medical officer:

"Well, anyway, it helps to support the state!"

Duhay:

"If a policeman showed up and made a fuss, he got hold of him and threw him out."

"How dared he?"

"You're very simple. Perhaps the policeman reported him. So what? But he didn't report him, he didn't dare."

Kvassay, laughing:

"The policeman didn't understand the position, that's why he made a fuss. But when he found himself thrown out, he understood the position immediately."

The chief medical officer:

"It was an eye-opener for him."

Kvassay:

"You'd better stick to your last and say that the cataract was removed from his eyes."

"All right, the cataract."

Duhay cut them short with a gesture and warmed to his subject:

"Of course he always paid the bill. The binge often went on till the morning; the whole party having packed themselves into one or two carriages, depending on the number, and driven to the roadside 'inn'—at this point he whispered the inn's special, improper nickname in Vályi-Verasek's ears; it included the name of a specific part of the female anatomy with the usual decorative adjective before it. The chief medical officer and Kvassay smiled and the hostess bent to pat the dog at her feet and looked as if momentarily absent from the proceedings—and there he would wake the innkeeper and begin to drink again and carry on his own brand of fun until the next morning. . . . I joined him once, and that's the story I want to tell you."

And here Duhay began to laugh with the pleasure of that memory.

"There were the four of us, all of us except Petur as drunk as lords, it wasn't only we could hardly stand, we practically fell out of the carriage."

"Feri Varga did fall out."

"That was another time. . . . As I told you, we were dead drunk, but he wouldn't let any of us go home. At such times no prayers or excuses because one was feeling bad, or had an engagement or something urgent to do, were of the slightest use. He'd force you in at revolver-point."

"And of course such a person always has a revolver," interjected Vályi-Verasek.

"Of course. He never goes out without a loaded revolver. Well, we drove to the inn in a shabby old carriage, this time without the Gypsies because they'd managed to give us the slip at crack of dawn. He made short work of waking up the innkeeper by putting his fist through the man's window."

"How nice."

"Wait. There's more to it. We went through the tap-room to the best room, and found four Gypsy musicians, the local Gypsy band, there. They were sitting on chairs and sleeping like logs with their heads on the table."

The chief medical officer:

"Logs of course always sleep with their heads on the table."

"Well, anyway, they were asleep. István woke them by taking out his revolver and firing into the ceiling. The way those Gypsies jumped from their sleep and started to their feet, one of them yelling and the other throwing himself on his knees and begging: 'oh, dear sir, spare us, we're only harmless musicians' . . . well, that was an experience I shall never forget. How can I describe it? It was quite indescribable. That immeasurable, mad fear. The contorted, infernal terror on their faces was one of the most extraordinary thrills I've ever had. . . I admit it was brutal, but since it was going to happen anyway, it would have been the loss of a lifetime to have missed it. Since then, however frightened I may have been, I'd rather be struck dumb than be so out and out afraid. . . But the real fun was still to come. One thing after another. The three of us sobered up, because we'd never have been able to stand up to the laughter that shook us unless we'd been completely sober. While we were roaring with laughter Petur was giving orders with a deadpan face as seriously as though he were a stage director. How can I put it? The Gypsies were ordered to climb the ladder to the roof, sit atop the roof-ridge one behind the other as though it were a saddle, and play their violins in that position. When one of them was unwilling to climb, or moved too slowly, Petur fired his revolver; of course he did not aim it, but the poor creatures went mad with terror. Needless to say he's as good a shot as someone born in Texas, but none of them felt his skin was safe for a second after all, friends, it could have happened that just like that schoolboy ball game, the victim accidentally stuck his bottom in the way of the ball, that's to say, the bullet. When it hurt us to laugh any longer, we went back to the room to go on drinking and to eat something, while the Gypsies up on the roof had to play. Suddenly, unfortunately for him, some fellow, a skinny figure of some wandering sort of craftsman, showed up for a glass of brandy with a bag in his hand. 'What are you?' A barber, travelling round the farms, for the estate managers and land stewards and the like.

Just the thing! The barber was ordered up to the roof to join the Gypsies and shave them up there one after the other. 'Oh, sir, please, please, don't do this to us, not just this, we'd willingly play for nothing!' You should have seen their abject fear! 'I'll get blood-poisoning!' one of them cried. They even prayed to God in an attempt to induce István to let them off the 'operation.' But he was inexorable. He sent a bullet whizzing past the itinerant barber so that furiously, despairingly, trembling all over, he shaved all four of the Gypsies, without water or soap. He had to take off their moustaches too, and that was the funniest bit of all. Can you see it, four Gypsies with great black moustaches, one of them even had a beard, that had to come off first, the faces had to be smooth in an hour and all this on the top of the roof! How they writhed, how they screeched and groaned!"

"How stupid!" said the woman. "That's what men call fun. To go without one's sleep and throw one's money away for this sort of thing."

Vályi-Verasek was astonished, and said with a look on his face:

"How is it a man like that isn't shot down like a dog? Isn't there a single man with the courage to face him and settle accounts with him? Good God, how tolerant can one get?"

"They are frightened of him, my young friend, like the plague. Everyone is afraid of him. . . ."

"But someone who wants to commit suicide anyway might try. . . ."

"Well, young man," said the chief medical officer, "someone who wants to commit suicide has his hands more than full of his own problems."

"Everyone's afraid of him. Perhaps I'm the only one who's not. Frankly speaking, I like him. Yes, definitely, I like him and he likes me too, so I'm in a more favourable position than other people. . . . Oh, he's also tried to insult me but I just said to him: 'Look here, István, stop behaving like this with me because I'm completely at your mercy, you're much stronger than I am, and I'm not prepared to fight a duel—on principle, of course, as you know. You can do what you like with me, but you ought to realize it's nothing but a hideous abuse of your superiority'."

"I'm not afraid of him either," said Mrs. Duhay.

"Oh, it's quite different with you," continued her husband, "you as a woman have nothing to be afraid of. You know only too well that with women he's most polite and deferential. You can even slap him across the face and he won't say a word, he'll only kiss your hand."

The woman smiled.

"Well. . . he's not that polite with every woman!" retorted the chief medical officer.

"But he is, with every lady. A peasant woman or a maid, well, that's quite another story. He's just as rude to them as to men."

"There was that business with Mária Kara-Szabó."

"Yes, he kicked her and turned her out."

"I wrote the medico-legal report. I even thought that he would provoke a row with me, although I was only doing my duty as a doctor."

"Mária Kara-Szabó reported him to the police for assault and battery . . ."

The chief medical officer:

"It could have been classified as an aggravated assault. But I was prepared to be helpful by describing the wound as likely to heal within eight days."

"And was he prosecuted?" inquired Vályi-Verasek."

"Almost. But somehow he managed to wriggle out of it; he forced the girl or the family to withdraw the statement."

Duhay:

"There was that other case; the farm-hand who sent him a message saying he would stab him to death. Over some argument or other. The message was handed to him, but he acted as if he'd never had it, because he never tried to deal with the man. They say he was not very keen to settle the matter."

"Perhaps he was frightened too."

"Out of the question. He doesn't know fear."

The chief medical officer:

"You cannot expect these sort of people to be consistent. He's either got a screw too loose or too tight, and that's that. Believe me, I know him inside out, better than anyone. You know I'm also the police doctor and well, a certain type of girl comes under my jurisdiction. But I'm not talking, oh, no, I wouldn't even if there weren't a lady present. I just refer you to Krafft-Ebing. But not a word from me," and he clapped his hand over his mouth.

Mrs. Duhay:

"I refuse to believe such gossip. István seems perfectly sound to me."

The chief medical officer:

"No one carries his psychological secrets written on his forehead."

"Tell me, Wildy," asked the woman, using her nickname for her husband, "where has he gone, what's he up to now? I don't like it."

This was followed by silence. The maid came in to clear away the coffee cups and ask whether they wanted anything before she went to bed. After she had left, taking the dog with her, Duhay continued with a sour look on his face:

"I don't like it either. But my worry is something different, I'm not very

concerned about István himself, he'd get the better of the plague itself; but he was here with us and he went from here to inspect or whatever you call it—in a case I have nothing to do with.”

And he continued in a low voice:

“They're organizing a revolt or something. I don't think it's a wise thing to do, because if it fails, quite a few people will regret it. But there's more to it than that—that's their concern, but why should I know about it? Why does he tell me about the plan, even if only in the most generalized terms? All of us here might get into trouble. I really have nothing to do with any kind of political action, I'm an artist, I paint pictures, I paint when there's a king, I paint under the republic, I paint under the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . .”

“Oho!” interrupted Kvassay. “You're hardly likely to paint under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Because you won't find anyone to buy your pictures.”

“Why not?”

“Do you think that's the type of picture the comrades want?”

And he pointed to a painting hanging opposite him on the wall, depicting a Negro acrobat, dressed in yellow, jiggling on the stage.

Duhay warmed up:

“Why shouldn't they buy it? I think it's a damn good picture. Ask old Fényes, he says it is one of my best. I've managed to catch a single movement, a single posture as though it were a snapshot, but it's not like a copy, it's not the dead cross-section of a movement, but movement itself, the dancing Negro with his angry, drunken stamping. Why d'you say they wouldn't buy it? Because of the subject? But I tell you I can paint other things. And if I stop painting, I can do something else. I'd work. I wouldn't even mind being a stone-breaker if I can make a living by breaking stone and if breaking stone is not despised.”

Kvassay laughed:

“You a stone-breaker! It's not so simple as that, friend. And you can hardly make the sort of living you like from breaking stone.”

“How do you know what I like? One lives as one can.”

“I'd like to visit you on the highway after you've been breaking stone for six weeks.”

The chief medical officer:

“Not on the highway. In the city, on Kossuth Lajos Square. You can interview the new stone-breaker.”

“You'll always be welcome!”

The woman to her husband:

"Do stop talking nonsense, please. You wouldn't last an hour."

"The first day. But I'd be all right after six weeks."

The barking of dogs was heard outside. It was followed by the faint sound of footsteps on the beaten clay path, across the front garden, and Petur's friendly voice trying to pacify the dog. Csomai the dog was owned by a colleague, living in a studio flat next door, named after an ardent Expressionist. A knock at the door and Petur entered. They looked up at him enquiringly, with one word:

"Well?"

"Nothing. We've got to wait for a couple of days. But don't talk about it."

They accepted it. Conspiracy, armed revolt are, to say the least, matters of discretion, but in any case dangerous. Petur, however, could not restrain himself:

"If these scoundrels fall, I'll be the executioner myself, personally. Breaking on the wheel is child's play to what I'll think up and do."

The woman pressed her lips together, kept silent and then burst out in exasperation:

"Please, please, don't talk of such things! You shouldn't put them into words even if you are alone in a room."

"Madam, you are always right. I've already stopped. But... I don't think I have to be afraid of anyone squealing here? I imagine I am as safe as if I were swearing alone to myself?"

And Petur cast an involuntary glance at Vályi-Verasek, whose face, to make matters worse, went bright red. All of them were overcome with embarrassment except Petur. The woman explained:

"Yes, you're absolutely safe with us. But it is the principle that is important. One doesn't talk because that's the correct way to behave."

"Haven't you noticed I've been talking about something else for a long time. Mr. Vályi, you seem to harbour a certain resentment against me. Or don't you?"

"Oh, well, don't mention it."

"Then that's all right... call me István! We'll celebrate it with a couple of glasses of wine."

"Wine?" started up the woman.

Duhay:

"There's no wine in the house."

"There isn't? You seem to be Communists too. But if there isn't, we'll get some."

"Where from? You know everything's shut for the night."

"There's Weisz, the grocer next door. He must be knocked up."

"Don't fool around, István. It's no use. We might get into trouble."

"What trouble? Are you afraid? Go and tell the authorities to stop abusing their superior power. They are much stronger than you are, so you won't hit back and you're not prepared to fight a duel."

"I'm not afraid, but there's no point in it. They close at nine and now it's past midnight; you can't get drinks at this time even in illegal ways."

"Ah! Illegal ways! Don't make yourself a laughing stock, you ass. Illegal, indeed!"

The woman rushed to her husband's aid:

"István, don't insist. Do see reason, what can't be done shouldn't be done."

"Dear madam, I do see reason, but I'd still like to ask you to allow us to drink a liter—only a liter. It's not too much. Let's sell the skin before we've killed the bear. I'm so exhilarated I couldn't possibly get to sleep before morning. It's only a matter of one bottle, dear madam."

"But we don't have any at home."

"I know, I know. But Weisz has."

"He shut up shop long ago. He's asleep."

"Józsi will wake him up."

"Józsi is asleep too."

"Then I'll wake him."

He was already on his feet, kissing the woman's hand with a smile, and she laughed, indulgently. Petur headed out of the room to find Józsi, the house servant.

He left the door open, walked up to the shack, flung the door wide open and yelled:

"Hey, Józsi, get up! Quick!"

There was a pause while Józsi shook himself awake and lit his candle.

"Come on, come on! Get dressed! Go to Weisz, the grocer, knock him up, get three liters of wine. White wine. Don't be too long!"

He reappeared at the door, stood there waiting impatiently, then hurried back to the shack, and his angry voice was to be heard inside:

"What are you doing, idiot? Why are you taking so long with those high boots? Leave them alone and go over barefoot."

Józsi might have murmured something.

"Shut up or I'll teach you a lesson. Here's the money, five times the price, let him take as much as he likes, and get going!"

He emerged at the door again, turned round, looked after the man who had disappeared into the gloomy night, and closed the door behind him.

The woman asked:

"Did he go barefoot?"

"Yes. Of course."

Duhay grew angry:

"Why didn't you let him put on his boots? It's cold, it's just above freezing point, it's like winter. He'll catch cold."

"Only he won't. Do you think so because you're such a delicate creature yourself?"

"But he will, poor creature. He'll be ill."

Petur:

"It'll take more than that to kill him."

"He'll have to stamp about in front of the shop in this cold mud and slush while waiting for the shopkeeper to get out of bed." This from the woman.

Duhay:

"I don't think he'll even get out of bed. He's not that much of a fool."

The woman:

"No. He won't sell wine at such an hour."

The chief medical officer:

"It's prohibited. He won't dare to let us have it."

Petur:

"Pity! I forgot to tell your chap to inform him who sent him... oh, well, it's all the same. We'll drink this bit of a wine and go home. It's terribly cold outside. I'm surprised it's not freezing."

"Even the weather seems to have gone mad. I don't remember ever being so cold on May Day."

"The weather has turned the Red month of May pretty sour."

"There was a big storm in Budapest. Did you hear of the journalist who was killed by a falling lamp-post in Rákóczi Street?"

"I gather his name was Paris."

"Paris! He must have been a Jew."

"Then he's no loss."

"Except for the fact that those blackguards are responsible for all this too. They're going to be sorry all right," contributed Petur.

They were all silent. The desire to talk arose again in Petur:

"Well, if ever we manage to get this gang off the country's back we'll have a hell of a bloodbath that'll last a year."

"A prolonged bloodbath isn't going to do any good. Any bloodbath at all might be too much of a good thing."

This comment came from Duhay. Petur was taken aback. He bent a fierce look on Duhay, lifted his finger, and ground out each word in slow syllables:

"You! Mind yourself! I like you very much, old man, but let me warn you that even those who have the presumption to try and restrain us a little are also going to be very sorry for themselves. It appears you don't realize that these thugs have committed the greatest crime in history."

Duhay seemed to pale:

"Listen, I'm not defending them! But I can't support a folly either."

"Folly!" repeated Petur, and stopped short. A second later Kvassay surprised the assembled party by saying:

"What they're doing to the country is a scandal, but if you think of the idea, I mean, the idea of Communism itself, one has to admit that it's an idea with a considerable substratum of truth."

"You're joking," said the woman, mockingly.

The chief medical officer:

"No, this is an error. It's based on incorrect logic. For Communism starts out from the argument that people are equal. Now I can assure you with all my authority as a doctor that people are not equal."

Duhay:

"It's not quite so simple as that. People living today are in fact not equal, but. . ."

Petur interrupted:

"It's all rubbish. People are not equal because there are gentlemen and peasants, workers, so to speak, just people. And the whole dirty lot must be held tight on a leash otherwise they won't work."

This was followed by a short discussion, cut short by Józsi's arrival. There stood Józsi in the doorway, with bare muddy feet, empty-handed.

"Well, what happened?" asked Petur, suddenly.

"He refused to sell me any wine."

"You spoke to him?"

"Yes, I did. He refuses, he says he won't open up the shop this time of night and that he is forbidden to sell it."

"Did you tell him who sent you?"

"Yes, I did. That I was sent by you, sir."

"And what did he reply?"

"That he was very sorry."

"I see. Well, now I'll go with you. And he will be very sorry indeed. For not selling wine."

Petur walked up and down the room. Józsi disappeared suddenly, and failed to return.

"You'd better not argue with that Jew," Duhay warned Petur, "he may even report you."

Petur left the room and called Józsi:

"What are you doing there again? Leave those boots alone!"

"It's cold and it's very muddy, please let me . . ."

"Come on, quick!"

Mrs. Duhay said:

"Leave the fellow alone, István."

Duhay followed suit:

"Why don't you let him put them on . . ."

"Damn this idiot of a man! I'll go on my own."

And he hurried away.

The party started to talk about something else. The woman asked Vályi-Verasek about his favourite dish because she was inviting him to dinner for Saturday. The conversation wandered on, food, eating, pork chop in bread crumbs, though it was all the same because any kind of food was good if well-cooked and the finest ingredients used; the painting was interesting, wasn't it, the jigging Negro, you could almost hear the clatter of the wooden shoes, the painting caught the fantastic speed of the dance; and Jármy who lived next door had been a long time in town and what was it he was working on, oh yes, he was a very gifted fellow, of course, but lazy, and it was very pleasant living here but when it rained, one sank knee deep in the mud and it became very dreary, and since the Communists took over you could hardly find anything in the market, the peasants were saboteurs, they did not want the Whites' money and actually no one knew what Petur and his friends were up to, they were all former army officers, with a couple of intellectuals, the group was said to include two Jews, a lawyer and the owner of a timber yard . . .

"Petur's been away rather a long time."

"There seems to be some trouble, Weisz won't give way."

It was some time after this that Petur returned. He had Weisz, the wineshop-keeper with him, clutching the wine bottles, five of them, in his hands and under his arms. Petur was pale and had a grim look on his face. As he took the bottles from Weisz's hands, they looked into each other's eye for a second in the light, as though this exchange of glances had remained over from the dark for settlement. There was a striking contrast between the somewhat short, thick-necked, sturdy Petur and, facing him, the tall, thin figure of Weisz with his prominent Adam's apple.

The bottles were placed on the table and as Petur turned away from Weisz to concentrate on the wine, Weisz started to leave.

"Oho! You'll stay here, Ikey!" cried Petur. "You're not going to escape. You'll have a drink with us."

Weisz remained standing and maintained a gloomy silence. The hostess took some glasses from the shelf and put them on the table. For a minute Vályi-Verasek fixed his eyes in passionate desire on the tall, buxom figure of the woman with a look of yearning, but he thought he ought to stand up, say good night, and go home. Only he found himself unable to act; he knew too well it would be useless, they would force him to stay on. Why hadn't he taken advantage of Petur's absence to slip away? He pondered over it, but could find no answer to the question. Perhaps he had been retained by curiosity? Perhaps he had hoped his aching wound would be staunched?

"Is there any water around, madam?"

"Do you drink it with water? Since when?"

"Yes, I do, I only drink wine with water."

The woman went out to the kitchen and returned with a jug of water. Petur poured the wine into the glasses, but filled one of them with water. They clinked glasses and drank, with Weisz standing before the door; Petur reached for the glass with water in it and took it to Weisz, holding his own glass filled with wine in his left hand:

"Well, Mr. Weisz, let's clink glasses!"

Weisz stood clumsily, trembling with anger, Kvassay broke into laughter and joined in the fun:

"Now, Mr. Weisz, bottoms up!"

"I don't drink. Neither water nor wine."

Petur: "Oh? Never?"

"Not now. No."

"But Mr. Weisz! Do it for my sake. You're not going to let the party down when everyone around is drinking?"

Weisz stood there, staring at the ceiling, holding the glass in his hand.

"Mr. Weisz, it's to my health! You even refuse to drink to me? Mr. Weisz, you'll offend me... Consider, Mr. Weisz, how nicely I'm asking you. And how rude you're being. Don't be so stubborn. Believe me, a gentleman never behaves like this... Excuse me, Mr. Weisz, the reason I say that is not that you are a gentleman but that now you are among gentlemen and you should behave like one. You can take it from me, Mr. Weisz, upon my word of honour, a gentleman will always drink if someone clinks glasses with him."

With the exception of Vályi-Verasek, all the others had turned their heads away to conceal their laughter. The woman half-shook her head, as though disapproving of what she was doing, but the more she tried, the less she could resist laughing. Vályi-Verasek felt that he only needed to be a very slightly different man, he only needed to add a millimetre more to his

stature, and he would take out a revolver—in that case he might even have one—and shoot the person arguing in front of him without a word.

Petur's voice took a sterner note:

"What are you going to do, Ikey? Drink or not? Listen, if you refuse to drink of your own accord, I'll open your mouth and pour the lot right down your gullet. And look, it might be wiser to drink it, because if I am forced to pour it into you all this fine, fresh water may well go down the wrong way, and make you cough, Mr. Weisz. Come on!"

Weisz's mouth jerked, as though a bitter smile had wrung it. He lifted the glass to his lips and took a gulp.

"Oh, no, Mr. Weisz! It's terribly unfair to answer a poor creature's request like that! You're cheating, Mr. Weisz. That's just like you. You've been cheating your whole life long and now you want to cheat again. But listen, you mustn't take me for an idiot. I'm not a peasant or a farm labourer to be given change from a crown. This costs so much, and that costs so much and the rest is mine, you're not entitled to any change but here's a penny my man, God speed you and see you again soon."

Laughter broke out and a thin female giggle.

"Do you hear me? Now they're laughing at me. I'm a laughing stock, Mr. Weisz, because you're playing with me like cat and mouse. Whatever I do to try and please you, you don't care a damn. You just touch your lip with the cup like the tenor singer in the opera. Perhaps you're anxious about your voice? Are you afraid that when you utter a sound you'll cackle like a goose?"

Petur moved to the table, poured another glass of wine for himself, and looked round the party with a satisfied air, noticing even Vályi-Verasek's disapproving face, but he didn't care, sour, stupid ass! He emptied his glass:

"That's the way, Mr. Weisz. Now come on, come on!"

He caught hold of Weisz's hand, squeezing his fingers on it and forced the glass to his mouth; Weisz tried to take another gulp, but Petur dashed the glass of water in his face and Weisz found himself gasping and choking.

"Now you see? You refused to take the advice of those wiser than yourself. I warned you, didn't I, that there would be trouble if you didn't drink. . . Well, Mr. Weisz, that wasn't very successful. You're not doing so well yet. You'll soon master it. You'll drink it down in no time. . . why, just as though it were water!"

Kvassay roared with laughter and wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. The others also laughed. Vályi-Verasek couldn't help smiling as well. All of them drank and Petur unsmilingly refilled Isaac Weisz's glass with water.

Duhay tried to stop him, laughing:

"Stop it. That's enough."

"Oh no, it isn't. All of us will drink a liter of wine and Mr. Weisz will also drink a liter of water. He is going to drink with us too. And then he can boast of having been on the spree with gentlemen who even clinked glasses with him. A liter of water is nothing to a grown man. It's the very least the organism needs, isn't it Chief Medical Officer?"

The chief medical officer could hardly answer for laughing.

"At—the—very—least!" he jerked out eventually, tears of laughter streaming from his eyes.

Vályi-Verasek smiled again, felt ashamed of himself, and tried to excuse himself by thinking—well, they're all mad, including the shopkeeper!

Petur also burst out laughing. His face reddened. He drank, and took the glass over to Weisz. Weisz took hold of the glass, advanced two steps and put it on the shelf.

"What's the matter, Mr. Weisz?" cried Petur. "You're not going to revolt?"

"I won't drink," said Weisz in a muffled, trembling voice.

"You won't?"

Vályi-Verasek stood up, moved up to Petur and took him by the arm:

"Now, please, István, I ask you, leave this man alone. We've been having a very good time, you're a splendid chap, but leave him alone now, let him go home and let's be by ourselves a bit."

Petur turned to Vályi-Verasek in surprise and gaped at him. He continued:

"You see, we've got something to talk about among ourselves too."

Duhay also intervened:

"Please, Mr. Weisz, go now, and don't be angry with me. It's your own fault. Why didn't you stay at home?"

A word seemed to trying to work its way out of Weisz's throat, but he suppressed it and turned to leave.

"Stay here, swine!" shouted Petur.

But in a second he seemed to change again, took the empty bottle, put it in Weisz's hands and said quickly:

"Off you go, Mr. Weisz, and bring it back filled up."

It looked as if he was giving Weisz—and himself—an opportunity to slip away and not show up again. But no sooner had Weisz reached the door than he shouted to him once more:

"Weisz! . . . Halt!"

Weisz turned round, dangling the empty bottle against his leg by the neck.

"Take care, don't slip. It's very muddy outside, and if you slip, the bottle will probably break and . . . a bottle . . . is a very fragile thing, you know . . ."

And he whipped out his revolver and fired a bullet through it.

There was a blast and smoke and the shattered glass fell splintering on the threshold. Mrs. Duhay screamed. Weisz stood paralysed.

Petur roared with laughter and sat down at the table.

"You may go, Mr. Weisz."

Duhay, who felt he had a non-aggression pact with Petur, shook his head and remarked:

"What the devil does this mad bull think he's doing?"

The chief medical officer gave the signal with a loud laugh, and all of them burst into convulsive laughter that held them speechless for several minutes. In the meantime Weisz had vanished.

Duhay was the first to recover.

"It was stupid to shoot. There may be a Red Guard within earshot who heard it. It can lead to trouble."

Petur waved his hand:

"You'd better think a little less of that Red Guard. I see they've taken you in properly with their comedy. It's the moment of glory for the proletariat, my friend, it will be followed by lamentation, I assure you."

The woman:

"Stop talking politics. I hate this constant talk of politics. If only it were all over. God will help us."

Duhay:

"What if you'd hit him, and not the bottle? His leg, or if the bullet had hit his stomach?"

Petur laughed:

"I tell you what. That would have been hard luck on him."

"Do you remember when in . . . er . . . that inn, you know what I mean, you fired a shot through the clarinet-player's hat?"

Petur looked surprised.

"The night we had the Gypsies shaved on the top of the roof."

Petur pursed up his lips and wrinkled his forehead:

"I seem to remember that . . . but I don't remember having shot a hole through a hat."

"The best of all was that while shaving the Gypsies the barber was so afraid of you that he kept on looking in your direction, so he shaved them without seeing what he was doing."

Petur grinned:

"Yes, I remember that. And then I made the barber come down and sing in the tap-room. How lively he suddenly became—how dashingly he sang: 'I'll write my name in the gendarme's blood—this very night'."

And he sang the song himself, loudly, from beginning to end, both verses.

"That's a good song. Beautiful. I've never heard it before," said Vályi-Verasek nervously.

Duhay waved his hand:

"It's an old song. It's unknown in the rest of the country, but I've often heard it in this district."

"I'd like to learn it."

"Then listen," said Petur, proffering his services and beginning to sing it again, this time very softly: 'If I enter, if I enter the roadside inn at Abony'."

Vályi-Verasek fumbled in his pocket for a piece of paper. An obscure feeling of satisfaction came over him as Petur leaned towards him politely, and sang it slowly for him.

"Give me a pencil, please," he muttered to Duhay. At that moment the dog began to bark outside. The barking grew sharper. Inside they all fell silent, listening. There was a loud knock at the door. They looked at one another.

"Come in!" cried Duhay.

The door opened and a Red Guard in uniform entered. He was a tall, thin, middle-aged man with hollow cheeks.

"Good evening," he said.

"Good evening," two or three voices replied.

Petur averted his head from the Red Guard. He stood still, his face hardening.

"What's going on here? A binge?"

And he took a look round the room, his eyes resting on the bottles and wine glasses. Duhay replied:

"There's no binge here. We're just sitting and talking."

"And of course it's water in those bottles. . . . Let me have one of those glasses."

He moved to the table, lifted a glass and smelt it. Petur was quick to react in a sharp voice:

"Don't sniff around things, we've had some wine. No one is denying it."

"All right. What about the ban on alcoholic drinks?"

Petur did not reply. He wanted to keep silent. Kvassay tried to ease the situation:

"Listen, my friend, there's no need to be so strict. We observe the ban

on spirits as well—unfortunately—because we are not in a position to drink. . . .”

The chief medical officer:

“Unlike Comrade Sztupkó, the chairman of the Workers’ Council, who also observes it—when asleep.”

Kvassay:

“The fact that just once one has half a glass of wine is not really breaking the law. . . . I’m sure you wouldn’t object to a glass yourself, it does one good in such cold weather.”

The Red Guard:

“I don’t drink. But you were having a binge here late in the night because I heard singing as well. The lighted windows can be seen as far as the bridge. . . .”

The woman drew her breath sharply. The shutters had been left open! They’d all been going in and out and none of them had remembered it!

“And I also heard a shot, it might have come from here or heaven knows where. . . .”

“A shot? Well, I really don’t know anything about that although I’ve been sitting here with the comrades all night.”

The Red Guard smiled sarcastically.

“Say, with the gentlemen?”

“All right, with the gentlemen.”

Petur kept his eyes on the floor. The Red Guard was rather embarrassed. Duhay increased his confusion:

“I just wanted to say that I heard something too. But I thought that you had fired a shot after someone, it didn’t seem to have been far from here.”

“I didn’t hear anything,” declared Kvassay with convincing simplicity. “Though my ears are as sharp as a hare’s.”

The Red Guard didn’t know whether to go on about the shot, or whether he might be committing some stupidity or injustice. But he was also afraid that if he accepted what they said, he might expose himself to ridicule. For these bourgeois were undoubtedly smart! He stood helpless, not knowing what to do. He would have liked to get away, but didn’t know how to do it at the moment. What made him stay was perhaps some fear that they would laugh at him after he had left.

“Have some wine,” said the woman suddenly, a glass already in her hand. And she added: “We were just about to break up and go to bed.”

The Red Guard accepted the glass and drank the wine at one draught.

Duhay smiled:

"I'm not an alcoholic, but I think a drink is good thing on occasion, don't you, comrade?"

The Red Guard regretted that he had accepted the wine. He felt himself compelled to explain:

"The ban on spirits is not necessary on the grounds that no one should ever drink a glass of wine, it is based on a quite different . . . basic principle," he was unable to find a better word at the moment.

"Which does not apply to the Red Guards, eh?" was the sharply worded question from Petur, who lifted his head and stared into the Red Guard's eyes. "Especially if they are on duty, eh? There must be someone to confiscate this kind of poison from the bourgeoisie, mustn't there? Instead of leaving it to kill them, turn them into brutes and destroy them, eh?"

The Red Guard blushed all over, to the tips of his burning ears. He bit his lip and was unable to utter a word.

"Leave him alone, István. It's not correct to offend a guest. He's a very decent chap," said Duhay as he stood up, moved towards the Red Guard and patted his shoulder patronizingly.

"Of course, of course. He's a very decent man. An excellent man! What are you in civilian life? Shoemaker? Tailor?" and Petur laughed.

The Red Guard felt as though the whole room was turning. "Barber," he managed to get out.

"Aha, bravo, Figaro, bravo, bravissimo! . . . Tell me, Matyi"—that was Duhay's first name—"wasn't this fine hero the one that shaved the Gypsies that time? He looks like him."

Duhay felt the situation was tense, and gestured to Petur to stop. Petur poured some wine out and offered it to the Guard. He was pale and his eyes were burning. The Guard hesitated. Only for a second or two, then took the glass and emptied it with a quick movement on the floor. He looked down as if he wanted to throw the glass away as well, but eventually went to the table and put it down there.

He then took out a notebook and a pencil and pointed his finger at Petur:

"Your name, please."

Petur laughed ironically.

"Your name, please."

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours."

"Athanasius Balaban!" and he burst out laughing again.

The Red Guard waited. He guessed that the name was a joke. And then:

"Your papers?"

"Mine?"

Outside the dog began to bark again. They listened. The barking rose to a quick crescendo and someone called out: "Kick him." Footsteps—and the door was unceremoniously flung open. A small, spare figure of a man in uniform stood there, with people moving behind him in the dark. They knew the spare man by sight, he was the commander of the local Red Guards.

Petur could not bring himself to drop his act.

"Oh, so we've got some new visitors!"

The commander looked at Petur quietly through his *pince-nez* with a kind of grey, indifferent, dispassionate look all the keener for its aloof implacability. Petur met it with a smile suddenly distorted by hatred, but the inflexible gaze of the eyes facing his showed that his fate had already been decided. The people sitting in the room caught their breath, aware of the tragedy of the moment.

Now the spare figure turned his attentive eyes to the door, where one of the guards had stepped on the broken glass and was bending down to see what it was. The spare figure then cast an inquiring glance at the Red Guard standing ill at ease in the room:

"Anything to report, Comrade Mihály?"

"Yes. I was going to check the identities of the whole party this very moment."

"This very moment? How long have you been here?"

"I arrived only a short while ago. I was walking on the bridge when I noticed the light and . . ."

"You arrived only a short while ago? Perhaps you've been talking up to now?" and the commander looked sharply into the Red Guard's face.

He replied with studied vagueness:

"I questioned them . . ."

The commander did not care for the ambiguity.

"You've all been drinking, I think?"

In fact it was a question but no one answered.

All of a sudden the commander turned to Vályi-Verasek:

"Who are you?"

The woman answered:

"Antal Vályi-Verasek, a painter. He's a guest from Budapest . . ."

The commander lifted his eyebrows at the woman:

"I didn't speak to you," he said.

"I'm Vályi-Verasek," said the painter in a muffled voice.

"You I know," said the commander to the woman. "I'm curious about the people I don't yet know."

He indicated Petur with a glance.

"This gentlemen is slightly drunk. He may be in a kind of state of semi-intoxication," and he looked with irony round the large elegant room. "They say that people reveal their true selves when drunk. He reacted to our arrival somewhat sarcastically. . . ."

He suddenly turned on Mihály, the Red Guard:

"What the devil have you been doing here till now?"

"Drinking with us," said Petur simply.

"That's what I thought. That's why we were supposed to be the new visitors. How much did you drink?"

"Just a glass. I gave it to him," the woman hurriedly interrupted.

"Don't interfere, madam, don't try to take the responsibility on yourself. These chaps are not Sir Galahads. I had to press him, he protested most strongly, didn't feel like a drink at all. He's a conscious proletar, poor thing."

The commander looked at Petur silently as though waiting for him to lose control.

Petur realized the position and fell silent.

The commander:

"There were also shots heard in this area. The sentry posted at the river control reported by phone that he had heard several shots from this direction."

They all gazed at one another with an air of enquiry, slowly shaking their heads.

"There couldn't have been a shot fired here!" cut in Mihály, the Red Guard defiantly, already mentally prepared to abandon the commander and the cause he represented.

"I didn't ask you, Mihály, because you are a fool. And corrupt. Clear off now. Go to the centre and report to me tomorrow."

Mihály the Red Guard left without a word or gesture of farewell.

Kvassay tried to repeat Duhay's stratagem which had been so successful the first time.

"Yes I heard some sort of report from fairly close range. I couldn't be certain it was a shot, but it could hardly have been anything else. . . ."

Duhay caught on swiftly:

"I can't say I heard anything, though my ears are as keen as a hare's."

The commander smiled contemptuously. He was silent for a moment or two, then turned to one of his subordinates:

"What the devil have they been doing? . . . shooting at bottles, perhaps?"

He moved to the door, opened it, struck a match and picked among the broken pieces of glass.

"Well, it's of no great importance, it wouldn't matter if it didn't mean one of them possessed a revolver. . . . Perhaps I ought to have each of you searched. . . ."

"Here it is. I shouldn't think anyone else here has a revolver."

"This should have been handed in long ago. There was a definite limit. Last March!"

"I was on the farm, I knew nothing about it."

The commander took a look at the revolver and turned the barrel in his fingers.

"One bullet missing. So only one was fired and the rest of the shots seem to have been hallucination on the part of Comrade Schwarz."

"Of course it's missing. I fired it. I never denied it."

"I asked and you didn't reply. I also inquired about the shots."

"Not from me. . . . I shot at a wine bottle."

"Hm. If there isn't a man, then I suppose a wine bottle does?"

Turning as if to explain to everyone present, he said with what appeared to be satanic coldness, but may have been no more than uncompromising severity:

"Not an entirely uninteresting man."

He slipped the revolver into his overcoat pocket, leaving his hand over it.

"Your name?"

"István Petur."

"Comrade Solymár, take everyone's name and address. We'll arrest fellow-citizen István Petur and take him with us."

"Me?"

The commander left this question without an answer. He did not even look at Petur. He turned to Solymár instead.

"Handcuff him. He may try to escape in the dark."

"Me?"

Since his stupefaction was also ignored, he began to shout vociferously, yelling hoarsely:

"Don't you dare handcuff me. Me? You. . . ."

For one second a moment of sanity took over, flashing up like an electric discharge:

"Very well, then, take me. Detain me. All right!"

And then as though it were impossible, as though his soul could not, would not give way:

"But I warn you, scum, once this whole gangsters' adventure of yours is over, when your time is up, may the Lord have mercy on you."

The commander:

"And put him in irons."

"Me? You blackguard, you Red rat, you . . ."

With one bound he was before the commander, pushing his own face close up to the other with his eyes starting from their sockets; he went crimson, and with a quick movement of his right hand knocked up the commander's chin. For a second the man staggered, but the next split second saw Petur flat on the floor as the commander swiftly drew the revolver from his pocket and hit him on the temple with the butt.

"Oh, God," screamed the woman.

The Reds kept still, but reached for their weapons as the members of the party jumped to their feet in alarm. Vályi-Verasek was literally frozen in his armchair. The commander readjusted his *pince-nez*.

"Comrade Kánya, go and fetch some sort of conveyance. The first thing you can find will do. If he doesn't come round, you and Solymár will have to carry him in it. But in any case, handcuff him. He might come round on the way and attempt to escape."

The woman knelt beside the unconscious man. Choking down a sob she felt his head. The chief medical officer also knelt beside him, hurriedly undoing his collar and shirt; he turned him on his back and murmured to the woman:

"It's nothing serious, he'll soon come round . . . Get me some water and a towel."

At that moment Petur opened his eyes and looked at the ceiling vacantly.

Vályi-Verasek had still not moved. His heart was beating so violently he thought he was going to faint. As though from far off, across his terror of death, he regarded himself wonderingly, that his triumphant satisfaction had come to this.

The commander walked up and down, then halted before Solymár:

"Post an armed guard before his cell! Turn all our detectives on to a thorough investigation of his present and past record. The people he is in touch with; the ones he meets. His home must be searched. Every letter and document removed. Question his neighbours and relations . . . He's an extremely dangerous character! You've only got to look at him and you can be certain that there are any number of crimes he has committed in the course of his life . . . I don't think I'll be proved wrong, I've got a good eye for that sort of chap."

The commander stopped and stared before him, indifferently, with no further interest. Duhay sidled up to him:

"Excuse me, comrade commander, what's going to happen to us here?"

The commander flung out his hands in surprise:

"Why, what should happen to you?"

"But we didn't do anything. We got involved in this as innocently as . . ."

The commander pondered:

"Nothing? Violation of the ban on spirits, to say the least of it!"

"Perhaps we needn't be prosecuted for that?"

"That's not our business. We'll simply put in a report."

"But what do you think, comrade commander?"

The commander looked Duhay contemptuously up and down:

"It's not quite so simple. You all unanimously denied the shot and, indirectly, as a result, the revolver as well. You tried to mislead us. Not to mention anything else."

Duhay felt the world shifting under him. It was terrible! He'd never thought about it like that. They might even put him in prison. It was the end, he was going crazy, he couldn't stand it any more.

"But why are you so frightened? You don't think they'll cut off your head?"

"It's terrible!" was all he could mutter.

"Aha, now you see! You are a real counter-revolutionary too. On top of everything else."

"But why do you say so, comrade commander?"

"Because you're so afraid of us!"

And the commander smiled his freezing, ironic smile.

## MARCH 21\*

by

JÓZSEF LENGYEL

I was discharged through the massive gate of the Central Remand Prison in the late afternoon of March 20, 1919. On March 21st the first thing I did was to report to Visegrádi Street. They put me to work on the spot; among other things I was supposed to get some papers into safety with the help of Comrade Sári Fonyó. But we never got round to it, for the comrades were informed that a "big thing" was coming off that night. So I got ready for that big thing. I hurried over to M. K., an old school-friend. He had been demobbed, and was a sympathizer. I asked him for his large service revolver, which he handed over without questions asked. From K.'s I rushed home and did what I could to equip myself properly. A pair of breeches, a pair of heavy boots, a big slice of bread, and a red armband made up the equipment. By the time I got back to Visegrádi Street, it was already known that the people in the Central Remand Prison had been released and were on their way to the city.

There was intense activity going on at Nos. 15 and 17 Visegrádi Street. In the first place we had to commandeer typewriters from the neighbouring offices; then, since our premises had become too small for us, we commandeered a flat in the house. All this had gone quite smoothly. But so much work had accumulated within minutes that very soon even our enlarged premises were too small. Masses of people were tramping around, people of whose intentions we had not the faintest idea. At this point Gyula Hevesi or Tibor Szamuely, I no longer remember exactly who, commissioned me to go with twelve men and occupy the Stock Exchange building. As a matter of fact, that was the place where, with Comrade Fonyó's help, we kept the secret files of the Party, and we had often remarked that the Stock Exchange would make a very suitable Party headquarters.

\* A chapter from the author's book *Visegrádi utca* (Visegrádi Street), an account of the 1918-19 events.

The occupation of the Stock Exchange, like the commandeering, went smoothly. I did not know what agreements had been made by the leaders of the Social Democrats and the Communist Party while in the Central Remand Prison, so as far as I could I took up defensive positions at the building. I posted six men outside, with instructions to stop all approaching vehicles, to ask for papers, and if they wouldn't stop, to shoot. I placed six people as reserves at the inside snack-bar, and positioned myself in front of the only single open gate, in order to check identities.

I knew most of the comrades by sight. And those I did not know were not particularly difficult to screen. Only workers and journalists wanted to get in. I admitted the workers and sent back the journalists. More than one journalist assured me of his staunch Communist sympathies assuring me he was going to write something wonderful for the next day. I kept telling them that their papers wouldn't be coming out the next day, and that there was absolutely no need for their presence. A larger number of armed workers and soldiers arrived, led by people I knew, and, of course, Party members came.

This was it, I thought.

What was going on inside I did not know. I let myself be relieved for only a few short minutes at a time, especially since I was still expecting the rattle of gunfire from somewhere—perhaps from the direction of near-by Váci road, and the West Station, in the neighbourhood. But all was quiet. There was no trace of police.

Later at headquarters I heard that the national guard and the police had yielded without any show of resistance.

But there was also other news. "Three policemen have been shot dead on the Rákóczi Boulevard," one of the new arrivals told us. (This later proved to have been a false rumour; policemen were hard to find that day.)

At about six o'clock in the morning, as there had been no trouble, I allowed myself to be relieved, and walked home slowly. I lay down on the bed fully dressed, and at nine in the morning I started back to the Stock Exchange.

The street was again full of life, and the hansom cab I had taken, as I was tired, collided with a tram. So it was pretty much the same picture as in October. Except that now I had the revolver strapped not under my coat, but over it.

When I arrived at the Stock Exchange, I saw scores of people queuing up before the gate. As if they were queuing for lard or sugar, except that they were all well-dressed people. "What are you waiting for," I asked one of them, who could well have been working as a stockbroker the day before and had come to the Stock Exchange through sheer force of habit.

"To join the Party."

"A bit late, don't you think?" I said.

I was about to go in. "Hey, wait your turn!" a gentleman in a very expensive-looking overcoat, obviously a newly-baked disciple of democracy, shouted at me. For my part I preferred to pull out my revolver and flourish the butt-end, and they were quick enough to let me through.

Upstairs I found the place teeming with newcomers—they had a sickening way of calling everyone comrade and pushing in through every door.

I had a hard time finding Ottó Korvin. Ottó told me that the Soc-Dems were sitting tight, but this was just as it should be. As to what I was to do or where I was to report, he had no suggestions to offer, so I started for home.

I went for a walk. On my walk I met Frigyes Karikás. At that time all I knew about this handsome, vigorous lad with the big grey eyes and energetic gestures was that he was an ironworker and that he had been in Russia. That he would once write very good short stories was something that probably not even he himself suspected at the time. Karikás was in a bad temper. "Things were different in Moscow," he said. "We stood on one side, and the Whites on the other, and our blood only met at the kerb, where it ran together."

I wasn't very happy either. The papers had appeared, and the police had simply been re-named the Red Guard. But perhaps this was all right? How was I to know? I was only a common soldier—or perhaps corporal—of the revolution. . . . All my friends were already working in jobs in the Council Republic, only I was unemployed at the beginning of the Proletarian Dictatorship.

A few days passed like this, until I met Comrade Vágó or Comrade Jancsik, I no longer know which. He asked me where I was working. I said nowhere and that no doors were opening for me.

"Call right away at the *Red Journal*, that's the place for you. It's obvious."

That was what the comrade said. I called at the *Red Journal*, and Károly Jancsó gave me a real and exuberant welcome. He said he was very glad that there would be one more to add to the small Communist group on the editorial staff.

Work started. And strangely enough, after the first few days, everything began to look beautiful to my eyes, or at least I thought that everything would go on getting better and more beautiful.

# THE MONETARY FRAMEWORK OF A SOCIALIST ECONOMY

by

BÉLA CSIKÓS-NAGY

*The Three Stages of the  
Hungarian Price Debate*

*Price is the equivalent of value in money terms.* This was the starting-point of the Hungarian price debate. Thus in an earlier period price in the context of a socialist economy was considered a phenomenon which *should reflect the socially necessary labour inputs (social costs)*. It was supposed that price relations must reflect value relations (labour input), this being the only way that provided a sound economic orientation. Whether the price system met this requirement or not was checked on the basis of the net social income realized in prices as distributed over various products. At that time the view prevailed that the main task was to bring about a consistent price system which expresses the social cost of products in accordance with a precisely determined system of incomes. Thus the first stage of the discussion was centred mostly on determining a scheme for income distribution. This discussion went back to the categories of "value price" and "production price" as set forth by Marx. In the case of "value price" the net income is realized according to wage costs, whereas in the case of "production price" according to the capital embodied in production. This means that in a value price system the ratio between wage costs, and net income and in a production price system the ratio between capital and net income is equal in all prices. The debate about "value price"—"production price" also dealt with intermediate price models in which net income is realized partly in accordance with wage costs and partly in accordance with capital. (Two or multi-channel price systems.) Everybody knows that such ideas about prices can be conceived only in an artificial way, because a price system existing in practice cannot be consistent with a determined income pattern. But one has to bear in mind that at that time Hungary had an administrative,

fixed price system. Usually prices were adjusted to social costs. The discussion on prices aimed to give guiding principles for those rearrangements.

*The second stage of the price debate was directed against the administrative character of the price system.* The main objection raised was that such a market category as price had been applied in an administrative manner. Therefore discussion was centred on the problems connected with market processes. The discussions at that time dealt with notions such as *use value, marginal cost, scarcity, competitive prices, equilibrium prices, etc.* Social costs, value price, production price were hardly mentioned in contrast to the earlier stage of the price debate. All this prepared the reform of the economic management system which was to be carried out some years later.\*

The Hungarian reforms in the way the economy is directed, strictly speaking, started a process in which a controlled market mechanism gradually abandons various elements of a centrally directed economy, which still prevail. By gradually strengthening the elements of the market mechanism an economic model will emerge, in which

— on the one hand, economic processes in ever widening fields will come under control by the market; price regulation will be carried out increasingly by indirect methods, mostly fiscal and monetary policy,

— on the other hand, retail prices will approach production costs; price deviations based upon turnover taxes and price subsidies will be more and more limited.

Thus the economic reform has made use of the results of both price debates, accepting value (production price) as controlling price tendencies (the first stage of the price debate) and market price as controlling short-term price movements (the second stage of the price debate).

*Now we are in a new stage where the price debate develops under the new conditions, i.e. within the framework of the new management system.* The common characteristic of the "old" price debates was that the category of price was considered as an independent phenomenon and not as an element of the monetary framework of the economy. As a matter of fact, the thinking of Marxist economists was at that time so deeply involved with the idea of a barter economy that it has been almost impossible, up to now, to get rid of it. To make it clearer: in a centrally directed economy monetary and fiscal means are subordinated to the plan defined mostly in physical terms. Plan targets expressed in value indices mostly represent decisions in terms of volume too. This is the reason for using fixed prices, for confining price

\* See my own "Two Stages of the Hungarian Debate on Prices" in *Acta Oeconomica* No. II-IV, 1966 which discusses this point in greater detail.

changes to the launching of plan periods and for combining them with plan repricing. But if this is so fiscal means, and partly monetary means, must be adjusted to the requirements of a fixed, administrative price system. In short: *plan instruction prevails over pricing and pricing prevails over financial regulators*. Thus the view is becoming predominant that the category of price is the main coordinating factor in determining taxation, interest rates, subsidies, customs duties, etc. But this way of thinking springs from the same root as the idea of a barter economy.

All this can be characterized in the following way too: *in the first stage of the price debate the main consideration was how to use the price category to suit a centrally directed economy best*. Here the principal point was that the role of price is nothing else than to support government planning in a rational way. This was really an *underestimating* of the price function. Recently it has become clearer and clearer that in connection with a controlled market economy the main point is the *monetary framework* of the economy. These intricate interrelations must be taken into consideration when the price function is tackled. This is the main point which characterizes the price debate now in progress, and which can be considered as the *third stage* of the price debate. The financial aspect of the economic reform is still in its initial stage, and the adaptation of the monetary framework to the new requirements is partly a task for the future. This will be the central topic of the economic debates of the years immediately ahead, at least in some of the socialist countries. However, relying on the experience of the capitalist countries and the logic of a process which has started in the socialist countries, we can make some points already at present.

#### *The General Principles of the Controlled Market Mechanism*

To bring the whole matter concerned nearer it seems to be worth while to give a summarized picture of the working principles of the controlled market system. The instruments of market regulation may be put into three groups:

- the instruments of budgetary and monetary policy, that is to say financial policy;
- the instruments of price and incomes policy, and
- restrictive instruments in physical terms.

When forming the control system the dilemma of economic policy has at all times been the decision as to which instruments to use and in which

way to use them, in order to achieve the set aim. The debates on this subject in Hungary turned around what is commonly called the "conform" and "non-selective" economic policy. In such a type of economic policy market regulation is confined to financial means, but, even then, without any discrimination. Such an economic policy does not, of course, exist in practice. *Economic policy is, by nature, non-conform and selective.* No state exists—regardless of its socio-economic system—in which the government would not use direct regulators and would not use some of them in a selective form.

It seems to be reasonable to call attention to the report submitted by Professor Prebisch, principal secretary of the Conference on World Trade and Development, to the 1964 Geneva session and to the "Algiers Charter" drawn up by the seventy-seven developing countries and prepared for discussion at the 1968 Conference held in New Delhi. To boost their exports, the developing countries, at the 1964 Geneva Conference, turned to the advanced capitalist countries for customs concessions and to the socialist states for import quotas. This differentiation was based on the assumption that the mechanisms of the market economy and of the centrally planned economy were fundamentally different. At the 1968 New Delhi Conference, the developing countries no longer made any differentiation but asked for their share in the increasing consumption of the developed countries. The past years' experience had taught them that exports were often impeded by the system the developed capitalist countries use in granting import licences and in some cases by import quotas. And when there are no administrative constraints, the developed capitalist countries are in a position to apply prices, taxes and subsidies in a way which render customs concessions doubtful, or meaningless.

Nevertheless, *the concept on which conform economic policy relies, has many positive elements.* Two things at least should be mentioned. Firstly, that if an objective is achievable by indirect regulators, these must be given preference over direct regulators. Secondly, that if an objective cannot be achieved by indirect regulators, it is quite possible that direct regulators would also prove ineffective. It is the concept of conform economic policy which calls our attention to self-restraint, very justified in market regulation. One thing is certain: if economic policy is compelled to use rigorous and direct regulators of an extensive scope, this is a sign of acute unbalance, and in such a situation the only way to master the problem is a revision of the objectives of that economic policy.

If it is possible at all to set up an order of preference for economic instruments this may look as follows: price and income restrictions are more appropriate than restrictions in physical terms; fiscal and monetary

regulators are better than price and income regulators; within the framework of fiscal and monetary policy indirect instruments ensure a smoother economic performance than direct ones. Taking all this into consideration the government has more opportunities to form the control system in a way which can work with the best possible efficiency. Nevertheless, it has to be borne in mind that given a high level of production forces and certain social norms, first of all under the principle of full employment, indirect methods of fiscal and monetary policy cannot give a suitable solution to all problems, which must be solved by economic policy. It is by no means due to chance that an autonomous price and incomes policy subordinated to its own rules and thus applying its specific control instruments is being introduced in more and more countries.

Thus the actual question is not whether to use or not to use the instruments of price and incomes policy but rather how to use them lest they come into conflict with the efficiency of fiscal and monetary policy. In some countries economic troubles have emerged not because price and income control has been introduced but on account of the way in which monetary policy, in the first place, failed to work efficiently.

Some observations should also be made with respect to non-selective economic policy. This concept would be unrealistic, e.g. in the field of tariffs tax, or credit systems. Economic policy is, by necessity, associated with political preferences. Selectivity is the essence of a tariffs policy that aims to protect national production, because should this not be so, tariffs as regulators would be quite superfluous; the more so as in a non-selective system the same objective can be achieved by the devaluation of the currency. In tax and credit policies the stimulation of exports has for long been the general principle, and recently more and more countries have begun to apply financial regulators to encourage undeveloped areas to catch up. However, *the concept of non-selective economic policy also contains some positive elements*. Using economic instruments in a selected way one has to answer certain questions. Such as:

(1) Where is the point at which economic performance must be governed by a unified yardstick?

(2) Which should be the criteria for the determination of those preferences?

(3) How can the extent of the differentiation be unambiguously defined?

To make this clear can in itself prevent us from applying preferences in an uncontrolled way. If a government's preferences are applied as a general line of economic policy, the market mechanism cannot perform its rational allocation function but it degenerates into a mere technical framework.

It appears that from the aspect of the selective principles of economic policy, it is necessary to *differentiate between the processes of long-term development and operative policy*. Political preferences may be regarded as unavoidable elements of long-term economic policy. Consequently, it is the principles of selection associated with the credit policy of investments and the transformation of structure which are justified in the first place. The situation is somewhat different in the sphere of short-term decisions and in operative actions. In this field the more positive the opinion formed of the economic policy is, the less it will resort to exemptions, viz. the more consistently it will create equal conditions for everyone in the spheres of production and consumption.

### *The Question of the Money and Capital Market*

If the general principles of market control, as explained above, are acceptable, it can be taken for granted that *the monetary framework of the economy stands at the centre of investigation*. Commodity economy is a money economy in which money is a general equivalent and the means of turnover, of accumulation and also legal tender. Although these money functions always prevail in a commodity economy their scope and the way in which they operate depend on the socio-economic system and on the economic mechanism. In the *capitalist free market model*

— commodity, money and capital markets are working in a close connection with each other;

— commodity flow and price movement are controlled directly by the market mechanism;

—the capitalist state exerts an influence among others on the flow of commodities and on price movements mostly by fiscal and monetary policy.

This model is based on the hypothesis that the money function embraces the economy and thus market control can be carried out by financial instruments in a comprehensive way. This control system can work at the same time *only* in a very intricate and diversified money and capital market system because capitalist private ownership atomized the economy. But the question must be raised whether *the existence of the money and capital markets is to be considered as an absolute prerequisite of an efficient financial policy or not*. We have to tackle this problem in the light of socialist production relations.

Socialist ownership naturally precludes all such forms of the money and capital market as rely on capitalist private ownership. Although in principle

the enterprises may operate in the form of joint stock companies, *no stock market* can come into force, since this would presuppose the private ownership of the means of production. Land under agricultural cultivation is not for sale, therefore a real estate market can exist only in the form of a *market for family houses and plots*. But the question is whether socialist principles permit capital markets at all, even in spheres outside socialist ownership.

In the preparatory debates concerning the Hungarian economic reform this question was raised in connection with the monobank system and its credit monopoly. In the centrally directed economy *no enterprise was allowed to grant credit to another one*. This was based on the consideration that the bank account should reflect the production and distribution processes. This was regarded as an important method of controlling the commodity flow by the flow of money. *Capital movement between enterprises was prohibited too*. This was aimed at ensuring a centralized financing of all investment activities. That is why depreciation funds and the predominant part of enterprise gains were centralized in the budget. In the *monobank system* this financial policy had to be rendered as efficient as possible.

The monobank system and its credit monopoly has been maintained in the new control system too. The opinion prevailed that when indirect regulators are used mainly, instead of direct ones, planned commodity and money relations cannot be ensured except by a strongly centralized banking and credit granting organization. This concept relies on the assumption that to become an efficient regulator of the commodity market, the financial pattern must be a centralized one. According to this assumption, the market and with it, competition,

—may evolve in the sphere of the *commodity economy*, as the subject of market regulation, but

—is not to evolve in the sphere of the *money economy*, since this is the *means*, of market regulation.

This problem is entirely independent of ownership relations. Which stand we take may depend on our interpretation of the relationship between the plan and the market or, more precisely, on our view as to the conditions under which the market regulations based on the economic plan may be regarded as efficient.

But really, what problems are combined with a bank-credit monopoly which would make it worth while to subject it once again to a critical examination? The bank-credit monopoly has been developed from the state monopoly of the issue of notes. This development was considered as a necessary part of the so-called "*one-account system*" according to which liquid money must be kept in the bank, in one account. This system prohibited

not only credit relations between enterprises but job work relations too. All this originates from the ideological standpoint which refused to consider capital goods as commodities. According to this the flow of goods among state-owned enterprises is nothing but a supply system technically organized by central planning. But one can think in the following way: In the new Hungarian economic mechanism enterprises are paid interest on their bank accounts; this is not always the case if credits are granted by one enterprise to another; if, nevertheless, enterprises prefer to have direct credit relations with each other, they do so because it can help to organize production in a more rational way. Commodity and money relations are, of necessity, elements of a commodity economy and so *it is not reasonable to exclude credit relations from commodity relations.*

If enterprise credit relations are prohibited then even more reasonable points may be raised against enterprise capital movements. Nevertheless, remarkable advantages could be achieved by *allowing an organized capital market* within the framework of the state bank system. There are institutions (e.g. state-owned insurance companies) with a significant surplus income. To render the profitable direct investment of these assets possible can be considered as an important aspect of an autonomous business policy. At present these assets are centralized in the budget and, at the same time, the government takes over an unlimited responsibility for their solvency. In the new Hungarian control system the budget centralizes one part of the depreciation fund and enterprise gain is taxed to a high degree. This is why an organized capital flow between enterprises is out of question. Thus the only way for accumulated amounts—beyond self-financing—to flow back into the economy is through the budget. But direct capital movement as against budgetary financing could provide a better solution, since in this way the controlling effect of the market mechanism becomes effective. *Finally, the non-existence of an organized capital market means that, at present, problems for which instruments of monetary policy are best suited, must be solved by instruments of fiscal policy.*

It seems that *problems of the money economy must be reevaluated in the light of the experiences we have gained and shall gain in the new economic mechanism.* It seems best to set out from the idea that financial regulators cannot be efficient unless they allow sufficient freedom for *the laws of the self-movement of money.* If economic and legal prescriptions set too rigorous constraints on the movement of money and if they preclude the market forms of this movement, such an institutional framework of the economy would put heavy limitations on the efficient utilization of financial regulators.

The equilibrium of supply and demand is in fact nothing but the concise

expression of the states of equilibrium on diversified markets controlled by budgetary and monetary policy. The commodity market is regulated by them. The concept of a barter economy relies mostly on the commodity market as such. Therefore, many people identify the reforms of economic management in socialist countries with a *process of decentralization* which ultimately leads to more freedom for enterprises. In such an approach, the financial problem, too, is nothing but the decentralization of sources of finance, and the coming into being of self-financing by the enterprises. But this, in fact, is only one aspect of the matter! It is important also to examine under what conditions this could lead to a positive solution.

*The multifold banking system and primarily the separation of Central Banking from trading functions, furthermore the liberalization of the movement of money in inter-enterprise relations, and the movement of capital under organized forms* seems to be the most promising road leading to an improvement in the socialist economic mechanism. This, at the same time, is a precondition for adapting *the relationship of the enterprises to the budget* to the requirements of the controlled market system. It is due to the absence of money and capital movement between enterprises that today, within the framework of the financial policy, we must find budgetary methods to solve financing tasks, for which a monetary policy would be much better suited. In all probability these questions will be considerably debated in years to come.

#### *The currency problem*

Even under the new control system Hungary has maintained her *restrictive foreign exchange policy*. Hungarian currency is not convertible. Foreign currency can be taken out of the country but only a restricted amount. Nevertheless a correct establishing of the value of the forint was one of the most hotly discussed questions in the preparatory stages of the new management system. The passions raised by the debate concerning *average and marginal value* perhaps ran even higher than those in the discussion in western countries about stable or flexible foreign exchange rates, about purchasing power parity, equilibrium foreign exchange rates, etc. in the forties and fifties.

*But what divides the Hungarian discussion significantly from the western one?* In the Hungarian discussion we tried under a restrictive foreign exchange policy to approach the rate of foreign exchanges by which foreign trade transactions could be judged according to their efficiency. Linked with this, the marginal value of the currency emerged in the discussion supposing that

by it the equilibrium of the balance of payments can be ensured. As against this the discussion in western countries was carried on under conditions that presupposed convertible currencies and were closely connected with the policy of the International Monetary Fund. This latter discussion was largely influenced by the fact that, according to the official policy of the IMF, to avoid competition in the devaluation of national currencies, foreign exchange rates must be stable and changes may occur only for serious and justified reasons. In the Hungarian discussion about the new economic mechanism the reform of foreign exchange regulations and thus the convertibility of the currency did not emerge, in spite of the fact that only in this connection can a debate about the equilibrium of foreign exchange rates be considered realistic. Nevertheless, if the question of foreign exchange rates emerges in the framework of a comprehensive foreign exchange reform it will lead us to the mechanism of international division of labour.

Developed capitalist countries of Western Europe could ensure the convertibility of their national currencies after the Second World War only gradually and based upon an international monetary system, that is to say, by monetary cooperation. This was achieved at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944. Following this *the international division of labour among capitalist countries developed, governed by the following considerations:*

—every country is interested in the *general growth of productive forces*. A slump in one country as a result of foreign trade affects all other economies in an unfavourable way;

—every country is interested in all *currencies being convertible*. If this is the case, the possibilities of a manifold international division of labour are given;

—every country is interested in an *equilibrium of the balance of payments*. Disequilibrium in one country may restrict foreign exchange policy, and so may lead to a restrictive import policy, which affects the export possibilities of all others unfavourably;

—every country is interested in *foreign exchange cooperation* as a result of which foreign exchange rates, interest rates, gold and credit policies are internationally coordinated. Because, if they are considered as the objects of an autonomous national economic policy, the international monetary system—which is the main point on which market economies rely—can be profoundly harmed.

The currencies of numerous West European countries became *convertible without their possessing sizeable gold reserves at all*. Since then some of them have accumulated significant gold reserves as the result of the monetary cooperation which has come about. The gold reserve, in such cases, was the outcome

and not the prerequisite of the adaptation to the international monetary system. But the precondition for this had been the existence of a "key" currency functioning as the "world" currency, which for these countries has been the US dollar. Since, from the point of view of the other countries, the key currency is merely a reserve currency, only the US dollar is directly connected with the available gold reserves. Should the currency of any country be only a trade currency and not a key currency, then, from the aspect of convertibility, the only criterion would be that the commodity exports, etc. should produce as much foreign exchange as would be regularly needed under normalized foreign exchange regulations. If the foreign exchange producing potentials of the country's economy were insufficient, its gold reserves alone would solve nothing. There is no gold reserve which would not melt away in the case of a steady passive balance of payments.

What *conclusions* of benefit to the socialist countries can be drawn from all this? The first is that achieving the convertibility of a currency cannot cause insurmountable difficulties from the point of view of the real economic processes, since the maintenance and development of the export potential is essential to the economy even if the currency is not convertible. The problems of the equilibrium of the international balance of payments cannot be circumvented. From the point of view of *international liquidity*, it is indifferent whether a country has a trade currency or a restricted one. The only difference is that with a restricted foreign exchange management, the need for foreign currencies is less than it would be if foreign currency were available without significant restrictions. The damage caused by not satisfying demands for foreign exchange, on the other hand, is likely to exceed considerably any likely savings in foreign exchange.

The second conclusion may be formulated as follows: *the road to the convertibility of a currency leads through international monetary cooperation*. In other words, the monetary problem of a national economy cannot be satisfactorily dealt with if the system of international cooperation in which the country participates, is of a non-monetary character. And it is in this way that socialist currencies are related to the economic mechanism of the CMEA (Comecon). What characterizes the CMEA can be summed up as follows:

1. Economic cooperation within the CMEA is based on a closed system of multilateral accounting in which the accounting unit is the Clearing Rouble. This is a closed system internally as well as externally.

—Externally it is expressed in the fact that the Clearing Rouble does not fit into the world monetary system. The Clearing Rouble is not convertible. Claims in Clearing Rouble can be used as legal tender in trade within the CMEA only.

—Internally it is expressed by the fact that the Clearing Rouble does not fit into the monetary systems of the member states. It is separated from national prices and foreign exchange. It was just this problem which the Hungarian economic reform intended to solve by abolishing the administrative prices of export and import products and the simultaneous setting up of what are usually called foreign trade price multipliers for the US dollar and the Clearing Rouble.

Therefore, economic cooperation within the CMEA is virtually a barter system.

2. The economic mechanism of the CMEA is based on the assumption that, in the long run, once placed on multilateral foundations, exports and imports will be in equilibrium for each member country. Consequently, no structural creditors' and debtors' position should develop. It was bearing that in mind that the countries affiliated to the CMEA established the International Bank for Economic Cooperation, which functions as a *clearing centre* in 1963.

3. The value of the Clearing (transferable) Rouble must be established according to the principle of price formation. In forming foreign trade prices, the CMEA *relies on the dollar prices in force on the capitalist world market and when expressing these prices in Clearing Roubles, the US dollar and Soviet Rouble's official gold parity (1 to 0.9) are taken as a basis.*

The derivation of foreign trade prices in Clearing Rouble from the US dollar prices on the international market takes place in a system of prices fixed for periods of several years ahead. The CMEA countries mutually agree on the time when these prices are to be changed, and on the general directives of the manner in which capitalist market prices should be taken into account. The actual fixing of the foreign trade prices takes place within the framework of bilateral trade agreements. This system leads to the following peculiarities:

—The foreign trade prices within the CMEA follow the trends in the capitalist world market with a lag of several years.

—The adaptation of prices to the capitalist markets is more consistent with respect to raw materials and foodstuffs (in general, with "exchange" commodities) than where products of processing industries are concerned, particularly machines.

—Within CMEA markets the same product may be sold at different foreign trade rates in different bilateral relationships.

—The prices of new industrial commodities are in some cases adapted to the capitalist world market prices actually in force, in others to the fixed foreign trade prices of similar articles.

4. Lack of a unified monetary system sets peculiar requirements also in the regulation of currency relationships.

If the national currency is non-convertible and commodity trade is regulated outside *the monetary system*, *the rate of exchange in trade becomes indifferent*, the only criterion being that the foreign currency price should somehow be translatable into the home currency, at some rate of conversion, since otherwise there would be—technically—no way in which foreign trade prices could level. The situation outside the commodity trade is different. There, for instance in tourism, the national currencies come into direct contact and a realistic value ratio must be established. For this purpose the CMEA countries have introduced the so-called “intourist” rate of exchange.

The mechanism of cooperation within the CMEA already led to discussions in the 1950s. Working groups had already then been set up to study the system of cooperation. In the late 1950s the road seemed to lead through the solution of the price problem. The switchover must take place from capitalist market prices to socialist foreign trade rates, the latter to be evolved from the collected production costs in the CMEA countries. In this way the study of the system of economic cooperation was carried on within the framework of the “*own price basis*.” Later, however, it became obvious that the selection of one single element of the cooperation cannot possibly lead to a positive solution. The crucial problem of the system of cooperation in fact concerns *the market and not the price*, and as such, it requires the solution of the monetary problems first. More precisely, a monetary system of cooperation must be created, and the general principles of regulation must be derived from it. But to reach it intricate tasks have to be performed, three of which deserve special attention: (1) multilateralism; (2) the foreign exchange credit mechanism; (3) relations with the capitalist monetary system.

In connection with *multilateralism* the CMEA countries should open their markets to each other. This can be achieved by a flexible system of foreign trade. Long-term agreements on a government level would retain their significance even under these conditions. Only the content of these agreements will have to be adjusted to the requirements of a controlled market mechanism. That is to say, obligatory export-import quotas must be applied in a limited form, mostly for raw materials and some agricultural products of great importance. Generally, the mutual flow of goods must be governed by agreements on an enterprise level.

Agreements among enterprises can efficiently control commodity relations only if enterprises are entitled to bargain. Administrative prices in the sphere where the free flow of goods is more or less assured cannot work in

the interest of rational allocation of these good. Thus flexibility in foreign trade means, at the same time, a flexible price mechanism too.

Multilateralism opens up the way for a currency which—under these conditions—can work as legal tender. But this is valid only within the framework of the CMEA market. Only a convertible currency can put all countries into a position in which their assets assure their solvency right through the world market. This is the absolute prerequisite for organizing the CMEA market as a regional one. In this case member countries employing a policy of protection prefer mutual trade to all other trade relations but at the same time, preferences determine the extent of this protection too. In this way autarchic tendencies within the CMEA can be avoided and trade relations with the capitalist world market can be pursued in a more rational way. More and more signs encourage us to trust that the development of international cooperation in this direction will begin in the not too distant future.

### FROM OUR NEXT NUMBERS

#### THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EFFECTS OF THE NEW ECONOMIC MECHANISM

*Rezső Nyers*

#### A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH TO EAST-WEST ECONOMIC RELATIONS

*József Bognár*

#### HUNGARY AND THE NEW TENDENCIES IN EAST-WEST TRADE

*Gerd Bíró*

#### ADVANCED UNESCOLESE

*Iván Boldizsár*

#### ARS MATHEMATICA

*Alfréd Rényi*

#### IT'S A MILLION MILES TO BUDAPEST

*Erzsébet Galgóczi*

## YOUNG WRITING

The following is a sample from the work of a number of recently discovered young writers who are in their twenties and thirties. The poets are Ágnes KERESZTES (b. 1937) who works at a publishing house in Budapest, Dezső TANDORI (b. 1938) is a teacher of German, he graduated from Eötvös University; Magda GUTAI (b. 1942), works as a reader for a publishing firm. Of the prose writers Anna JÓKAI (b. 1932) is a secondary school teacher with a degree from Eötvös University; she published a novel in 1968, a volume of her short stories is in preparation; Erika SZÁNTÓ (b. 1941) has been a journalist for some time and now works for Hungarian Television. Short stories by her have appeared in various magazines. Árpád AJTONY (b. 1944) attended Eötvös University for some years but left to devote himself entirely to his writing. He has published a number of stories and is now at work on a filmscript.

DEZSŐ TANDORI

### FRAGMENT TO HAMLET

#### I

...such uniqueness only the unconceived  
can make. All approaches are in  
themselves ephemeral: measure  
continually recreated  
by its own change; a pipe  
which sounds only at its own sound...

O inconstant devotion,  
on whom even a speck of unsifted time  
will sit like a death

#### II

O recurrence: your choking of heart  
is only the real, always only a version.  
It's the unprepared, in us,  
for which we pretend we're prepared.  
Then when our doors are opened we fall  
out but no longer through ourselves...

## III

...at every flap of a wing, copying  
 space which is always the same  
 place becoming its inverse: hope:  
 he brings perhaps our only completed mask,  
 the post-death mask,  
 so close it already reaches  
 our motionless presence...

*Translated by Frederic Will*

DEZSŐ TANDORI

## KOAN BEL CANTO

I only wish for that future time  
 which has passed away.  
 Let me not live a single moment  
 which has not had its day.

May the one I shall be forget.  
 Let there be an endless ground  
 and me—like the one who leans aside  
 from the wind's crowding sound.

*Translated by Frederic Will*

ÁGNES KERESZTES

## BAKÁTS SQUARE

One solitary spire, slender devotion-in-stone  
 and wavering chimes at noon and evening.  
 Behind the back of God  
 thrown down school satchels, dirty gym bags,  
 pullovers with sleeves turned inside out,  
 fighting on the irritated grass  
 —the grass praying for iron spikes.

In the hospital,  
 as in a glass house,  
 small premature babies are maturing,  
 they're lying naked under glass  
 and wonders which can be only partly estimated in forints  
 keep them alive.

Fillérs and forints roll in the Square  
 from daddy's pocket into buddy's palm.  
 There's no hospital for premature minds:  
 around a few sparrow-tenement plane trees  
 teenagers are loafing at dusk,  
 their usual benches guarded by spittle coming  
 thick and fast:  
 verification, seal  
 in hard witness of swearing.

No sweet adjectives are showered on "mother" here,  
 only brazen imperatives;  
 unsteady arrogance motions the past away  
 and the future—with insolent gesture.  
 For every square of the possible  
 there's the sixth power of their demands.  
 And in history no one's graduated  
 summa cum laude.

The open-air flicks are near;  
 but the Newsreel's far.  
 East and West take turns on the screen—  
 we tighten our belts, our chests  
 bloated with moral pride;  
 yet flea-bitten building brigades  
 and beat-up negroes, protesters,  
 make these kids laugh alike.

It's they who drop buttons  
 —not thoughts—in the collection box of the world—  
 they who squeezed freely into this age  
 for which their grandparents paid  
 —with two world wars.

*Translated by Frederic Will*

MAGDA GUTAI

## FLAG IN THE SNOW

Then there is a time of silence and exhaustion:  
wrestling of mud and snow,  
weeping of clammy jasmines  
hung from slabs of stone.

Crickets lay down their strings,  
crouching gaunt and thin.  
Death will rub away  
legs that rasped to the moon.

A silent pear-tree looks  
its last at the far shore,  
it is shrouded in tar-paper,  
burnt clouds bear low.

Not sky but clinging slime's  
in the throat of the underwater sail.  
The reed-bed's lungs above it  
give an iron-dragon howl.

Hammering winds crash,  
winter snaps love up.  
Then there is a time of silence and exhaustion.  
You let your arms drop.

You examine your awkward legs:  
the kelpie is sleeping there.  
Your pillow sliding from summer  
sucks you like mud to its lair.

You are struggling  
so that the snow  
should not speak the language of bones.  
You give a voice to love.  
You call me through those snows.

You unfurl the flag: sweep  
the dust away from my lips.  
My throat glows red with twelve  
rose-apostleships.

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*

ANNA JÓKAI

HUNGARIAN LESSON

(short story)

**Y**esterday I taught with the windows open. The sun streamed in as far as my desk and warmed my back. It was pleasant.

Today it started to rain again. It rained in the morning, it rained before noon, and it was still raining at lunch-time. I left for school even more tired than usual. I was even more indifferent than as a rule.

My mother had screamed all night long. I gave her morphine. It was of no use. The children kept turning and twisting in bed, but did not wake up. They were just as much used to her moans as to the iceman or the garbage collector.

Pista sat crouching on the laundry-box in the kitchen. In his pyjamas and winter-coat. He had not rinsed his coffee-cup, there was sugar stuck to the bottom. The stubs he had stamped out had burnt holes in his straw slippers. His lips were pouting in disgust. I spoke to him in vain, he did not answer but there was nothing peculiar in that, for years it had been the same story. I kept turning the gas burner, adjusting the flame. High and low, and then again high and again low. I watched the hissing dragon-heads.

At four in the morning Mother's pains abated. I took in some Eau-de-Cologne and sponged her body. She wanted some orange juice, but did not drink it. She asked me whether I had taken her green suit to the cleaners.

My mother is seventy-five years old. She has cancer of the bowels.

From five to seven I slept. At half past seven the children went to school. I cleaned the house and cooked a dish of something. At half-past twelve I washed my neck. I put on lipstick. I tied the waterproof scarf with the tear in it on my head and fought my way into the packed tram. I was pushed against the chest of a young man and supported myself between his shoulders. The car dragged us along as two pieces of wood.

Garlicky meat-balls and cabbage were on for school dinners.

One of the women was late. She has a new boy friend. This gave us something to talk about until the bell rang. We climbed the steps slowly. That was something. Three minutes. I was told that one of my stockings had laddered, and I answered "Oh, really?"—though I had been wearing it like that for four days.

My first lesson was with VII. B. Hungarian. Luckily the children knew their lesson and even lent me a book. I checked how far we were supposed

to be in the book. They stood up and someone read the class report. Two or three giggled and snickered. I pretended not to hear and they shut up by themselves. We glared at each other for twenty seconds, the class and I. I sighed and indicated with my hand that they could sit down.

I stood up in front and leant on my palms on the first desk in the middle row. I found myself staring into Kati Kovács's face, which was black and blue. I wanted to call on her, it seemed to me that she should be given a chance to improve her grade. Perhaps it had been sheer laziness on my part that instead of making her recite, I asked her how she had got hurt.

I had not expected an answer. But Kati Kovács began to cry. Her brother beat her with his fists. He wanted to send her back to the farm. I said that this was terrible. The Farkas twins smiled. In the house where they live a four-year-old little boy is made to kneel blindfolded and whipped with a lash. That was much worse. Enikő Jakab was boasting. Her foster father never beat her. He only drank. He drank up all their money. That was why she had worn gym shoes all winter.

They kept talking like this for some time. About someone's mother who died because of an abortion. About a thirteen-year-old girl who committed suicide.

Sometimes I spoke, but I did not really have anything to say. I would have liked best to sit down with them at one of their desks. I kept seeing Mother in her pink nylon chemise with lace, down to 5 stone. Iron in hand. Curling her hair.

I was almost crying. Then Pali Herbert stood up and said that he had already made up his mind about what he wanted to do. He wanted to become a hangman. That was what he felt like doing.

I was scared. I clapped my hands. I asked them to be quiet, sharply. The children shut up. They leant back. Their eyes grew.

I stood up straight and began the new lesson. Clearly and distinctly as at other times.

The compound sentence may be coordinate or subordinate in structure. In coordinate sentences two independent thoughts are connected. The two phrases were related by meaning. A subordinate sentence could be recognized by—and this was very very important.

That was where I stopped—at this word. I slipped my fingers into Gyuszi Horváth the little humpback's hair. Very important!

I burst out laughing. The children popped up their heads. They just stared at me, but I could not stop.

Soon they started too, and had a good laugh.

We all laughed, with our heads down on the desks.

ERIKA SZÁNTÓ

THE FLAT IS EMPTY

(short story)

“I’m thirsty.”

“At last you said something. I’ve been sitting by your side for hours. You opened your eyes every now and then but you didn’t say a word although I kept asking you.”

“I’m thirsty.”

“I’ll bring you some water in a minute. Where do you keep the glasses? There are only mugs in the cupboard.”

“It’ll be all right in a mug.”

I’m lying in the same room now. At home. Here’s the armchair. Here’s the bed. Mother had locked up the waterjug with the six glasses. It’ll be all right in a mug. The bed belonged to Mother. The mug was on the chair. There was some water left in the mug. She took that awful lot of medicine with very little water. She woke me on Saturday morning. I’d have slept longer, getting a free Saturday for once. The rest of my days are strictly regular. No stepping out of line.

“Here’s the water. Take your time over it, it’s cold as ice. Now, listen to me. I’d like you to tell me all you know. It’s very important, you’ve got to understand!”

“Are you serious? How can anything be important to me?”

“Nonsense! You either stare and don’t speak a word or you talk nonsense. Your mother is dead and you despair. All right. But you’re not going to help her with this.”

“And do you know of anything else? Anything I can do to help her.”

“You’re too late for that. . . I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that. . .”

“Leave me alone. . .”

Sometimes in the afternoon I am glad. If there is no key in the door I know that Mother is not at home. A gift of an hour or a half. The flat’s like a cold compress. Makes me quiet. The room is tidy of course. Mother gets up an hour before me and puts everything in geometrical order. Wasted effort. It’s a miserable room. You have to struggle with the couch in the evening, you break out in a sweat before you can pull it out. The two faded armchairs are also no good. Then I realize I don’t know what to do with them either. Sometimes I wake up with the thought I should solve something. And I know for sure how I’m going to start. Then I forget.

I warm some water in the kitchen. A wash makes a new person out of me. She'll come home in the evening, and Tamás soon after. That's how my day ends. Like every other.

Mother isn't dead. There's no day today, there's only yesterday, the day before, and all the rest, they're all here today.

I'll put on my white linen dress. I always feel like my old self in this dress. My lovable, self-assured, comforting self. Tamás always sees me like this if I want him to. He enjoys being with me. He accepts snugly that I enjoy being with him too. That's all. Nothing important, but O.K. Perhaps I should do something extraordinary some day so that he noticed I'm a living person too and not everything's in ideal order. Perhaps if I lay on the tram-rails or if I appeared with my hair undone in his company. No, nothing of the sort. It's only that I feel the taste of my whole bloody day in my mouth like the taste of some stale, undigested food. It'd be quite in vain to talk to Tamás about this, he'd say it's the weather!

Mother comes. I can hear her shuffling at the end of the hallway. I can see an alert expectation of kindness on her face. She's hungry for it. All my muscles become tense, I don't stir, I don't speak, I speak in one-word sentences. Yes. I'm fine. No. Nothing's happened. No news. Fine, thanks. Yes. No. And I say at the end: Please, leave me alone... What do you want from me, Mother? I'd like to be left alone, not to be spoken to, not to speak... Is that so much to ask? What's the matter with me? Nothing at all, everything's fine. What more do you want than sitting behind a window for eight hours, holding a dirty old pencil and changing the carbon paper under the filthy work sheets every now and then. Service, change of oil, brake adjustment, service, change of oil... how long do I have to wait... please, wait your turn...

I ended up doing this. Yes, I should've wanted to achieve something definite. I only feel as if I had fallen out of somewhere, the usual, spinning routine had thrust me out and I may never make my way back.

It's Mother clinking with the key in the lock. Oh, yes, I left mine in. She has a claret rayon dress on, the colour of our armchairs. I give her a kiss, I sense the smell of tiredness from her temple. She disposes of her bags in a complicated way, she always carries many bags at a time, she always carries something, I can't understand, for the two of us, why, why... Then the janitor drops in, he took in some mail for us in the morning. Mother handles the envelope clumsily. She starts ripping it open. She tries at three different places, and it's open. It's a piece of paper. Printed matter.

I should've told her something, or asked her something. Rather asked her something?

Mother said it was a court summons, she had to be a witness, but she had no time to tell me why she had to be a witness. She stood there with the open envelope and I had to rush off. I've got to rush off, Tamás is waiting. I'm hurrying again though I know I'll have to wait. You always have to wait for Tamás.

Kati Espresso, thick cigarette smoke, iced lemonade, friends. No Tamás. I find an empty table on the floor in the middle, two men say hello straight away. My hand rests nervously on the table, I collect myself and light a cigarette. That's the best at times like this. The Kati is packed with drama students even in the summer since many of them stay on in the hostels. They do jobs in films and the open-air stages also give them some work.

I don't think it's ever occurred to Tamás that it can be unpleasant for me to be sitting here. The people around me have all *made* it. Tamás never realizes what it feels like to be left out, he wastes no thought on it because he thinks it can never happen to him. He might find me pretty, that's why he shows me off here every other day in front of his fellow-students, friends and rivals. That's all.

At long last, I can see Tamás's open-necked white shirt at the entrance. Every day he is browner and more rested, his eyes are a clear blue from much, deep sleep. He stops at three tables till he gets to mine, his apologies are kind and smooth, he curses television, the way they can't keep to schedule and in the free and easy way of a man-of-the-world he orders gin, kisses my hand and tells me we're off to Földvár for the week-end...

Why should I tell him that the air is hot and sticky in the workshop-office because of all the sweating people? Whom should I tell?

We have another gin and I begin to feel good when suddenly it occurs to me that I should break with Tamás. Strange. We sit there, he strokes my hand and all I can think about is that I should break with him. I think of the stinking workshop too, that's all I'd have left, and the blunt copying pencil, and Mother in our one-room-and-kitchen flat, the smell of onions in the evening, washing up, and I know for sure that I don't have enough strength to start again on the road to getting another man. I know people get into a state when they hear a 20-year-old girl speak like that so I never tell anyone.

My thoughts steal away by and by, I laugh a lot, my eyes start to glimmer, they grow big and black and I can feel my face is hot too. Tamás can be satisfied. We have another drink and then he says he's got the keys and shall we start.

We get off at the terminus. The air is more transparent here, the heat of the day doesn't get stuck among the gardens. At last. It's easy to breathe.

The flat Tamás borrows is like a brothel. We always get confused there when it comes to making love. The room faces the garden, it's a large room, it could really be nice. But there is a deep-red brocade curtain on the windows, the bed is covered with a red, fringed cloth, the lampshade is full of painted nudes, and the orange-patterns of the wallpaper are a sticky colour. I begin to feel sorry for us.

We sit down under the lamp. We pinch some cognac from the bar which gives a red light and we try to find that mood without which making love is only a series of exact, engineered movements. We're often like that. We embrace, hands move on our bodies, but in our minds the day goes on. I think of things to settle or a telephone number keeps rattling in my head, not to be forgotten. I notice sometimes that Tamás's movements become irritable, he touches me as if I were a stubborn tool which refuses to yield to his hands. And I wait for everything to clear out of my head, today, and yesterday and tomorrow. We're often like that.

Today's different, we get hot fast, perhaps it's the gin, but we seldom have money for drinks.

His face moves out of my sight. That's good. When it disappears altogether.

Sometimes I think Mother is afraid of me.

One mustn't love anyone. No one, because you start to feel frightened.

"Answer my questions please."

"All right. Go ahead."

"What did you know about the summons?"

"Some paper came from the court that's all. Mother said she was wanted as a witness. I didn't think it was anything serious. Witnesses are not in trouble."

"Did you know what the case was?"

"Something to do with the Arrow-Cross people."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

"How much do you know about what happened to your mother in '44?"

"Oh, she was persecuted. They got her but then she was lucky."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, that's all."

"What happened at the trial?"

"Nothing. I went with her because she'd asked me to. She said she didn't feel well. I got up without a word. I got dressed and I went with her. I was allowed only into the gallery because I had no summons for the trial. They got Mother to sit down in the witnesses' waiting room."

"And then what happened?"

"Nothing. I was nervous because there were an awful lot of people on the gallery and I always get nervous in a crowd. Then they brought in the defendants. One of them was called out, a small, very thin man, and he was told to tell in detail what he had outlined the previous day. He did as he was told."

"What did he tell the court?"

"Horrible things. It was terrible to listen to. I've never liked reading about these kind of things, but the way that man said it was much worse. He spoke in a low tone but the hall was dead quiet. Then my mother was called out. She was awful to look at for she was very pale. I thought she was going to be sick. But she wasn't, she stared at the small, thin man instead, and she began to cry. She was told not to cry and she stopped."

"What did they ask?"

"They asked her name and address and when she was taken there... to the cellar... whether she saw any of the executions, she said yes, she did, and the beatings and all... the drowning too and when everybody was shot... Then they asked her if she knew who was in charge when all the men and the women were stood to the door of the cellar and Mother went up to the thin fellow and said it was he."

"What happened next?"

"They asked her how she escaped and Mother said the fellow picked her out of the line. Then Mother started to cry so heavily that a break was ordered. I didn't go down to her because you mustn't speak to the witnesses. She kept saying after the break that she was picked out of the line, that's all. Somebody asked her why, why just her, but the judge told off the young man who asked this question and pointed out that the witness was 19 years old at the time and the defendant's question was irrelevant. Mother didn't look at anybody not even when she was allowed to leave. I left the hall too. When I stood up everybody stared at me in the row and I heard somebody say: That woman went to bed with that bloody Arrow-Cross man. I didn't say a word, I didn't feel like quarrelling.

"That's all about the trial. Then Mother went back to work and I left for Földvár at noon."

"Didn't you talk about the trial?"

"I just told her to stop crying. I told her it was nonsense to cry."

"And then? I knew she would go on and on, and it's just as well if she can cry it off. I even thought it was going to be good that I was away for the week-end because I can't bear crying and I always hurt her when she cried. I didn't want that to happen again."

"I'd like some more water."

"All right. I'll bring you some."

But I can't help her. I don't know exactly why, perhaps she was too tired, perhaps I was. She cries and tells me she's had nothing in life. I know. Her life is not spoilt, it's just gone, evaporated. I'm the only thing she's got to show for it. And the suffering. That's something. . .

The trial. We shall live in it for a long, long time, we shall wade in it slowly and no one can tell what for.

I don't want the pain to hurt me which has lost all its strength by now, it's only you who is heaping this pain upon me again to tie me down. No use, Mother. It's certainly no use, because I don't want it this way. I want a good kind of life around me. I don't know how it could be good, some warm, holiday mood is missing. What remains is nothing but disgusting, sticky carbon paper, seventy-seven copies to write and a mug mumbling nonsense outside the window. It's a cage, not joy, nor celebration or brightness and watching you it becomes even worse you can believe me because I always like to think that it can't happen to me, *my* life can never run to waste like a blot of ink. It can't be true that love is nothing but a cold, nervous fright and lots of exhausting effort and the future's nothing but the repetition of yesterday with more tiredness each day, now tell me, can this be true? I'm not going to let this happen. Whatever it may cost I'm not going to let that happen.

Mother, when I look at you I believe everything. I believe it can happen to me. Each of your uncertainties is so familiar to me. What could I do with you and myself.

I don't dare look at you. I feel that you are watching my hand like the hand of a thief or like the cat, that ugly, seedy beast is watching the mice on the stairs of the attic. I turn my head. I'm not looking. Oh yes, I'm going to pack my summer dress, my white lastex slacks and my white nylon nightie. I'm not looking and I'm going.

"Was she crying?"

"Yes."

"Did she say anything?"

"She asked me to stay. So that we could talk. But they were waiting for me."

"Quite. It was Saturday noon. You did go to Földvár then. Alone?"

"No, not alone."

"Didn't you think something might go wrong?"

"No."

"Nothing? Didn't you think of anything at all?"

"What do you want? Somebody was waiting for me."

"Do you love him?"

"What do you mean? And what if I don't? Anyway, he did wait for me. What can you do on your own on evenings and weekends? Those one and a half days are empty and terribly long. Do you know something? Let me tell you that if someone's got brains they make a neat compromise. It's a clean business. I play at being in love. I play at being loved. I see you don't understand. . . ."

"No, I don't understand. One must search, one must wait."

"It's give and take. Quick, hygienic contacts. And safe. They exist."

"Why aren't you made of better stuff? You see what I mean?"

"No."

"All right. I'll leave you alone. Get some rest."

It's hot. Very hot. Rush. Queue at the bus stop. Doesn't matter if only the train got a move on. When Budapest is left behind everything's all right. Your face was yellow, Mother. When did humility get stuck to your face? Sometimes I can feel it on mine. Yes, my face must look like that too sometimes. I watch if Tamás is satisfied and I don't know why I do it. When it's not Tamás who is important. Surely, it's not him. Maybe its stage-fright. Making an appearance. Whether I can conquer the public. He is the public.

I don't love him. No, I don't love him. Mother, you'd certainly have felt sorry for me if you'd known. You'd have felt sorry for me if I had told you that the days bring me just as much fear as they bring you. If it hadn't been for Tamás there would still have been the daily to and fro which drops you from one day into the other. You cry, you complain, you count the pennies of the housekeeping money, you go to bed early, what else should you do, you say, but you only say, that's life alone. After one day, two days, on the third I'll join you myself for I've no antidote against your age-old grief. Only Tamás. His rushing, his constant excitement, week-ends like this and the feeling that *something* is happening. That is Tamás.

Tamás, dear, you like my dress? I like its colour. It's just like Lake Balaton.

Mother, you've always been afraid of that seedy-looking man. I saw it in your eyes that you were pleading. You said, yes, it was he who gave the

orders and your eyes were pleading in the meantime. You begged him not to say it out loud that you gave yourself in exchange for your life. I hate your humility.

You should have turned and said only once: Go, I don't need you. I want you to go. . . I want it. Why didn't you teach me to stand on my own, Mother? . . . We are afraid and in a tight corner we compromise. Both you and me.

"What did you think about when you returned home?"

"I suspected no trouble at all."

"Why not? Didn't you see how desperate your mother was?"

"Oh yes, but I'd got used to that over the years."

"You should've got something straight between you. Perhaps your mother expected something from you. Didn't you feel that perhaps you should calm her down."

"Mother never liked it when people tried to calm her down. She wanted other people to cry with her. But I didn't want to do that."

"What did you think after the trial? What did you think of her?"

"What do you mean. What could I think?"

"And what about now?"

"Leave it alone, will you. My Mother's dead. What would *you* think of your dead mother?"

"She was still alive then. She went back to work after the trial and then she went home to talk to you, but she couldn't."

"I had gone. They were waiting for me."

"Is that the only reason?"

"Yes."

"All right. Do you feel better now?"

"Yes, better."

"Take this medicine all the same. The doctor said you should take one every hour. Nothing special. Some sedative, I suppose. Here, take this mug. And read this. We found this letter next to the bed. Read it carefully. I'll go into the kitchen in the meantime."

Mother never wrote letters.

Tilting letters: *To my daughter and no one else.* It's been opened, of course, police-routine, how on earth could she have known? Squared copy-book pages, torn adhesive tape. I'd like to put it away somewhere, into a drawer, into a box, behind a lock. Once I've read it I can never pretend to be the same person.

Final things are fearful. It's like dying. Nothing else to be done.

The roll was read out on the stairs of the academy and I had to stop my daydreams. It was declared that I shall not become an actress. It was declared. I forgot what exactly I was excluded from, all I could feel was the definiteness of a decision. The failure.

I thought I couldn't say out anything loud. I constantly watched myself: Be careful, one little suspicious move and everything's going to fall to pieces. I cut the habit of making sudden movements. Keep guard on what little is left. No movements. Tamás belongs to the sunny side, you mustn't let him go. I know: Tamás is a nobody, a student. Still, he comes from the sunny side. It's unmistakable. Just like a caste-sign.

I said it out loud. Yes, I did. I no longer watched myself. I was exhausted, the beautiful evening knocked out my alertness. I forgot the moment when the clever, strained hold broke, I only felt a pain that the dark night is so beautiful and deep. Tamás I—do—not—love—you. I don't love you. I said it out in the hot night, in the sand by the lake. I didn't want to say it out loud at all. You can't tell where the words are born in the quiet, ink-black night. Perhaps the water, the breaking waves throw them out on the lakeside.

It was easy. It wasn't me. I'm more careful. I keep guard. I'd shout: Who let you break our agreement?

We stand up and part. We lie down each on our own.

The beautiful, black night still lasts and I fall asleep with an unknown, free feeling of well being.

*God bless you my darling daughter you will get on somehow without me I don't know why I bother you with this I don't know but I can't go without a word I am going now and nothing but good is coming on to me God willing but you will be on your own from now on without me in this world because I was still your mother even if I was a bad woman and even if you don't understand how and why but I know when I won't be with you any longer you'll forgive that I did that with that Arrow-Cross man you must forgive because it's no use being angry with someone who is not here any longer and it is not done anyway you can only be angry with someone who's living I saw that you hated me so much you didn't even want to talk to me to your mother whom that man fell upon like an animal I just couldn't tell anyone even your father didn't know about it nobody only perhaps God but I am going to account to Him anyway but still I am more afraid of you therefore I ask you forgiveness it's I who asks your mother you don't know what it is to see that no one is going to survive with a sound mind and you only long to get out of that cellar because the smell of blood is driving you mad and what is one born for if one has to die when one is*

*twenty and that man tears the clothes off you but then he let me go and said hop it and I ran out into the street but you don't like to listen to that I know very well what could your mother tell you it's so difficult to get on with you God willing I'll die quickly it'll be easier than bringing you up you see you could have said just a word that it's all right mother I am not angry with you because you gave yourself to that Arrow-Cross man because you wanted to live like everybody else but I no longer want to now may God bless you your mother.*

Somebody opens the door.

"Have you finished reading?"

He looks at me. He turns round and goes out of the room. I can hear the door slam.

The flat is empty.

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ÁRPÁD AJTONY

KÁZMÉR RÁKÓCZI

(short story)

**K**ázmér Rákóczi walked into the class in a dignified manner. The whole class stood up at the same time, there was no movement whatever anywhere, not even a slight stir, as if they had been the component parts of a great machine. The windows had been open. Kázmér Rákóczi went up to his desk and turned to the monitor.

"Teacher, I beg to report the number of the class is unaltered."

Rákóczi waved, Babay went to his place, the boys sat down, only a few of them remained standing as if indicating that they wished to speak. Rákóczi didn't glance in their direction. He inclined his wrinkled face, his hand was resting on the class register but they knew that their time has come.

"Please excuse my disturbing the order of the period," began Hegedüs. He stopped short for a moment, then suddenly:

"I am sorry, I couldn't do my homework for today."

Kázmér Rákóczi nodded. It was Sellő's turn.

"Forgive me, please. . ."

He left his exercise-book at home. Another nod. Huszár couldn't catch up what he had missed by his absence because his mother was feeling unwell. Kázmér Rákóczi looked up and asked in an undertone:

"Is she feeling better now?"

"Yes, Sir."

Huszár didn't sit down right away, there was silence in the class. In the silence there appeared the bed of Huszár's mother, the thick wrinkles of the sheet and the crumpled pillow. The woman leans forward, she asks for water or perhaps for a lemonade. Huszár's father sighs sadly behind the bed, his mouth twitches behind his short moustache and he brings the soda-water. Then Kázmér Rákóczi nods and his nodding carried away the whole apparition, pillow, silence and all.

Kázmér Rákóczi opened the class register. He called over the names.

"Daniel, Derzsy, Erdélyi, Ferenczy. . ."

And already they were standing in front of the blackboard. Daniel's flame-coloured hair fell onto his forehead and he smiled faintly. Derzsy was looking disinterestedly, Erdélyi looked beyond the window, and Ferenczy's seriousness was mingled with expectation. Then all Kázmér Rákóczi said was this:

"Madách."

"Imre Madách was born in 1823 in a village in Nógrád County called. . ." began Daniel but Rákóczi had raised his hand.

"Wait!" he said. "When you start to speak about a writer don't begin straightway with his birth. This doesn't look good. Say a couple of sentences about him first, place him in the age. . . or perhaps just that Imre Madách, the author of the *Tragedy of Man* is one of the greatest figures of the Hungarian literature of the nineteenth century. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Sir," replied Daniel.

"Well, continue," Rákóczi made a sign for him to go on.

"Imre Madách was one of the greatest figures of our literature in the nineteenth century. He was born in 1823 at Sztregova in Nógrád County. His mother had loved her sons very much, especially Imre who had a weak constitution. He was the eldest among them and when they were studying in Budapest it was he who had to take care of his little brothers. Madách had done this too, assiduously. After having finished his studies he went home and sent articles to a Budapest daily. In them he criticized the backward state of the country."

Kázmér Rákóczi raised himself a bit and pointed at Derzsy. Derzsy gave a little cough and took up the word.

"He had written dramas already previously, among others *Moses* and *The*

*Civilizator* but his truly great work is the *Tragedy of Man*. This he sent to János Arany first."

Derzsy spoke of the structure of the drama, of its contents, about Adam and Eve.

"Eve actually symbolizes the eternal Woman," he said. When he got to the medieval colours, Rákóczi stopped him. His glance ranged over the rows of forms.

"Many people cannot even imagine any more what those Middle Ages had been like. They only think of Gothic churches, sacred images and icons. Accidentally of crusades, whereas people lived even in the Middle Ages, human beings of flesh and blood."

They looked at Kázmér Rákóczi as if the whole class had been one sole big eye. How, in what manner, had those people of flesh and blood lived in the Middle Ages?

"Mysticism was brooding over them, they didn't wash very much." Rákóczi smiled faintly in spite of himself. "Of course do not think it was on account of their mystical way of looking at things that they didn't wash. Only these two things too, like so many others have become intertwined with one another. The purer somebody wanted to be in soul the less he cared for his body. Where was the body-cult of the antique world by that time? For instance they held the dissection of the body to be a sacrilege, thus medical science couldn't develop either. Epidemics, the plague and other diseases were frequent."

Among the forms dark, dirty figures now appeared, the people of the Middle Ages. They huddled together feeling cold, they exchanged tiny insects among themselves and spoke a deep-voiced unintelligible language. The plague was coming. People looked at it with fright, they tried to flee into cracks and holes.

"In Spain there were two universities which were allowed each year to dissect one corpse." Kázmér Rákóczi bent low over the desk and was thinking. "Let me see. . . which were those two universities? If I remember right the one was that of Barcelona. The other. . ." Suddenly he drew himself up and waved his hand. "Ah, I am forgetting things! Well, I keep on forgetting things more and more as the years go by. This of course doesn't mean that you too may forget things!"

The people of the Middle Ages already almost succeeded in vanishing, in hiding away into the holes but the voice of Kázmér Rákóczi had brought them back to reality.

"When a husband went into the battle, he buckled a so-called chastity belt around his wife's hips. Here, on her hips," he said, while showing

it too. "He put a padlock on it and took the key along with himself. And the women couldn't have a wash during that time on the spot where the chastity belt was. However, the good wives didn't wash even without having this belt on. Their white slips had turned quite grey by the time their husbands came back."

Kerégyártó held up his hand.

"What do you want?"

"Excuse me, please," Kerégyártó stood up, "I would like to ask something."

"Go ahead."

"Tell me, please, on which side should I walk if I walk in the street with a girl and her mother in the street? Or rather who should be in the middle?"

Kázmér Rákóczi nodded his head.

"Yes. Well, according to the laws of propriety always the girl's mother." He dug into his grey hair. "The girl should walk on the right side and you on the left."

"Thank you very much." Kerégyártó sat down.

Sellő raised his hand next.

"It may occur," he said, "that the girl works it that way that she gets into the middle. What should I do then?"

Kázmér Rákóczi shook his head.

"Then you are compelled to go on like that. But otherwise there are no sharp rules here. Let's say, you are talking and there are such mothers, aren't there, who do not like to talk, they rather listen to what you are saying to one another. In that case it is indeed uncomfortable to talk constantly over the head of the mother."

Sellő said thank you and sat down.

After this Kerégyártó raised his hand again.

"Please forgive me there is something else I would like to ask. That the boy always walks on the girl's left side I know already. But here on Árpád Street the pavement is so narrow and if I go on the left side I constantly push the girl off into the gutter." He would also have liked to say that if he goes on the right side he pushes her against the wall and she will mess her coat. But he didn't say a word about this.

Kázmér Rákóczi answered broodingly.

"Indeed, here in front of the school the pavement is very narrow. It would be good to have a normal pavement here already." Once more he dug into his grey hair. "Well, you should walk on the right side then. But this doesn't only concern Árpád Street but remember well in general that if the footpath is narrow, then you should walk on its edge."

He glanced at his watch and waved to the four boys to go to their places. The boys opened their exercise-books.

"Is there anybody who wants to ask something else?"

Silence.

"Sellő, dictate it!"

A wind sprang up in the street and the cool air flowed in through the window. It brought along the smell of the Danube and a little bit of noise too. As they were bending over the forms they tried to adjust the scratching of the pens to the rhythm of the wind and even Sellő's words sounded as if he had taken great care not to disturb this harmony.

"Eighty-nine, stop, period, stop. Underneath it: one, stop. Question mark. Underneath it: two, stop. . ."

He looked up inquiringly at Kázmér Rákóczi who answered in a whisper.

"The life of the people in the Middle Ages."

"Under it: three, stop. . ."

"The discussion of Saturday's social programme."

"Asterisk. Under it: homework. Under it: one, stop. . ."

"Revision: Imre Madách."

"Beneath it: two, stop. . ."

"Revision: grammar."

The bell hadn't rung yet when Kázmér Rákóczi came down from his desk. The class stood up. As he made for the door he held his long body straight and only nodded with his head for a moment. The boys felt that the Danube's smell which was brought in by the wind was mingled with some strange odour.

Kázmér Rákóczi was strolling around the Roman amphitheatre at Óbuda. The sky was quite clear, the moon and the stars were twinkling in the sky's deep blue ocean but the gas-lamps along the road made the evening somehow melancholy. Now and then the wind hit them and they extended their shadows, even Kázmér Rákóczi's shadow and also that of his cane. But Rákóczi liked the play of the gas-lamps and therefore he thought that today he would be walking about longer than yesterday or the day before yesterday. As he was doing the sixth round already, three boys appeared at the bend. They were Kerékgyártó, Huszár and András. They had long trousers on, their looks were serious and a watch gleamed on András's wrist.

"Taking a walk, Sir?" Kerékgyártó asked.

"Yes," Kázmér Rákóczi nodded, "today I would like to take a longer walk than usually. I don't even know why, but somehow everything is so mysterious around me today. This starry evening, and the stones of the

amphitheatre. Its stones weren't so dark at other times, were they, boys?"

The boys didn't reply, only Kerékgyártó was swaying his head. Kázmér Rákóczi looked at András.

"What's the time?" he asked.

"Late enough already," András answered.

They walked on in silence. András on his right, Kerékgyártó on his left, Huszár was lagging behind a bit. The gravel crunched under their feet. Nobody was seen on the road, the number 18 tram turned into the street only once with empty cars, with the conductor dozing in the rear.

"You are very old already, Sir," Kerékgyártó began.

Rákóczi didn't look at him, he watched the road in silence but the boys could see quite well even in the darkness, that underneath his eyes soft pouches were bearing testimony to the passage of Time of which he himself had spoken so much. All is in vain, no matter how faithfully and humbly we serve Time, he doesn't spare anyone. It was perhaps then that it struck them for the first time that Kázmér Rákóczi's words didn't only float in the air of the classroom but everywhere where they happened to be, in the street, on the tram. They were with them often even in bed before falling asleep, even if they spoke merely of an insignificant event or of simple subjects.

"We would like to wall you in, Sir," Kerékgyártó spoke again.

Kázmér Rákóczi even now didn't reply and then Huszár stepped forward a little. Kerékgyártó pointed his finger at the depth of the amphitheatre.

"Over there, beneath the box seats. Everything is there already, bricks and mortar."

Even András raised his hand.

"Old red bricks such as you were always telling us about, Sir. Bricks that are very hard to make but once ready, they withstand the storms of nature for a long time."

They stopped. Kázmér Rákóczi nodded and said:

"I was already waiting for you," but one could feel a hesitation in his voice.

They started down the steps. Kerékgyártó was helping him by taking his arm carefully lest he should stumble over a gap. Cautiously they removed the large stones, branches and twigs out of his way. Beneath the box seats the small hollow was yawning.

"That's what we had in mind."

Kázmér Rákóczi bent down, felt his bony waist, then took his seat with wavering movements. Huszár was already mixing the mortar.

"Are you sitting comfortably, Sir?" András asked.

Kázmér Rákóczi only nodded with his customary movement. Kerékgyártó was handing the bricks, and András was fitting them tightly to each other. Every now and then he struck them too, he examined whether tomorrow the children playing at ball won't cause them to collapse? But everything was precise, regular and unambiguous.

Already there was nothing but a little hole left.

"Did you do your homework?" it came from within.

"Yes, we did."

"You too, Huszár?"

"Me too, Sir."

The smell of fresh lime was there for a long time yet. Perhaps because a lot of rain fell in those days. Later even plants grew on the wall, thin flowers of all colours, blue ones and yellow ones too.

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# BIBLIOTHECA CORVINIANA

by

DEZSŐ KERESZTURY

## I

The library of Matthias I, the brilliant king who ruled over Renaissance Hungary from 1458–1490, was given the name of the “Bibliotheca Corviniana” by Peter Lambeck, the librarian of the Hapsburg court in 1666, because the King had given himself the appellation of Matthias Corvinus after the raven, the heraldic bird on his escutcheon. For many centuries its memory was kept alive by what were not much more than legends or legendary tales handed on from one generation to another, or indeed by what there was of scientific or scholarly opinion; on one hand—boasted the humanists—it had at least fifty thousand volumes, on the other—carped the critics—not more than 350–400. The consensus of scholarly opinion today puts the number of volumes between 2,000 and 2,500.

As to its provenance, one theory claimed that the collection was founded on the books King Matthias expropriated from the two great patrons of humanist learning and literature of his time, the bishops János Vitéz and Janus Pannonius, when they fell from favour, and was further enriched by those brought from Naples by his second wife, Beatrix of Aragon. For long public opinion—if it knew anything about the library at all—knew it only as part of the almost ostentatious splendour and display of the great king; it was seen as the plaything of a Renaissance ruler who, at the summit of his power, liked to flaunt his riches, a library put together at random as if it were simply part of the royal treasure. Even serious historians long believed that the Corvina Library came into being without any antecedents—like the whole Hungarian Renaissance of Matthias—and disappeared with the death of the king (1490) without leaving any traces.

The truth of the matter is that the library of Matthias is so closely con-

nected and intertwined with the personality of the King himself, that its importance can only be properly evaluated in relation to the historical role he played. Innumerable traditions handed down among the Hungarian people and their neighbours agree with the cold findings of history as to the exceptional grandeur of King Matthias; he not only overcame the feudal anarchy of the time and defended Hungary and adjacent countries, he reformed their social, economic and military life, and was also the great patron and tutelary genius of Hungarian and Eastern European civilization. The vast structure gave way, not only because of internal opposition, but also because its extent overstrained its resources. But the whole undertaking, inspired by a mixture of strength, imagination and political genius, was built on a more than ephemeral foundation and exerted a profound influence for centuries after its collapse.

Why and how the Bibliotheca Corviniana was founded, what were the intentions and purposes which furthered its development, what its influence was, and on whom, are all questions which have been treated with meticulous care by outstanding historians, librarians and scholars, working both on the volumes which have survived and the library as a whole—Flóris Rómer, Jenő Ábel, Arnold Ipolyi, Vilmos Fraknói, József Fogel, Pál Gulyás, Edit Hoffmann, Emma Bartoniek, József Fitz, Ilona Berkovits, Éva Koroknai, the two Csapodys, to mention only the main Hungarian workers in the field. A detailed bibliography was compiled by Klára Zolnai and József Fitz: *Bibliographia Bibliothecae Mathiae Corvini*, Budapest, 1942. (Publications of the National Széchényi Library, 10). The results of all this research were summed up in two volumes designed for the general reading public: *Magyarországi Corvinák* (Hungarian Corvinae) by Ilona Berkovits (Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1963) and *Bibliotheca Corviniana* by Csaba and Klára Csapody and Tibor Szántó (Budapest, Magyar Helikon, 1967).—(The Corvina Publishing House has issued translations of both volumes in several languages including English.)—They are prefaced by comprehensive essays by the editors, containing much new and important information. Csaba Csapody's essay in particular must be considered as the most thorough resumé of the state of present knowledge on the Bibliotheca Corviniana.

All this meticulous research has clearly established that the Corvina Library was not a freak piece of improvisation that grew out of nothing. There is a good deal of information and a number of documents still surviving from before 1500, proving that books belonged to the cultural life of that period. It is known that various institutions—mainly those linked with the Church and the Court—accumulated libraries during the

Middle Ages. In his affection for books, in the establishment of his library and in the wealth of art lavished on their decoration King Matthias had several most remarkable precursors in Hungary. Perhaps the earliest was the great monastic library at Pannonhalma founded in the early eleventh century, which still contains some of these manuscripts, and which was the model for many other monastery libraries. The first illuminated books date from around the period of the Anjou kings in the fourteenth century, and the library of the Emperor Wenceslas found its way to Buda in the fifteenth century. János Vitéz, the great humanist patron and poet, who was King Matthias's teacher, formed a remarkable library of his own. "There were very few Latin books which were not in that library," wrote Vespasiano de Bisticci, the Florentine bookseller of the time. The Bibliotheca Corviniana came into being as the continuation of a living tradition, as its proudest and most original, most modern and most glorious representative, in fact, for one historical moment: as its crown.

## II

But the library itself has its own story running parallel with that of the life of the king who died at the age of forty-seven—particularly with the thirty odd years of his reign (1458–1490).

King Matthias had passed his early youth in the company of books. His tutor, János Vitéz, was an outstanding figure among the first significant Hungarian humanists. And books were certainly not missing from the home of the Hunyadi family. We know that Matthias learned to read and handle books at a very early age. Several volumes were bought for the library during the first ten years of the king's reign. A line from the *Elegia* of Constantinus Fanensis—"te memorant musas celuisse Latinas"—written in 1464, makes it clear that the 21-year-old sovereign's fondness for Latin literature was known as far afield as Italy.

The planned and meaningful development of the library can be connected with three events.

The first took place in 1467, when the University of Pozsony (now Bratislava) was founded, the beginning of a period when Italian humanists appeared in growing numbers at the royal court. In 1465 Marzio Galeotti, the friend of the humanist and scholar Janus Pannonius (who was, incidentally, an excellent Latin poet), and the biographer of King Matthias, settled in Buda for some years. The second event took place in 1469, when Matthias was crowned King of Bohemia, an event which consolidated the

Western direction of his foreign and cultural policy. The ornament on the vaulted ceiling of the main gallery of the Bibliotheca represented a constellation with Matthias being crowned King of Bohemia, and the book-plates marking the ownership of these magnificent volumes in most cases include the double-tailed royal lion of Bohemia. The third event took place in 1472, when János Vitéz and Janus Pannonius fell from favour. The library was augmented by the books expropriated from these two passionate collectors; the new acquisitions were in part rebound and in part adorned with the arms of the king. That year the number of Greek books in the library markedly increased; Janus Pannonius was actually the first man in Hungary who appreciated, collected, understood and even translated the Greek authors who were becoming more and more important in the humanist world.

This line leads us to the second great development of the library, coinciding with the last decade of the king's reign. Policy is once again the main motive force. The marriage of the king to Beatrix of Aragon was of course meant to serve his ambitious plans obviously inspired by the example of Sigismund of Luxemburg, the King of Hungary who became Holy Roman Emperor. The occupation of Vienna in 1485 was a further step towards their realization.

The queen had passed her youth within the ambiance of the equally magnificent and famous Aragon library, so her dowry also included a collection of books. She played a major role in the development of musical life in Buda Castle. She brought many books with her, and ordered many others. Although she kept her own library separate from the king's, yet her collection increased the total number of the manuscripts stored in Buda Castle and enhanced the importance of the royal library.

Her influence, however, seems overshadowed by that of Florentine humanists and illustrators, such as Attavante dei Attavanti and Francesco Antonio del Cherico, makers of unique Renaissance masterpieces, Marsiglio Ficino, the founder of the new Platonist academy, who exerted a comprehensive ascendancy over the scholars of the Hungarian Renaissance court, Francesco Bandini, Ficino's friend, the spiritual leader of the group of scholars centred on Buda, and—first and foremost—Taddeo Ugoletti, librarian of the Corviniana in its golden age, and tutor to Johannes Corvinus, the illegitimate son and heir of the king.

Matthias mobilized a whole army of agents to procure him books of interest. The new librarian, an extremely learned scholar of humanist tendencies, visited almost all the important libraries of Europe, in order to collect them on a systematic basis; being himself proficient in Greek, he

carefully and competently added a comprehensive selection of Greek books to those already existing in the collection. He created the luxurious surroundings of the library and organized an exemplary and up-to-date arrangement of the books.

“Quadratus mediis locus in penetralibus ergo  
 Existens, cameras testudine substinet altas  
 Incurva, paries quam cinxerat undique fortis  
 Decocti lateris durique a robore saxi,  
 Cui geminae lucem fundunt a fronte fenestrae  
 Compositae vitreisque coloribus, in nova certe  
 Cunctis, qui veniunt illuc, spectacula rerum.”

Deep inside the palace stands a square hall,  
 Bold arches of the vaulted roof descend  
 On walls of rock hewn stone and files.  
 Two windows tall admit the noon-tide sun;  
 The gleaming, coloured glass with pictures strewn,  
 All marvel who behold their perfect art.

So wrote Naldo Naldi, a contemporary admirer of his. Besides organizing the arrangement of the books, Ugoletti also looked to their security, and ensured their accessibility. He encouraged the Latin translation of Greek texts, and had many source-books copied in illuminated books; it was his responsibility to see that the finest Florentine masters were called in as scribes, illuminators and bookbinders, that the products of the Buda workshop were equal to anything produced elsewhere, and that each of the treasures of the Corviniana bore the king's coat of arms, the mark of royal ownership.

The exact size of the workshop is unknown. To speak of 60 illuminators, as did the archbishop and historian Miklós Oláh (1493–1568), seems pure exaggeration; there were almost certainly some 12 or 15. Ilona Berkovits, who has done excellent research on the Corviniana, has this to say about the Buda style: “As can be seen from the work known to originate in the workshop of Matthias, the imported codices had no major influence on them. . . They served as practising models for the illuminators working in the workshop. . . The foreign illuminators working here arrived with an artistic craftsmanship matured under a number of influences. By exerting an influence on local Hungarian illuminators and themselves being influenced by Hungarian Gothic traditions, these painters created a specific

mixed style in Buda. The products of this style, although falling in line with the Italian Renaissance manner of illumination, are of an individual character. So, the art the *miniaturists* developed during the reign of Matthias which was, for decades, a typical expression of Hungarian Renaissance."

Ugoleti took care to see that the civilized world should be duly informed about this extremely precious collection: he had, in fact, himself inspired Naldo Naldi's panegyric on the library. Under his guidance the Bibliotheca became a really living library, in which serious and comprehensive scholarly work was done. It is to the obvious merit of Taddeo Ugoleti and the circle of humanist scholars around him that the Corvina Library owed its fame not only to its valuable and beautifully illuminated manuscripts, but also thanks to the variety of the collection, to the part it played as a vital influence in the culture of its time.

Let us read the words of Csaba Csapody on this "variety" and "comprehensive character": "In the eyes of the humanists, really valuable literature included ancient literary works, particularly classical works of the Greek and Latin authors, the Church Fathers, and the first centuries of Christian literature. This was the treasury of knowledge, the sum of all values. It was the librarian's task to collect these works, to discover as yet unknown works and to have them copied. . . . All beyond that, mainly occasional writings, panegyrics and correspondence, they probably did not take very seriously themselves. . . . This was the ideal Matthias had in view, and this is what he wanted to achieve in the feverous haste of his last years."

### III

The third and tragic phase in the history of the library begins with the death of King Matthias. With that death, the period of ruin and decay set in, at the end of which the once glorious Bibliotheca Corviniana shared the fate of the medieval Hungarian cathedrals and castles including those of Matthias himself—all that remained of that glory were basement walls reaching up to the ankles or waist-high, which a nation bending over its history continues to dig out from under layers of sand, mud and earth piled up by wind, water and human hands; a carved stone here and there, an arch, a frescoed fragment, better preserved by the indifferent earth than by belligerent man, cannibalising the ruins for building material.

The dispersal of the Bibliotheca was started by Matthias's immediate successors: Beatrix, returning to her native country, took her books with her; the carts of Johannes Corvinus, saving himself together with his

treasures, were sacked by his enemies; and, although the Diet passed a resolution declaring the library the property of the nation, and forbidding any depredations, yet a steadily growing number of volumes disappeared from Buda, either as royal gift, or as books borrowed, books saved or books simply stolen. The third and last librarian, good old Petrus Ragusanus, helplessly abandoned the collection and the destruction was completed in the following years by armies from all parts of Asia and Europe which either took part in the occupation of Buda or in its recapture. Half a century after the death of Matthias the Corviniana was little more than a wreck. The fragmentary remains, for the most part not part of the original collection, were taken to Vienna after the liberation of Buda (1686).

For me, the most startling part of the lately published volume on the Bibliotheca Corviniana was Csaba Csapody's account of the authentic Corvinae that survived. The exact and succinct descriptions include sentences such as: "...In most cases, the arms of King Matthias were painted over with the arms of the Spanish Hapsburgs. According to the records, the Governors of the Netherlands have sworn their oaths on this book for more than 200 years." "The codex was taken by Sultan Soliman as booty from Buda in 1526. Sultan Abdul Hamid returned it as a gift in 1877; its new cover dates from this year." "Francis Prince of Modena gave it in 1848 to the Hungarian National Museum but... it was retained in Vienna. The Hungarian National Museum only received it in 1891, but owing to the stipulations of the Trianon peace treaty, it had to be delivered to the Italian state. It was finally returned in 1927." "Completely spoiled in World War Two..." "The Chrysostomus Corvina of Warsaw... was burnt during the Second World War." The series of quotations could be continued at length. May I add that not one of the volumes at present in Hungarian libraries were in Hungary during the centuries of devastation at home...

The Bibliotheca Corviniana, however, did not vanish from the cultural history of Hungary, or the world without a trace. It was not only its legend which survived, together with that of the great king. The library exerted a profound influence on the development of Hungarian humanism in the strictest sense; the great historical work of Bonfini (*Rerum Ungaricarum*

*An illustration from the "Epitome Rerum Hungaricarum", an account of Hungarian history by Petrus Ranzanus, Neapolitan ambassador to the court of King Matthias and Queen Beatrix. The contemporary parchment manuscript is bound in a leather binding, and the painting is believed to be the work of a Neapolitan illuminator, executed between 1488-1490. It shows the ambassador addressing the King and queen. (National Széchenyi Library, Budapest)*



**V**ENI AD TVAM PRAE  
 STANTISSIMAM MA  
 IESTATEM MATHIA  
 HVNGARORVM POTETIS  
 SIMEREX ATQVE AD TE  
 BEATIX OMNI VIRTVTVM  
 GENERE ORNATISSIA REGINA



PHILOSTRATVM LEMN. S  
PRAEST. ET I PRIMIS. PÆATIO



ex crescere uideamur planius ceteri  
cum profuso Serenitatis tue nomi  
si in Pannoniam traierissemus. C

*Decades*), to take only one example, which was written at the royal court, within the Bibliotheca, has become a model of Hungarian historiography as a whole and thus contributed substantially to the formation of the Hungarian historical consciousness.

But the influence goes somewhat wider. Matthias was the last significant national ruler of Hungary, and his reign was the apex and final realization of Hungary as a medieval great power. The position of Hungary as a great power cannot, however, be understood within the narrow range of vision of recent nationalism. The empire of Matthias, with its intellectual centre, did not belong to the Hungarians alone, but to the whole of Central Europe; it was an integral part of the entire European world. This is why the legend of the great king remained a living reality among the neighbouring peoples as well; why the spiritual stores gathered in the Bibliotheca Corviniana have nourished more fortunate humanist centres like Cracow, Prague and Vienna, and why its most precious specimens were treasured in the libraries of Europe.

The latest volume on the Bibliotheca Corviniana is a tangible demonstration of this supra-national solidarity of the spirit. Twenty-three European and American libraries have cooperated in the making of this book and Unesco has given it support. In addition to the introductory summaries, the Hungarian editors have shown remarkable and praiseworthy enterprise in the compilation and integrated arrangement of the rare and beautiful material. It was certainly no easy task to collect the colour photographs, but to prepare the colour plates for the press must have been meticulous and toilsome work indeed. The Hungarian paper and printing industries have every reason to be proud of this edition, and the cooperation which has been given in the production of this most successful volume "redounds to the eternal honour" of all the libraries concerned.

*Initial N (enlarged) from a parchment manuscript bound in leather containing the Heroica Imagines by the third century Greek sophist Flavius Philostratus, and De Vitis Sophistratum and Epistolae by his nephew of the same name, translated by Antonius Bonfinius. The manuscript is believed to have been produced in Florence between 1488-1490, and illuminated by Attavante degli Attavanti and other members of the same workshop. The illustration shows Johannes Corvinus, the son of King Matthias, entering Vienna. Borders to the text (not shown here) include portraits of Johannes Corvinus, Bianca Maria Sforza, Bonfinius himself, and Philostratus, as well as King Matthias's coat of arms. (National Széchenyi Library, Budapest.)*

# A DAY FOR MODERN ART

(Part VII of an American Diary)

*The Guggenheim Museum—New York from mid-height—The art of seven decades in seven galleries*

by

IVÁN BOLDIZSÁR

*New York, April 26*

(*Morning fright.*) Looking at my diary this morning I was truly frightened. I don't know what I thought I was doing when two weeks before I had made my appointments for today. True my trips to Yale and Boston intervened, this Tuesday seemed such a long way off, and my New York programme became more crowded in the meantime. But I didn't know how I was going to stand up to this crowded day. In the morning I had to call at my host institute, they phoned a short while ago to say I had some mail to collect and there's also my further programme to be discussed. At twelve I had an appointment with Thomas Messer, the Director of the Guggenheim Museum. At three I had to be at the National Educational Television office. It's a must, this being the only non-commercial television company of America. True I haven't yet been able to pick up any of their programmes in my hotel, and the other programmes I have seen have given me visual constipation—so I must make their acquaintance, I suppose. And to cap it all, in an earlier geological age, a month ago to be precise, when I'd barely arrived here, I and my friend E. the painter whom I had known in Hungary agreed that he would take me to his patron, Professor Y, a faculty chairman at a college near New York. He had been away in Europe at the time but E. had known when he would get back, it was yesterday or the day before as I figured, and that was why we had agreed on this afternoon. Coffee at the Professor's. But how and where was I to have lunch before that? And worse than that, in what state would I be for the *pièce de résistance* of today's agenda what promised to be one of the highlights of my whole American tour, the opening of the Seven Decades series of exhibitions tonight?

While I was putting on my clothes mechanically and already feeling tired I could only laugh at the thought of my having accepted an invitation

to dinner for six-thirty, before the opening at eight, with Mrs L., one of the organizers and sponsors of the exhibition. I owed this invitation, and that to the exhibition, to Mrs A. W., who else? Before then too she had far exceeded her official duties as head of the art section of my host institution, as well as what American hospitality demanded and had already done much to introduce me to the artistic life of New York.

While having these thoughts and trying to work out beforehand what I would do each minute, I boiled the water for tea with a plunge heater—mark you, a Hungarian-made gadget!—and took out from a plastic bag white bread sold ready sliced which is soft and crumbly like a bun, and the only thing I don't know is what makes it taste like blotting paper. I eat breakfast standing up to get my weight down. Also to economize. Not once had I managed to have breakfast for under two dollars when I had ventured into the hotel restaurant, and although I could afford it on the Ford scholarship, I found it impossible not to work out the expense in forints and then the food turned bitter in my mouth. Anyway because of the many lunch and dinner invitations I was getting too fat for the clothes I had brought over.

It was a nice warm and bright morning, in Hungary the sun shines like that only at the end of May. Stepping out I reached First Avenue in a quarter of an hour. Up to the institute, where is my mail? My wife had written to me already from Paris, she was to board the *Queen Mary* the next day, in a week she'll be with me. She was happy she had been able to spend a week with our younger son who is a student in Paris. There was also a letter from this son of mine, Miklós, who had sent it to the institute this time, being uncertain about the length of time I was going to spend at my Boston address. That letter had taken the unusually long time of six days to get here, it had been written before my wife arrived in Paris. Its tone was bitter-sweet, telling me as it did about his strange disappointments, his toothaches which seemed to follow one another and about his agonies over a play he'd started to write, and also the frustration he was feeling on account of his forgetting things he'd learnt back home. The children had written from home to say everything was all right, the car was giving no trouble, the dog and the cat were well taken care of, and my grandchild was sucking away happily. (I loved the order in which they put things.) I looked out of the window on to the East River and to the left at the big bottle green building which today is New York's most fashionable and smart apartment house. Several people had thought it important enough to call my attention to this place where Robert Kennedy lived with his then nine children. Before he had become a Senator of New York State he had moved to New York giving up his home near Boston. Thinking this over and being glad that

I already knew so much about New York and had seen so much of America, I was flooded by homesickness as by a suddenly soaring fever. I had no longer had any desire to see the pictures in the Guggenheim or to listen to its director's explanations; I'd like to have dinner not with the wealthy Mrs L., but at home around the big table with my children, my daughter-in-law, the other two's girl and boy friend, with my cat, as always, on my left and my dog on my right.

Or to be slowly walking home with my wife and son in Paris. We'd get out of the Metro at Vaugirard station, and stroll down the rue de Vaugirard towards Convention, it's dark already, we'd promised to be home by eight, my mother-in-law takes dinner very seriously, but till then we'd drop into this bistro and swallow a few oysters as an appetizer, the last this season, a few more days and the oyster eating months with an "r" in them are over. The images of the Paris stroll and dinner at home fused and I felt the taste of the oysters together with the early potatoes, that of the Mâcon at my mother-in-law's with the claret coloured light Red of Kunbaja at home. It wasn't really homesickness I felt, but nostalgia for Europe. Hard to explain why the two had come upon me together now. I felt well and happy, being passed from hand to hand, so to speak, pampered everywhere. They couldn't have been nicer, or friendlier. Could it be that I was longing for roughing it a bit? Or only for trees in the streets? Cups of strong coffee? Other kinds of talk in which I didn't feel compelled at every word to look behind my shoulder as if I were kept under continuous observation. I knew all this was nonsense and also ingratitude to my hosts, to every new American friend I'd made, but mainly to fate. I should have been glad it had made this great adventure possible for me. And I am glad.

(*The Guggenheim Museum.*) Afterwards we began to discuss my long programme of travels in May. We got so involved in it that in the end we had to take a cab to the Guggenheim. From 48th Street up to 88th Street is forty blocks and just about three dollars with the tip. I couldn't get used to the way that amused my American friends. Couldn't I understand that one dollar didn't make any difference? How can one live if one watches every quarter? What did I want to buy to take home from here? I just couldn't explain to them that I wasn't saving up for anything in particular, but that simply, and in general, in accordance with my way of life because of national, family and other traditions I had an inborn horror of every avoidable expenditure.

This time, however, I felt grateful for the taxi because it brought me to my destination at ten to twelve and so I had time to have a good look at the most extraordinary building in all the round world. I am using the adjective

round on purpose: the windowless building is round itself and has something of a globe about it. At the time of its opening in 1959 I had seen so many pictures of it and read so many discussions about it that now I greeted it as an old friend. My first impression was that it was both smaller and less high than I had imagined. But obviously this very tall city was the reason for this impression and just as the churches of New York and their spires are dwarfed by the skyscrapers, so was this building too.

The spherical simile does not of course quite apply. From the outside it is a great concrete spiral which grows wider in diameter going upwards. Frank Lloyd Wright, the greatest American architect, had told spectators and critics to look at the building from the inside. He has called it "organic architecture" where the floors do not lie above each other like layers but flow into one another as if the whole structure were a work of sculpture. Till now I had thought of this explanation as an afterthought, but going in I agreed with the artist. Now I am all enthusiastic about this museum, the kind of excitement gripped me which I only feel at the first sight of truly great, exceptional buildings. I felt an urge to take possession of it at once and enjoy it as a whole and at the same time to look at every one of its details. I had felt the same about the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Florence Baptistry, the Paris Sainte-Chapelle. This Museum also expresses the age, its technical and material potentialities and while doing so it creates a tension in space produced with its own walls which makes a man feel that he is part of something great and whole.

(*The birth of a new style?*) It was clear to me then why Frank Lloyd Wright had called this kind of architecture "organic." All its parts fit, flow and fuse into each other like those of a living organism, a man, an animal, or a plant. Nothing here is rectangular or angular, nothing is superimposed on anything else, no floor or part hides any other. I had seen and liked a great many modern buildings in New York and Yale in recent weeks, but this was different, this was new. The signs of modern architecture are precisely the sharp angles and the stark interplay of perpendiculars and horizontals. The geometrical elements are denuded, as it were, and that is why curves, arches and vaults necessarily disappear. Frank Lloyd Wright might have originally considered windows unnecessary in a building which was intended to be a museum. What was needed were walls and light, and he created walls and light. That is, his designs were determined by function, but at the same time he tried to satisfy an already present demand for beauty. It may be that the Guggenheim building is a unique and happy creation, but it may equally be that it represents a new style or at least a new departure within the modern style, the architecture of cement and glass. The onlooker here

perhaps catches the process *in statu nascendi*, the way one can witness the birth of the Gothic style in the Saint Denis Cathedral.

(*Woman in a Yellow Sweater.*) I was lost in thought. As usual I imagined that I had plenty of time and now I had again managed to be late although, quite exceptionally, I had arrived earlier than the appointed time. I asked the attendant where the director's office was. I had to go out into the street and into an oblong office building next to the circular museum. I found myself in a narrow staircase. The doorman told me to take a seat while he rang and told them I was there. I sat down on a couch; it was nice to have a rest. Looking up I could see upwards as far as the roof of the building. Suddenly I became conscious of a familiar picture looking back at me from one of the turns of the staircase, from behind a glass panel. Where had we met? I soon remembered, but then I didn't believe my eyes. Modigliani's *Woman in a Yellow Sweater*. I knew her well, my good friend, my room-mate. In 1946, in Paris for the first time after the war, I had bought a full-size reproduction and for a long time it had hung on the wall near my desk. One day it fell, its glass broke and since then it has retired to a portfolio. I had never realized that its original was in New York, and not even in a dream chasing a will-o'-the-wisp had I thought that I might catch a glimpse of it in a store-room. It was turned with the wrong side towards the room, casually, smiling at me. Not needed, another exhibition was on, there it stood against the wall. Hello Jeanne, I greeted her, for she who was wearing the yellow sweater was none other than Jeanne Hébuterne, Modigliani's wife whom he had never married, the mother of his daughter, also called Jeanne, who the year before had published a book about a father she had not known and her mother who had thrown herself down from an upper floor on the day of her father's death. That minute my homesickness ended. I was at home and in Paris again, and once more I experienced the pang in my heart which I had felt in my younger days at the sight of the yellow sweater, almond eyes and elongated face of Jeanne Hébuterne. Thank you I called up and the portrait smiled back from upstairs.

It may be, however, that the smile I saw was already beaming from the face of Mr. Thomas M. Messer. Would I excuse him for keeping me waiting? Would he excuse me for being late? A young, friendly man with a slightly foreign accent. Because of his name I thought he was German by birth but later I found out that he was of Czech origin. I told him how glad I was to have seen the Modigliani picture again in such unusual circumstances. He smiled but I had the impression that he had slightly misunderstood me. The conversation started haltingly as so often when I called on a stranger. What did I want actually? I said that the Guggenheim as a museum,

both as a building and its contents, was well-known in literary and artistic circles at home, yet people in general had no clear idea what it really was and some of them believed that it was some fantastic, out-of-the-way building. One of the reasons for my coming here was to see it for myself and write about it. I should like to know to what extent the average New Yorker, the man in the street, the passers-by and the visitors had accepted this odd circular building widening upwards and the paintings and sculptures in it. Art historian as he was he replied with figures: we were in America. In the course of a year half a million people had thought it worth half a dollar to come and see the building and the pictures.

I showed him two copies of *The New Hungarian Quarterly* I had brought along with some good reproductions in them. I talked a little about the state of art in Hungary. I showed him photos of sculpture by Miklós Borsos and Tibor Vilt in the magazine. He liked them very much; he also looked at some reproductions by Derkovits, but he thought them *vieux jeu* and gave me no time to explain that he was not a living artist. Hearing the name of Csontváry he looked up; this name, which he pronounced Ksontvary instead of Chontvary, had rung a bell. Couldn't he get pictures by Hungarian artists? Or reproductions at least? He went on asking a lot of questions about Hungary. In fact he knew only one Hungarian painter, Moholy-Nagy, had I known that one of his paintings, from 1924, was exhibited in the Museum? An interesting composition, not now to be seen as it had been loaned to the Seven Decades series of exhibitions. Good, I was going to see them that evening. I should look for it in the third decade.

Meanwhile it had got on towards one o'clock, he was expected for lunch. Did I want to go in through this door straight into the Museum? I did, but I closed my eyes while the lift took me down to the ground floor, and then, slowly, as Frank Lloyd Wright intended, I walked up the gently rising, stairless slope.

(*Up and down the slope.*) Then I went down again, even more slowly this time, taking in and enjoying at every step the architectural novelty. In the meantime I saw a number of good pictures but the most brilliant work of art to be seen there was the building itself. The light comes through a glass cupola at the top which by the way cannot be seen from the street. It is a windowless building, I said before, and so it seems from down below. It has no windows in the accustomed sense, but there is a continuous glassed-in aperture, as wide as a window, between the broad ferroconcrete bands spiralling upwards. One does not notice it from inside unless one looks for it. Everything else is a slightly bent wall to hang pictures on, which demands that pictures be hung on it. The circumference of the spirals is so

large that it seems to be perpendicular to the back of the pictures: this too is one of the architect's magic feats.

But there is something else, something out of the ordinary, to surprise the spectator, something to create an additional spatial tension with these cream-coloured, wide and infinitely gracious slopes. It takes some time before the eye discovers one of the bull's eyes of Wright's design: the spirals do not make complete turns of  $360^\circ$  but only about  $320^\circ$ . The artist's finger pushed in the wall slightly along the remaining  $40^\circ$  in the shape of a small semicircle. The circle might have seemed to him too perfect a figure, and the secret of great works of art lies in some small, apparent irregularity which the artist manages to commit in order that his work should strike us as artistically and not geometrically perfect.

The material exhibited at the time of my visit consisted of three sections. The Thannhauser exhibition was on the ground floor. Nothing to do with Wagner's opera. It is the marvellous collection of an art dealer of German origin called Thannhauser. According to Mrs A. W. it was he who, still as a schoolboy, discovered Picasso in Paris. I think there are others as well with whom he has to share this midwifery, but I can vouch for this much that out of the seventy-five pictures exhibited, forty were by Picasso including one painted in 1898 in Barcelona, which he had still signed Ruis-Picasso. It is called *The End of the Road* and is strongly reminiscent of Munch.

Yet how much else was there from all of Picasso's periods! One is always moved when one comes face to face with the original of a picture seen reproduced in countless books. The hall is at once illuminated, and in the dazzling light the other spectators melt into nothingness, one is anticipating a reunion with Botticelli's *Venus*. More solemn still is the moment when one comes across a masterpiece unexpectedly as I did when I saw the famous, square-shouldered *Woman at the Ironing Board* of his "blue period." Thannhauser had known perfectly well what to collect: Cézanne, Manet, Renoir, Degas, Modigliani, Braque, Gauguin, Van Gogh came one after the other in this order, not of chronology, but as their names come off my pocket tape-recorder in my own voice of devotion and astonishment. Had Thannhauser suddenly appeared to me, there and then, and said, Sir, I reward you because I know you will write with affection and understanding about my collection, the Guggenheim, New York and the United States, and because of this I let you choose a picture for yourself as an advance, I should have reached first for Picasso's *Woman at the Ironing Board*, but my hand would have stayed in midair.

Sir, I'd have said, I'm a poor man but a good turn deserves another. I shall not take the *Woman at the Ironing Board* from you, I'll be content with

Van Gogh's *Hills around Saint-Rémy*. Those hills, blue and green, press on impetuously like the crested waves of the sea, all is in a rush and alive with motion—but what's the use of my describing it to you. I know it is your favourite too.

And since Mr. Thannhauser is an art dealer I also know in advance that he would beg me to give him back the Van Gogh, and I should have to leave the Museum empty-handed.

But I did not leave for the time being. I had scarcely seen anything of the Guggenheim. The Thannhauser collection was the first part, the other two remained. The second part comprised an exhibition of contemporary American painters and sculptors. With the exception of the Japanese-American Noguchi's very oriental, very Japanese, queer question mark, much like a lute, called *Lunar* and a gilded wooden statue called *Exclamation* whose arm, if it has an arm, dangles like a "mobile" piece of sculpture, the rest is all trash, one worse than the other. I keep listening to my indignant voice on the tape. I also added this: "I can't think of any other expression. Really they have nothing in them, neither imagination nor inspiration nor some creative effort nor yet the intent to shock, only a striving to make one different from the other, and in the end they remain as like as two peas." Why was I so cross? Perhaps because my enthrallment with the architectural beauty of the Guggenheim and the added reality of the Thannhauser collection induced a state of rapture in me, and then the Museum itself is crammed full with undistinguished pictures! Perhaps also because at home in Hungary I am one of those who campaigned in speech and writing against the damaging tradition of speaking about "degenerate art" both in the thirties and the fifties. Perhaps also because I had been looking forward to seeing the sort of good American abstracts I had seen three weeks before in private collections. I should have liked to see one or two works by Franz Kline with his incisive black squares, Kenneth Noland's ovals, Mark Rothko, De Kooning whose yellows I liked, or Barnett Newman of whose work I had seen nothing yet.

Never had a wish of mine been fulfilled sooner than this one regarding Barnett Newman, but as it turned out there wasn't much to thank for in that. The third part of the museum was a show devoted entirely to Newman. It is a kind of "This is what I think of you" stuff, to borrow the title of our immortal humourist Karinty's skit on the bluffing moderns. The little show consists of twelve pieces called collectively "Calvary" showing the twelve Stations of the Cross. "Showing" has just slipped out because the series does not show anything in the world. That wouldn't matter, but it does not express anything much either. Huge canvasses painted white from

frame to frame. Nothing on the white surfaces, or almost nothing: vertical black strokes, one wider, one narrower, sometimes singly, sometimes several together. To call this "Calvary," to exhibit it in a separate room and to have tried to justify the whole thing in a pamphlet is the apotheosis of pretentiousness. Or a mockery of it?

Fortunately there is a serious and beautiful exhibition in this part of the Museum: Kandinsky's development from his earliest work, his landscapes to abstraction. This is very good and instructive and interesting.

On the ground floor there is also a beautiful gate by Miró, a piece of pottery glazed in harsh colours but on the whole well balanced, and a Calder mobile, one of the less successful ones. Once more I walked on the sloping spiral way up to the upper level enjoying the design of the building. I bought a guide to the Museum, and took Frank Lloyd Wright's advice: I went into a small restaurant, ordered lobster and salad and bitter tasting tonic water to wash it down and then refreshed I walked through the Museum once again as recommended by the architect. I had plenty of time, to get to the Professor on the other side of Manhattan near the Hudson river.

(*Window-opening and other problems.*) The host received me in shirt sleeves. He excused himself, the temperature had suddenly risen sharply and they had not fixed up their air-conditioning system on the window yet. In the room the air was really close, stuffy and hot. I at once felt an iron band gripping my temples. What was to become of me at the height of summer if the heat was too much for me now? I asked cautiously why he did not open the window. He touched his forehead: "It hasn't occurred to me, you see!" Although he had a little contraption for the opening of the raised window to filter the air so that the wind from the sea did not carry in the dust and thick smoke of the city. But they have become so mechanized and air-conditioned, these Americans, that the ancestral action of opening a window simply does not occur to them.

From the Professor's balcony I had a fresh view of New York. From the twenty-eighth storey I could see the river with the berths of the big ocean-going vessels. The Professor said he had a few days before seen the *Michelangelo* dock with her prow and bridge cleft and damaged in the great Atlantic gale. It was a fearful sight even from this height. (I hoped she would be repaired by July 15, I meant to travel home on that ship.) In front of us, or rather below us, was the centre of the Con Edison atomic power station. I asked this backwoods question: "Aren't you afraid of radiation here?"—but I was not even expecting an answer. A little further back stood the towers of San Gimignano, in midtown New York. It is from a height of some thirty storeys that one can really appreciate the towering buildings

of the Rockefeller Center. Seen from the river they appear only as parts of the skyline, standing at their feet there is no judging their real size for lack of anything to relate them to. However, from this height where a European feels slightly dizzy the people in the streets below appear ridiculous dwarfs and the cars crawl along like toys on the floor of the nursery, I felt the same awesome respect as at the foot of the Khufu pyramid.

The Professor's wife kindly explained to me what we saw, and she wanted to fetch binoculars without which the Statue of Liberty could not be seen from here. I told her not to worry but she went and fetched them all the same and the glass made the seventy-storey buildings of the Rockefeller Center impossible to appreciate since it telescoped the necessary distance, but far away at the confluence of the Hudson and East rivers, at Upper Bay, as it's called, the Professor's wife explained, I caught sight of the famous Statue for the first time since I had arrived five weeks before. The Professor's wife was pleased to have been helpful in giving me this experience. She was chatting pleasantly remarking how nice it was I could make this journey and come to see them with all the work I must have, and no doubt it was a great experience for me to see America after Eastern Europe. "And you see I told my husband straight away how interesting it would be to talk to you, when he rang the State Department in Washington to ask them if it was all right to ask you home." The Professor came back to the balcony at this moment and I did not know whether he heard or not what his wife had just blabbed out. In any case I changed the subject to literature. Had he heard about Attila József, I asked, because the Statue of Liberty had reminded me of one of his lines "...fifteen hundred thousand of our men staggered to America." He knew of the poet but not this poem. Thanks to E. the painter, who spoke hardly a word and who sat, neither fish nor fowl or rather both at once, sandwiched between an American and a Hungarian, the Professor knew quite a lot about Hungarian literature and also about that of our neighbours. Again I found out, as so often before, that we who live in Central Europe, the Danube basin and the Balkans did not interest the Americans very much as individual nations, and they aren't even interested in the reasons why we don't know each other any better. He thought it odd that we Hungarians, like the others, wanted to sell—to use an American expression—our verse abroad in the first place. It might be the best, but the seller couldn't decide on his own what merchandise the customer wanted to buy. Short novels. Good plays. No history. How did we expect the audience or the reader to find their way around in a totally unknown environment? However, everything happening in Hungary today was interesting. The Professor enjoyed this contradiction and even called my attention

to it: the American public did not mind trying to find their way around this unfamiliar environment.

As we were talking I suddenly reached for my head, I felt hot all over. The lady of the house was worried, didn't I feel well. I shouldn't have minded that. Worse had happened. I had simply forgotten to go to the National Education Television office. It had slipped my mind so completely that I had even forgotten to telephone. What was I to do? I could have sunk into the earth for shame. The Professor did not take so tragic a view of it. "Call them up and say you've forgotten about it." Impossible, it would offend Mr. Davies. He must have been waiting for me. "You'd offend him more if you told a lie." E. nodded in agreement. Yes, this was a different country, a different world, different manners. In Hungary, and I suppose everywhere in Europe, one would have had to think up a suitable excuse. The person told the excuse would know it wasn't true but he would accept it. Other countries, other rules of the game. I confess I liked this new one better.

I got on the phone. At hearing my name the secretary asked if anything had happened. I swallowed and told her straight that I had clean forgotten. I also muttered something to the effect that I had such a crowded programme. . . . But she did not let me finish. "Never mind. Do you want to speak to Mr. Davies?" I asked her to tell him how much I regretted it. Could I get another date? We settled it in a minute.

I had missed out one item of my programme and still I felt dead tired when I said good-bye to the Professor and his wife. To go home, change and start the day all over again, as it were; I felt I simply couldn't make the effort. I stood under the shower, then I also let some cold water from the tap drip on the back of my neck. Could I dare lie down for twenty minutes? I had no other choice than set my little kitchen egg-boiling gadget with an alarm bell. A twenty-minute nap worked wonders again.

(*Seven decades—seven galleries. . .*) Dinner with the Dr. L's was light and rushed because we were in a hurry. We ate salmon and salad chiefly, and specially chiefly we drank champagne. Had I known what a bout of champagne drinking I was in for later that night, I would have dipped only the tip of my tongue in it like the incomparable and wise Mrs. A. W. There were two other guests besides us, two elderly, slender and intolerably smart gentlemen. Their names went in at one ear and out at the other. Still that night I took a proper note of them. A fair few of the pictures exhibited came from their dining-rooms. It was the joint ambition of the hosts and other guests to give me a good idea what the series of exhibitions we were invited to was about. To begin with, did I know what P.E.A. was? The United

States like socialist Hungary are not short of abbreviations (take their name to start with). I had learnt enough of them to fill half a dictionary, but I had never met P.E.A. before. It means Public Education Association.

"You've often asked me what is good in America?" Mrs A. W. said. "Here's my answer: this for example." P.E.A. is a social organization. Its aim is to explain to parents the various types of schools as well as the necessity for schooling on the one hand and on the other to support the schools of New York city and state, to propose legislation to further general education, and to increase the efficiency of educational establishments. It was P.E.A. which suggested seventy years ago that schools arrange joint vacations. It was they who introduced the Parent Teacher Associations in America, it is usually referred to by its initials, P.T.A. P.E.A. initiated teachers' visits to pupils' families, started the first school sanatorium, chiefly for pupils with heart trouble, the members of P.E.A. help educationists in their teaching work, for instance, in running school libraries. In recent years they have given much attention to the problem of drop-outs.

I found out that one could note down information while eating salmon and drinking champagne. I understood everything except what all this had to do with the pictures and sculptures on display in the Seven Decades Exhibition. "You don't seem to begin to understand America. P.E.A. badly needs money. Every year they put on a really extraordinary exhibition and charge a very high entrance fee. This year the Association will be seventy years old. They have collected the best pictures of these seven decades and put them on show by decades in one gallery each." One of the smartly dressed gentlemen added that most of the items exhibited were privately owned.

(*The first decade: 1895-1905.*) Dinner over we took a taxi to 1895. This is not a house number, though there are higher numbers on the Broadway, but the first of the Seven Decades, from 1895 till 1905, in the Paul Rosenberg and Co. Gallery in the easternmost block of 79th Street. On entering we were offered champagne to start with and then handed the beautiful catalogue all in one for the seven exhibitions, and asked to pay ten dollars for it. My sigh at hearing the price was really inaudible, I had no reason to complain, it cost twice as much to go in, and that had been arranged by Mrs A. W., that magician. But it seems that very elegant art collectors can hear inaudible sighs too, by the time I reached for my wallet, the taller and more slender and white-haired of my dinner companions put his hand on mine: O.K., don't bother. The catalogue of two hundred pages and 370 pictures is beautiful and includes all the paintings and sculptures in the exhibitions.

In the first room for the time being all I could see were people. Greetings

everywhere, Mrs A. W. and Dr L. introducing me left and right; swallowing my name they came heavily down on *Hungarian* and added with emphasis *from Hungary*. So I was a true-born, grass-roots Hungarian from Hungary. I felt the rate of exchange going up. A lady with silver hair gathered in a bun remarked that as far as she knew no genuine Hungarian from Hungary had been present at any private view of an exhibition arranged by P.E.A. Of compatriots, not fresh from Hungary, I discovered two at once, Pál Mocsányi, the noted connoisseur, and his wife, a musician.

I passed by the first pictures, they were from the deepest 19th century, two or three unknown Americans, as if Impressionism had not existed. I don't suffer from Picassonitis, but the first picture which pulled me up was again a Picasso: *Lady with a Fan*, painted in 1905. Not yet the genuine stuff but already radiating originality and vigour. I knew the owner personally: Averell Harriman. I dared not tell this to my friends, they might think I was dropping names even if I had added that we had sat on the same committee at the 1946 Paris peace conference. (At the time I did not even suspect that a fortnight later I would be his guest in Washington.) At any rate, the statesman and son of a railway magnate went up in my estimation when I found out that he collected pictures, and what pictures! In the first decade some thirty odd paintings and eight to ten sculptures were gathered together. The most impressive of these was Rodin's *Torso Taking a Step*. A copy is in the Paris Rodin Museum, but there, placed among a number of large-size statues, it fails to achieve the same awe-inspiring effect as here life-size, headless and armless. He steps out with his right foot so forcibly that involuntarily I backed away a little.

This first decade is the age of the "no longer" and "not yet." Academism had outlived itself and Impressionism had reached its high point—there was a powerful Pissarro here and a charming, an all too charming Renoir for our modern eyes, *Gabriella with Two Children*, but the new had not arrived, non-objective art was still to come. The most memorable are the members of the Nabi group. I saw for the first time, and I did not remember ever having seen a reproduction of it, Vuillard's *Symphony in Red*, a woman in a red dressing-gown on a red divan against red wallpaper among red furniture, and all the reds of a different hue and depth and value. It adorns the living-room of a New York millionaire. I could have imagined half a dozen better works by the Nabis than Bonnard's *Dining Table* painted in 1900. Of course I had our Rippl-Rónai in mind. How interesting it would be to exhibit here his big bearded, reading Vuillard portrait, it would fit nicely into this decade since it was painted in 1897. Or how well his *Uncle Piasek in front of a Black Cupboard* would supplement the all-red Vuillard canvas and the

Bonnard interior. But had they been there they would have been in American hands. After all, it is better they are where they are, in Budapest and Kaposvár, but the pity of it is that the Americans only believed me when I talked to them about Rippl-Rónai's greatness the way they believed me when I told them how good our poetry was.

(*The second decade.*) This was said in the taxi, to Mrs A. W. as we were going on to the next decade and the next gallery. It was right in the art dealers' quarter, in 57th Street. We had to go upstairs and, at the door young ladies offered us champagne. There were more visitors here. People on the inside had known that here better-known and more important pictures would be shown. Truly, right at the entrance we walked into one of the basic pictures of Cubism. Braque's *Still Life with Draughts* in the usual frame with a second, oval one, around it, Picabia's *Procession in Seville* in which the nuns' veils could be taken for birds as well or they may be simply polygonal figures (it is owned by the New York Rothschilds), and one of Picasso's intentionally disfigured nude studies for *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*. Renoir is still in this decade, represented by his full-blooded, slightly humorous *Judgment of Paris*, Utrillo makes his appearance, and not just with any old picture but with the well-known *Lapin-Agile Covered in Snow*, and—I could hardly believe my eyes—there was a one and a half metre long section of Claude Monet's *Waterlilies* with its yellows, greens and lilacs. On my way to America I had stopped off in Paris for a few days and gone to see the complete *Waterlilies* in the Orangerie of the Tuileries. I had seen parts of it before, but to see the whole together belongs to the realized and not-so-hard-to-realize beautiful daydreams of a man's life. This piece is from a private collection in Washington. That's where the German Expressionists were too. I looked for Franz Marc, the idol of my colleagues and myself during my 1930 student year in Berlin, for *The Blue Horses* or something similar, but only a less satisfactory canvas of his called *Broken Shapes* was on show, incidentally from the Guggenheim Collection. I consoled myself with Lyonel Feininger's *Tall Buildings*; it is a fine and expressive piece with its exciting light refractions.

Suddenly I felt the pictures were a little too much for me, though we were only in the second decade. I stood in front of a very Chagallesque Chagall *Above Vitebsk*. An old Jew, painted so many times by him, in gaberdine and peaked cap, with a bag on his back is striding in the air over the snowy housetops and towers of a small town. It was impossible to look at each picture separately. One did better to observe how in this decade preceding the First World War and beginning with 1905, the year of the publication of Einstein's theory of relativity, art was pressing forward to

complete abstraction. Picabia's veils had adumbrated it, Delaunay's *Shapes* had indicated it, the Czech Kupka's *White and Blue Circle* had almost reached this point—naturally I am speaking about this exhibition and not art history in general—while now finally standing in front of Piet Mondrian's *Composition No. 7*, we had arrived right at the heart of abstraction.

(*The three kinds of public.*) Mrs A. W. was dragging me out, there were five decades in front of us, what was I noting down so much and would I please put that tape-recorder away, people were staring. I suspected that people were staring at each other anyway this evening. Here was "tout New York" checking who came with whom and what everybody was wearing. Glancing back to check on Mrs A. W.'s kindly remonstrance, I observed that the public fell into three groups. The first were in evening clothes. They were the wealthy owners of private collections, the happy and envied lenders of the pictures. The second group were the sock and stockingless of both sexes, in jeans and pullovers and sandals. These were the artists, perhaps some of their pictures were shown as we got close to the seventh decade. These are the poor and the bohemians, they may do as they please. The ones in evening dress were obviously trying to make contact with the ones in jeans who received them with condescension. Mrs A. W. and Dr L. were amused by my observations, this already in the third taxi. According to Mrs. A. W. I was only mistaken in thinking that the stockingless and unshaven were also poor. Those taken up by God and the rich had plenty of money.

"And which is the third group?" Dr L. asked.

I begged to be excused for my immodesty. The third group was myself. I could not possibly belong to the first two categories because I was neither in a dinner jacket nor in jeans. I came in my simple and only dark suit, wearing a polka dotted tie. That must have been the cause of the disapproving looks and not my pocket tape-recorder.

(*The mad decade.*) The third decade from 1915 to 1925 had so much in it that it would have turned my head even without the champagne we were offered again. "Les années folles" as the second half of this decade is called not only by the sexagenarian Parisians looking back into the past with nostalgia but as they also have come to be known in French literary and art history. How many great works of art had migrated to America if they could represent not only the very best, but the best and the second best artists by one important picture or sculpture each! They could afford to miss Modigliani's *Girl in a Yellow Sweater* by leaving it tucked away in that little room by the staircase in the Guggenheim and to put on show in its place his *Boy in Pink Waistcoat*, which is seldom on show, from the collection of a

millionaire living in Mexico. The waistcoat is yellowish if anything, but the simple charm of the boy's look is marvellous. The whole greatness of the "School of Paris" was present. Before I had been looking for Juan Gris next to Braque: here he was leading in the pictures in this exhibition. *Harlequin Sitting at Table* is a delicate balance of patches of light and Cubist angular forms. I could have spent the rest of the night there contemplating it, to try to get at its secret. "You're crazy," Mrs A. W. said. "Drink some champagne anyway and let's hurry up, there're four galleries ahead of us yet." In this the third decade there were naturally some more Picassos and Chagall, for the second time, with his adorable bouquet of lilies and roses growing out of a loving couple, out of the girl's bosom. There appeared for the first time a wildly whirling Soutine and straight after him the Surrealists: Max Ernst's *Ambiguous Woman* which I do not like and Chirico's unforgettable rigid dream scene *The Mystery and Melancholia of a Street* with a girl trundling a hoop in the cold lights of an arcaded street.

When I reached the first picture by Paul Klee it became more and more clear to me that this series of exhibitions was such an opportunity and such a gift which alone would have made it worth while to come over from Europe as a stoker if there had still been coal-fired ships and if I had been young enough to do it and if I had. . . No more champagne for me, at least not till the next gallery decade. These thoughts were occasioned not only by the Klee picture, though it showed well his mastery in amalgamating the symbols of dream, fantasy, nightmare and hope with impressions of nature, but also by the knowledge that there isn't a museum the world over with such a comprehensive, complete and wide-ranging collection. It takes the wealth of America and the New York art lovers' fancy to bring it about.

It is interesting for a European to see the American artists of the period exhibited next to the well-known French, German and Italian painters. From the previous two decades I remembered only Winslow Homer with an Art Nouveau picture which reminded me of some of the façades of the Kristóf Square houses back home; in the second decade I got to know Arthur G. Dove's name together with a picture painted in 1911 called *First Movement* which represents a transition from Expressionism to abstraction, and is really a fine work. In the third gallery they began to come in force. Now why was I astonished at their not having heard of Rippl-Rónai when I read of Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keefee and George Bellows here for the first time? Three artists belonging to three different styles. Hartley is a Surrealist, Georgia O'Keefee is an Expressionist but non-representational, Bellows is all the more representational: he painted a boxing match. I had the suspicion that he was included because he is

regarded as one of the forerunners of pop-art. In the Cubist *Still Life* by Stanton Macdonald-Wright—oh, America!—Lincoln's head peeps out from unknown objects and forms.

I felt an *embarras de richesse* and not because the company I was in was that of rich people, but because, punning apart, there was such a wealth of works of art to look at. In great museums, and in big cities also, one can comfort oneself with the thought that one will go to the Louvre the next day, for instance, or that the next time one is in London one will spend a whole day in the Tate. But here I knew that this was a unique gift of the Muses, their collective contribution, painting and sculpture having had no special Muse, and in two or three weeks' time the exhibitions would be taken apart and I'd have no time during the coming days to look at them again. Even now I had only a minute to glance at the sculptures, though there was Brancusi's *Mademoiselle Pogani*, who was certainly Miss Pogány, that is Hungarian, this white block of marble polished finer than skin, with a bent head on which the artist had left the features sketchy and unfinished, but the veins of the marble impart individuality to the inanimate stone. Here is the new movement in sculpture: Jacques Lipschitz and Henri Laurens and next to them a sort of return: Ernst Barlach's Gothic *Avenger* with drawn sword, terrible and carved in the German sculptural idiom. And there was a Rodin too, his portrait of Pope Benedict XV; who would have thought that Rodin was alive and active in that fantastic decade?

I was about to leave the gallery when I thought of what director Messer had told me. The Moholy-Nagy picture was in the third decade. I went back quickly through the rooms and in the end I found it where I had stood before I started, right at the exit and rightly so because he painted it in 1924. It is a work of finely graded tones and in warmer colours than most of Moholy-Nagy's paintings. In the fashion of the day it is called: *A II*. Deep blue, light brown, white and green overlapping rhomboids are placed on a greyish-yellow ground. Their curiously fascinating effect is achieved by each of the parallelograms being translucent without the colours merging or standing apart. A scarlet disc in the middle behind the angular forms appears as if it were the sun glowing from afar.

(*The fourth and fifth decades.*) For a change we did not take a taxi to the next exhibition but walked some twenty houses up Madison Avenue instead and then another thirty down, because the fourth decade was placed in two separate galleries. That meant a double portion of champagne. I ventured to remark that if this was to continue in the end we would see everything double and remember fourteen decades in twenty-eight galleries in the padded cell. I had no success. If I was tired there's a taxi. But I shouldn't

refuse the champagne, they would be offended since we were the guests of the galleries. The period between 1925 and 1934 received me with the image of dread. The artistic sensibility had as early as 1932 a premonition that Europe was going to tremble. Here there was Klee's notorious, much discussed and today almost classic little composition *The Mask of Fear*. I tried to describe it in live speech to my little pocket tape-recorder but without success. It has nothing in it but an egg or rather potato-shaped surface which all but completely fills the canvas. Two buttons which look like eyes and their hanging continuation which could be the nose if I wish them to but the question is whether the artist meant it that way. An arrow sticks out of the potato head and below there are two pairs of legs in shoes. Ludicrous and horrible all at the same time like Hitlerism.

Next to Klee came a great American painter whose name is perhaps more familiar as that of a still greater Russian writer: Gorky. He spelt it with a "y," his first name is Arshile and he came to the United States from Armenia in 1920. This picture *The Artist and His Mother* is a poem in yellow, a meditation on the lost native land in the newly-found country and expresses the common feeling of millions of Americans. New great names cropped up in this decade: Miró, Arp, Tanguy, Dufy. Another American, the off-beat and noted Neo-Primitive John Kane with his much reproduced picture *From the Window of a Studio*. It shows the New York of the thirties with skyscrapers, but still with horse-drawn vehicles, tramcars and wooden houses in the foreground; many of the latter have remained to this day.

It is interesting to observe how and with what works the greatest who figured in the preceding years reappear in this and the next decade. (The owner of the fifth gallery by the way bears the name of one of the greatest: Pierre Matisse, the painter's son.) It was during these years that Kandinsky stepped from his "architectural" period into his period of "the circle." Picasso was also beginning around this time to transform the human body in such a way that new forms came into being, for instance, *Nude in Black Armchair* or *First Steps* and it was then that pieces of sculpture appeared in his paintings as a structural element of the picture, usually in a form more naturalistic than the rest of the painting. Matisse was represented in the decade beginning with 1925 by a weaker work (*Woman Reading*), but in the following one, in the gallery of his son, we could admire his *Room with an Etruscan Vase*, the full gamut of the Matisse colours, his spontaneous ease, serenity and melancholy. Bonnard had grown simpler (*Chair next to a Window*) while Max Ernst was present with one of the most spirited creations of Surrealism. The face of his *Euclid* is an inverted white pyramid against a background of parallels meeting presumably in infinity.

Of the sculptors Henry Moore made his appearance in this decade with a composition *Stringed Figure* not yet Mooresque and all-out abstract that's if a sculptural work in three dimensions can be called abstract at all. Here there was the first Giacometti, too, in every way truly a Giacometti: his figures thin as a thread and yet tremendously energetic cannot be mistaken for anyone else's work. By now my head was spinning and I could not remember whether I had or had not seen anything by Maillol in the first decades? There must have been something by him near the beginning, at any rate, here there was a major work with the simple label: *Standing Female Figure*, but then he hardly worked at anything else. A few further "firsts" among the sculptors: Barbara Hepworth whose place is amongst the greatest, though she is little known in Hungary; then Calder with one of his first mobiles, and there we stopped for a while. One of the millionaire collectors in our little company said that this marked a new departure in the history of art and we would see in the last decade what he meant. We had a quick look at a Salvador Dali; this too was a much reproduced picture, of which the punning title *Œufs sur le plat sans plat* is part of the Dali grimace. Something vaguely resembling an oyster hangs in the void, alternatively it reminds one of an X-ray picture for a demonstration for lung specialists. Dali is extremely gifted and yet he seems to me more of a clown or mountebank than an artist.

Three further styles. The Mexican Siqueiros's peasant bulging with energy called *Folklore* could not have failed to remind me of Ferenc Medgyessy's *Folklore*, the fine reclining male nude in front of the Déry Museum in Debrecen. The Mexican painter expresses the exotic in folklore: he wants to convey to his North American public how the Latin-American Indian peasant differs from the white population. The Hungarian sculptor portrays the people's immanence and wants to show that everything has its ultimate source in it. Folklore is represented or suggested by a small piece of carving held in the hands of the male figure. How interesting this Medgyessy work or even some other work of his would be in this gallery of the thirties.

As far as I could tell Ben Shahn is besides Jackson Pollock the best known contemporary painter in his own country. Two ways, two worlds. The first Pollock was shown here not far from Shahn. The latter was represented by a not very significant work and Pollock's real style was only to develop in the following decade. Ben Shahn's real greatness is shown in the canvas which I had seen in the Whitney Museum, in his *Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti*. That painting takes for its theme the famous miscarriage of justice in the twenties which also underlies Upton Sinclair's novel *Boston*. Two top-hatted

gentlemen and a third one in a judge's cap are standing at the open coffin of the two executed revolutionaries. In front of the painting here which shows a blind accordion player I reminded my friends of the more significant work in the Whitney Museum. All four of them knew by heart whom the picture showed with discomfiting likeness: the President of Harvard, the President of the M.I.T. and a high-ranking judge. Ben Shahn was a political painter, I say it in the past tense not because he is not alive but because recently his subjects have become more abstract while his style remained representational. One of my friends attributed this change to the consequence of the "affluent society." I do not know whether this is so and should have liked to ask the artist himself, but I did not manage to meet him. (My friend Mrs A. W. consoled me at the end of my stay with a "next time." I am not sure, not because Ben Shahn is seventy now, but I do not expect to be able to visit America once again.)

I have wandered away from the exhibition. We were in front of Jackson Pollock. This first picture is called *Male and Female*. It is a crossbreed of Surrealism and abstraction. Could it be that "male" referred to the gender of the word surrealism which could be regarded as masculine in Latin and the other word in the title to the feminine *abstractio*? It is a confused picture from the chaotic period of the development of an artist's style.

(*The sixth.*) Out in the street again we all took a deep breath. We looked at each other. I had a feeling that my friends were doing all the seven galleries for my sake only. I dropped a hint that I was tired and maybe if . . . The other millionaire in the company who had been very reticent till now became very active and hailing a taxi he asked me if he should take me home. For they would go on. I had some difficulty in explaining that I wasn't all that tired and merely thought they were, please get me right. All right, they understood me, but why was I making so much fuss about it? Because I am a European, I thought to myself, without saying it aloud and without further ado I asked where the next champagne was served. We had the 1945 champagne in 57th Street, at 41 East, and twice at that because two galleries were housed at this address. The first was called André Emmerich (doesn't it sound suspiciously Danubian?) and the other Galleria Odyssea. Deny it as they would, my friends were also tired. We were united in our decision just to scamper through since it was almost midnight and we had started this race across time and space at eight in the evening.

Right at the entrance was a "real" Jackson Pollock, worthy of the painter who is generally regarded as the major figure of post-war abstract art. The picture is called *Mural on an Indian Red Ground* but that really does not say

anything. Jackson Pollock managed to introduce movement and dynamism into abstract painting, millions of tiny strokes and lines which act on the eye as "cool" jazz does on the ear. From then on I only took perfunctory looks at the European artists whom I knew and could recognize at first sight, I was more interested in those unknown to me, that is, the Americans. Willem de Kooning, for instance, who practised "abstract expressionism" together with Jackson Pollock. The painting to be seen here is non-objective and still representational, it is called *Woman and Bicycle*, one can recognize a woman's face and especially her gigantic breasts and yet the whirling light surface represents itself rather than its subject. The picture oozes two qualities rare in modern painting: humour and a zest for life.

I had looked for Rothko in the Guggenheim in the morning; here there was a huge canvas by him called *Red over Dark Blue on Dark Grey*. It represents exactly what it says. It is all large patches of colour, no more, but it possesses a spellbinding quality. Franz Kline also paints in this style, similarly huge canvases. Black square on white and the top side juts out a little on the right like the eaves of a house. It is called *Wotan*. It is not bad but titles like that give me a pain in the neck. Barnett Newman had a painting here too, the negative of his *Calvary* in the Guggenheim; there black perpendiculars on white, here the other way round.

Mrs A. W.'s thoughtfulness knew no limits. Now that she noticed that I was on the look-out for Americans she called my attention to William Baziotés. I had never heard his name before. Now I shall never forget it. There is a weird mysterious quality about his *Lagoon*, and indirectly and yet precisely it evokes the notion of the sea-shore, the meeting of the green of the sea and the green of the grass, unseen presence of sea animals and monsters and man's longing to lose himself in the boundless expanse.

"Shall we go?" We can if you like. "And won't you look at your compatriot?" Another Hungarian, true, one who had gone to live abroad: Victor Vasarely. The title of his picture is *Jarkand II* and I am unable to make out its meaning. It's an optical game, not with squares but with a bomb-shaped falling form placed in space. An enthralling picture.

(*The seventh.*) We were in the street once more. Awaiting us there was still the last decade taking us from 1955 up to almost the present, 1965. We walked back to Madison Avenue to get some air. All in vain, museumitis finally got me down: I felt my stomach rising and my head swimming as if I had been seasick. I never fail to contract it after being in a museum longer than an hour and a half. We decided just to drop in but that was not to be. The last decade was so rich in new artistic forms, surprising or still-born experiments that we forgot about the time.

Thanks to the joint marvel and grace of nature and art Picasso accompanied us all through the seven decades. He seemed not to have aged a whit. His *Seated Woman* expresses the anxiety and insecurity of the age just as well as *Guernica* does the horror of war. It was interesting to notice how related the art of Willem de Kooning, born in Holland but living in America, is to that of Karel Appel, who was living in Holland, both are boiling over, agitated yet suffused with serenity. The point when a movement turns back on itself and into its opposite is marked by the prematurely dead Yves Klein's canvas *Monochrome*. More precisely it is not a canvas at all but latex, but there is nothing on it, only an unbroken pinkish surface.

(*Anything goes.*) From there the next step was taken by those young artists who renounced or rejected the brush and the canvas, the chisel and stone and rebelled against even the tyranny of collage and stated that works of art could be made out of anything, with anything, on anything. True, Giacometti and Moore continued to furnish proof in this decade (and gallery) that it is possible to make a portrait out of bronze. Here we saw, for instance, the portrait of Giacometti's brother Diego which he did countless times over and the result was always new and different, or Moore's composition of two interlocking forms representing nothing and still expressing life. The thirty-year-old Jim Dine painted an evening dress with the woman left out but the metal necklace that hangs on it is real. George Rickey in a composition called *Peristyle* set up two fencing foils on plinths and slightly bent their tips towards each other. It is a fascinatingly beautiful work with a rhythm of its own. More questionable but not lacking in creative invention is Jesus Raphael Soto's work *Gabon*. Hanging on the wall was a wooden grid much like a mudscraper placed over the mat on rainy days. Before it also on pegs, hang two thin metal rods which will move in the breeze or if given a push by the spectators. I had heard about Jean Tinguely already in Paris. He is one of the reigning sculptors of this "a-work-of-art-can-be-made-out-of-anything" school, that is if such art categories as sculpture still apply to them. Tinguely had put together something bizarre from pig iron, wires and broken pieces of tools and called it *Makroko*. It has some vague resemblance to a bouquet. Also falling within the category of sculpture was F. J. Kiesler's one a half meter tall thing made from bronze, wood, cement and gold foil appearing at first sight to be a stork's nest on a chimney. This piece only irritated me, but there is something in this new off-beat trend to interest and fascinate too. Louise Nevelson, for instance, had brought together wood shavings and pieces of old furniture to build a totem pole *Wing Column*. Eduardo Chillida piles up steel castings in a way that the construction expresses really what its title indicates: "*Tremblement*

*de fer*," and the quotes should be doubled because French has no such expression, it must have been inspired by the common one for earth tremor.

It was interesting to observe how these constructions tip over into the comic. Richard Stankiewicz gave this gay title to his work contrived out of rust-bitten steel, muts, and pipes *Travels of the Pussycat King*, and it does remind one of a cat in its form and movement. H. C. Westerman gave his thingumbob a title which reads like one for a philosophical treatise: *Memorial to the Idea of Man if He Was an Idea*. Here our little company halted. So far my friends had been explaining with understanding and almost tenderly, what these novel works composed in a newfangled way wanted to say. Perhaps because the birthplace of these creations belonging to no identifiable genre was America, and truly the Mecca of this new direction in art was not Paris any more but New York. Patiently and curiously I listened to their explanations while scrutinizing the objects on show. I was sincerely interested because it was new and chiefly because it had come into existence. I was fascinated by their oddity, their irregular, out-of-the-ordinary artistic grammar and was sincerely pleased when one or two of them were not merely shocking, irritating or provocative but also did not fail to excite my aesthetic sensibility. Now however, we were just standing and standing in front of a wooden box stood on its narrower side tricked out with bottle caps. This constituted the trunk of Man who was or wasn't an Idea. His arms carved out of wood are akimbo on his "hips." The head is a smaller and narrower box, the mouth is a slot of an automatic machine, for the visual organ (of which there is only one) he has the scale of an electric meter, the nose is a bottle opener made of tin. Mrs A. W. suggested that we take it as a three-dimensional caricature. What else could we do? No one would think it very funny in *Ludas Matyi*, the Hungarian satirical weekly.

(*The disruption of art forms.*) Since we had stopped to think we might as well sit down. We were tired. This last decade gathered almost a hundred works and objects. I wanted to speak with them about the possible causes to which they attributed this dismemberment of the traditional art forms and categories, the renunciation of century-old materials and the mockery directed at them. Before they could have answered my questions I had to jump up, because right opposite us I had caught sight of two things queerer than anything I had so far seen in these exhibitions. My friends also noticed them but did not move, they knew them well enough. They were two controversial, overpublicized and much reproduced items belonging to the new movement; I had read about them in *Time* and if I remembered right, also in the *Saturday Review*.

One was Claes Oldenburg's construction called *Glass Case with Pies*. It is real glass case and there are really pies in it. Mr Oldenburg had purchased the glass case, presumably in Macy's. The pies are in a real aluminium tray but were made not of dough but of some coloured plastic. Apple pie, cherry pie, black currant pie, meat and ham pie. I could not discover what the sixth was. All I knew for certain was that the whole affair belonged more to window dressing than to any recognized branch of art. The other object was Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed*. It, too, was a real bed, with a soiled pillow case, tattered sheet and a Mexican peasant rug.

Why did they do this? I went back to rejoin my friends. We talked rather than argued about them, and they didn't appear to be in possession of the complete answer either. I can think of three causes and one explanation. The first is the search for the new, the second the public of the affluent society, the third the quest for a relationship to reality. Perhaps one should begin with the middle one. In recent years the buying of pictures has become a vogue. The mass media, including the large circulation picture magazines have aroused people's interest in works of art and their creators. Moneyed people have recognized the high investment value of pictures and sculptures and have also found an outlet for their snobbery while at the same time fulfilling the chief commandment of the American way of life, that is the acquisition of status symbols. The papers and television regard creative activity as part of the news: what is new is news, that is a good "story." Art dealers support this craze for the new. If an artist, especially if he is a beginner, wants to hit the headlines he must create or at least contrive something which is unprecedentedly new, of which the paper can carry a photo which will shock and outrage to some extent. I would not say that this process is all to the bad. The trouble is rather that it tends to push the art dealer, and he in his turn, the artist, towards eccentricity and whimsicality, towards "what's-never-been-before," and in this way even valuable initiatives are deprived of a chance to reach maturity.

The second cause, which is in reality the first insofar as the pictures, sculptures, pictorial sculptures and sculptural pictures and all other indefinable constructions and assemblages are brought about by artists and thus the motive force must come from within, is the sincere quest for the new. Since abstract art has reached the monochromatic surface it has been imperative to seek for something different in style and it has become self-evident and obvious that the artist should experiment with contemporary materials in order to achieve a contemporary style. In possession of up-to-date materials and with the sense of the nuclear age in their hearts and nerves and prodded on by the inexorably feverish tempo of American big

cities and above all New York, and the avidity for exhibitionism in their blood, the road to these objects has been both natural and logical. This already is really the third cause: the facing of a reality, the imitation and reflection of which these artists consciously repudiate and even deride. This is why they feel compelled to carry it to absurdity.

But as soon as they have achieved their goal they have already lost the race. For here is pop art, here is kinetic art and something else that I had not heard of or met with till this exhibition. I have no liking for pop art. My trouble with it is not the usual one of new trends, namely that I do not understand it at first sight, but that I understand it too readily. The illustrations of pop art, here, for instance, the picture called *Sunset* by their prophet Roy Lichtenstein, return to the cheapest naturalism, to the cheap movie posters with that all too easy device of putting it in quotation marks.

Kinetic art is a more complicated affair. This is what my millionaire friend had referred to three decades and two hours ago when he said that Calder's mobiles had started something new. We stopped in front of Pol Bury's work called *Nine balls on a slope*. Nine greater and smaller balls are rolling down a gentle slope very slowly and then fall into a small basket and it is the spectator's job to put them back on the slope. We went back to Tinguely's *Makroko*, because I had not noticed before what was the most important thing about it, namely that it moved and made a noise. I had to laugh but my friends were asking whether I failed to see that the artist expressed with this the unbearableness of life in a metropolis?

At the end of the seven decades and the series of exhibitions arranged in ten galleries is that which I can only call "something." Not because it is abstract or non-objective but just on the contrary. I am talking about the work of George Segal (born 1924) and Bruce Conner (1933), both American. With Segal, a life-size plaster man is sitting at a real table covered with a real nylon tablecloth. He is just sitting and staring in front of him. Conner placed in a baby's crib a small life-size, crippled child made of off-white wax, whose face is distorted with pain. In addition the whole thing is covered with a kind of nylon cobweb. The artist presumably meant it to shock but it only disgusts. And Segal's plaster man, although completely naturalistic—or just because of that?—was not about man but dehumanization. It is not a recreation of reality but a regurgitation of it.

Despite this I went out into the eighth decade undispirited. The return to man was not represented merely by this disappointing trend in the Seven Decades exhibition. There was present another aspect of this trend both new and perennial. I am thinking of the sculptures of Ipousteguy who is American, Reg Butler who is English and César who is French.

Ipousteguy's life-size, glossy bronze man, whose nakedness is as dazzling as that of Renaissance statues, stretches out his arms as if to embrace the whole world but a cut disfigures his brow and he has three legs. Metal drips from César's bronze torso as if it had come fresh from the furnace or from a nuclear disaster. Butler's *Girl on a Wheel* shows no less than that there are no outdated subjects, and it is better to look for the revival of art not in objects but in man himself.

This is also borne out by Manzu's famous *Cardinal*. I took leave of the seventh decade with this work, because after so many various interpretations of the beautiful and after experiencing the aesthetics of the ugly, I was longing for beauty represented simply, expressively, vigourously and ruthlessly. And it occurred to me that if they had not been Hungarians new sculpture by Miklós Borsos and Tibor Vilt could have found a place in this exhibition.

It turned out in the taxi that there was no question of going home. Mrs A. W. had got supper ready for us which we would not refuse, could we? I accepted on one condition: I didn't want to see any more champagne. (General approval on all sides of the cab.) With the salads, which were good, we drank mineral water which was even better. I thanked them again and again for the intellectual and culinary treat and the great experience they had made possible for me. Let me admit, they pressed me, that this was only possible today in New York. I did not question that. "I was troubled a little the whole evening," jested one of the millionaires, "because I have a lot of money and was able to buy those three exhibited pictures (he asked me not to mention which they were if I wrote about them) and a hundred others. Assure me, please, that there is some sense in having a lot of money." I assured him and congratulated him on his good taste. An exhibition like this one was really only possible in America. He was right, a better one was difficult to imagine. At most one could wish the works were gathered in one publicly owned museum called Seven Decades, and this name could then be brought up to date with the passage of every ten years.

## NO VERDICT\*

by

TIBOR DÉRY

**H**aving seen the two masters of my early career into the grave—Árpád Tóth who died very young, and Milán Füst who lived to the ripe age of eighty—I cast another quick glance at the society gathered at the east end of the Romanesque church wall. In case I returned to them...

At the moment I am thinking about the great variety of deaths chosen by the members of this eccentric society, most of them prematurely and probably against their will. Compared with their unworthy elders, most were relatively young when they died. The range of their diseases is broad enough to fill a medical encyclopaedia and a historical manual. Andor Grósz was killed by a bullet in the heart—deliberately or by accident, who knows? Árpád Tóth died from tuberculosis, Gyula Havas was killed by a brain-tumour of tubercular origin. Throat cancer caused the death of Mihály Babits and Kosztolányi. Zoltán Nagy was shot by a housebreaker, the day after the liberation of Budapest. Karinty was killed by a cerebral tumour. Osvát shot himself through the heart an hour after his daughter died. Dezső Pataki was killed in a forced labour camp during a mass bombing attack. A. E. Gelléri was deported by the Germans and ended in a concentration camp. Milán Füst and Kassák both met their ends in bed at eighty years of age.

The end of the beautiful velvet-black crows is unknown. Their flying skeletons escort me against the sky, but turn at the garden door and fly back into the remembering night. Home again, a fearful Alighieri returned from Hades, I examine my sleepless bones; they are still whole. Anamnesia. There's nothing wrong. My heart is all right too, apart from the extra systoles I have—but then, who hasn't? A slight dilatation of my lungs

\* The first excerpt from Tibor Déry's forthcoming autobiography, *Ítélet nincs* ("No Verdict"), appeared in our previous issue (The N.H.Q. No. 32).

makes me cough, but—who doesn't? Smoke less—say the wise ones—and so do I. My legs. . . Well, hm. . . Vascular stricture, but not dangerous, and the unavoidable sclerotic processes, certainly in the brain as well, although it is for my nearest relatives to give a reliable opinion about that, since the public has as yet found no fault. Hm. The only thing I grumble about is my memory, which isn't working the way I would like, and my stomach, dooming me to lack of appetite through acid deficiency. But when I shave every morning I still look into the mirror without fear, unlike some of my friends, for I know what I have to know, that is, my age; and I do not compare my face with the youthful image that looks out at me from old photographs, but with the faces of my contemporaries. Not bad, I say to myself. I've still got twenty-two teeth of my own, not one of them false.

To acquiesce in old age, although with a certain melancholy, is a platitude which has illuminated us with its truth since man first began to think. That it should be accepted is all I can suggest, for this is our only method of defence. And it should be accepted with a proper candour, without the pretence that it is better to be old than young, better to be wise than a fool, that it's healthier to have false teeth or none at all than bite with thirty-two teeth, that it more befits a man's intellect to philosophize in bed, impotent for love, than to embrace a young body or even lie contriving schemes of the heart, in short, without the falsehood that insubstantiality is a more desirable condition than the substance of life. Our body is declining: it is noted, but with disdain. If consolation is needed it can always be found. Yes, we have grown fat, but our belly is still much flatter than those of other writers of the same age. Or inversely: our dimensions are somewhat larger than those of others, but then our ideas carry more weight. True, our legs have become ridiculously thin and withered, with swollen varicose veins and green and purple spots which recall the maps showing mountains and rivers of our school years, but they are still more reliable and safer than the literary judgement of our fellow-author X. Our buttocks are wasted, the skin on our arms—particularly above the shrunken biceps—is shrivelled, but it smooths out again if we pass our hand once or twice over it. We have some difficulty in climbing on the bus, so we have bought a car. A puzzle I do not trouble to resolve: why is it that the nail of our big toe has grown so thick that it looks like the mountain ridges of Switzerland seen from the air, and that the chiropodist has to force his way in? It is noted—no more—and a sock and shoe put on.

Now my face. I see it while shaving or, less frequently, putting on a tie, for a second since my attention is concentrated on the objective task before

me. But I do not avoid the confrontation, looking automatically the other way like a thief suddenly confronted with his fence; in fact, when I catch sight of myself, I take pleasure in prolonging the glance: it might be worse, more ravaged. Once more, it is enough to bring one or other of my contemporaries to mind. I have to admit my eyes have grown smaller, the white of the eyes has turned a bit yellow—a bad sign for my stomach—and two semicircular ditches lie under the eyes; but it isn't critical, a stranger's glance could pass over them unnoticed—if it wanted to. Though, of course, young women do not want to. There are also crow's feet as remarkable artistic additions. My nose has grown sharper—not at all bad—and is joined to the mouth by a bracket each side; not so bad either. Over the head-nodding muscles, there are two wrinkles on my neck, but no dewlap; did I really nod so often through my life? On the other hand, my forehead is unmistakably larger than it was in my early days, especially upwards and back; I don't think the loss of hair is too high a price to pay. There is still enough hair at the back of my head. All in all, I am not ashamed of my face and far from laughing at it; I quietly and even cheerfully identify myself with it. It is quite all right in its place, I mean that altogether I am quite all right in my place. I recommend ageing men and women not to avoid the mirror, but to spend half a minute every day—the men, of course!—looking at themselves, and getting accustomed to and fond of their own wreckage; their encounter with death will be the calmer. To accept death with honest dignity, in full knowledge of the facts—that is something we might learn from the animals. And don't forget—I add cheerfully—nature helps us to tolerate death, natural death, I mean. Our physical and mental capacities decrease, but so do our demands. Dwindling, wasting, we prepare ourselves for the narrow final exit. As a young man I played tennis, and won third prize, as far as I can remember, in an international competition. But do I in fact remember? Some time later Aranka was still dazzled by what remained of my skill. As I grew older, I preferred ping-pong, obviously with less spectacular results. Today it is enough to read about Emerson, Darmon or István Gulyás in the sports column of *Népszabadság*, rooting naturally for the last-named. I have walked a great deal all my life, knapsack on shoulder, through Norway, Transylvania and Italy; today, a timid little constitutional of fifteen or thirty minutes around the house in Pasaréti Street in winter, and certainly not more if the road is slippery; the same in summer, at Balatonfüred, towards the house of Aunt Moró, or Arács, or even a bit further. Certainly a touch of chagrin sometimes pricks my heart when I look at the Bakony mountains, or even only at the top of Péterhegy, because my legs, my lungs and my heart have a definite repugnance

to steep or even gentle slopes. Never mind, I say, sitting on the upper slope of a vineyard—the silence is as peaceful and the view as wide as over there. You want a wider one? . . . Look in your heart! It has stored enough for the rest of your life. You mean the physical pleasure of walking? Write about it! Not as a substitute, but because writing is even better than walking.

Automatically, like the sympathetic nervous system, nature trains us this way for the final dissolution which is going to be the ultimate peace treaty with our life. You have less appetite? Look at your young wife, how pleased her eyes are, how she sucks the chicken bone, with more productive excitement than you felt in all your life. You used to be content with two or three slices of fat of ham by way of extravagance, white as snow or with a yellowish tint, costing a few farthings, which you ate with a half pound of rye-bread sitting on the lower step of the Buda embankment, happy, enraptured by the illusory phantom of freedom. You have more wine today than is enough for your daily glass . . . ? Offer it to your guests, and be glad to have something to offer, for there was a long time when you hadn't. Don't give them too much, of course, because you still don't like to see them drunk . . . And what about travelling? You still haven't been beyond Europe! Not even to Sicily! I note to myself how the items in my internal accounts, once underlined with red ink, turn paler and paler: you must go to Africa, at least once, and once to America! Nonsense. Why must you go there, I ask myself. The plan is not, in fact, definitely abandoned, only I know I won't have time this winter, because I have to finish these notes, and I would really be a fool to leave our garden in summer, where one can work so peacefully—and even better in autumn . . . So it will have to be next winter. I cock an eye at myself: I know quite certainly that I am not going to Africa, nor to America either. But the work and the garden are not simply an excuse, they are really better than Africa or America. They are better—for me. And since I accept myself as I am—an old man, with limited demands through diminished capacities—I do not consider it any sort of self-denial to stay at home. I feel no sorrow for it. Perhaps a pinprick, nothing more, asking myself why I hadn't found the time earlier, why had I gambled away my inheritance and lived such a disorderly life? But the consolation is ready to hand: if I had travelled, there would now be a superfluous American or African travel book the more in the cellars of the state-owned book-distributing enterprise. With a gentle hand nature takes care that the decline in our body is accompanied by an equal decay in our intellect, and that the latter rests content with what satisfies the former; in perfect teamwork the two-man brigade gaily scrapes the road to the grave.

And women? It is quite simple; recently they have lost their looks. I find less and less pleasure in them, and I become more and more particular. Need I emphasize that I am particular with the eyes alone? For I feel little desire to take the way leading from the eyes to the hands, and from there to the fountain of procreation. I look at women in the street, in social intercourse, with a cool objectivity: it is simply unbelievable how much less beautiful women are today than when I was young. Even the girls, let alone the married women. With a more or less expert eye I appreciate the young freshness of the former, like puppies, the gaiety of their voice, their ringing laughter, their awkward teen-age coquetry, the curiosity welling up from the centre of the body and shining in their eyes. But I am unhappy with their feet sweating in broad soles and their toes squeezed into tight stiletto-heeled shoes, and a bit unwashed to boot, their legs which are either too thick or too thin, their hips too wide or too narrow, their short middle with no curve from the waist, their breasts too big or too flat, the spots of perspiration in the armpit of their dresses, their necks too short or too long... let alone faces with their thousand abominations. And the way they do their hair—for God's sake! And how they talk! I simply cannot tell you how much more beautiful and attractive they were in my youth, or even ten years ago. What, I ask myself, has happened to them?

I still like women and rate them higher than men. But then, do I esteem them only for their clever minds, their sound common sense, their tact, their gentleness and, above all, for their maternal heart, and not for their curves? Are they really uglier than they were? There are often most attractive young ladies looking out from the covers of picture magazines, but I never have the opportunity of meeting the originals. Merely seeing them arouses my masculine ambitions, and my lethargic hands and feet would willingly rouse to get in touch with them. But where are they? Should I risk my wife's contumely for their worthless counterfeits on the streets of Budapest and London? Not to mention the probability that these young creatures are quite unaware of my intrinsic value, that in fact they may never have heard of my justly illustrious name. And I should find myself playing the role of the prurient old man for the charms of a Susanna who is not so charming after all! And risk the reputation for which I have sacrificed my life?

There was a time when my eager curiosity gave itself up not only to the familiar secrets of a woman's body, not only to strange landscapes, but to all human beings and their arts. It is as though a kindly divinity had attached a tight-fitting eye-visor across my forehead which restricts my range of vision and directs my eyes there where they are still able to carry out their reconnaissance duties with economy. That is to say, to what is most important

for my life and my work. What is the use of details anxious to prove and prove again what has been already proved? What's the good of pleasures that weary you and pains that weary you even more? I think I know the course of history as a whole; why should I now get excited over what is supposed to be an unexpected caracol of history, which, though I may enjoy its amusing grace, contributes nothing to my edification? I am equally prepared for the worst and for something not so bad. I don't think I can change anything—I am speaking for myself—so all the strength I still possess I use to protect myself and my family. To help all those who turn to me with trust in my optimism, using my heart and money with economy. I protect my work, irrespective of its use or uselessness, because it gives me pleasure. Do I have to take a telescope to explore unknown corners? I know them all. Do I have to read a whole library of the latest books, in which nothing but the decoration is new? I remain content with the works of my friends or acquaintances, and sometimes, on the bidding of that flair of mine, open a new book, quite forgetting that I read it last week. Unfortunately I myself am rarely wrong, and unfortunately my flair is more often mistaken. I envy those brisk old gentlemen who, hobbling along, would not miss anything that occurs, nor be left behind in the divagations of history; I envy them, but I don't copy them. I know, and I have often said, that it is not the goal, but the road leading to it which is interesting, and that the detail is more important than the whole. But, with reference to my age, I want to choose the way and the detail myself. Broken down by the good services of careful Mother Nature, my memory is both a help and an excuse.

"You ought to go and see X's new film," I am told.

"I certainly will," I say, but by the evening I have utterly forgotten what I was supposed to see, or that I have to go and see something at all.

"Have you seen X's new film?" I am asked.

"No, unfortunately not," say I, quite forgetting that I saw it yesterday.

"What do you think of X's new film?" I am asked.

"Oh, most interesting," I say, forgetting this time that I haven't seen it at all. I have a faint suspicion, though I don't say so, that I am mistaking it for a film I saw a year ago, where . . . who was it, who played, and what . . . and why . . .? On the other hand, I remember with the utmost clarity the attitude of our dog Busán when we went to fetch him six months ago at the pound, and he moved out of the cage and looked at me.

Retaining only what is needed, reduced curiosity selects, ageing memory sifts out and winnows. They obviously help to maintain our balance. Our deficiencies are the most eloquent evidence of our wisdom. They provide an agreeable transition to the condition where we are not going to be

interested in anything, nor remember whatever it may be. Do we have to blame nature for this foresight? Or reproach ourselves? With our close-fisted generosity? When writing I always catch my hand leaving out the last letters of the word I have written, in order to reach the end of the tardy idea the sooner. In the morning, when washing, the next sentence in my manuscript records itself in my head, and in the scurry to put it on paper before I forget it, I forget to drop the toothpaste back into the glass. I get up from my table and go to the next room, only to come back rather irresolutely having done nothing: the affectionate solicitude of nature has made me forget that I was going to fetch the morning newspapers, which were undoubtedly of absorbing interest. But I do not forget—even though I have it written in my notebook—when publishers and newspapers are due to pay.

The world most readily helps in restricting our body and soul, i.e. in the containment of ourselves. It has simply grown uglier—like women. So what is the use of looking at it if I dislike it? If I do not want to conquer it? Yes, most positively I dislike it, I become increasingly dissatisfied with its exterior and interior shapes. I don't like the new houses in the street. I look at the youngsters and their hair annoys me, brushed down to the tip of their nose and covering the very thing they ought to accentuate: their forehead. Conversation indoors and outdoors is on technical achievements, which sets the yearning eyes of the most beautiful virgins aflame. What could I see on television, if I looked at it, or what could I hear on the radio, if I listened to it? The great slogan of our times: We aren't going to wait till tomorrow! All right. But, for me, I prefer to retire where I can remain privately with my recalcitrant taste—in the small garden I can still cultivate with my reduced capacities. That is the way nature outwits us. Fuming, grumbling old men, we think we are turning our back on a world we dislike, while this very world is in fact dismissing us in grace. This is why I am now sitting in my garden—still convinced—while murmuring over my poem, that I am cherishing the fateful philosopher's stone while the world heads for disaster.

Should I laugh at myself? Not for a moment. I repeat: I accept myself with all my foolishness and my awkwardness; I accept my wrinkles, my missing teeth, the lapses of my tongue, I am at ease with my perpetual unease, with my absent-mindedness and forgetfulness, with the blunders of my bungling meditations, in short, with all my deficiencies, unashamed of the failings of old age and the disparity between desire and capacity which surprises me every now and then in my dreams. That I walk with a bigger stick than befits my shrinking stature. That I cast wry glances at heavens I no longer possess. That I am sometimes unable to read my own

handwriting. That I disagree with my own opinion. I cling to the conceit that it is below our dignity to violate the natural state of old age and to feign good humour when we really want to show our teeth in our bitter discontent with the world. And that it is not right to simulate a false optimism in our desperate conviction that we are moving in the wrong direction. Who should be brave enough to stammer out his opinion if not old age, wise however in the knowledge of his own impotence and with a proper humility towards life? What can you lose, old bones? Nothing but your self-esteem, until you spit in your own face, if you lie or play the hopeful and pretend to trust in an ultimate purification to come, although in reality you are long past hope. What is the use of my shameless play-acting? And if I happen to believe in the play of antagonistic forces—it might indeed be my only reasonably satisfactory belief—then I have to maintain my position and repeat my own truth, just as the other age groups repeat theirs, in the senseless hope that their clash might strike a spark to illuminate my death-bed. I even like myself in this attitude. I am an idyllic old man.

And if I am still in that composed state of mind, I think I shall not be offended at death.

An epitaph in a Scotch graveyard reads as follows: Here lies Melwyn Fitzgerald, who lived for 61 years. Born a man, he died a grocer.

If it had happened the other way round, I think Mr. Fitzgerald would have been more fortunate.

Once we have arrived at this painful and gloomy question, we have to break down our ancient, superstitious resistances and ruthlessly strip the question bare, even though, according to well-established custom, it blushing covers its secret parts with both hands.

Am I fit for this operation? I rarely think of my own death and if I do it is rather with my brain than with my whole organism. Death does not dwell in my mind's core, or if it does, no more than in the infant smelling only of milk, not of decay. I am also a bit thoughtless and unguarded, and simply don't think about it. For instance, I am not in torment. Although I believe that an invalid can only be approached by another invalid, with an understanding which reaches out from one pore to the other, with vibrations unmeasurable by instruments, keeping time with one another, so I believe death is to be observed only from the threshold of death.

I am therefore unable to understand the essence of death; several outstanding authors agree with me, and they have explained why. And I certainly do not want to roll the vast agglomeration of ideas accumulated so far around this subject one step further—I have neither the strength nor the

erudition to do it. Let us stay within the meagre confines of these notes. All I want to do, and primarily for my own sake, is to tidy up the method we use in approaching the subject. I'm afraid there is a certain confusion of ideas, or to put it more exactly, two different concepts are clothed with one and the same word. By death we understand that somebody dies. He dies to himself and he dies to the world. So here we have two entirely different phenomena, packed into a single word through nothing but careless thinking. Their close contiguity, which represents them as the consequence the one of the other, may serve as pretext for the abuse, but it impedes the process of thinking. According to the beliefs of the one who dies, death for him may be either the final consummation or a transient passage, but for the outside world it is a final fact, irrespective of any belief. The dead man is not identical with the corpse. I am dying in my own name and for my own account, but I bequeath a corpse to the world. Irrespective of its belief or absence of belief in the hereafter, the world is incapable of communicating with the corpse, either in the form of burial rites or in tending the grave, since the corpse cares not a farthing for the most elementary rules of social intercourse, and simply refuses to answer.

So, if I understand myself correctly, there are two different sorts of death: private death and public death. Which do we mean when speaking of death? And which, first of all, when thinking about it? I repeat: they are two utterly different phenomena which, in any reasonable form of contemplation, must be approached separately.

Why is it that I am afraid of death—if I am? And why is it that the outside world is afraid that I am going to die—if they are? I think these are the most useful questions to ask in approaching the two different concepts and in separating what has been combined in general usage.

I am afraid of death because it stops me continuing to live; that is obviously the general answer, mainly befitting the young. Its meaning, if we put two and two together, is this: life is worthwhile. Then, a jump: I am afraid of it because I know—I have heard—that I am going to suffer in my death agony. I am afraid of it, as of an operation which is nonetheless unavoidable—sooner or later I shall have to submit myself to it. There are people who would like to put it off, their organism cherishing a childish hope that they were born immortal, while others would hasten it, finding no more pleasure in the world. Furthermore, I am afraid of it because the world I am due to abandon is a good one after all, and even if it were not I am used to it and resist any change with the stubbornness of old age. There is never anything better to follow, anyway. The hereafter? But what if it is hell? I am afraid of death because I fear the world will sustain a loss

through lack of my cooperation. There are a good many of us—how many *billions* are we?—but in all conscience I have to admit that in my modest way I fear I am irreplaceable, at my working place, for instance, or in public affairs, or in defence of my nation, in fact in helping it to prosperity. I am afraid of death—and this argument is a solid one—because who will take care of my family when I am gone? Among the hundreds of reasons unspecified here let us end with the most sentimental—the argument of over-sensitive souls: I am afraid of my death causing pain to the survivors.

Most of these fears include, to a greater or lesser extent, the grocer element; it is only when he approaches the final exit, in this last solitude of his death-agony, unshared by any, that it slowly flakes away, and the man, dying, remains locked in intimate duel with his body which like a tired but fractions child on the playground, wants to go on.

The world, standing around the grave, is afraid of something else. It is mourning for itself, for the gap in its habits, which the dead has exchanged for another hole—the pit. He has abandoned his family, which is now left alone—left by him, but abandoned to itself. It may be he did not even settle their future, either materially or spiritually. The widow is poorer in love and bread, and no substitute in her bed either. The children rightly resent the missing paternal smacks. Returning from the funeral, the working-place of the dead is found empty; a double headache to fill up the vacancy: will there be an adequate successor, and what inner struggles have to be appeased within the rightful heirs? But even the proper consolation of the bereaved family is a duty incumbent on the world, including the funeral, where farewell speeches must be made with a list of pious lies, the visits of condolence which, due to the tact of friends and colleagues, may last for several days or even weeks, the general spiritual comfort which is not only a matter of decency but, alas, often a real emotional need, and, finally, the material provision furnished by the world in the form of pensions and so on. Finally? By no means, because there is still the remorse caused by the neglect of obligations: what wrong did I do to the dead, and am still doing to his wretched family?

Here too the grocer element in most of the fears is emphasized by death. But the world is afraid of my death not only because it might burden it, or because it may in some way or another feel itself responsible for it. I think the warning forefinger of my death is of more importance: you look out, your turn will come! Of course this admonition reaches the eardrum with varying intensities; the young hardly hear it, the elderly nod approvingly, the aged pretend to be deaf. But whether we recognize it or not, it is to be recorded: the dead has died not only in his own person, but also as a

part of the world. He has gone from this world, and even if by no more than the size of a mote and the weight of an electron, he is lost to it. It is not a question for discussion here why he did it and for what purpose, although it would be equally true to say that we simply don't know. There is one thing we know for sure: whether his death was a good death or a bad, too soon for his personal plans or taking place in due time, whether it was a natural or a violent death, the consequence of his own conduct or an accident, whether he was buried as a suicide or a war victim, whether he died the martyr to an idea or was knocked out with a beer bottle in a pub, in good health or sick, happily or unhappily—is all of no importance. What matters is that he ended his life not only upon the commands of his personal destiny, but also on behalf of society as well. Whether also of nature, I wouldn't dare to ask.

I am unable and unwilling to deny my cool commonsense even in the face of death. But—although I am an old man—I am equally unable to conceal my dismay at the sight of the mad helplessness which seizes the overwhelming majority of mankind on the question of death. Whether instinctively or in full awareness, it is a greatly discussed and readily understood fact that brain, spirit and body are equally unwilling to deal with the thought of death, and still more unwilling to look it straight in the face and take cognizance of what they see. Our relationship to death floats in a state of constant equivocation. Shocking as it is, this equivocation is deliberate. It does not spring from our ignorance about the final things, but on the contrary, from the obfuscation of our little knowledge. The weakness of our fallible humanity leads us to permanent self-delusion. We suffer from claustrophobia, and wish to transfer the limits of human life, despite the body's better knowledge, into infinite space, eternity and endless time, even though we accept it as a truth that the life of animals ends with their death. Since we know that not even space is empty, that it is not dominated by "nothingness," we cannot, or rather we do not want to imagine that personal existence ends with "nothingness." No one is compensated for the end of individual existence by the consolation that his neighbours, that is, mankind, will continue to live; though this is the exact analogy of "not empty" space. The desperate effort humanity makes to cover its face before the blinding darkness of death is really affecting. From the earliest beginnings it has tried to assuage this greatest of all agonies by superstition, religion, arts and other means, always with one and the same purpose: to give man strength and confidence. Just watch the primitive savage devotedly obeying the howling orders of his masked sorcerer. Or watch the confidence and resolution of the congregation responding to the priest at the altar. Or watch the artist—how

much strength he takes, and gives again, from his work—sometimes. All of them are struggling against death.

Death is already present in our life, not only in the form of diseases which in actual fact rarely have to do with our future end. Like a torch in darkness, death often flashes through our best moments, leaving a little soot in the soul. There are people in whom it rests for a longer time, and unfortunate and therefore noble-minded ones in whom it darkens every hour of life. These are the prophets of death, a function of which they are unaware. Like so many black banners, their very personalities are evidence of the omnipresence of death. They should have out respect and compassion, but their portion is a shrug and an indulgent smile.

Just think of the damage caused by the grocer element so violently intermingled in our life, of all the startling eccentricities and ridiculous maggots running throughout our senescent brains! My friend Aurél Bernáth wrote about an uncle of his, a former country editor, in whose study eye and breath were hemmed in by vast cupboards everywhere; they were all stuffed with old newspaper clippings, which he cut out with large scissors and arranged according to always changing principles and systems, although he must have known that his occupation would be of no use either to him or to the world. But—did he in fact know it? My father gave up his legal practice in 1904, took no more cases, returned his diploma, but for the next ten years his shelves, filled with the files and occupying almost a whole room, were still kept in our flat in Báthory Street; I used to look at them with awe whenever a door happened to open, and admire the bundles of documents giving out thick clouds of dust on sight.

Can it be true that old age has nothing to do but let the empty gestures of the past tick over mechanically? Let us disregard for the moment the new and much appreciated role of grandfather and grandmother—a role to be played less and less frequently. How are we to qualify that human spirit—to take it to the extreme—that society, which puts its old people at the top of a tree, like some Negro tribes, and shakes the tree until the weaker fall; they are killed. The rest may survive till the next tree-shaking. Is our life as utilitarian as that? Not even the wolves kill the old wolves, at most they leave them to their fate if they cannot run fast enough. The animal retires in the hour of death to a hiding-place, where it ends its life in dignified solitude. We are not entirely responsible for our senile vacillation ourselves, the grocer society has a major share in the slower or faster development of our senility. As also in our unnatural and exaggerated fear of death.

Only one reaction can be considered worthy of the human spirit: biting into itself. The only worthy answer to mortal fear is suicide. Homeopathic

treatment—to cure death with death. He who cannot resign himself to his mortality should commit suicide, or he makes a laughing-stock of himself. Although this is an extreme conclusion, not borne out as a rule—fortunately?—by our life of compromises, I cannot imagine a more precise and poetic solution to mortal fear.

It could of course be objected that it is unrighteous—I was about to write unlawful. Because my life is not my private property, neither by its origin, nor its character, nor even by its consequences. I have received it as a gift. . . . but did I ask for it? They gave it, anticipating my consent. As a child I actually made use of life, and from this again they concluded that I gave my consent, thereby abusing my nonage. The moment I was entered in the land-register of society, my topographical number, my site and my measurements were recorded; it would need a very strong internal earthquake indeed to break away from the record. And then, have I the right to refuse to repay all that was invested in me in the form of education, learning, the training of soul and body, the lessons in the dance steps of social behaviour? I grow up among creditors, and they will whisper in my ears to my last minute. And I myself breed more and more debtors.

But what is even worse, I feel attracted to both the one and the other.

There is no other possible answer to all this than a firm “no,” without giving any reasons. At best a single argument might be put forward: it is true that I consider myself a defaulter, since I deprive the community of my life, which is not my exclusive property; but please, just take criminal proceedings against me! I certainly shan't try to get out of it, if a court exists which declares itself competent to hear the case. Only find one! Every one of its members would sooner blow his brains out than pronounce judgment against me.

Just imagine a flock of sheep grazing on the meadow, with an obstinate black sheep amongst them. Let us assume that they are merinos. Let us also assume that nature is kindly and has given them lush, sweet-tasting grass instead of a barren slope where the scarce grass and moss must be torn from the bare rocks; and that they have a limpid brook running beside the meadow, with no Aesop's wolf. There is enough salt. Thunderstorms are unknown in the region, no lightning or thunder disturbs the sunlit peace of their rumination. And let us further assume that they have a good, peaceable shepherd who never breaks the leg of an errant sheep in sudden anger; his dog does not bite them, it only barks every now and then. They live peaceably in the cloud of their bitter wool smell.

But then there comes a wolf and kills one of them. The black sheep, certainly of a highly neurotic nature, says to himself “Suppose he had

killed *me!* It's only mere chance it wasn't me he devoured but my aunt. It's true there has been no wolf in this country for the last hundred years, but suppose that in another hundred years another wolf turns up and eats me! It's true that wolves don't live to a hundred years, and it's also very probable that I shall not live to see my hundredth birthday—but one never knows. I am not protesting about this particular wolf, but about the possibility of wolves in general. It's a pretty sort of life which—although in my subconscious—exposes me to the menace of being consumed by wolves without my approval and probably against my will! It is a pretty poor flock of sheep that is incapable of protecting my aunt and at the appropriate moment would be incapable of saving me from being digested in the stomach of an imaginary wolf! Let alone that the undoubted existence of the wolf leads me to the conclusion that there are even more evil beasts; I can instantly invent imaginary beings at will, with imaginary names, such as lion, hyena or bear. As can be seen from their names, they must be real monsters. But if you prefer it, the winged dragons or sea snakes living in my dreams, coming forth one morning and biting me in the throat. No, under such circumstances I do not want to live any longer."

A neurasthenic black sheep? Or a Lucifer in sheepskin, with his stupid "*non serviam*"?

Is death an outrage? An offence? A blow to one's self-respect? A kick from a dirty boot in our most sensitive part? Which cannot be made noble unless we offer ourselves and receive it deliberately?

A healthy man—in all the varied complex sense of the word—is only entitled to be afraid of death as long as he is not ripe for it, that is, before he has become suitably old. With a little sober commonsense this fear is small enough to fit into a back pocket. We can help ourselves by growing still older. But if at the proper time we reach the place from which those commands will summon us, we wipe our nose, lift our hat and, with a painful smile, surrender our bones. It can be done safely, it will be the proper consummation of all the ups and downs of life, and we may even renounce the consolation of the other world, if we wish. The grave will be the reward of our pains.

And let me add my blessing to it. With my limited capacities I have been meditating on the nature of death and it's reassuring for me to have got no further. I see no flash of light beyond the darkness, but this is precisely what I am relying on—the inconceivable. It is undoubtedly a desperate hope which I cannot translate into human language, but what else is there to believe in, as I watch the non-stop self-destruction of mankind? I set a grain of sand against the ocean. That is to say, I do my job.

GYULA ILLYÉS

## THE MAKER

I

Like a voyeur  
I watched their coming together  
among the springs,  
the watchmaker's gaze  
of pointed steel, and  
his tweezers—  
the way they were testing one another!—

It was all explained to me in advance,  
anxiously I watched  
as under the cover of a blue flame  
in the test-tube, two thoughts  
of the chemist were gladly becoming  
better acquainted.

A stirring among the golden springs,  
a tentative whirr of a new creature  
trying its wings,  
teetering on the twigs  
of the nest's rim.

More ardent  
than two lithe bodies dancing  
together, embracing,  
those two  
thoughts so different from each other  
frolicked and turned  
struggling  
for life, for death,

finding their fulfilment  
in a third.

2

As a babe in the hands of a midwife  
 begins to live, a success,  
 tiny, naked,  
 powerful,  
 it kicked among the wheels and springs,  
 a deed that has been given  
 life and body almost  
 like our own.  
 It came with me,  
 came as my perpetual  
 dog, my master  
 on my leash,  
 myself on leash.

3

With eyes more screwed-up than an ant's,  
 on the nib of my pen  
 it turns, spying  
 on my work—  
 it lurks, waiting to find  
 a gap,  
 a split-second only, to rush  
 through space  
 exchanging its message  
 for another.

4

Glistening,  
 the file slid back and forth;  
 shrieking as though  
 by its own light,  
 the copper rod, thick  
 as a finger in the vise;  
 jammed,  
 jumped, it too  
 wanted to do something  
 by itself.

Then from that oily palm  
 like a tiny fish  
 rushing with purpose from the instant of its birth,  
 it wanted to leap  
 among companions,  
 into its element,

knowing its place from the start.

5

What a fate. We have no  
 director to guide us, no  
 thread to follow, only  
 this work in our hand,

this quivering little compass.

This is the oldest  
 god, a dog sniffing  
 the long trail to where we are

from the time when islands  
 floated and the mountains rose  
 ever so slowly,  
 as though to show there is direction:  
 an order needs something  
 more than itself,

needs companions.

6

What humiliation!  
 What a spur to pride,  
 that the premiere bit of good counsel  
 for our far-famed human  
 mind—to tell the truth its  
 most brilliant argument—was  
 the original gift of  
 the exchanges between  
 the two thumbs and the index  
 fingers . . .

7  
 Nothing's sweeter than the ecstasy  
 of such revenge!  
 No god, no leader  
 protects me,  
 only that ardor,  
 frailer than an inchworm  
 at my fingertip  
 —what does it accomplish?—  
 to set  
 something right.

This purpose  
 is no longer mine alone,  
 this challenge  
 risen from the dust, that says  
 go on, and

the stars will change places!

—By our will.

8  
 To grasp the first clue  
 of a puzzle, the neck of a net,  
 the purpose of my being alive here on earth,  
 of my servitude,  
 from what work whispers to me,  
 and then the network of the planets,

whatever is confused, obscure  
 even in the tissue of the light,  
 or in my mind,  
 —that is servitude; perdition;  
 dying.

To stand face to face, to grapple  
 head on like a pair of wrestlers  
 locked in the fight to the death, yes,  
 to fight it out with  
 death, with  
 fear,

although smeared with mud, to carry to safety  
 something pure.

The order, the order that suits me.

9  
 What poverty is this,  
 what wealth,  
 never to have known a handshake  
 more stirring to the heart,  
 more stimulating than the touch  
 of the Lord

—it was no longer my hand guiding  
 hammer and wedge  
 but His on mine.

10  
 Well, I create too.  
 I can make things.  
 Since then, the Rival hasn't shown  
 his spectral face.

Jealous, eh? Put to shame?

That time I had to spread the sheaf of reeds  
 between four stakes to make a roof,  
 the heavens began to fall,  
 tumbling, thundering, uncontrollable—

fell in hail on the front garden.

O.K., that one died.

But not its longing  
to be eternal, nor  
its memory.

11

All the mines, blast furnaces, atomic piles  
of Europe, America, all the continents  
and planets yet to be reached  
in the future

cannot squeeze  
into one fist as much power, as much knowledge  
as you,  
the first

to swing an axe-handle,  
sky-crushing.

12

How sad it is to be an orphan,  
to have no step-father  
but the one I raise.

It is pitiable to be alone,  
the one whom nobody can love  
but she whom I can teach  
how to love.

Facing nothingness,  
hell simmering with its secrets?  
The labyrinth of our fears.

Taking in hand, at last, slowly,  
assiduously, moving well,  
our face, too,  
the divine.  
The one which faces itself.

In our children  
reunited.

13

With these mortal eyes  
 to learn what I am here to do,  
 the job that waits for me to do it,  
 for which, somewhere,  
 a peasant, hoeing, sends me this  
 glass of wine,  
 a worker touching down his soldering-iron  
 sent light  
 into my room,

to find with mortal eyes  
 the eternal task:  
 Make the future speak!  
 —already it is quarreling with death,

skillfully, intelligent,  
 bustling, with  
 authority.

To do the job  
 well, to our liking  
 —yes, like good  
 love-making.

Almost stroking its face  
 in gratitude.

To leave it there,  
 to look back a few times  
 on the one who lies there satisfied;  
 she keeps my riches,  
 conceiving my future,  
 the meaning, maybe forever, of all  
 I was here for,

mortal, imperishable.

*Translated by  
 Daniel Hoffman*

# WHAT HUNGARIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH?

by

ANDREW FELDMÁR

In the April 6, 1967 issue of *The New York Review of Books* a short query was published which read: "I should appreciate receiving from your readers observations and criticism concerning the present state and availability of Modern Hungarian Poetry translated into the English language." It was signed by me and my address followed. Over 85,000 copies of this issue were printed and almost 60,000 of these were mailed to subscribers. I received only fourteen replies: three from Great Britain, the rest from the U.S.A. Considering that *The New York Review* is the best literary journal in North America, if not in the entire English-speaking world, the mere paucity of this feeble echo was disheartening in itself.

One of the first letters to arrive was written by Burton Raffel, associate professor of English at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His blunt but honest reply could perhaps best summarize the outcome of this little experiment: "Your query . . . as to the availability of modern Hungarian poetry in English, can, I think, only be

answered by a flat, 'what Hungarian poetry in English?'"

In what follows I would like to touch upon some of the possible reasons for this apparent lack of interest in Hungarian poetry, using the letters I have received as guide-posts. It is hoped that the readers of this article might wish to contribute their views on the subject; I am sure that the editors of *The N.H.Q.* would welcome and carefully consider all opinions.

Perhaps the most serious problem concerns the quality of existing translations. Burton Raffel writes: "I have seen, in *The N.H.Q.*, some attempts at verse translation. One can only call them attempts; the quality is very poor." Michael Paul Novak, assistant professor of English at Saint Mary College in Xavier, Kansas, mentions several anthologies<sup>1</sup> published outside Hungary, then he notes: "The major weaknesses of all of the above translations are misguided attempts to follow the rhyme schemes of the originals, artificial, awkward diction, and wordiness." It may be worthwhile to look

<sup>1</sup> Watson Kirkconnell, *A Little Treasury of Hungarian Verse*, Washington, D.C.: American Hungarian Federation, 1947.

Watson Kirkconnell, *The Magyar Muse*, Winnipeg: Kanadai Magyar Újság, 1953.

Egon Kunz, *Hungarian Poetry*, Sydney: Pannonia, 1955.

J. Grosz and W. A. Boggs, *Hungarian Anthology, A Collection of Poems*, Munich: Griff, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Burton Raffel, *Charil Anwar—Indonesian Poet*. From *The Literary Review*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1967, pp. 133-157.

<sup>3</sup> See for example: W. H. Auden, *The Lay of Hrym and Brunhild's Hel-Ride*, translated from the Icelandic in the *N.Y.R.* of B., September 28, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Ezra Pound, *The Confucian Odes*, N.Y.: New Directions, 1954.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: S. Burnshaw, *The Poem Itself*, N.Y.: The World Publishing Co., 1960.

This book is an excellent introduction for English-speaking people into French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian poetry. For the philosophy of giving prose translations accompanied by generous commentaries, see Burnshaw's *Introduction* to this book.

<sup>6</sup> I have received two translations of a poem (*They Walled up Every Window*) by Tibor Tollas who now lives "in exile" in Vienna or Munich. One was by T. Melnechuk, the other by Watson Kirkconnell. I have never seen the original, but judging by either of the English versions, the poem is sheer propaganda without the slightest poetic merit. There may be value in publishing occasional pieces of poetry with a political bias (e.g., David Ray's *From the Hungarian Revolution*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1966) but there is no denying that the important events of Hungarian literature are still taking place in Hungary. Many potential translators living out-

a little deeper into the practical problems of translating Hungarian poetry. Let me quote here from Dr. Raffel's letter once more: "Hungarian poetry is surely not easy to translate. No poetry is easy to translate. On the other hand, if not translated by poets, poetry should not be translated at all. It is better to be silent than to betray. And the fact is that poetry from an apparently alien linguistic and cultural situation *can* be made to work in English." To prove this, he enclosed a sample of his own work<sup>2</sup>: excellent translations of modern Indonesian poetry. Yes, the translator should be a poet—a W. H. Auden<sup>3</sup>, or an Ezra Pound<sup>4</sup>. That is a necessary, but by no means a sufficient condition of success. How many good poets are there who write in English, and also understand Hungarian well? I know of none! There is a need then for sensitive and accurate translators to prepare prose versions of poems. Many<sup>5</sup> would stop right here and attempt to go no further. The pre-occupation of providing English verses to the *entire* poetry of another nation's literature must prove to be disastrous. Some poems simply cannot be translated, others are not worth translating, and still others should wait for the awakening kiss of their own individual Prince Charming, and not be farmed out on commission by the dozen. Every time

side Hungary have lost all touch with young, contemporary, living and breathing poets and their works, due to pseudo-political, not literary reasons.

<sup>2</sup> A line taken from Ruth Sutter's version of one of Attila József's poems which appeared in the *Chicago Review*.

<sup>3</sup> In the Spring, 1967 issue of the *Tri-Quarterly*, published by Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. This issue was dedicated to "Tradition and Innovation in Eastern European Literature," and turned out to be a valiant, well-executed and successful venture.

<sup>9</sup> Let me just mention here the problem of the editor who judges and "corrects" translations without a perfect knowledge of Hungarian. In the Autumn, 1966 issue of *The N.H.Q.*, several verse translations appeared over my name. A short 17-liner was printed after more than 25 changes had been made in the original. Due

I read a mangled English version of one of my favourite Hungarian poems, Frost's definition of poetry comes to mind: "that which gets lost from verse and prose in translation."

The number of poor translations is ever growing. Why? Because poets of the English-speaking world are unlikely to learn Hungarian. Because very few Hungarians who have mastered the English language adequately are in touch with either Hungarian poetry or English poets<sup>6</sup>. New channels of communication need to be opened up urgently! Then no one would write "fit your face to the window"<sup>7</sup> when the poet said "melt (or flatten yourself) into the window-pane." Even when such partnerships do exist, the result does not seem to do justice to intricate and melodious poetry, such as Attila József's, for instance. George Gomori and Matthew Zion<sup>8</sup> commit dozens of inaccuracies, and yet can only produce English verse that probably no decent magazine would even consider publishing, were they sent in as originals. I could go on and on<sup>9</sup>. Even the poem W. H. Auden praises, writing "I am convinced that *The Boy Changed into a Stag Cries out at the Gate of Secrets* by Ferenc Juhász is one of the greatest poems written in my time," is a plodding, pedestrian attempt compared with the

to a "pressing deadline" I was not consulted about the alterations. Needless to say, the result was far from satisfactory. Let me illustrate. One line had "burning throats of current" in place of my "grilling jerks of current," I suspect the correction read "burning throats," and "throats" was just a printer's error; even then, however, the Hungarian clearly implies the "interrogating" or "cross-examining" sense of "grilling." I might have agreed that "grilling jerks" was too colloquial and/or misleading, but the editor should have been able to consult the original Hungarian before committing this blunder. All this may sound like so much hair-splitting, but my point is that distances—be they geographic or linguistic—must be bridged by sustained and painstaking dialogue, or even argument if necessary. One cannot be overly sensitive when it comes to translation. "It is better to be silent than to betray."

beauty of the original. Auden must have read between the lines and come to the right conclusion in spite of the poor quality of the translation.

Ruth Sutter wrote to me from San Francisco that "my own experience leads me to believe that people in the U.S. who care for poetry *are* interested in Hungarian poetry; one has only to provide the translations—hopefully, ones that do justice to the poetry. . . . As far as I have been able to discover, however, few—if any—U.S. writers are actively engaged in this work." My own experience in Canada has been similar but with emphasis on the scarcity of people "who care for poetry." It may then be presumptuous to ask for much, when—in North America at least—interest in even the best and most original poetry is at a very low ebb indeed. How could there be a market—let alone a competitive one—for Hungarian poetry in translation, when even talented American poets find publishing their own work a difficult and unprofitable task<sup>10</sup>?

<sup>10</sup> Witness the Atlantis Editions, published in Spain, of Richard O'Connell or Jack Lindeman. Or consider that in 1961 New Directions printed only 8,000 copies of Thomas Merton's *Original Child Bomb*.

<sup>11</sup> (i) Ted Hughes and Daniel Weissbort, who edit *Modern Poetry in Translation*, were thinking of coming out with a Hungarian issue. Mr. Weissbort was also planning to compile an East European anthology, with a Hungarian section.

(ii) Penguin Books commissioned David Wevill, a Canadian living in London, to translate Ferenc Juhász poems. Peter Redgrove, an English poet, is working on Sándor Weöres—also for Penguin.

I received news of many recent and current efforts<sup>11</sup> to bring the verse of Hungary to English-speaking readers. I can only hope that these will be better guided and more inspired than what has gone before. There must be a way to share the beauty and excitement of the poetry written in Hungary today—if not with millions, then at least with a handful!

\*

*We publish the above article in the hope that it will start a discussion. Publication does not, of course, mean that we agree with every point made.*

*The problem of translating Hungarian verse into other languages is part of the wider one of translating poetry as such. Many, the world over, are concerned, methods of tackling the job differ, and so do opinions—we do not think of ourselves as altogether unprejudiced. Andrew Feldmár's personal, thought provoking piece will, we are sure, prompt others to have their say.*

(iii) John Horder in England, was reported to be working on an edition of Attila József.

(iv) Paul Tábori in New York, and Thomas Kabdebo in London, are working on a very extensive anthology, along the lines of the French Gara anthology, enlisting the help of numerous English poets.

(v) Clark Mills, publisher and editor of Voyages Press in New York is reported to have plans for a volume of Endre Ady.

(vi) Béla Királyfalvi and M. P. Novak were working on Ady, József and Juhász, but were planning to concentrate on József alone.

OTTÓ ORBÁN

GAIETY AND GOOD HEART

On this heavenly molehill  
where a long-drawn-out war is being waged besides the local massacres  
and the anonymous heroes of time squatting in the dug-outs of their days  
know that a smile is only self-deception and joy is death's moratorium  
for major causes are composed of minor causes  
for victory is unreal in a battle where  
peasants' huts are bombed with figures  
for the business of living is a master sculptor and can twist a man's  
face to a sheep's  
and in hunger there is neither poetry nor sense of the fundamentals  
on this earth where poverty is no news  
and no one is fool enough to stammer or cry out in shock  
for who has not clambered down from some cross or other  
and who has not soaked his nail-stuck feet in a bowl of water  
what typist has not forgotten her lover's unforgettable face  
where everybody but everybody has shaken hands with the bereaved widow  
assuring her of his sympathy gazing deep into her eyes  
and has cabled ALL THE BEST on hearing of the resurrection of Lazarus  
where the idea of endurance was invented to meet the torture-chamber  
where there is no one who has not seen it all  
and who does not have endless opportunities  
and who would gladly exchange state affairs for a fishing-rod  
on the breast of this barren mother  
when the stars of cosmic paralysis transfix you to the dust  
and you lean on the rail and look down into the valley  
you can see the hope of the age the little rickety truck  
stuffed with whatever has been salvaged from the fire  
sticks of furniture sacks stewpans chickens  
like an unkillable bombardier-beetle  
like a tin-jowled reptile flashing headlamp-eyes  
and lolling out its panting petrol-tongue like a child  
while in front of the flames embossed on its jolting flanks  
the nickel trade-mark shines:  
Gaiety and Good Heart

*Translated by Edwin Morgan*

# TOWARDS A NEW SCIENCE POLICY\*

by

MAURICE GOLDSMITH

Concern with national science policy is recent: it was just four years ago—in October 1963—that OECD held the first historic Ministerial meeting on science. The concern arose from the now accepted view of the key part science and technology have to play in developing the strength, progress and prestige of countries, and from the fact that governments in all advanced countries have become the major supporters of scientific activity. In all industrialized countries, at least one per cent and sometimes as much as 3 per cent of GNP is spent on R and D of which about one-tenth is spent on basic research. In the OECD countries as a whole, the state bears at least one-third, and sometimes more than two-thirds of the cost. There was recognition, therefore, that if science and technology were to be used wisely in the national interest there must be a policy for wise deployment, and also a policy for the deliberate fostering of science and technology. Thus, science policy was seen to be more than “science and economic growth”: it had to embrace a policy *for* science and a policy *in* science.

But there does not exist a single national policy concerning science in this, or indeed in any other country. It may be that we can develop such a policy, but this would require a deliberate statement of social emphasis absent today. What exists in practice is a range of interrelated policies, within and without science, at different levels. Under these circumstances, there is no explicit statement of national objectives: neither can desirable actions be identified easily, nor responsibilities be allocated to each implementing agency. It's really a hotch-policy.

That is why the Council for Scientific Policy, in its first Report last year, could lay down in general terms only its view of the tasks of a national

\* Paper read at the Leeds Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, on September 4, 1967.

science policy. They were: "to maintain the environment necessary for scientific discovery; to ensure the provision of a sufficient share of the total national resources; to ensure that there is balance between fields and that others are not avoidably neglected; to provide opportunities for interfertilization between fields, and between the scientific programmes of nations."

It has been assumed thus far that in national science policy we are face-to-face with two problems: a general one of co-ordination, and a more basic one of priorities, the allocation of limited resources among competing claimants. In fact, it is true that the way we now divide up our resources represents not the use of rational criteria, but the accretion of past empirical decisions:

*And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always deteriorating  
In the general mass of imprecision of feeling,  
Undisciplined squads of emotion.*

Is this hopelessness, expressed by T. S. Eliot in *East Coker*, to continue to be valid for decision-making in and for science? Or, can we present an ideal and universal balance of scientific activity to which we can direct our sights?

Sir Solly Zuckerman, chief scientific adviser to the British Government, presents the realistic viewpoint. He states: "I find it difficult to believe that we shall ever be able to decide about the disbursement of our scientific resources by use of some administrative principle dramatically different from the one which determines our actions today." There are, on the other hand, those—such as de Solla Price—who believe that if we can learn why science works as it does, and how it reacts with society, we might discover a key leading to a more efficient science policy.

While I cannot deny the significance of Sir Solly's vast experience, and while I support without reserve the basic research undertaken by Price, I should like to follow up the viewpoint of Alving Weinberg, director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He believes that the value of science (in both philosophical and scientific terms) cannot be determined from within science. It must be judged from outside. He has suggested, therefore, that "large-scale public support be given a field of science *only* if it related well with respect to certain external criteria. These are—technological merit, scientific merit, and social merit." I feel the time is now come for a statement of science policy in terms more closely related to national objectives.

I believe we need first to define the goals of our society, and then to see how science can help us to arrive at those goals. In so doing, we may obtain a better understanding of the interrelationship of science and production, of science in its aspect as a direct productive force, itself becoming possibly an *industry* of inventions and discoveries. (I distinguish this from innovation, the process by which an invention is translated into a product and becomes available for marketing.)

We have reached a stage in science of science studies in which it is possible, even without much specialist knowledge, to pose new questions and to plan intelligent research work. There is not so much a lesson to be learned, as Bacon put it, as a task to be done. What will emerge, I hope, is an understanding of the necessary and co-ordinated research that has to be engaged in by many disciplines.

All societies, whatever their socio-economic forms of organization, have entered the stage in which their future will be determined by the changes brought about by what, for want of a better term, we call "the technological revolution." This revolution is not understood clearly because we are involved in it: the majority of us—and this includes, unfortunately, politicians—have little idea about the substance and long-term dimensions of this "revolution." I suppose it is because wherever a new environment forms it is invisible and what we perceive is the old environment. But the "revolution" can be seen to be expressing itself by imprinting a new character on the conditions and context of individual and social behaviour. The non-traditional activities of groups of young people in all countries is part of this expression. I see them as demonstrating, in Einstein's words, "the poetry of the intense longing for new human values," or, an attempt to tell us what is our new environment. This is to be seen also in the increased demand for social science studies in our Sixth Forms. It is an expression of concern with our new society and with the part that science has to play in it. It is a statement that we cannot live by science alone.

Because no human activity can be based on a *tabula rasa*, we are involved in two main, but different, social processes: the one traditional, based upon the industrial revolution and now two hundred years old, and the other always new, because based upon moment-to-moment-changing science and technology. The hand of the traditional is still everywhere, and of course, we shall never be able to escape its palm prints. For example, the textile industry has been transformed by the coming of man-made fibres so that it is now an engineering industry. Yet, the traditional cotton industry still everywhere exerts its pressures. It is dangerous to assume that these two social processes are changing—the one into the other. They are not: they

are in a conflict which will require great wisdom to resolve. The science of science has a contribution to make here.

I have referred to the inadequacy of the phrase "the technological revolution." It is inadequate because there is a tendency to identify this "revolution" with purely technical processes. It is more than that. We are concerned with human behaviour at a level far different from that involved in the industrial revolution. Dennis Gabor expressed it well when he wrote: "Till now man has been up against Nature: from now on he will be up against his own nature." I would prefer to call this the "period of human revolution," because the technological developments will enthrone the individual as never before—providing we acquire soon enough the wisdom necessary to prevent our self-destruction in war and racial violence.

In this situation we need to examine carefully the clichés which express, and reinforce, our current behaviour and attitudes. In so doing, we may discern what are the old and tried methods we must change, or discard, if we are not to perpetuate backwardness. An example of this was the call of the old Advisory Council for Scientific Policy for a basic revision of the school curricula in the sciences.

I wish now to look at our concept of "research." For me, this is basic to the consideration of priorities in national science policy. Suggest that we take a hard look at science as a productive force, and in many scientific/academic circles, even today, shudders of pure unease will be apparent. There is here a hang-over from cultural forms that are almost gone. In the days when the scientist was an indulgent amateur working in privileged—but even then, limited—loneliness, the great Faraday (or was it the great Franklin?) when asked what possible use there might be for one of his discoveries, could only reply with reason: "Why, Madam, what is the use of a newborn baby?" He was engaged in "basic research." He was pursuing knowledge for its own sake, and thoughts of application were far from him. In fact, Faraday laid the foundations for the electrical industry, but he did not—and could not—foresee such development: no more than Rutherford would foresee the development of atomic energy. Rutherford, as we know, was opposed to speculation. "Don't let me catch anyone talking about the Universe in my laboratory," he would say. But his day and Faraday's are gone. Although the Faraday story is a good one, I think it is high time we used it only for history-telling. It is as irrelevant, and meaningless, in today's conditions as a six-language dictionary of plastics and rubber technology would have been 150 years ago.

Research is considered generally to consist of a continuous spectrum of activity with three major segments: basic, applied, and development. Basic

research is understood to be that type of research which is free-wheeling and undetermined in goal, and where the primary aim is to obtain new knowledge. Applied research is considered to be the application of that new knowledge to conceived ends. The division may have been meaningful up to, say, 1914, when science was still the domain of the virtuosi, when the relationship between science and technology was scarcely defined, and when the scientist-made myth of the ivory tower purist was dominant.

I am happy to recall that some 25-30 years ago in an essay in that remarkable collection of his, *Time: The Refreshing River*—which much influenced me—Dr. Joseph Needham wrote with great understanding: “There is really no distinction between ‘pure’ and ‘applied’ science. The common distinction between ‘science for its own sake’ and ‘science for its practical usefulness’ is unsound. Human motivations are always too mixed. There is really only science with long-term promise of applications and science with short-term promise of applications. True knowledge of nature emerges from both kinds of science.”

This view is reinforced in some interesting studies undertaken in the USA. They are to be found, for instance, in Vol. 1. of a report on “Basic Research in the Navy,” dated April 1959. It was prepared by the Arthur D. Little company and is an early “research on research” study. Its implications are expressed, more scientifically I believe, in *Project Hindsight*, a Dept. of Defence study of the utility of research. What follows is based on an article on this Project that appeared in *Science* in June 1967. It is by Dr. Chalmers W. Sherwin, now Deputy Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Technology, who suggested the study originally when at the Dept. of Defence, and Col. Raymonds S. Isenson, the director of the study.

In recent years, the Defence Dept. has been spending 6 to 7 thousand million dollars a year on research, development, testing and evaluation: 5.5 thousand million is spent on the last three activities, which result generally in equipment whose military value can be measured in some way to satisfy inquisitive Congressmen. But research projects present another problem. During the past twenty years, the Dept. has spent more than 10 thousand million dollars on research. In the current fiscal year, a total of about 1.5 thousand million dollars is allocated to research and exploratory development. Of this, 300 million to 400 million dollars is being spent, mainly in universities, on basic research; and about one-quarter goes on “undirected research.” Thus, the Defence Dept. is one of the principle supporters of basic research, with expenditures exceeding even those of the National Science Foundation, the body set up to support basic research.

Are these enormous sums really necessary? What is the return on these expenditures? What is the pay-off to the Dept. of its own investments in science and technology? Is there a rationale for the huge support of undirected basic research? Project Hindsight sought to answer these, among other, questions.

The challenge was an economic one. The answers would need to be found in economic benefits. The economic return of a scientific or technical invention is through its utilization in an end-item—a piece of equipment, a process, or an operational procedure. To assess return, it was decided to measure the value of the end-item made possible by the innovation. For military hardware this can be done by comparing the value of an end-item with that of some predecessor end-item which it partly or wholly replaces.

The most difficult step was to identify the key contributions which improved significantly the performance, or reduced the cost, of the successor. It was found that such a key contribution could be traced back to identifiable people at a definite time, or to what they named an Event. This is defined as "a period of creative effort ending with new, significant knowledge or with demonstration of the applicability of a new engineering concept." *Identified Events* are classified, according to the intention with which the work that led to them was carried out, into: *Science Events* (theoretical or experimental studies of a new or unexplored natural phenomena), which might be *Undirected* (the advance of knowledge without regard to possible application) or *Applied or Directed* (to produce specific knowledge or an understanding of phenomena needed for some particular use or uses), and into *Technological Events*.

There were 13 different teams studying 20 systems of diverse character. Their finding was: that it is the interaction of many mutually reinforcing innovations that appear to account for most of the improvement in performance/cost of weapon systems compared to their predecessors. In the larger systems, 50 to 100 Events were common. There was not a dominant invention or discovery which by itself seemed to account for most of the performance/cost increase. Even the invention of the transistor was followed by a long and necessary series of Events before its full benefits could be realized. This was the most significant finding of Project Hindsight; large changes in performance/cost are the synergistic effort of many innovations, most of them quite modest.

The great majority of Events will be technological or applied science, and the isolated invention or the random scientific fact is not likely to fit in, or be utilized. The key to efficient utilization is recognized need. But to recognize need there has to be a very detailed knowledge of either a class

of systems, or a specific system, so that the critical problems can be tackled. The prediction is, therefore, that actual systems—particularly those in the early stages of design—will be the most frequent sources of recognized need.

Of interest, also, is the finding that the average time interval between predecessor and successor is 13 years, and that only 10 per cent of the Events utilized in the successor had occurred by the time the predecessor was designed. Recent technical activity accounts for the specific advances leading to the improved performance. Five to ten years often elapsed before an Event was used. The median delay for scientific Events was nine years, and for technological Events five years. Thus, in a study covering only twenty years undirected work did not play a significant role. However, on the 50-year or more time scale undirected research was declared to be of great value.

The utility of science might be discussed not in terms of its value, but rather in terms of the time to utilization. The Hindsight study has demonstrated that the process by which science moves into technology and use is not in the simple sequence we have been brought up on. Sherwin and Isenson end their report: "It is unusual for random, disconnected fragments of scientific knowledge to find application rapidly. It is, rather, the evaluated, compressed, organized, interpreted, and simplified scientific knowledge that we find to be the most effective connection between the undirected research laboratory and the world of practical affairs. If scientists would see their efforts in undirected science used to a more substantial scale in a time period shorter than 20 years, they must put a bigger fraction of their collective, creative efforts into organizing knowledge expressly for use by society."

I have devoted some of my limited time to this summary of Project Hindsight because I believe that those functional systems capable of applying—what Jantsch calls—"spur and focus" to the general research effort should be favoured consciously. This is the new factor in our redefinition of research. The division into basic and applied, certainly so far as mission-oriented projects are concerned, tends to be confusing. It leads management to concentrate on the wrong things.

Here I want to question a view frequently expressed in government circles, that the reason for division of science between the Department of Education and Science and the Ministry of Technology, was that there were two quite different financial justifications for science. In the case of academic science, there was a fixed sum of money which was what the country could afford to spend, and scientists were invited to advise on how this should be done. On the other hand, the Ministry of Technology in deciding how best to deploy resources had to be guided by economic criteria to

ensure the optimum economic return from them. Through this division of responsibility, it is argued, if something cannot be justified on economic grounds, it might be worth doing for its own sake and fall within the orbit of the DES. This seems to me the height of confusion. This viewpoint expresses the isolationism of basic science and tends to separate off University research from national interests. The Ministry of Technology, above all, must understand the workings and mechanism of basic research if it is to be effective in terms of profitability.

In the definition of research, two factors should be considered: first, the time scale in which the research is likely to find an application, and second, the specificity of application at the time research is begun. Thus, the shorter the time interval and the clearer the area of application, the more "applied" is the research. However, research seen as basic by the researcher, may be regarded as applied from the overall view because it fits into a coherent pattern of related work. Further, success in applied research greatly expands the need for basic research.

Research comes to be seen as a continuing process—a kind of continuum of diminishing uncertainty in application—in which the researcher makes choices at stages, and the factors influencing his decision at each stage determine the degree to which his research is basic or applied. It follows then that the fact that research is basic does not mean that it does not have utility: it does not possess this quality at that stage. This, surely, is the position in biomedical research where mission-oriented research always poses basic problems. For example, it was announced at the beginning of this month that Marek's disease, which used to be called fowl paralysis and is estimated to cost the British poultry industry more than £10 m. a year, has been found to be associated with viruses of the type that cause chicken-pox and shingles. This has led to linked studies carried out in "basic" laboratories concerned with fundamental work on the nature of viruses.

There is no opposition between basic and applied research. Harvey Brooks, whose views in part I have been quoting above, points out: "The essential point is that the categorization of research depends on the existing situation in technology and also on the environment in which it is conducted. As definite categories, basic and applied tend to be meaningless, but as positions on a scale within a given environment they probably do have some significance."

I suggest that we should seek to define research by Levels, allied to specific goals, and we shall see that new knowledge may arise at any Level in the research field. The Levels might be as follows:

LEVEL	TYPE OF RESEARCH
Zero	not designed to pay off in any determined period, within twenty years: may or may not be mission-oriented
One	designed to pay off in a determined period, and leads to development
Two	concerned with improving existing products and developing new ideas from Level One
Three	concerned with management and marketing expertise to exploit the new product

Deliberately, I do not use the terms *basic*, *applied*, etc., because of the power of words to condition us to old thinking.

Looked at in this way we see research as a form of activity concerned not only with the production of new knowledge, but also as a productive and sales force. We may be able to introduce a form of quantification, necessarily crude at the moment, by introducing at each Level a technique of rank rating by preference. For this we might make use of all, or some, of the following criteria: cost, length of time to complete; staff required; probability of achieving objective, or potential impact of project on practical application; marketing potential, or relevance of the project to adjacent and significant branches of science; possibility of competition, or being superseded technologically; impact on national prestige and international influence; broad cultural impact. Tooling-Smith, director of the Office of Health Economics, suggests I might add: *uniqueness* in the sense of how many other research teams are in the same field, and *availability* of previously unexploited knowledge.

This approach by ranking through Levels of research must involve studies of long-range national needs. These will provide an opportunity to consider alternative policy structures. We arrive, thus, at links between technical feasibility and social desirability. The researcher finds himself linked with social problems, such as pollution, transportation, urbanization, and industrial growth.

I have dwelt at length on this concept of research because it might help to clear the air about decision-making on priorities. One role of national science policy is to see science clearly as a technique and not as an end in itself. It may very well be, as J. B. Adams suggests, that in time we shall discover other techniques to replace science for this purpose, in the same way as there were techniques for the production of goods and services before science as we know it came along. This is still true in developing countries. But that is an aside. Concentrating on and defining social needs is a proper

field of science, but it does mean that national science policy must be concerned with recasting social problems to accentuate their technological character and to reduce them to a form in which they can be handled by existing institutions. Thus, progress in basic science is linked with the goals of applied science, and vice versa.

What I have suggested is most tentative. I hope I have made it clear that the central problem in science policy must be to suggest the social values to which science must be directed. This is a new way of looking at science, for it incorporates the values of science in the problems of science itself. Ideally, national science policy should be a statement of goals of a community, and of the procedure necessary to achieve the desired objectives. Thus, the problem of priorities falls into line and may be solved en route in defining goals. A closer relationship develops between the economics of choice and the politics of choice. The more we know just what we want to do, the more we shall be obliged to know just how to do it. Governments can then begin to use science policy, as they do fiscal policy, as a social instrument. As interrelationship develops between objectives and policies and this is an iterative process in which objectives are re-defined as resources, threats and opportunities are reconsidered.

And what of the role of the scientist? I see no reason to differ from Sir Henry Tizard's view that a committee made up solely of scientists is an ineffective instrument of policy. In his Haldane Memorial Lecture in 1955, he said: "In pure science there is little room for compromise. There is often room for differences of opinion which can be as acute as in any other branch of human endeavour; but in the end these differences are settled by experiment. I remember an occasion when someone was bold enough to differ violently from Lord Rutherford in print. I asked him if he was going to reply. He laughed and said: 'What's the point of it? We shall know the truth in ten years' time.'"

By contrast, compromise is the rule in politics; "an appeal to experiment is usually impossible, and the need for action may be imperative. So when there is room for much genuine variety of opinion on matters of policy, scientists are apt to behave, in the Gilbertian phrase, like party leaders in each street maintaining with no little heat their various opinions, especially if they are physicists."

The US National Academy of Sciences, through its Committee on Science and Public Policy (COSPOP), recognizes that although scientists do not speak with one voice, they should advise the Government on scientific matters. But how can they be both advocates of a particular plan and judges in assigning priorities? One device is to make surveys of specific disciplines.

There are very good reports now available on, for example, "ground-based astronomy"; on "chemistry; opportunities and needs"; and on "physics: survey and outlook," but they tend to be isomorphic. Weinberg's comment is: "It makes little difference whether the field is astronomy, physics or computers; its achievements have been outstanding, its promise superb, and its needs and tastes very expensive. Nor is this surprising. Each report is prepared by dedicated members of a particular scientific community whose passions and aspirations, as well as knowledge, centre on a single field."

Dr. Kistiakowsky, first chairman of COSPUP, has pointed out that they tried to make certain that "each field has the best spokesmen, that they collect the facts, and that they form their best judgment as seen from their point of view as protagonists of a given science." He thought it would be very unscientific for scientists to accuse each other rashly. "I don't think any single chemist, say, or any single physicist, without first carefully studying the issue involved, has the wisdom to criticize the other science's goals. Each of these reports is an expression of the kind of resources they need for a vigorous and healthy discipline. Whether the goals are essential from a national point of view has to be decided elsewhere."

That is why the Science of Science Foundation has set up a Science Critics Panel, of which Lord Snow is chairman. We propose to take such isomorphic reports and submit them to many-disciplined critical examination.

What is the relationship of the scientist to the Government machine? Psychologist Bernice Eiduson, director of research at Reiss-Davis Child Study Centre, Los Angeles, California, has looked at this for the American scene. Frustration is the keynote, even among the scientists who were "effective" in the Washington political arena. She reports (in *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, October 1966): "The scientists themselves (*involved in her study, that is*) have made certain recommendations for the future. They acknowledge that the situation in Washington moves so quickly and has so little stability that it is difficult to predict the kinds of arrangements that might be more workable. However, they are recommending that the problem might be constructively approached by experimenting with a number of models for using scientists in advisory and consulting capacities... The group proposed, furthermore, that social scientists be called in to design some of these experiments, not only because of their skills, but also because such a task would provide an opportunity for social scientists to demonstrate their much-neglected resourcefulness."

Be all that as it may, the present generation of scientists is the first to have to live with the knowledge that their work has impact not only on the national and international political scene, but also on individual and group

morality and behaviour. In this situation, some insist on rigorous objectivity seeking to keep their political views separate from their scientific work, and others—more correctly, I believe—seek to have some voice in defining the impact of what they have helped to create. Technically, the scientist can describe the hazards of a nuclear experiment, or the effects of a new pesticide, and with these objective eyes they may be neutral in outlook. The problem is to maintain this neutrality, and not to go on to make value judgments when involved in the government machine. Social decisions must be made by the politician and clearly recognized as such. The scientist qua scientist can never be on top, but must always be on tap. But a story about Blondin, the famous French acrobat, is relevant. The occasion was that stupendous day when he crossed Niagara Falls on a tightrope carrying a man on his back. He had gone but a short distance when the man on his back looked down and said: "Br—excuse me—don't you think perhaps we should go back." To which Blondin replied: "Just because you're on top doesn't mean you know where you're going." However, Sir Solly Zuckerman said in the third annual Science of Science Foundation lecture this year: "It is the scientist's employer, whether it be the Government or the board of an industrial company, which commands his service and which has the responsibility for action and which decides whether or not it will follow his advices. If the scientist wants more than this, then he will have to become a politician."

To summarize: National science policy must justify itself in the fulfilment of defined national goals; in so doing, science as a technique will come to be seen as *today's* instrument of choice to help secure those ends, and the "opposition" between basic and applied research will vanish as they appear simply as different levels of research attuned to the fulfilment of national goals.

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# SURVEYS

HANS SELYE

## IGNÁC SEMMELWEIS—THE LESSON FOR US

At a time when the wounds of Europe were beginning to heal, after the storm of the French Revolution and the terrible bloodshed of the Napoleonic campaigns, when the streets of Pest-Buda once again echoed with joyous, optimistic songs, a great son was born to the beautiful city of Pest-Buda. Nobody could then have known that the world would only appreciate his genius when the sufferings resulting from the narrow-minded obstinacy and ignorance of his contemporaries had already led indirectly to his death.

The tragic fate of Ignác Semmelweis, born on July 18, 1818, in Pest-Buda, died in Vienna on August 16, 1865, is today well known. His undisputable merit was to have recognized that those assisting at the deliverance of a child could, and often did, infect the mother, thus giving rise to puerperal fever, a condition which in those days claimed hundreds of young victims. Semmelweis insisted on cleanliness, and on the disinfection of hands, bandages and instruments coming into contact with the woman in labour. His discovery met with no understanding, and instead of appreciating it at its just value his "more experienced" colleagues and superiors attacked him with bitter malevolence, and he was scoffed and

laughed at by his students. His theory was considered eccentric and erroneous by the Institut Français, and also by the influential, experienced Scots gynaecologist, J. Young Simpson.

John Stuart Mill declared that if the laws of geometry had only existed to annoy mankind they would have been repealed long since. Perhaps this seems somewhat of an exaggeration, but the case of Semmelweis proves that facts are often hard and seem to contradict one another.

It is clear to everyone today that our far-sighted scientists can relieve mankind from many deadly infections. Back in the June of 1848, when Professor Kolletschka, who had cut himself during a post-mortem, died, with symptoms similar to those of mothers infected with puerperal fever, the connection should have been recognized by everyone, not only by Semmelweis. Ferdinand von Hebra, the famous Austrian expert on skin diseases, and a contemporary of Semmelweis's, said later that "if the history of human errors were to be written one could hardly show a more apposite example of human blindness. Future generations will wonder how expert and eminent specialists could err so enormously."

Many a scientist has attempted to find an acceptable explanation for the enmity which inflicted such harm on the theory and work of Semmelweis. Certainly a grave responsibility rests upon some of his contempo-

\* This message from Hans Selye was read at a Semmelweis Commemoration in Budapest; on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ignác Semmelweis.

raries, yet nobody can know all factors which played a part in these tragic events. Fifty years later Pasteur produced irrefutable evidence of the existence and role of bacteria. After that it was easy for people to be scandalized over the abysmal ignorance which had ostracized Semmelweis. Today we are aware that he was the pioneer of clinical antisepsis, and a great genius of medical science.

Only consider: if at this very moment somebody were to announce that heart

disease is curable, how long would these saving words continue to meet deaf ears? How long would fifty per cent of mankind have to die of a heart condition until at long last somebody believed them?

We have to pay for everything on this earth, but we humans pay an especially high price for that which is good. So do not let us allow the memory of Semmelweis to be merely a subject of pity; let it be a warning to present and to future generations.

## FROM OUR NEXT NUMBERS

WOMAN'S LIFE IS ONE LONG WAR

*Emil Kolozsvári-Grandpierre*

MY SOLE SELF (Part of a play)

*Sarolta Raffai*

MAKING A LIVING AND MOTHERHOOD—  
THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN HUNGARY

*Egon Szabady*

SINDBAD'S AUTUMN JOURNEY (a short story)

*Gyula Krúdy*

GYULA KRÚDY'S WORLD

*György Sebestyén*

DEVOLUTION IN SCOTLAND

*Zoltán Halász*

THE CHANGING IMAGE OF APOLLINAIRE

*István Vas*

INDIAN PALETTE

*Féler Nagy*

JEAN-PAUL SARTRE: HIS ROAD

*Zádor Tordai*

LAJOS KOROLOVSZKI

## THE DAY WE WENT INTO THE FORUM

To forestall the first suggestion of plagiarism: this title is a quote. It first appeared in the TV-column of the Budapest daily, *Magyar Nemzet*, in a review of the 90-minute programme, *Forum*, on Hungarian Television, on September 17, 1968.

Seated in Studio Two were seven well-known journalists specializing on foreign affairs (Frigyes Léderer, János Hajdu, Tibor Pethő, József Pálffy, István L. Szabó, László Szabó—and myself) with perhaps the most popular and able of Hungarian TV reporters, Tamás Vitray, acting as compère. They proceeded to answer questions by viewers, asked over the telephone in the course of the programme. Calls came in at two telephone boxes on previously given numbers, and the numbers were prominently displayed on the boxes shown on the screen for people who decided to call while the programme was on.

The three passive heroes of the programme were the two journalists and the typist who indefatigably took down and passed on the incoming questions. Needless to say, the telephones rang non-stop—there were 268 calls during the 90-minute programme.

There were, in fact, many more questions in addition, for besides the panel in Studio Two and the telephone calls there, there was another place also being televised as part of the same programme: the Rába Culture House in Győr, where a live audience were at once watching the Budapest programme and asking questions themselves, which were taken up from the monitor before the seven journalists and answered, with an occasional reference to János Avar, a reporter in the Rába Culture House, who answered some of them. All in all, however, only ten of the Győr questions were answered—which was a pity, since this north-western Hungarian town, combining both history and a thriving modern life, certainly

deserved more time. The only excuse was, of course, a very sound one; the pressure of the enormous number of incoming calls in the Budapest studio made it impossible to maintain a proper balance.

After these technical preliminaries the reader may well ask why the programme was so interesting or, for that matter, so important, as to be worth reporting it in *The New Hungarian Quarterly*? Before trying to answer may I make an imaginary aside: as a member of the panel I went through an extremely exciting time in the 90 minutes of the programme, and the fact that I was the editor of the programme by no means diminished my exhilaration. The double role of editor and participant may well make me a partial witness on the one hand, but it also gives me the credibility of an eye-witness on the other. The general response to the programme has justified me in the latter role, that of the eye-witness, the man who was there.

### *New Genre?*

The novelty of *Forum* certainly did not lie in its title, even though it was in fact the first programme to bear this rather obvious title. It lay rather in the content, or to be more precise, in the new form of approach. Hungarian Television has no long past behind it. It only began ten years ago, and there are 1,300,000 television owners in a population of ten million. Compared with foreign—both Western and Eastern—achievements, Hungarian Television has very little to be ashamed of as far as ideas and techniques are concerned. The small lag is entirely due to its late start and the overall economic-technical gap between Hungary and larger, richer countries with greater populations.

There is, however, one field where new

starting-points have been slower and more difficult to find, the field of political discussion. The dissemination of information about home and foreign politics has, from the very beginning, taken an important place, in many forms, and has been given plenty of viewing time. Even at the most cautious estimate, it is undeniable that over the years Hungarian viewers have acquired a wide range of international information. (This can be verified from personal conversations, letters, conferences and the questions and comments at lectures on international politics.) Nonetheless for a long time politics was not included in the group of really interesting programmes, which gave some people the false impression that political programmes are boring *sui generis*. As a result, the next logical step followed: political programmes must not be shown in peak viewing hours.

For two or three years now Hungarian Television has been trying to go further than its former aim, the mere formation of public opinion. There has been a trend not only towards informing and presenting but towards inviting the participation of the public in the formation of political programmes. An increasing number of interviews have been televised, the style of commentaries has become less formal—though still not informal enough—and there have been, for instance, discussions on economic policies. As part of the new tendency programmes such as *Between You and Us*, *Lunch-Break*, *Monitor*, *Model Shop* and *The Third Side of the Coin* have been introduced. The very titles themselves indicate that politics have ceased to appear on the screen in terms of declarations and dicta, but rather that the opinions of certain viewers are offered to the others. Similar or, indeed, even more advanced forms have been adopted by Radio Budapest. The steps leading up to *Forum* included—besides the programmes already mentioned—the pioneering role of a series of the “open trial” type, *Question Time*, and even the telephone-service programme of well-known and popular ex-

perts in the Hungarian language. The immediate predecessor, however, was a programme on foreign politics telecast in May—*From the Headlines to the Comments*. The first part took the audience behind the scenes from the telex room where foreign cables are first received, through all the processes and places, to final publication. In the second part—for the first time in the history of Hungarian Television—Hungarian foreign correspondents answered questions received over the telephone. It immediately became clear from the response to this programme that this second part of the programme could develop into an “adult” type of programme. That was how the idea of *Forum* was born—as a regular programme embracing not only foreign politics but in time other fields of politics, economics and general culture as well. Between the conception and the realization of the idea an event of no small importance occurred—August 21, and the problem of Czechoslovakia became the focus of public attention. The event did not change the decision to put the programme on, but it naturally increased the excitement preceding its *début*.

Telephone calls received during the programme—I am here referring to the calls which expressed opinions on the programme under way—letters and press comments, have unanimously proved that not only was *Forum* a success but it has also—even if unwillingly—created a precedent. No small part has been played in this by the methods adopted: the fact that it was live television, the participation of the public, the need for off-the-cuff replies, the fun of watching the tight-rope performance of the panel; we all enjoy watching somebody perform a “difficult” task in the public eye which might well lead to a flop. What was really important, however, was more than this: the programme opened the door wide to genuine public participation and so helped to democratize public life in Hungary. This is clear from the few letters of disagreement we have received on some of the issues raised.

The journalists sitting in the floodlight, waiting in trepidation for the unpredictable questions—taking off their jackets in the second part of the programme at the suggestion of viewers—gave their answers to the best of their abilities. Not that they said anything radically new or heterodox. The reason why viewers were pleased was the fact that the demands of the programme compelled the members of the panel to speak briefly, naturally and informally, to discuss answers between themselves, to ponder an answer with a troubled frown, or to admit frankly that they could give no answer to a particular question.

#### *Some Statistics*

268 calls, as I said, arrived at the Budapest studio, discounting the live questions of the Győr audience. We answered 51 of them—including the questions from Győr. A moment's thought make it clear that this must have meant a fair speed, especially if one remembers that in order to complete, or check the accuracy, of an answer, the leading reporter rang up *Népszabadság's* correspondent in Prague and the Hungarian News Agency's correspondents in Moscow and London. It would be almost impossible to give an account of all the questions and answers. In so far as the answers are concerned, it was not so much their content as the manner and form of the reply which was new and original. I think it will be more worthwhile to try and give a kind of statistical summary of the questions. There were "delicate" questions as well as "easy" questions, and the proportions of these two types of questions were roughly matched in the answers. In other words: the questions not answered for lack of time were both "easy" and "delicate" questions.

58 questions related to the Czechoslovak situation itself, 38 to the Rumanian and Yugoslav aspects of the problem, 24 to its bearings for Hungary, and 13 to general developments, including mainly the con-

ference of Communist and Workers' Parties planned for Moscow in December. The rest of the questions—which, naturally, alternated—included queries (22) on the domestic and foreign policies of the United States, 16 on developments in the Middle East, 13 on Africa, 10 on China, 8 on West Germany or NATO, 5 on Vietnam, 7 on Albania, 5 on Greece, 3 on Cuba, France and Indonesia, 2 on elections in Sweden and 2 on the Pope's Encyclical. The others might be said to belong to the "miscellaneous column" in these statistics, with the exception of 6 enquiries about the influence of events in Czechoslovakia on football cup matches, in other words, about the decision of UEFA, which had "split" up Europe by holding separate rounds of matches for Socialist and Western-European teams respectively.

As expected, this breakdown shows how much Czechoslovakia was the focus of attention—the programme was telecast on September 19. There was a good deal of evidence that in the absence of the Czechoslovak problem the United States would have ranked first in interest. The relatively small number of questions on Vietnam might seem surprising, but a reasonable explanation here may be that some of the questions about the United States also had a bearing on the Vietnam war, together with the fact that the Hungarian public is very well informed about Vietnam. There was a striking lack of questions on Latin America, and interest in Western Europe was also rather weak. There was only one "English" question: "Has the devaluation of the pound and the gold crisis in general decreased Hungarian exports to the West?" The six questions on Albania obviously coincided with the recent news about that country's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.

#### *The Questions*

A further scrutiny of the questions reveals not so much a curious as a responsible public opinion eager to find out the basic inter-

connections of political events, and it is safe to say that it is also hoping for what one might call more "new bricks" in the building of socialism, and for a situation favourable to the development of international collaboration and the preservation of peace.

Many viewers asked whether there was counter-revolutionary activity in Czechoslovakia or not. Some maintained that in Czechoslovakia a new type of socialism had come into existence. Many callers raised the question of the role and responsibility of the old Czechoslovak leadership, while others enquired about the effects the new federal state in Czechoslovakia was likely to have on Hungarians living there. Many viewers, of course, called to ask the date set for the withdrawal of the Hungarian troops, and many asked who were the persons who invited the Warsaw Pact countries into Czechoslovakia. One group of questions requested more information on the problem, with more live programmes, and a considerable number of callers expressed their anxiety whether the present Czech government would be able to cope with counter-revolutionary tendencies. One question was: "The process of consolidation in Czechoslovakia makes it possible for reactionary elements to go underground. What do you think, and how do you think this can be prevented?" Another anxious question: "Can we trust in normalization in Czechoslovakia when the Communist Party there does not lead a two-front fight?" Typical of the variety of questions are the following: "Today we reject former Czech policies under Novotny, but did we warn Novotny *then* that his policies were wrong?" or "Czechoslovakia is officially a 'socialist republic,' Hungary only a 'people's republic.' Does this mean that Czechoslovakia is closer to communism than Hungary is?"

Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia almost invariably expressed the callers' inability to understand the reasons behind the policies of those countries. As far as Yugoslavia was concerned most of the

questions referred to Yugoslav politics as a whole and to the future of relations between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Rather surprisingly quite a number of the callers were worried whether the volume of Hungarian foreign trade was threatened by recent events in international politics. Many people, of course, enquired about the world conference planned for Moscow and international developments in general. Even if there were one or two rather pessimistic views, the great bulk of the calls expressed the view that, allowing for a possible deterioration in international relationships, the world was not likely to relapse into the old depressing cold-war atmosphere. Questions about the future of international relations, by the way, were answered by the panel in basically the same spirit.

Questions concerning the United States come under two headings: the one concerned the Vietnamese war—"What effect is the outcome of the elections going to have on the war in Vietnam?", "What is Mr. Nixon's policy over the Vietnamese war and relations with the Socialist countries?", "What human and material losses has America sustained in the war?", "What is the responsibility of the United States for the paralysis of the Paris talks?", "What is the United States' basic interest in waging the Vietnam war?" etc. The majority of the other questions can be summed up in one: "What has become of Senator Kennedy's assassin?" In conclusion, many callers wanted to know whether it was possible for Johnson to become President in any way and what significance the votes of the electoral college had. There were relatively few questions concerning the Negro problem in America.

There was a wide range of questions on the Middle East. Some of the more important questions included queries about the possibility of a new war in the area, why the United Nations decision had not been implemented, and what was going to happen to the Suez Canal? Most questions indicated

sympathy for the Arab side in the conflict, but there were also calls supporting Israel. One anonymous caller (some supplied names, some did not), phoned to say: "Who is right in the Israeli-Arab conflict? I think neither. The reason why I am asking for an answer is that I am all for a bit of a laugh." The overall note of the questions betrayed a wish to see an end to the conflict. Quite a few callers enquired about social and political developments in the countries of the Middle East.

There was a mild sensation when no fewer than six viewers called to ask about Tshombe. Viewers were equally interested in the Ben Barka case, the future of Masmaba-Debat, the agreement signed between Sekou Touré and Nkrumah, and the future of the Congo and Nigeria.

Questions about China were general in character, and were mainly centred on its domestic situation and the motives behind Chinese policies.

Questions on Vietnam raised the administrative problems of the liberated areas, and also the same problem asked in connection, with the United States: "What is the original reason of the Vietnam war, why is the United States so involved over it?"

There were several questions concerning the "Black Lion" manoeuvres then taking place in West Germany; other callers were curious about the West German working class and the role of the neo-Nazi party there. Someone also asked why there was still no peace treaty with West Germany.

"What is going on in Cuba now? We hear very little about those parts now. How are we to assess Che Guevara's role?"—were some of the questions asked about Latin-American revolutions. Other callers were interested in French economics. Two viewers wondered why the Pope, considered to be a progressive-minded ruler, had issued such a conservative encyclical. The election victory of the Swedish Social Democrats was also mentioned, and there were complaints that television had provided so little information on Indonesia and the Communist Party there.

It is, of course, impossible to group questions falling under the heading of "miscellaneous." Just for curiosity, however, here are a few of them: "What is Khrushchev doing at present, where does he live, and what are his activities?" "What's happened to the crew of the *Pueblo*? Are they going to be released?" "What does the Basque movement want?" "Can the Common Market have an influence on the exports of Socialist countries to the West?" "Does the existence of large political blocs mean that we are moving towards the re-division of the world?" "What is Cardinal Mindszenty doing?" "Is it true that László Aradszky (a well-known Hungarian pop star) has been involved in an accident?" The most peculiar and at the same time charming question ran as follows: "How can people acquire the habit of loving each other?" The whole panel, by the way, would have liked to know the answer.

ENRICO FULCHIGNONI

## SOCIOLOGY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGE

What do sociologists think of photography? If mass society and the technical means which make art accessible to the masses are considered as neutral, primary and unhinderable phenomena and not as aspects of social and economic development, they can be looked on as a basis for measuring the destruction of genuine human relations, as a result of alienation, on the other hand also as equitable fate which makes the bourgeois individual disappear from the scene and brings about new ways of life and art which the masses can and must take possession of. This double polarity of positive and negative judgements has been part of the history of photographic art and technique right from the start.

Few technical processes in the course of their history, from the very outset and during their entire development, have been given such constant attention by the collective critical consciousness, as photography. This is the reason why a sociological analysis of the technique of photography enables a thorough study of its development in modern society to be made.

Krakauer, in describing the nature of photography as a medium, denies outright that a phenomenological description based on an intimate intuitive approach could offer a satisfactory solution. "Analysis," he writes, "must be based rather on the notions professed about photography in the course of its progress, i.e., on the concepts that, in one way or another, reflect existing trends and practice."

He goes on to suggest an ingenious system of corroboration which, in his opinion, would consist of examining the two fundamental trends of ideas connected with photography, viz. the ones professed in the initial stages of its development and the

(more important) present ones. Should the ideas of the pioneers and those of the modern critics concentrate more or less on the same essential points, then the conclusion could justly be drawn that photography has some special traits and satisfies precise needs in its social environment.

Here we come upon a first favourable circumstance: when the daguerreotype was invented, the informed public immediately realized the specific qualities of this new instrument and unanimously pointed out the unique ability of the camera to reproduce and, at the same time, to reveal visible physical reality. All agreed that photography imitated nature with an ability comparable only to nature itself. In their fervour, the enthusiastic realists of the nineteenth century stressed an all-important point: that the photographer must in all cases reproduce the objects as they appeared in front of his lens and not be given the freedom—this being the privilege of the artist!—to arrange the existing forms and their reciprocal relations in space according to his or her individual outlook or taste. (We shall see that this fundamental theory is the forerunner of some recent ones in the sociology of the photographic image, e.g. of Bourdieu's theory, although he makes his point more elaborately.)

Krakauer himself emphasizes that photography was invented at an appropriate moment. Many important inventions were born without being supervised, as it were, by the collective consciousness. Photography, however, was born under a lucky star; it appeared at a time when the ground had been prepared for its acceptance. The "mirror of memory"—for this was photography's irresistibly realistic vocation—was entrusted with the task of registering and

revealing, principally because, in that period, the forces of realism had launched a powerful attack against the excesses of the romantic movement. In nineteenth-century France, the birth of photography coincided with the spread of positivism, which was more an intellectual attitude than a school of philosophy and which, meeting with the approval of many a great thinker, discouraged metaphysical speculation in favour of a scientific way of thinking—in complete accord, by the way, with the nineteenth-century process of industrialization. There is, however, a third method of analysing the phenomenon of photography, more subtle and articulate than the former ones. What Hegel said about philosophy, also goes for photography: "There is no other art, no other science exposed to so much scorn, and at the same time supposedly comprehensible at once by anyone." The French sociologist Bourdieu writes: "Unlike other, more exacting, cultural activities, such as drawing, painting, or playing a musical instrument, unlike also a visit to a museum or an attendance at a concert, photography can do without the sort of culture taught at school, or which the various professions that transfer their values into cultural experiences consider to be higher. There is nothing that appears to be more opposed to the stereotyped notion of artistic creation than the activity of the amateur photographer, who mostly wants his camera to do the greatest possible number of operations for and instead of him. Nevertheless, it is easy to prove that, while the production of the picture itself is entirely accomplished by the automatism of the camera—the choice of the subject, the selection of the theme, is an act involving the most complicated ethical and aesthetic values. If it is true that, speaking in the abstract, nature and the progress of the technique of photography make every object suitable for photographing; the fact nevertheless remains that—in view of the infinite number of technically possible pictures—the photographer chooses a definable and

definite range of subjects, genres and compositions."

#### *System of Values, World Outlook*

This *choice*—reflecting the opinion of the first theoreticians of photography in the nineteenth century—has considerable sociological importance. Photography is meant to set down a given aspect of reality—i.e. it wants to solemnize and eternize reality—and so it cannot be left to the arbitrary judgment of the individual imagination. Bourdieu's analysis seems especially adequate in this context: having adopted a common system of values, the group, he says, subordinates its practice to collective rules. And, in the last resort, even the most frivolous photographic image may express, in addition to the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of values and the world outlook of an entire group. Sociologists who, in recent years, have dealt with this particular meaning of the phenomenon of photography, have drawn very interesting conclusions. Indeed, extending the analysis of the significance of the "subject choice," it seems possible to prove that "the scope of subjects a given social class thinks appropriate to be photographed (i.e. the choice of possible photos as opposed to themes that can *objectively* be photographed in view of the countless technical possibilities of the camera) can be determined by a certain number of implicit models" (Bourdieu, *op. cit.*).

#### *What Can Be Photographed?*

What is the importance, then, of this new area of *conditioning*? It has a decisive importance, for "within this well-defined area of photography, it is possible to determine the sense that a certain social group attributes to the act of photography as *the ontological promotion of an object, perceived*

as one worthy to be photographed, i.e. to be set down, preserved, communicated, exhibited and admired. This statement is of particular importance; it is a real sociological *discovery*, which goes to show that the norms that distinguish the things to be photographed from those not to be photographed, are inseparable from the system of judgment, characterizing a class, a profession or a school of artists for whom their aesthetic notions constitute only a partial aspect of things when compared to the complex system of values regulating their social conduct. It is clear that this result, if checked by the proper means warranting its authenticity, opens up a series of research areas in present-day society, precisely because, in contradistinction to traditional artistic activities such as painting or music, practising photography is accessible to an infinitely greater number of people, both from the technical and the economic point of view."

*Farmer Photographers in the U.S.S.R.*

It is high time to leave off theory and to get down to actual examples. I shall do this by speaking about my personal experiences. One of the most frequent observations of visitors to the Soviet Union is that a vast quantity of cameras has been sold to the public since 1960. (Their number, according to statistics, increased fivefold in three years.) Cameras are cheap (from the equivalent of 5,000 to about 60,000 Italian lire). In spring and summer, there is a steady flow to Moscow of provincial people, kolkhoz-peasants, agricultural workers from all the republics, from Asia and the Baltic, from the Black Sea and the distant Uzbekh or Khirgiz provinces. I had ample opportunity to watch their doings, their attitudes and faces right from the moment I saw them fidgeting with view-finders and light-meters. What was the first thing that hit the eye? It rarely occurs that one of these farmers points his objective at a landscape

or a monument the way American tourists are prone to do. I pursued my observations through many a month, and for years back I cannot recall one single instance of a Soviet farmer going for one of those "sunset effects" one often sees tourists snatching behind the Colosseum or below the Eiffel Tower. No; the subject preferred is the offspring of Adam. Ninety-nine per cent of Russians photograph just other Russians of both sexes. I have seen dozens of couples ambling in front of the Kremlin or dawdling in Red Square, with their snapshot-camera and the concomitant strap and satchel. They took dozens, indeed, hundreds of portraits of each other along the same pattern: inspired look, frontal perspective, absolute immobility. In other terms, for these novices to sensitive emulsion, the point was not to photograph as is the case with most people from the West, a fleeting moment, an unforeseen gesture, a shapely leg, a winking eye or a skirt blown by the wind. For a Russian farmer, taking a photo means to snatch his (or her) own body from the current of Time and to place it into the domain of prestige given by mummification.

*The Difference between Photographs taken by Farmers and by the Petit-bourgeois*

The analyses alluded to above which were carried out in recent years by Bourdieu at the European Centre of Sociology directed by Raymond Aron, and sponsored by a great industrial company of the West, supply us with a new working hypothesis for the study of the psychology and the sociology of the photographic image. What are the view-finders and the lenses of the various categories of workers, peasants, students and employees directed at? Is there any possibility of discovering a common denominator in this sphere? What are the favourite topics and subjects? It follows from what has been said above that these are all questions of supreme interest in the world of today,

haunted, as it is, by that universal chase after black-and-white and coloured shadows. The first results of the analyses are surprising. In France, for instance, a comparison was made between the photos taken by peasants on the one hand and by employees on the other. Various methods of direct and indirect analysis were put into operation by research teams at work in various cities and rural centres. There is, first of all, a fundamental difference, radically distinguishing the two categories. For the employees, photography is a sort of substitute for painting—an easier and more expedient way of “creating art.” But what kind of art? What kind of painting? There’s the rub. Those photos taken by French employees seem to revive the most hackneyed commonplaces of nineteenth-century academicism and anecdotism. The photographic clubs meetings from Lille to Toulon in order to reward, in private session, the most outstanding photographic products, are but sorry appendices of the provincial galleries displaying the poor choice of subjects of the *Belle Époque*, fancy-dress balls, sunset on the lake, the first kiss and baby in the tub . . . The sense of choice of these image-hunters stops at the picturesque, in so far as the latter can conjure up an anecdote. As in the case of their great-grandparents photographing to them does not mean “registering,” but experimenting with “artistic creation,” composing, that is, a little scene consisting of aesthetically “possible” elements, with outdated effects in almost all cases. These petty-bourgeois photographers, in paradoxical contrast with their taste as—for instance—cinema “consumers,” tread the worst and most old-fashioned path in the moment of creation, the path that, owing to chemistry, optics and mechanics, leads to the multifarious mummification of that extremely outmoded mythology whose figures peopled the squalid Olympus of our forefathers.

As for French peasants, the information provided by analysis is in accord with the observations I made at the beginning about

Russian photographers. In France, just as in Russia, photography becomes the means to make eternal, as an attempt to defy passing time, socially approved and regulated scenes and attitudes, such as weddings, honeymoons, christenings, first communions, golden wedding anniversaries. The persons in the pictures must assume solemn faces for the purpose. And no imagination or wit here! The sole (and the only permissible) position—just like in certain monuments of Egyptian art—is the frontal perspective, with the body completely rigid. All this has a definite meaning: to pose for such a photograph is to take up an attitude which is not and “does not want to be” natural. The effort made by the body, the festive attire donned for the occasion, the stiffness of posture and gesture—all indicate the wish to respect a tradition in order to command respect. But how come that from the Urals, down to Portugal, from Sweden to Minnesota so many photographs taken by peasants look so astoundingly alike? What does the “ceremonious atmosphere” indicate—the atmosphere that distinguished a “provincial” photograph from a “town” photograph? Our sociologists profess a theory, though with some caution, saying that, in contradistinction to certain groups in towns and cities, rural-society, being closely linked to certain rhythms and constant factors of climate and seasons and also to biological cycles, is bound to be, as far as imagery is concerned, much more in unison with and loyal to permanent values all over the world. At the beginning of this article I cited my personal experiences in the Soviet Union as being very close in their results to the outcome of the analysis made of photographs taken by French peasants. And if the intelligent reader casts an eye on the family photographs in rural districts from Sicily to Veneto, he would certainly arrive at the same conclusions. Can we still speak, then, of “bad taste” when looking at these pictures and these artificial postures in which so many articles devoted to the *naifs* of the

camera have taken satirical delight? I certainly do not think so. Peasant photography refutes chance and fleeting moments. *What it amounts to record is the unique encounter of a face and a memorable situation.* This series of conditions demands a respectful attitude from the photographer, an attitude as little "natural" as possible—if natural means accidental, if it means what is contingent or episodic. If we think it over—these photos of stiffened upper bodies and immobile pupils express an entire philosophy. In the language of aesthetics, *frontal* means *eternal*, in contrast to perspective in depth which expresses a historic outlook. So, while adopting the methods and postures of Byzantine mosaics, the peasant and his wife posing for a wedding photo wish to escape the profane and temporal temptation inherent in a picture.

In the same way and with the same artifice, the founders of Orthodox theology opposed Western theology with an immobile, "sacred space," a hieratic dimension in contrast to spatial and temporal "chaos"—the latter a feature of the profane way of life.

*"Sanctification" in Plastic Arts  
and in Photography*

An interesting aspect of the problem on which we wish to reflect is the following: what is the function, in modern society, of these "sanctified" photographs? It is useful to remember that in certain religions, art was authorized only under the condition of excluding the ineffable subject of Divinity. Such was the case with Judaism; and such is still the case with Islam. And one can quote, from the history of Christianity, innumerable instances of the reaction against the excess of images. The reason for this diffidence is quite simple. Religions based on the soul fear idolatry—frequently a concomitant phenomenon. A religion without art and images must, therefore, be within the possibilities, art and image often being excluded from the domain of religion. It can

be observed, however, that only the representation of Divinity was prohibited in such cases and not the sanctifying of the profane element. When the ancient Church came out in defence of sculpture and painting, it wanted, above all, to legalize the veneration of images, considered as a means of fortifying religion. Christianity had to cope with the problem. The principle was soon admitted in the course of the history of the Church, so much so that when the iconoclasts tried to suppress the cult of images as one infected by idolatry, the Seventh Council of Nicaea was able to oppose an argument that proved invincible in the Catholic Church—that of existing tradition. In 787 A.D. the Council confirmed the legality of all kinds of pictorial representation, provided they be of adequate material and colour. The authorization was valid for churches, vessels and holy ornaments, as well as for walls or edifices whether in houses or in the streets. The reason for this consent must have exerted a decisive influence in the centuries to follow. The underlying principle was that *the honour given to the image goes out to the model itself so that he who looks at a picture looks at the reality it represents.*

The Fourth Council of Constantinople (869–870) supplied a further argument, also of great importance; it identified the respect for images with the respect the faithful must feel for the Gospel. In fact, the images constitute a book of a certain kind, i.e. the material of initiation into everything holy, an initiation entrusted to the artist. No question any more of permission or tolerance; this became a rule, a command.

From that historic period onwards, images are expressly required by the Church as a visual medium for teaching the dogma. As usual, it was St. Thomas Aquinas who gave a concise, clear and complete explanation of the doctrine on this delicate point, too: "There are three reasons for making use of images. The first is to instruct the ignorant. The second is to remind people of the exemplary moments of life by putting those

moments in front of their eyes every day. The third is to nourish the sentiments, for objects viewed affect them more profoundly than those only heard about."

The absence of aesthetic criteria is a particularly interesting point of this Christian notion of the image. The texts of the Councils and of ancient theology speak only about painted, sculpted or other images, without any reference to beauty or artistic quality. Not a single word is said about art; however, representation, resemblance, example and teaching, i.e. psychological and pedagogic attributes are discussed *ad abundantiam*. Images are explicitly considered as the most appropriate language for the illiterate, and in any case useful and beneficial for fixing, in the soul of the onlooker, the memory of a memorable and exemplary situation.

And what other function can photography have in present-day peasant societies?

*Presence and Pressure  
of the Photographic Image*

The debates about the realism of the photographic image originate, for the most part, from a permanent misunderstanding, from confusing the aesthetic with the psychological, from the confusion between true realism on the one hand, which is equivalent with the need to express the essential significance of the world, and pseudo-realism on the other, a *trompe-l'oeil*, restricted to the illusions of form. The very objectivity of the photographic image confers on it the power of authenticity, a power absent from the painted image. Whatever the objections raised by our critical spirit, we are bound to believe in the existence of the person represented (effectively *re-presented*), i.e. made present in time and space. Photography profits from a *transfer* of the reality of the object into the reproduction of the latter. Even the most exact drawing cannot give us a greater quantity of

information about its model and, despite our critical spirit, cannot possess the irrational power of photography which rules over our consciousness. The photographic image puts us in the presence of the person himself—a person freed, however, from temporary contingency. And it is here that magic begins. Reproducing, in this guise, physiognomies and objects *as they are*, photography confers on them an imaginary presence not accessible to any other means of reproduction. This is the reason why the major power of the photographic image does not lie in the doubtful values of "artistry" with which the photographers simply register, on a sensitive surface, a certain picture composed in advance and, hence, abstracted from the real, but, on the contrary, in the power with which photography is able to surprise the "being" in its autonomous vigour.

However, its peculiar structure and the great coefficient of credibility that we refer to above, allows the photographic image to bring about a new relationship between man and the universe. Many have already doubted, in the particular case of photography, the traditional notion of the "image" (which means copy, imitation). The image that imitates the world stays apart from it. In a drawing, however great the likeness, there always remains, between the object represented and its plastic transcription, a distance, an interval, which seems to disappear completely in photography. Here the image coincides so much with its model that it is "auto-destructive" as such. The image is the *analogon* so magically repeated—its material occupying the reproduced surface. In the plastic image, in painting or drawing, the world is attested—not in its forms and colours, but in its very essence, contested as *the world*.

This was a *transposed, transfigured* world, subtracted from that pure exteriority in which it manifests itself as a world. A world on which, speaking in plastic terms, man had left his mark. The portrait of Doctor Rey by Van Gogh is first of all a picture,

and only in the second place a representation of a face. The spectator can contemplate it as a work created in and attached to the world, and if he then concentrates on the physical person of the doctor, he will discover it with the eyes of Van Gogh, through the painter's transfiguring vision. The image traced by the hand of man functioned as a force of transformation: it appropriated the substance of the world in order to integrate it into all that is human. The revolution brought about by photography springs, however, from the fact that since its invention the world has been imposing itself, through its own autonomy, upon the "mediated image" man himself has evolved of this world. Submission has taken the place of sovereign power once exerted. Thus, in the extreme case, we can foresee an ever increasing presence of the world through an image that, surreptitiously, attests itself as such, it having become the field of an infinitely intensified and repeated presence. And after the world attested by plastic representation, there will follow, from a certain period onwards, a world that asserts itself *in se*, as opposed to the world that reveals itself to the onlooker's eye. The objective image makes the actual paradox come true in the sense that the world unveils itself even before any sort of human language becomes possible. Up till then, it had been present only through the mediation of the eyes. It was *given* material of the eye, material for man, who simply looked around and contemplated, or for man who created, i.e. the artist. In the photographic image, this world seems to precede—and not to contest—this phenomenon; it determines the phenomenon's contents by imposing a new way of looking at the world. The traditional scheme has been turned upside down. Instead of being a simple material of speech, the world forms a language of its own and conquers man through this language. The relation of man to the world as seen traditionally is being overturned and produces, under the impact of the photographic image,

the possibility of the world exerting its tyranny over man.

*The Place of Photography in the Hierarchy  
of Cultural Prestige*

A last socio-cultural consideration will help us survey the complicated course industrial civilization has taken as a consequence of the impact of the various technologies of the reproduced image. Let us cast a glance upon that useful method of verification which the Aron school calls the "hierarchy of prestige." What does this definition mean? The answer is simple and at the same time illuminating; it comes to us from Bourdieu's lucid conclusions: "In any given society, in a given period of its history, cultural events, theatrical representations, sport competitions, song recitals, chamber-music concerts, opera performances, are not equivalent in dignity and value. In other terms, the various systems of expression—from theatre to television—are objectively organized according to a hierarchy regardless of individual opinions. It is precisely this hierarchy which determines 'cultural legitimacy' and its different degrees."

More than thirty years ago the American sociologist Seldes expressed a word of warning in an essay in which he described the course to be taken by the traditional forms of art—music, painting, drama, etc.—under the impact of the forms originating from new means of expression, such as jazz, radio, cinema, etc. The process can be outlined in the following way: on the one hand, there is a tendency to the democratization of old *aristocratic* forms (at the same time, and in consequence not only will their structure undergo alterations, but so also will the system of criticism and the scale of values that have been applied to these forms for many a century); on the other hand, the *democratic* forms that came into being under the pressure of mass communications will display an opposite tendency which, as a result of

coherent dialectics, will lead them to consistent struggle for those *lettres de noblesse* that are among the particular goals of every art. In the great variety of interrelationships and interactions of democratic and aristocratic forms, there is a reciprocal attraction, an encounter between the most accessible levels of superior culture and the ever increasing standards of mass culture. Bourdieu analysed some interesting aspects of this process: "One gradually passes from fully consecrated forms of art to forms that are, at least for a certain period, left to arbitrary individual judgement." (It is true that jazz music and motion pictures are served by as powerful means of expression as the more traditional cultural works. It is also true that there are circles of professional critics with refined and erudite reviews at their disposal who, as indirect proofs of their ambitions of cultural promotion, often make all-out efforts to imitate the scientific and pedantic tone of criticism on a university level, to copy its cult of erudition for its own sake, as if, obsessed by anxiety for their legitimacy, they could not act otherwise but to assume the external traits of the owners of the monopoly of cultural legitimation, i.e. the professors—whom they are driving to despair by their attitude.)

The position of photography in the hierarchy of legitimacy is halfway between the *vulgar*—abandoned to the anarchy of tastes—and the *noble* cultural forms submitted to transmissible rules and regulations.

These considerations gave sociology the incentive to examine two particularly important aspects. One concerns the significance, in photography, of the great "period of sanctification" noted in religious painting and in the portraits of profane paintings, closely bound up with instantaneous photography (as we have seen from the type of photos taken by the rural population). At the other end of the scale, importance should be given to the effects of the "short time" of instantaneous exposure, that interweaves, on all levels, the texture of technological

society. One cannot disagree with MacLuhan when he says: "If the phonetic alphabet was a technical means to separate the spoken word from its aspects of sound and gesture, instantaneous photography has restituted gesture to the human technology of registered experience," and also when he, correctly, cites, among so many examples, the pioneering analysis, by Marey and Muybridge, of the people walking and the flight of birds. It is impossible, in the framework of this brief analysis, to deal in detail with the innumerable implications of this postulate, so I shall limit myself to a few suggestions. There is no other technical process that has widened our outlook to the extent instantaneous photography has; in addition, it has adapted this outlook to the position of man in technological society, through a permanent interplay of experience and the search for new solutions. (It was, for instance, Marey's analysis of the flight of birds that revealed the secret of that flight and that made it possible for man to put the finishing touches to devices promoting take-off from the ground. By "immobilizing" flight, the photographic image showed that the flight of birds was founded on the fixedness of the wings and that these furthered propulsion but not flight itself.) The number of possible examples is infinite; we may summarize them by saying that the dissolution of the traditional perspectives and the genesis of most of the unusual aspects of reality are the results of the arrival of the photographic lens in the technological conquest of the world around us.

The situation is interesting from the sociological point of view, for a number of reasons. First of all because the practice, in view of the legitimization of forms differing from the traditional ones, involves an awareness first of the product, then of its consumer and finally of the relationship developing between the two. And also because, in this quest for cultural status, it will be interesting to verify whether, as according to French sociologists, the new forms, among

them photography, have a tendency to organize themselves according to a certain system which does not belong any more to the domain of individual psychology, but which originates from the values that tend to organize different social groups. This hypothesis can be proven—as far as our subject is concerned—both by attitudes on photography and, above all, by photographic practice. The thoroughgoing study

of both fields makes it possible today for the sociologist and the psychologist to cover one of the most important fields of present-day technical civilization. In this case of the making and use of the photographic image, too, the significance of cultural sociology is the attempt to collate, from the relations between culture and society, the greatest possible accumulation of ethical and aesthetic motives and attitudes.

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ENDRE GÖMÖRI

### TRAVEL NOTES FROM JAPAN

I have stood before the Grand Central Station in New York in the rush hour; and I worked my way dozens of times across the Place de la Concorde in Paris at half past four in the afternoon; yet the one city where I felt that I could not "get hold" of anything, where I felt engulfed by the stream of chaotic traffic, was Tokyo. I'm not responsible for the feeling, it's the Japanese. I had already known before my arrival that in this city of ten million inhabitants the streets have no names. But to become aware of what this meant in practice one has to get lost in that maze of nameless streets. After diligent enquiries lasting more than

a week all I could find out was that as a general rule the buildings were numbered according to the date they were built. Or may be after the number of the site on which they were built. (The latest variation, which can of course only be applied in the case of a few office buildings or large hotels, is to give the house a name. For instance: "Mainichi Building" or "Blue Cloud Apartment House." Not that this helps much; one still has to know in which street of the multi-million city the Blue Cloud rises.

At the time of the American occupation three or four thoroughfares were given a name, and the side-streets were numbered—

perhaps showing nostalgia for Manhattan. Only few remainders are left of this experiment. Generally, on small business cards, which are printed on the world-famous Ginza, and which inform the traveller that his visit is anxiously expected at a little night-club or in a comfortable steam-bath of "No. 5 street off the Ginza"

This makes getting about in Tokyo a mad adventure. The taxi-drivers can only take the perspiring passenger to famous crossings, or conspicuous and well-known buildings; so a guest has to ask his prospective host for a little map well in advance, to press into the hands of the adventurous taxi-driver.

A more advanced method—which I discovered after ten days—is to employ two taxi-drivers. The first takes the passenger to the desired district. There he changes to the cab of another taxi-driver, who knows the district, and may perhaps take him to the desired place. Perhaps. A Japanese address includes, in addition to the name of the city, the district, the "neighbourhood" (cho) and the site-number (banchi). In such circumstances, mail reaches its destination only if postmen work for decades in a relatively small area, where they know every inhabitant by name.

Another clever method to reach one's destination is for the guest to ring one's host and hand the receiver to the taxi-driver for explanations. On the second day of my stay in Tokyo I asked why there was a red automatic phone on a small table standing in front of almost every shop. Within a few days these red phones became so many welcome beacons in the wilderness.

And finally, if there is a choice of taxi-drivers, pick the oldest, because the younger ones have generally almost certainly only recently arrived from the country and don't know the city very much better than the visitor.

Incidentally, Tokyo taxi-drivers are exceptional on several counts. 1. They themselves open and close the doors of their

cabs by means of a clever contraption. 2. In no circumstances do they accept a tip. Although proud citizens of Tokyo claim that this is due to the national character—I think it's a sort of apology for the muddle.

*No. 25. I-Chome, Nakameguro-ku*

The Hungarian Embassy also had to have a map made. The map is printed; so it's fair to conclude that there are several thousand copies of it available in Tokyo. The address is, of course, rather complicated: 1-29, I-Chome, Nakameguro-ku, Tokyo. Need I add that in spite of the splendid map I arrived for my first visit "with a police escort." After driving round and round for fifteen minutes, the desperate taxi-driver stopped in front of a police station; two policemen, armed to the teeth, but smiling benevolently, came out, got into the car and showed us to the Embassy.

The Hungarian Embassy is not only a house (more exactly a villa), but also the complex symbol of certain psychological aspects of Hungarian-Japanese relations. Walking round the garden of the villa with Mr. M., an official of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, he looked appreciatively at the trees and rocks and said it was the most beautiful garden in Tokyo. I am no rock-expert, but the garden is really lovely. The house was originally the residence of Minister of State Ichiro Kono. It reflects the best characteristics of modern Japanese architecture. The only thing that gives rise to gloomy thoughts is that the builders of the house must have viewed the international situation rather pessimistically: there is an atombomb shelter under the house, the exit from which is hidden from the unsuspecting eye by a beautifully shaped rock placed at an angle to secure the exit against radiation hazards. The shelter is used nowadays to store large crates, and the hazards are not radiation but accidents. The ambassador's little son likes to balance on top of it.

Yet, the atom-bomb shelter and the anti-radiation rock are in their proper place: we are in the country of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the shock wave caused by the nuclear bombs is still a living force in Japan's social and public life.

To return to the paths of the embassy garden: in the whole of Tokyo this is where the cherry-trees first blossom. The clearest spring in Tokyo wells up from the earth in this garden. Spring water flows from the taps too. In one corner there is a five-hundred year-old tea-house, brought here by the Kono family from a distant province. The various fine trees and peculiarly shaped rocks were also transported to the garden from different parts of the country.

#### *Asian Legends*

All this is not to impress the reader with what a splendid embassy building a small and far from wealthy country has in distant Japan. It is the winding paths of the splendid garden that lead to the psychological explanation. The Kono family had refused a financially much more favourable offer in order to hand the house over to the diplomatic representatives of Hungary. The decisive argument in the negotiations was that we Hungarian were, after all, "relatives."

At dozens of cocktail- and dinner parties I had to repeat to attentive diplomats and business men the story of the migrations of the Magyar tribes two thousand years ago. The traveller from Central Europe is no more exempt from the touch of nationalism and racial nostalgia, which has already caused so many tragedies, as anyone else. But I never before met with that intensity of the Asian consciousness which radiated from these attentive eyes.

(That the Japanese somewhere in the depth of their political consciousness consider the Hungarians "a related Asiatic people," has interesting diplomatic repercussions. Among the embassies and legations

of the Socialist countries, it is the officials of the Hungarian embassy who find it relatively easiest to make contact with diplomats, journalists and business men. It is a paradox: the myth which has long lost its value for us, becomes a tool of modern diplomacy.)

#### *The Hikari Express Modern Japan: a Fantastic Duality*

At the main Tokyo railway station I got into one of the steel carriages of the New Tokaido Line. The fastest train in the world, the Hikari Express, carried me at a speed of 200 to 240 kilometres an hour towards Osaka, the second largest industrial centre of Japan. I was in luck: the fine haze covering the hills lifted, and in the sunshine the almost perfect cone of the holy mountain, the Fujiyama, appeared. The mountain still soared in the window-frame, when a smiling young girl entered, pushing a trolley covered with refreshments. The welding of the rails and the springs of the carriage were perfect. The surface of the coffee in the plastic tumblers did not move, even at a speed of 240 kilometres. The girl—as she was pushing the table—delicately and hardly perceptibly bowed towards the holy mountain.

(It is said that before the war, on the buses plying in front of the forbidding, tall walls of the Imperial Palace, the conductor bowed deeply towards the Palace when he announced the stop. After my return from Osaka, I took that bus three times. The bow had already disappeared.)

As the luxury carriages of the Hikari stopped at the platform of Osaka station, the doors of the numbered silver carriages coincided within a centimeter with the corresponding numbered signs painted on the platform. But this was not all that could be seen on the Osaka platform. The passengers were met by members of their families or by business partners. They greeted each other with a ceremonial, deep bow, pressing

their hands to their knees. A careful observer could see that the head of the younger or of the women always dipped a little lower. And those on a lower rung of the social scale—which of course could not be fathomed by the traveller—always bowed lowest.

#### *Sumo with a Teleobjective*

Another example of this ambivalence is the *sumo*. In one of the biggest sports halls of Osaka, I squatted for two and a half hours in a box, and so did 15,000 others. The box is about one and a half metres square and is covered with a mat awning surrounded by a half-meter high balustrade. The spectator of course takes his shoes off before stepping on the mat. In all the boxes around me were large families, frequently three generations, from grandparents to grandchildren. Within minutes the steward appeared bringing steaming green tea in a beautifully shaped little pot. In the brightly lit circular arena 100 to 150 kilogram "mountains of men" fought each other. Exactly the same as at any time in the last thousand years. Their hair was bound in a Samurai chignon. The umpire supervised the bout with graceful movements, in an ancient silk kimono, a fan in his hand. And from the auditorium the last word in modern miracles played on this medieval scene: the one-meter teleobjectives of the photographers, representing papers with perhaps the largest circulations in the world; black and white, and coloured television watched the event with dozens of cameras. The *sumo* was part of the "autumn festival" held in Nara, the ancient capital of Japan, in the eighth century—more than a hundred years before the Magyar conquest of Hungary. From that time the movements and rules of the wrestlers and of the umpire remained unchanged. And the enthusiasm of the crowd. I think there is hardly any other country in the world where a thousand-year-

old sport, surviving in an unchanged form, would attract a modern and enthusiastic crowd of spectators.

Even today, after the fifteen years that have brought almost unbelievable economic progress and have transformed the country at a staggering speed, development in ideas, customs and material conditions can only be appreciated by taking note of this peculiar duality.

Which is what Japanese do—even at the pinnacles of political and economic power. In Tokyo I asked the Governor of the city (a modern and educated man; the first Governor of the mammoth city to be elected by the votes of the opposition) when they would solve the confusion of that labyrinth of nameless streets. "It's most unlikely" he replied, "that it will ever be done. Nobody would dare to break the tradition of unchecked proliferation in the city." In his ultra-modern room I had tea with Mr. H., director of one of Japan's biggest banks. Mr. H. regularly represents Japan at the meetings of the International Monetary Fund. In an armchair next to the desk there was a fine leather briefcase. I threw a glance at it. "My secretary left it here" Mr. H. said. "My own things are there," he pointed at the table. On the huge glass-covered desk there was a little bundle covered with a green silk scarf. The kind with which country girls used to come to Budapest to enter domestic service, only smaller. "It's very comfortable," said Mr. H., "and it's an old custom with us. I carry my books and papers in it." After leaving, I noticed that the Tokyo streets were full of such little bundles.

Right in the centre of the inner city, opposite the all-glass Sony Building, a huge electric clock shows the time at night. Under it an electronic device shows the days, hours and minutes that are left until the opening of the 1970 World Exhibition, the Osaka Expo. One has the feeling that in this city, where bank presidents carry their papers in silk bundles, there are people who

count the days not only to 1970, but to 2000. In the editorial offices of *Asahi*, a young journalist proudly placed in front of me the latest American prediction, "sooth-sayer" according to which Japan would lead the world in per capita production by the year 2000. I was shown other statistics too, which summarized the index figures of the 19 most progressive branches of industry. Taking Japanese production in these selected branches of industry as 100, in the summer of 1968 the American index was 230, but the West German only 68, the British 48, and the French 42. Japan, actually the third, is potentially already the second industrial power of the Western world. (But why "Western"? Why not say—capitalist world.)

The rate of change is truly extraordinary. Motorways cut across the city running level with the second or third floors of the skyscrapers. Below them, in the maze of unfathomable mews, stand wooden shacks in their tens of thousands. One can watch from the windows of the *Hikari Express* how the factories eat into the rice paddies and the bulldozers into the hillsides.

The principal island, *Hunshu*, is gradually being linked to the other islands by bridges and tunnels. A 36-kilometres-long tunnel under the sea is being planned to the Northern island, *Hokkaido*. The first half will be completed by next year. *Kyushu*, the Southern island has already got a tunnel, and plans for a huge bridge over the straits are now being worked out. Japan remains an island, but it will soon no longer be an archipelago.

#### *Macmillan's Victory*

A diplomatic lunch. Mr. M., a personal friend of Foreign Minister *Takeo Miki* rang up: Parliament is in session, yet the Foreign Minister is ready to receive me. He will find half an hour for me. He thought the promise was worth a celebration, and he invited me

to a fabulously beautiful Japanese inn in the shadow of the *Hilton*. The room which had been booked for us—as if it had not been in the centre of a metropolis with ten million inhabitants. It was decorated with flowers arranged by a masterly hand, and through the half-open sliding door one could see the cold beauty of a Japanese rock-garden. It was a great honour when the proprietress herself, the sister of a famous actor, crouched at our table to serve the dozen or so dishes. Before lunch, Mr. M.—sipping hot rice brandy—delivered a short gastronomic lecture: we were not going to get the ordinary dishes, the stuff they gave to the tourists, oh no, these were the most ancient dishes, going a long way back in history. This boded ill. The food arrived: sea-delicacies, fish, mussels, sea-weed in many varieties. The colours and shapes were so beautifully arranged on the black lacquered plates that I was almost ashamed to spoil them with my chopsticks, which I handled proudly but awkwardly. But there's no use denying it: the obligatory courtesy of the guest collapsed before some rather unusual dishes. Hospitably understanding my host flicked a finger and ordered roast duck, to make up for the loss. But afterwards he remarked, with annihilating politeness: "Last night I had dinner here with the former British Prime Minister, Mr. *Macmillan*; he ate everything."

#### *Gajmuso*

I went to the car with my self-confidence slightly shaken. Destination: the Foreign Ministry.

In the district between the *Hibiya Park* and the deep moat of the Imperial Palace, resplendent with holy carp and graceful swans, official buildings rise. The most modern and most awe-inspiring among them is the palace of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, which is called—an abbreviation of its Japanese name—*Gajmuso*.

In the Foreign Ministry a gleaming lift, lined with violet plastic, took me up to the fourth floor, towards the reception room of the Foreign Minister. In the corridor a guard in dark blue uniform. In the hall, on the walls and the ceiling, fine timber panelling. Red leather armchairs around the low conference table; in the window-recess china vases and lacquered boxes. In the centre of the hall a screen separates the conference room from the more intimate rooms for quiet negotiation. Next to the Japanese flag in the corner the tall bronze statue of Mutzu, a Japanese politician of the last century. He was one of the politicians who worked on the revision of the unequal treaties which had been made with Japan in earlier times. His poems are kept in a glass box at the feet of the statue. (A disrespectful obtrusive thought intrudes: the main line of Japanese foreign policy at the moment is still determined by the American-Japanese Security Pact, one of the most unequal treaties in the world. The foreign minister who could start a political process leading to the radical revision of this pact would deserve another statue in the panelled room. Posterity would in this case perhaps be prepared to do without the finely chiselled poems.)

The Japanese Foreign Minister, however, is unlikely to have any chance today to practice the ancient art of epigrammatic Japanese verse. Perhaps nowhere is the pace of the politicians' day to day life as strenuous as in Japan. A few helpful officials of the Foreign Ministry had to fight hard to give me forty-five minutes of his time, as he was in the middle of a Parliamentary session. According to the rules of Parliament, certain politicians, including the Foreign Minister "have to be physically present" during the whole length of the debate. Even in the last minutes of waiting there were several phone calls between the conference room and the Minister's secretariat in Parliament House. "Another ten minutes." "Another five minutes." "We are glad to inform you that the Minister has left."

*Green Tea—with a Chinese Flavour*

Almost the moment the Foreign Minister entered the room the indispensable, acrid green Japanese tea appeared, in blue faience cups. The "background-talk" began—not an interview, to allow the Minister to express his views more informally. Nevertheless, the conversation seemed like delicately sipping thoughts about foreign policy as well as pungent green tea. The sentences of general goodwill reverberated in the room in a cultured form. In the Viet-Nam question "a new, more realistic approach is necessary." His visits to Hungary had left "extraordinarily deep impressions." He was endeavouring to "improve relations" with both the Soviet Union and China.

It was the same in a dozen conversations over innumerable cups of green tea. The tension of a great deal of accumulated passion and unsolved conflicts lie hidden under the surface in Japanese foreign policy. But the closer the interlocutor is to actual power, the more cautious and circumspect the conversation.

This worried me a lot. Only after the second, the third week did I begin to suspect the answer to this peculiar enigma in foreign policy. This may be a subjective judgement, but after talks with politicians of the most diverse points of view I received the definite impression that while on the surface party-passions boiled over the Japanese-American treaty—it was China that cast a shadow over the entire national policy! This subjective impression was not derived from anything they said, with their set smiling faces. It was what they did not say that was the more interesting.

The Japanese Liberal-Democratic Party is today perhaps the strongest conservative party bloc in the entire capitalist world, which—in spite of the openly and often cheerfully fought power and factional struggles—steers the country firmly, and as far as one can see for the next ten years, invincibly. Not even from the extreme right-

wing politicians of this powerful conservative party was it possible to wring any other statement about China than the almost silkily smooth phrase, expressed with an air of conviction that it was of essential importance for Japan to view its relation to China realistically and to establish and strengthen a correct and even good relationship between the two countries. I could not get one of them to give any more definite opinion of Chinese power ambitions—even when the politician sitting on the other side of the table was separated by innumerable light-years from the philosophy and power aspirations of Mao Tse-tung's China.

In the course of later talks, the panelling covering the walls was replaced by wallpaper and paint, the tea-cups were progressively coarser—as the discussions took place with “smaller men,” and slowly facts began to give life to this picture—first formed on the basis of subjective feelings—of the “China-centrism,” which is hidden in the depth of Japanese foreign policy, and which is by no means free from anxieties and fears.

#### *A Curious Triangle*

In 1968 some noteworthy developments in Chinese-Japanese relations had occurred. 72 hours before I was conducted into the Foreign Minister's reception room Japanese-Chinese trade talks had been concluded in Peking after negotiations lasting almost a month. On Japan's behalf two well-known parliamentary deputies of the governing Liberal-Democratic Party, Furui and Tagava had been negotiating in Peking, and had also met the Prime Minister, Chou En-Lai. In those days in Tokyo everybody interested in politics knew—and with the exception of those at the highest level, said it openly—that the Japanese delegation had been exposed to extraordinarily strong political pressure in Peking. The Chinese criticized the new Japanese-American rapprochement, which had been accelerated by their own

possession of nuclear weapons, and stressed the Chinese Government's acute lack of confidence in the Sato cabinet. (This probably helped Sato a few months later to win the Senate elections.)

At the same time Peking made extraordinary efforts to give a political colouring to Chinese-Japanese trade. This attempt took on interesting forms. Until then Japanese-Chinese trade had been called—after the initials of the heads of the two delegations who signed the 1962 agreement (Liao and Takasaki) “L-T trade.” Since then Chinese-Japanese trade has been called “memorandum-trade.” The reason for the change in name is that, as demanded by the Chinese, the Japanese negotiating party accepted political principles of trade, and these were included in the closing communiqué called the “Chinese-Japanese memorandum.” These political principles were drawn up by the Chinese negotiating party, and may be summarized as follows:

1. China is not regarded as an enemy.
2. The establishment of normal diplomatic relations between China and Japan is not to be obstructed.
3. Japan is not to participate “in any plot directed towards the creation of two Chinas.”

When in the reception-room of the Gajmuso I asked Foreign Minister Miki how these three points could be reconciled with official Japanese foreign policy, the Minister replied that “the three points did not represent anything new: Japanese foreign policy did not consider China an enemy, it strove for the normalization of relations, and Japan's relations with Taiwan simply represented the recognition of international facts and could not be qualified as a plot.”

This masterpiece of political flexibility could not dispel the impression of the political journalist visiting Tokyo that somewhere in the depth the forces of change were also at work in Japanese-Chinese relations. One of the best examples of this was the case of the what is known as the “Yoshida letter.” The former Japanese Prime Minis-

ter, Mr. Yoshida, wrote at that time to Chang Kai-Shek. In the letter he promised that the credit facilities of the Export-Import Bank would not be used for the delivery of complete factories to China. When the negotiating delegation returned from Peking, the Finance Minister, Mr. Mizuta, announced in the Diet that decisions concerning the financing of complete factories for China, would in future be made on each individual case, and if necessary the financial means of the Export-Import Bank would also be made available.

When I asked Mr. M. over another cup of green tea about the Yoshida letter, I was given the answer: "The letter was of an entirely personal character, and does not bind the Japanese Government."

Needless to say, the Yoshida letter was a fundamental document in Japanese-Chinese-Taiwan relationships until quite recently. If it is now thrown into the wastepaper-basket, something must have happened. It is interesting that whenever I asked a Leftist politician or journalist a question concerning the Yoshida letter, their reaction was always the same. They sought the root of the change on the other side of the Pacific. They said—almost unanimously—that it was hardly possible that the government should have repudiated the Yoshida letter without first having consulted the Americans. The opinion was even voiced that the "soft" attitude of the Japanese delegation in the Peking negotiations mirrored the trends hidden under the surface of American politics seeking a "modus vivendi" with Peking.

This of course is already the rarified mountain air of "high politics," where breathing is difficult, and which is more dizzying in its effect than the maelstrom of cars on the Ginza. I have certainly been unable to free myself of the feeling that

preparations for a large-scale diplomatic parlour-game were taking place in the Tokyo-Washington-Peking triangle.

*A Cypress-column in the Meiji Shrine*

I believe that one of the politically and humanly most exciting questions of coming years is the way Japan is going to face the future. How is this modern Colossus of Rhodos, with one foot in the twenty-first century and the other not yet pulled free from the soil of the eighteenth century, going to deal with the hundred and one realities of the human world?

In the Second World War it could still be an official dogma in Japan that the Meiji shrine was invulnerable to fire, that it could not be destroyed by incendiary bombs. These were my thoughts as I was walking in the Meiji Park, a hundred years after the publication of the restoration document of the Meiji Emperor Muchihito, which pushed Japan with such brutal suddenness into the whirlpool of the modern world and of power politics. The park was peaceful. In the cool shrines Shinto priests solemnly blessed the young betrothed. Perhaps nobody among the passers-by was giving any thought to the fact that of the entire huge temple-labyrinth, only the twelve hundred-year-old gateposts, made of Formosan cypress, had survived. The rest—together with the dogma proclaiming the invulnerability of the shrine—was burned to cinders in the flames of defeat.

Every country is a world on its own. This is tenfold true for Japan. But all countries have common obligations. The first of these is the acknowledgement of inexorable reality. And there is no Formosan cypress that would survive another war.

# BOOKS AND AUTHORS

## THE OPPONENT

(From the Notebook of a Critic)

When many many years ago I first read Gide's diary of his travels in the Congo what struck me most about the book was what had impressed Gide in life: the terrible defencelessness of the black people and the merciless way in which resident whites silenced every cry of anguish. I had not then suspected that before long Gide's Congolese sergeant would find docile pupils in Europe. I am thinking of the disciplinary sergeant who picks ten or twelve of the natives who insist on the land they worked, has them tied to trees, fires a bullet into the skull of each one, and then attacks the women with a machete, and finally locks five small children up in a hut and sets it on fire.

The rhythm of "the slow ball" is also hard to forget: one of the pedantic colonial officers captures a few blacks—they have failed to pay their tax regularly or to deliver sufficient quantities of rubber to the collecting stations. Heavy planks are tied on to their heads and he orders them to "dance," which they do in the maddening blaze of the sun until they collapse one by one never to get on their feet again. When the first of them dies, the official is warned, but he contemptuously says "Merde" and orders them to continue the "ball."

Where either tax or rubber are concerned you cannot be let off. The only way to avoid paying tax is to run away, but escape and even death bring no reprieve. Those who remain behind in the village are made to pay

the tax instead of the dead or the fugitives. And if only women are left behind, it is they who are made to pay. Or they are dragged away to unknown places, strung to one stretch of rope with a hoop round their necks.

I am not likely to forget the two old women in Gide's book either. He arrives at a dead village amongst empty, derelict huts. In one of them, however, he comes across a one-eyed, bedrabbled old woman squatting in her rags. Next door there is an even older and more hideous nightmare of what once was a female body. All the others have fled leaving only these two ancient crones behind. They are garrulous, but no matter what Gide and his companions ask them they seem to be living in some arithmetic delirium in the abandoned village, and they answer all questions with signs of numbers. They draw figures on their foreheads, ten, twenty-one, less or more, only to efface these invisible furrows immediately and start all over again. What do they wish to express with this pantomime? The number of their derelict days? Or the sum of the taxes levied? One is left to guess.

It is a deeply disquieting book, thrilling notes that give you a chill. Beautiful, heart-stirring landscapes. The unforgettable hues of sunrises and sunsets. And like oozing blood on the bandage: cries of human agony everywhere. And what is perhaps even more gripping: everywhere a pathetic, desperate

yearning for a little, any amount of human sympathy.

This is how I remembered Gide's book.

I recently re-read *Travels in the Congo*. I am a European, and since my first acquaintance with the book I have come face to face with the sergeant-major of the Congolese gendarmerie. No. The colours have not faded a bit, it is only the temperature of the anguish they engender that has changed. After we have experienced something remote and previously unknown: the unrepeatable, unique impact of the first encounter gets blunted in the repetitions that come rushing at us.

And turning the pages of the familiar book in its fine new Hungarian translation (by Nándor Szávai) I am astonished to find besides the old Africa something that blind, deaf and ungrateful as I was, I had failed to notice at the time: Gide himself is there in the book, very much alive. He is present in both flesh and spirit, fully alive, himself, and not just any old man.

Gide, no longer a young man (he was fifty-six then!), restless, depressive, easily upset, in the Congo, travelling in various ways, one more arduous than the other, by litter, by ship and canoe, by car and cart and on foot. And all this while he is carrying with himself some of his most cherished books from home into the unknown. A whole travelling library. And then come the wonderful sunsets, his ears are pierced by the human cries of anguish and he is outraged by inhuman evil. He imperturbably inserts Racine, Goethe, Corneille, Shakespeare, Molière between two deaths and two orgiastic feasts of colour.

He cannot read at ease in the litter swaying to and fro, but at least he can recite to himself those Baudelaire poems from *Les Fleurs du Mal* which he knows by heart and looking into the book now and then he learns a few more verses. At night bats get into his tent—what could he do? He reads Goethe by the dim light of the hurricane lamp, the *Elective Affinities*.

Am I being sarcastic?

No.

Why should I be sarcastic at his expense?

What I am more likely to feel is admiration for his imperturbable devotion. Between two deserted villages refugees surround him, they are apprehensive, and hopeful, and grateful—and he records their grievances and gives them a spoonful of salt and even some money. His heart and mind are open—then he withdraws and writes this in his diary: "The huge dimensions of the Unknown encompass me on all sides. While I am exultantly rereading *Romeo and Juliet*, Marc (one of his companions) dresses wounds, administers medicines and then he does justice, which takes an endless time."

He is getting to know Africa and all the time himself, too. In another small settlement called Bubangi he notes: "During harvest-time the huts are under water for a day and a half. The water comes up to your thigh. On such occasions they cook their food on small earth mounds." And right after that: "I am finishing Cresson's little book *The State of Philosophical Problems Today*. His discussion of Bergson's philosophy convinces me that I was a Bergsonian for a long time without knowing it."

In one of the huts he witnesses a difficult birth. "A lot of curious people at the entrance. The opening is so low that one has to bow down as one goes in. We give five francs to the family and then return to the ship."—And what does he do on board ship?—"I am reading *Le Misantrope* which I consider far from being Molière's best play. Every time I read it again I become more confirmed in my view. We can often hardly tell who or what the mockery is aimed at. The subject is more suitable for a novel than a play."

One can only envy him these "travel companions." It is with them that he fortifies himself in the formidable, dark Africa. But there comes a moment when I rebel against the sympathetic traveller's "reader's diary."

"I am on the other side of Hell," he

writes on the shore of the Sari river. Thus far he has only seen trampled down tribes. People not born inferior but made inferior. Their beings broken by perpetual slavery long only for the coarsest pleasures. Sad flocks, without a shepherd. It is here that he comes across railway construction, the laying of the track between Brazzaville and the coast. Railway construction is a rapacious consumer of lives. How many pariahs have yet to die for the future welfare of the colony? he asks despondently. The details are horrifying.

He covers his eyes and seeks refuge in his notes.

And it is then that he jots down: "I am re-reading *Cinna* with tremendous delight and I am learning the opening lines again."

That he likes Corneille; that he compares the introductory scene of *Cinna* to Mallarmé's obscurest sonnets; that he is delighted by both—I am prepared for this sort of intermezzo, I have grown used to it. But that here—of all places—he should, irritably, indignantly and sarcastically, take issue with Clément Vautel—over what? Apropos of *Cinna* with the view that French literature is precipitately heading towards artificiality. . .

But let me halt my pen here! The reader might well ask: now who is this Vautel? And I am not at all surprised that he has never heard his name. Vautel is not known to either *Larousse* or the new comprehensive history of French literature in the *Pléiade* series—M. Clément Vautel is a tenth-rate, nay, fiftieth-rate hack. Between the two wars

he spawned novels like *Madame ne veut pas d'enfants* and *Mon curé chez les riches*.

And how do I happen to know this?

I simply know because as a budding and keen critic I mercilessly pitched into these very two when in the 30s with an insolent claim to be best-sellers, they appeared in Hungarian in the shopwindows here. They appeared and were a complete flop.

And André Gide, the great turbulent spirit of French letters, the literary innovator of the first decades of our century, the author of *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, *Nourritures terrestres* and *La Symphonie pastorale*, the passionate traveller and seeker after truth, the master of the noblest, most crystalline French prose, the idol of our youth—he of all writers condescended to a Vautel? To a tradesman in pursuit of the cheapest success? And to argue with a Vautel flinging at his head lines from Corneille and sonnets by Mallarmé in the frightening, dense night of Africa, near the railway construction site that had no mercy with the men working there.

A case of secret missing a beat. An irregular, alarming heartbeat. Nightmare.

I do not understand it.

Could it be that Gide took a gnat for an elephant? I do not think so. Could it be that somewhere, some time in the past he was stung by this gnat-Vautel? Possibly.

For all that possibility I still do not understand it. And the only way I can make sense of it is to suppose that sometimes we choose our opponents without the slightest reason.

ENDRE ILLÉS

## THE COMPLEXITY OF SHAKESPEARE'S COMIC CHARACTERS\*

A constantly recurring and indeed most rewarding theme encountered in recent critical essays and articles dealing with Shakespeare is the variety of angles and the diversity of aspects to be found in Shakespearean comedy. We are frequently reminded that in Shakespeare's comedies the final effect is usually the end result of a highly complicated process, that attitudes, opinions and emotional manifestations incessantly illuminate and modify one another and themselves. As a consequence of this method, surprise and revelation can never be regarded as merely professional tricks and techniques, they form part and parcel of the comic presentation of human beings, human relations—and of the relativity of human values. On the one hand, Shakespeare's characters fall into somewhat clear-cut moral categories, but on the other the judgements passed on them constantly fluctuate. But this very ambiguity and shift and change in judgement is one of the main guarantees of their authenticity and reality. The manner in which the assessment of the different human values in them takes place through correction and through innumerable degrees of comic, ironic, or satirical shades, is one of the most important sources of an effect which is specifically Shakespearean.

In recent studies the concepts of irony, satire, parody, distance, juxtaposition and so forth, have often been invoked. I think that an important first step towards the clarification of these concepts was taken more than twenty years ago, when S. L. Bethell wrote *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition* (London, 1944). He was indebted to E. E. Stoll and L. L. Schücking for certain ideas on the dramatic tradition more or less prevalent in the Elizabethan Age, but stopped short of their propensity to interpret Shakespearean drama exclusively in

terms of dramatic convention and the demands of the current Elizabethan stage. He was well aware of the complex features of a play, both as written literature and in terms of stage production and laid particular stress on that quality of a popular audience which he called "multiconsciousness." He pointed out that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were not only able to create the illusion of stage reality, but also at any moment, when necessary, to dispel it. This form of proceeding served to remind the spectators that the illusion was no more than an illusion and, at the same time, to enhance the realistic effect of the production. It involved not only the "multiconsciousness" of the audience but also a complex attitude on the part of the playwright.

Bethell rejected Stoll's and Schücking's narrow and "minimizing" interpretation of Shakespeare's characters, fully aware that they usually exhibit some additional quality that cannot be traced back to any tradition of the drama or the stage. "... Shakespeare," says Bethell, "happened to possess, beyond his contemporaries, a sympathetic insight into human nature: his characters do not always conform to type, and sometimes surprise us by the 'naturalness' of their behaviour."<sup>1</sup> If there is some reservation in the statement, it is partly due to the fact that Bethell himself considered the relation between Shakespeare and the medieval stage to be rather closer than it in fact had been, and the reservation has a special bearing—as is clear from another passage of the book—on Shakespeare's comic characters, whose function, Bethell believed, was less im-

\* Slightly abbreviated text of a paper read by the author at the Thirteenth International Shakespeare Conference at Stratford, September 1-6, 1968.

<sup>1</sup> S. L. Bethell, *Shakespeare and the Popular Dramatic Tradition*, London, 1944. p. 63.

portant than that of the tragic heroes, and he also considered them less realistic.<sup>2</sup>

The caution implicit in this approach cannot be justified. And if we accept the "variety of angles" in Shakespeare's comedies, a number of questions arise which we must try to answer: What is the role of the comic characters in this "diversity of aspects"? How do they function in this complexity? What sort of complexities are to be found in the characters themselves?

It is also a question whether these complexities and intricacies result in homogeneous characters, whether the Shakespearean character is a living person or merely fulfils a stage function; or whether it is merely a representation of something beyond itself, taking its entire significance from an abstract idea of the play taken as a whole.

My answer is that Shakespeare's comic characters are never quite simple, and that their consistency is usually maintained despite—or rather in consequence—of all their complexities and contradictions. The two greatest comic characters of Shakespeare, Falstaff and Shylock, are, of course, the best cases in point. As early as the eighteenth century Maurice Morgan perceived that Falstaff was made up of incongruities. And indeed he is full of contradictions and his liveliness, his comic qualities, his very existence is the result and sum total of his contradictions. These show him as a highly individualized dramatic character, but the contradictory features of his personality are in some way connected with that great turning-point in history the tragic aspects of which were consistently presented by Shakespeare, from *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* onwards. The highly complex comic nature in Falstaff can be traced back, in the last analysis, to a personal, and a historical, error of judgement. From the very beginning the fat knight misjudges his role and his chances with Prince Hal, the future king of the realm. This fatal self-deception coincides

with the historical delusion of his class: the decadent feudal aristocracy and especially the late medieval knighthood. That is how Falstaff's individual character assumes historical significance. But his complexity does not stop at this point. His is an essentially ambiguous character. He is not only a decadent parasite, but also a full-blooded representative of the Renaissance *joie de vivre* which is at odds with both the medieval system of values and the new fashion of Puritan asceticism, and is ready and able to criticize both. The manifestations of this basic ambiguity continually impinge and react on each other. One might say Falstaff lives by this very ambiguity—and by the series of contradictions which result from it and branch off in various directions.

Similarly, Shylock's more sombre figure—which, however, remains a comedy figure—is full of individual and historical contradictions. He is meant to be contemptible. But this is only one aspect of his character and of our estimation of it. He is not entirely inhuman, and, up to a certain point, he is right. We cannot deny the validity of his judgement on Christian ways: he detects a discrepancy between the principles and the actions of his adversaries and perceives the vices of exploitation, class and religious oppression lurking behind the humanistic catchwords. The laws of Venice are determined by the principles of commerce and profit—and so are Shylock's ways and methods. At every stage of the play the contradictions inherent in the age of merchant capitalism and primitive accumulation become manifest. They are, at the same time, inalienable elements of the complex portrait of Shylock. His clash with Antonio is based upon contrasting views on the principle of loaning money at interest. But the attitude which medieval and Renaissance Christian communities adopted towards Jews—as well as to Mohammedans and, in general, people of non-Christian faiths—also has its bearing on the central issue. Mr. Thomas H. Fujimura, author of an illuminating analysis of

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.* p. 77.

*The Merchant of Venice*<sup>3</sup> flatly denies the importance of the "historical" determinants in Shylock's character. Shylock, according to Mr. Fujimura, "merely happens to be a usurer, and usuriousness, like his Jewishness, is an 'accident'."<sup>4</sup> In his opinion it is the features of the "miserly old man," the "Puritan" (as a general type, conceived quite unhistorically), the "ogre" and the "devil incarnate" which really count in Shylock. The method is common: to identify Shakespeare's comic or tragic characters with universal types independent of time and place. The identification can be right or wrong—in this case it is reasonably satisfactory—but the specific historical features are automatically ignored. This is, in my view, a basic fallacy of approach. The historical "conditioning" of Shakespeare's characters can, in general, be easily discerned, and in certain cases—like that of Falstaff and Shylock—it is strikingly obvious.

It is undoubtedly true that certain universal types can also be recognized in Shakespeare's comic characters: the old parent (mainly father), the erring young man, the young woman in love, the clownish servant and—to continue the enumeration in Browne's words—"The pedant, the braggart, the hedge-priest, the fool and the boy." But in Shakespearean comedy the universal outlines are always filled in with characteristics which are historically and individually relevant. Being a usurer does not necessarily involve specific characteristics, connected to a definite period in history. But Shylock is not a generalized usurer, he is the money-lender of the late sixteenth century who—in accordance with the great economic changes in his age—is unwilling to acknowledge the "breeding" of gold as criminal. Thus, if we ignore the usurer in Shylock we not only deny a universal element in the picture as a whole—that is bad enough in itself—but we also fail to recognize an essential particular determinant of the character. In the detailed analysis of a character all universal and particular characteristics

must be taken into consideration—in their order of relevance. This is the only way to achieve the valid interpretation of a literary character—and the work of art which contains it. A dramatic character is a mixture of universal, historically particular and individual features. Mere generalities are not enough.

Don Armado—in *Love's Labour's Lost*—is mostly referred to in the Folio speech-headings as "a braggart," and the same generic name can be more deservedly applied to Parolles in *All's Well that Ends Well* or to Lucio in *Measure for Measure*. To stop at this point, to take the word as the essential definition of the characters in question, would be a fatal mistake, and would involve ignoring relevant aspects of the comedies themselves. Even if we want to throw light on the basic relationships of these three respective characters we cannot be satisfied with the generalized application of "braggart," out of the context of time and space; we have to realize that they are, most probably, to be visualized as sixteenth-century gentlemen living under the conditions of Renaissance feudalism.

Don Armado is a carefully drawn and highly individualized comic character, and so is Parolles. Lucio is somewhat different. He seems to play into the hands of those modern critics who attempt to dissuade us from resolving the contradictions of Shakespeare's comic characters into a consistent pattern. In the early part of the plot Lucio valiantly supports Isabella, encouraging the girl—who is in complete agreement with Angelo's strict principles—to struggle for the life of her "sinful" brother. At a later stage Lucio is seen slandering Duke Vincentio in a most outrageous manner, addressing, without suspecting it, the disguised Duke himself. The boasting and calumny is so resented by Vincentio that Lucio almost pays

<sup>3</sup> Thomas H. Fujimura, "Mode and Structure in 'The Merchant of Venice'", *PMLA*, LXXXI. 7. (December 1966).

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.* p. 504.

for it with his life, but eventually compounds his offence by marrying the prostitute whom he got with child, and that if we can believe him is as harsh a punishment for him as the gallows. Here we have a profligate who, when the occasion arises, is more than punctilious on a point of honour. He is, moreover as we have seen, ready and able to act nobly and generously—as when he espouses Isabella's cause. Are we mistaken if we try to find the key to the manifest incongruities of his character in the behaviour of certain young gentlemen of the Renaissance: great gestures on the one hand, grandiloquence on the other, and a sort of anarchic recklessness in the background? Perhaps we are not so far from Shakespeare's intention, but it must be admitted that this time it is much more difficult, and more open to question, than in the case of most of the Shakespearean comic characters to recognize the consistency behind the contradiction. There is no doubt about it: there are "problem characters" in comedies and especially "problem comedies" of Shakespeare. Lucio undoubtedly is one of them, and Bertram, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, is another.

These two characters, incidentally, seem to throw light on each other. In Bertram, as in Lucio, positive and negative features are intermingled; and the mud he flings at Diana is even baser than Lucio's outrageous calumnies against the Duke, since here it is the honour of a defenceless girl which is at stake. One of the basic components of Bertram's character is the irresponsibility of a certain type of young gentleman and nobleman; the same trait that we discovered in Lucio. Parolles most probably hit the nail on the head when talking about Bertram's feelings towards Diana: "He did love her, sir, as a gentleman loves a woman. . . . He loved her, sir, and loved her not." The strange and perplexing thing in this play is that on hearing the words "O, pardon" from Bertram, we are supposed to forget his base behaviour. At the beginning

Lucio appears a pleasant fellow enough, but later turns out to be a despicable braggart, and comic humiliation is his at the end. Bertram, whom we are led to believe an honest if stubborn and inexperienced young fellow, somewhat callow, behaves so monstrously in the critical situation of Act V, Scene III, that the happy ending is quite unable to cancel out the "bitter past"; he proves to be of no better moral fibre than Parolles, his one-time favourite. It is hard to rid oneself of the impression: something is missing from Lucio and Bertram that should balance their contradictions more convincingly.

Certain recent critics of the two characters are of a different opinion. Ernest Schanzer considers Lucio consistent enough to be compared to Falstaff; he writes: "His [Lucio's] frivolities do not claim his entire being: they are partly a cloak for a nobler self which comes out in his conversations with Isabel, above all in his 'By my troth, Isabel, I loved thy brother' (4.3.153). He is a rather complex, and, in some ways, contradictory character (which does not make him the less Shakespearean). Towards Claudio he shows himself to be a true and loyal friend, while towards Mrs. Overdone and Pompey he proves callous and perfidious having them arrested, it would seem, in order to get out of the way these two incriminating witnesses to his own transgressions."<sup>5</sup>

As to Bertram, Josephine Waters Bennett insists that we must bear in mind that *All's Well that Ends Well* is not a romantic play but a parody and satire with a definite point of view: "It is a play of the extravagances of young love seen through the eyes of experienced, sympathetic, yet wiser maturity."<sup>6</sup> On the sudden conversion of

<sup>5</sup> Ernest Schanzer, *The Problem Plays of Shakespeare*, London, 1963, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> Josephine Waters Bennett, "New Techniques of Comedy in *All's Well that Ends Well*," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, XVIII. 4. (Autumn 1967), p. 345.

Bertram when he acknowledges Helena as his wife by his exclamation of "O, pardon!" Miss Waters Bennett makes the following unusual commentary: "His is an honest sentiment rendered ironic by its convenience. Here we have tragi-comedy in Shakespeare's vein: not the sentimentalism of the honest whore or the repentant wife, but the irony of life which sometimes renders virtue convenient."<sup>7</sup>

However strained and unconvincing these interpretations may sound, the approach they represent is quite convincing when applied to the great majority of Shakespeare's comic characters, who are usually built on contradictions and therefore able to provide, at any given moment, some unexpected self-revelation, some genuine surprise. Shakespeare's comic figures, including the humblest and sketchiest of them, cannot be equated with a mere formula: they are not at all transparent. We are inclined, for instance, to consider Holofernes in *Love's Labour's Lost* a cantankerous fool, a typical pedant and nothing more. But before he makes his exit he exhorts and reprimands not only his aristocratic spectators in the play but also us, his larger audience: "This is not generous, not gentle, not humble." Up to that moment a fool has strutted on the stage; then, most unexpectedly, a human being takes his leave. We are, perhaps, taken aback for the moment, inclined to protest. Neither Holofernes nor Shakespeare is entitled to do this—a fool is supposed to remain a fool to the very end. But Shakespeare refuses to acknowledge such consistency. He is always ready to perplex and amaze us.

Or let us take Monsieur Le Beau in  
7 *Ib.* p. 355.

*As You Like It.* He is in the service of the tyrannical, usurping Duke; he is a courtier. Shakespeare, as a rule, gives a rough and satirical treatment to his kind. But in fact Le Beau is a decent, amiable fellow. He befriends the persecuted Orlando, advising him to leave the court quickly, and acquaints him with Rosalind's position in the house of her cruel uncle. He speaks with consideration and goodwill, as a kindly-disposed "attendant lord" should. But even after this preparation his parting words keep something like a surprise in store: "Sir, Fare you well: Hereafter, in a better world than this, I shall desire more love and knowledge of you." Is this merely a refined version of the courtesy found in Shakespeare's figures? It certainly seems to be more than that. The reference to a "better world" and to the closer and more intimate human relations it may make possible carries a special weight. We must admit that up to this moment we have underrated Le Beau, and focussed our attention on his "technical" function in the play. Now it becomes clear that he, too, is more than a formula.

May I hope that I shall not be misunderstood? I am by no means suggesting a return to the old-fashioned type of character analysis, and I do not wish to restrict the critic's interest exclusively to characters. I am fully aware of the value of different trends in recent Shakespearean criticism which are more or less independent of a detailed examination of this kind. All I want to stress is the composite and contradictory nature of Shakespeare's comic characters, and the need to take their specific and individual features, as well as their universal characteristics into consideration.

LÁSZLÓ KÉRY

## A HUNGARIAN ENCYCLOPAEDIA

Writing about this one-volume encyclopaedia of Hungary,\* I should first of all like to refer to the novelty of the enterprise which brought it about. Books brought out as the cooperative effort of publishers in a number of separate countries are not rare these days. This is largely due to the increasing number of art-books requiring considerable material and technical resources, and scientific and informative works needing preparation on an international level. The cooperation between the Pergamon Press in Oxford and the Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences somewhat differs from the usual, and it may well happen that as a pioneering effort, it marks out a road for other similar enterprises. This volume dealing with Hungary is published by Pergamon Press as part of the series "Countries of the World." Pergamon Press allowed Hungarian scientists and scholars complete freedom to say whatever they considered necessary and suitable to provide a picture of contemporary Hungary and at the same time made available the necessary staff to help with editing and the final drafting of the English text. To quote the preface by Robert Maxwell, chairman and managing director of Pergamon Press: "... The organization and compilation of this work was undertaken at my initiative by an editorial committee appointed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences... Writers were specially commissioned by the editorial committee to provide an account of the important aspects of Hungarian development and life... This is the Hungarian view of Hungary and as such the book makes available for the first time in English between the covers of a single volume, much information on Hungary which has been previously

\* *Information Hungary*. Published by the Publishing House of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, in joint edition with Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1968, pp. 1,144.

widely scattered or completely inaccessible."

The editorial committee mentioned by Robert Maxwell consisted of leading specialist authorities, with István Rusznyák, the President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, at their head. Ferenc Erdei, the well-known sociologist and economist, the Vice-President of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, acted as Editor-in-Chief. Though the individual contributions are not signed—a rule open to question in my opinion; the editor-in-chief justifies it in his introduction by claiming that in this way "the joint responsibility of the authors, reviewers and editors" becomes more evident—there is an alphabetical list of authors at the head of the volume which includes the names of leading authorities in various fields, from Professor József Bognár, one of the principal theoreticians behind the economic reforms put into practice since January 1968, to the geographers Márton Pécsi and Béla Sárfalvi, Béla Köpeczi, a professor of French literature, and Géza Naményi, the head of the Bureau of Information attached to the Council of Ministers. It is to be regretted that we are not told the names of the English editors, nor of those responsible for the conservative but tasteful layout and the excellent maps.

### *Past or present?*

Ferenc Erdei emphasizes in his introduction that this volume endeavours to give as complete a picture as possible of contemporary Hungary. "The development of our socialist society and the organization of our socialist institutions have now attained a considerably advanced level, and we have made it our purpose to acquaint the reader... with the present-day state of our people and our society," he writes, and then continues: "We have, however, felt it necessary also to relate something of the

history of our country. No people's life can be fairly understood without a comprehensive knowledge of its history. In particular the recent development of our country, the accomplishment of the social revolution and the establishment of social institutions may not be properly assessed without a certain grasp of the historical background. A knowledge of this background will enable the reader to appreciate the large number of unsolved problems of a social, cultural and economic nature which we have inherited, and to judge the way in which these problems have been tackled during the past two decades." It is of course impossible not to agree with these thoughts. On the other hand a reader familiar with the genre will ask himself willy-nilly whether an editor can possibly have the strength to keep a proper balance between past and present in a volume such as this one, always bearing in mind that its prime aim must be the description of the present.

This problem appears more than once as we turn the pages of *Information Hungary*. From the chapter on Hungary's economic geography to that on the arts a feeling arises repeatedly that the thorough and detailed discussion of historical antecedents like it or not means a curtailment of the space given to the present situation. I want to add right away that generally one does not regret this shift in emphasis, at least not that aspect of it which means a more detailed discussion of the past than expected. Thus the chapter dealing with the history of urban and rural settlement, for instance, gives an account of research which is so recent, and so interesting, that its results are a revelation even for a Hungarian reader familiar with the subject, while the chapters dealing with the history of art and that of literature are amongst the best short studies of the subject published during the last years. In other places this way of dealing with the subject has had less fortunate results. Thus, in the chapter dealing with music the dominating "historical perspective" means the displacement of the

present. Following sixteen closely printed pages devoted to the past, only barely 30 lines are given to Hungarian composers of our day who after all include names like Zsolt Durkó, György Kurtág, Emil Petrovics and Sándor Szokolay, who have an international reputation. Those interested in contemporary Hungarian music will hardly be satisfied with the information contained in a single sentence, in which the author of this chapter characterizes in one breath this new and important generation which after all displays such a variety of approaches to the art of music.

*The reforms in the direction of the economy*

The appropriateness of my critical remarks about the relative proportions of past and present is borne out by the brilliant chapter on the Hungarian economy, which in my opinion is the best in the volume. This section comprising about a hundred and fifty pages first generally deals with the organization of Hungarian economic life and its development, and then, dealing with each aspect in turn, it concentrates on the immediate past, and the present. The coming into being and development of the socialist economic order, its problems and the way these problems were solved are discussed in chapters which are full of ideas. They will doubtless be received with attention not only by specialists interested in developments in economic life, but also by the average reader. The massive introductory essay which determines the limits of the various periods in the development of the socialist economy is particularly interesting. It establishes three periods, that of reconstruction immediately after the war (1945 to 1949), that of socialist reorganization (1950 to 1956), and that of socialist development (1957 to the present). The author is not satisfied with enumerating the characteristics of these three periods. He thoroughly analyses the developing economic or-

ganization and the way it and the social environment mutually influenced each other. He critically examines those objective and subjective factors which finally made the realization of the reform of the direction and management of the economy inevitable. The sections dealing with industry, agriculture, transport and internal and external trade are valuable because of the information they convey.

*"What is what" in Hungary*

The Hungarian critic, and I imagine the English reader too, expects a thorough survey of the country from a volume such as this. In the course of an analysis of social and political institutions, of economic and cultural life and other aspects, he expects information which makes that which gives a country its special flavour more alive, and easier to understand. *Information Hungary* fulfils this task, but in some chapters unevenly. In some respects it cannot be faulted, thus I consider the chapter dealing with the Hungarian language to be a little masterpiece of its kind. A vocabulary and linguistic facts which must be totally strange and incomprehensible to the English reading public, are made comprehensible by the author in the few short pages at his disposal. The chapter dealing with the protection of ancient monuments is equally sensitive and objective.

The aims and methods of those charged with this task are graphically and objectively described, their identity with the methods supported by Unesco is established, and in addition the special Hungarian circumstances are pointed out, the *praetium raritatis* which owing to the ravages of the Turkish occupation and the destruction that took place during the Second World War is greater in Hungary, needing greater efforts in reconstruction and preservation than in other countries, which were not hit by the storms of history to the same extent. On the

other hand the layout of the chapter which discusses regional geography, is somewhat confused. More prominent sub-headings would have articulated this chapter better, and made the text, which contains a great deal of information, more easy to survey. Fortunately the thoughtfully compiled index of names and subjects—I looked up a dozen names and subjects at random, and they were all to be found precisely on the named page—to some extent compensates for this lack. The chapter dealing with folk art is also first rate. Following a history of the various styles in Hungarian folk art, and the geography of Hungarian folklore, an excellent survey of Hungarian material ethnography is provided. Unfortunately not all the colour plates which illustrate this chapter reach the standard of the text.

Telling about the country is the primary function of the chapter dealing with tourism and catering. It begins with a discussion of the history and present organization of travel enterprises and institutions, it continues with a description of places of interest to the sightseer, and concludes with a travellers' guide. This lists the names and addresses of travel and air-line offices, hotels and other institutions dealing with foreign travel, and also the main events which are likely to be of interest to the visitor. This varied information no doubt fits in well into a volume called *Information Hungary*. Not only someone about to go to Hungary, but also an armchair traveller whose thoughts for some reason or other stray to Hungary can find a lot of information in it. What I object to is not the information given, but that which is missing. Thus the short and objective account of Hungarian cooking largely confines itself to raw materials and methods employed; what is lacking is the taste and mood of culinary masterpieces, which captivate even the most refined gourmets, and which are due to the peculiar fusion of ancient Hungarian cooking methods which go back to nomadic times and French ones, which took place in the eighteenth century.

It is a pity that Hungarian wines are only mentioned in passing, the majority are simply brought down to a common denominator: "table wines." Nothing is said about the special history, method of preparation or properties of the famous Tokay. The various fruit brandies, especially the Kecske-mét apricot brandy, the *Barack*, not being mentioned at all, will be found odd by many who know and enjoy these first-rate spirits. On the other hand the description of the many and varied landscapes and monuments is not only interesting as a travel guide, but also as reading material. If only Hungarian travel brochures were anywhere near as interesting and varied as these pages in *Information Hungary!*

*From the Magyar Encyclopaedia to  
Information Hungary*

The first Hungarian encyclopaedia was written a little over three centuries ago by János Apáczai Csere, the Calvinist reformer and outstanding scholar and teacher of his age. His work, the *Magyar Encyclopaedia*, broke new ground in several ways. It was written in Hungarian at a time when in Hungary Latin was still the language of administration and education, and at the time when the Hapsburg Counter-Reformation destroyed independent thought, he created his work in the revolutionary spirit of Descartes and Copernicus. True enough it was published neither in Turkish, nor in Hapsburg occupied Hungary, but in Utrecht, in the Netherlands, in 1653. From there it reached Transylvania, which enjoyed a

certain independence, fertilizing Hungarian intellectual life with the progressive ideas of its time. Almost a century later, in 1735, the first historic-geographical work in the modern spirit, *Notitia Hungariae Novae Historico-Geographica*, written by Mátyás BÉI, appeared. This was printed in Vienna, from there it reached Hungarian schools in which it remained a favourite text-book right to the end of the eighteenth century. Later, in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many Hungarian encyclopaedias saw the light of day, though amongst them the Pallas Lexicon is the only one that could be called a work of considerable importance. Hungary's leading scholars of the period—the end of the nineteenth century—wrote it, and some of its entries are considered to be source material even today. A number of encyclopaedias appeared since 1945 (e.g. art, literature, science and also music) but the six-volume *Új Magyar Lexikon* (New Hungarian Lexicon) is merely the herald of a new comprehensive encyclopaedia that is due to appear sometime in the future, and which remains a burning debt owed by Hungarian publishers. After what I have said it will, I think, be understood of what an importance the birth of an encyclopaedia such as *Information Hungary* is, confined though it is to one volume, which contains the latest intellectual and material attainments of socialist construction, and which could well be the point of departure of a larger work. All credit is therefore due to the authors, the editors, and last but not least, the publishers in Oxford and Budapest, whose collaboration brought it about.

ZOLTÁN HALÁSZ

## COMIENDO EN HUNGRÍA

Two poets, both sons of fiery and fervid countries and societies, Miguel Angel Asturias, a Nobel Prize winner, and Pablo Neruda, a Lenin Peace Prize winner, set out to "discover" Hungary in an unusual and fascinating way. This book\* is their gastronomical diary of Hungary. These writers of painfully subtle moods and sharp social truths sat down at "Hungary's table" to taste her food, to roll the flavours round their tongues. They lifted their glasses filled with "Hungary's lightning splendour", and then proceeded to present to their readers a people and a country through "spices, fiery wines, and soft steaks sitting on sofas upholstered with rice and mushrooms."

If I said just now that the two world-famous Latin-American poets sat down to present Hungary to the world through her cuisine, I should not be writing the truth. The taste of a country and a people certainly shows in the flavours of its dishes, and the appetite of a people can no doubt be revealed from these flavours and tastes, but it did not even occur to the two poets to start discovering the Hungarian soul in its stuffed cabbage or to search for the character of a people in its fish broth or noodles with cottage cheese.

All the two poets wanted to do was to play around and enjoy life in these parts. "Hungary seemed savoury, so we tasted it," they wrote. They sat down to the Hungarian table in full-blooded careless joy and in a book they called *A Sentimental Journey Taken Around the Hungarian Cuisine* sang the praises in prose and verse—and in a way unique in world literature—of what they had eaten and drunk in Hungary. In the process, while enjoying a haunch of venison, or tasting the Tokay wine, they happened to make some interest-

ing statements about this country and its people.

### *Apéritif*

The apéritif to this book (the original Spanish title is *Comiendo en Hungría*, first published in Hungarian in 1968 by Corvina Press and now in several languages, including English, with a preface called "Apéritif" by Iván Boldizsár, with Zoltán Halász's gastronomical and geographical Little Encyclopedia, and with illustrations by Liviusz Gyulai, Emma Heinzelmann, Kati Lőrinczy, Mihály Pohárnok, Piroska Szántó and Endre Tóth) was not some special brew but the bill of fare of the Alabárdos (The Halberdier) Restaurant in Buda. This Lucullan haunt is housed in one of the Gothic buildings of the historic Castle district of Buda, which has seen so many wars and sieges. It was there that Iván Boldizsár first guided his poet guests, who were somehow possessed of the erroneous belief that the socialist system had standardized the Hungarian cuisine "as well". When Neruda saw "the fabulously rich repasts the 'Alabárdos' offered to the new pilgrims," when he espied the Kitchen Captain in the middle of the period *salon* mixing herbs and oils, liqueurs and wines, hot and odorous spices, when he watched him "change his chef's table into the chair of an alchemist," he thought of writing a poem in which he would hymn the flavours of the Hungarian cuisine and the Kitchen Captain himself. When they decided to report on a Buda restaurant to their readers in a new way they first thought of prose, then of verse. Finally, having sampled Hungary's well-laden table in Budapest and in the country, they decided to sing—not Hungary but the joy of life, in prose and verse, in magic poems and lively dialogues, in sonnets to the soups and villanelles to the venison. For when they first mentioned their

\* *Comiendo en Hungría*. A Sentimental Journey Taken Around the Hungarian Cuisine by Miguel Angel Asturias and Pablo Neruda. Corvina Publishing House, 1968.

plan to their guide, he asked them with a patriotic glow:

"Do you like Hungary as much as that?"

"As much as we like life," said Asturias.

#### Soup

"This is a war of continents. The children of all continents against the soup-plate. They do not even want to see it. They make grimaces, they scowl, they screw up their eyes, press their lips together, turn their heads away. They cannot stand the very smell of soup. In vain all promises of outings, trips, new toys. All in vain."

This is what Asturias says of the peculiar Soup War going on all over the world, in the introduction to his hosanna on Hungarian soups, called "Soup Regains its Rights." He discovers the flavours, aromas and specific composition of Hungarian soups; he speaks of fish broth, of *gulyás*, of chicken broth à la Ujházy, of the wine-soup of Hungarian Christmas nights; of the wayward yet controlled imagination which created those exquisite and delicious Hungarian soups. And then he asks, not without sarcasm: "Does anyone think of *consommé*, of *bouillon*? No one. *Consommé* reeks of evening-dress. It trembles in the cup like a golden eyeglass." The Guatemalan poet does not like evening-dress, nor the eyeglass. What Asturias likes is a quick attack—and surprise—even at the table. The unexpected, quick attack of spices, and the surprise caused by the magicians of the kitchen, who are past masters in blending hot and wild spices, bland and delicate spices, in just the right proportions.

#### Paprika

A special charm of the book is the savour and wit of its format: the part on dietetic foods is black-edged like a mourning envelope, the hymn to *paprika* is printed on red paper. No, this is not a book of a sallow,

sickly people or men suffering from gastric and liver complaints; this is a very palatable book of a people with good appetites, slightly overfed, and of its two great friends, Asturias and Neruda. It is a book on "wonderful and sweet Budapest," on "the country of meats grilled at evening-tide," on "wines of a crimson fire and crystal shine," on bridges that look like roasting spits, on lard and paprika, on the odour of marjoram and bay. This is a book by the thirsty sons of America in which they "tell the world about our happy states of satiety." Yet nonetheless there is thought and philosophical truth hiding behind each of its Pantagruellesque lines, and a lesson to be learnt behind each taste and flavour—although the poets never cease to emphasize, to the very end, that they did not come here to philosophize or study, but simply to eat their fill.

And in the meantime they discover, and praise, in verse and prose, Hungary and the Hungarian cuisine. They return thanks for the paprika where it is due, to its country of origin—America. Columbus took it from the New World, the Hungarian cuisine gave it back as "red paprika," a hot or sweet-flavoured ground spice.

#### Meats

I turned the pages restlessly. Did they include the barbecue? They did. I myself have often pondered on the secret of the Hungarian cuisine—in fact I was beginning to think that its dishes are so savoury because they contain the "taste of tastes." A Hungarian nobleman, in the course of a historic banquet, had a calf placed in an ox, a pig in the calf, a lamb in the pig, a chicken in the lamb, and a young pigeon in the chicken. He only ate the pigeon because, grilled over an open fire, the taste and flavour of the roasted animals had penetrated into the pigeon. Such ox-grillings no longer occur in Hungary, but the practice of the "taste of tastes" is still pursued. As, for

instance, the Hungarian custom of preparing fish broth by passing small fry, which has an exquisite taste but almost no meat, through a sieve into the fish broth, i.e. we season the broth with fish.

That is what our authors from distant parts discovered. They discovered that in bringing out the flavour of meat of domestic animals, of game and venison, a special imagination is needed, a surprising attack and balance in the spices added, to make a harmony of bitter and bland tastes, causing the artists, blessed with "a world-devouring appetite of accumulated hungers," to throw up their hands and sing again.

Being rather more prosaic, I once tried to find a practical explanation for the flavours of the Hungarian cuisine. I asked a world-famous Hungarian chef who had many prizes at international cooking competitions. "Crispy cooking," he said, "no matter whether it's meat or pastry. The cook has to catch the moment of crispness—when something burns but does not catch in the pan. The taste is hidden in this crispy crust. When the meat is no longer pink, but is not yet dark brown." "That is . . . ?" I asked. "Well, that's just it," he said, but he could not define it.

#### *Wines*

What report did the Latin-American friends make of the black-looking Burgundy wine of Villány, of the red Kadar of Pusztamérge, the "Grey Friar," the Kéknyelű, the Tokay wines, of Liszt's wine, of the red wine of Szekszárd? And what did they say about the Somló, the "wine of the newly-weds" which, according to the legend, favours the birth of a boy-child? It was a custom of the Hapsburgs to give Somló wine to the young couple of the family on their wedding-night.

Asturias and Neruda celebrate the Hungarian wine in verse and prose and in a toast called "The Great Cup." In it they call Hungary's wine a "memory of heavens."

"Here's to sunshine and to snow-crystals, to joy and to sorrow! I drink to love and to pain. I drink to fire and to hail," Neruda writes in his toast, and adds: "I drink to life, and I drink for life . . ."

#### *The Bill, please*

And now "L'addition, s'il vous plait"; add up your bill of goulashes, stuffed cabbages, pale-brown goose-livers, Balaton pike-perches, gamy brown sauces, fiery wines, and the royal epic made of these wines of flame.

This is not a bill to be added up and presented; for who can calculate the sum-total of this poetry and laughter?

But why is the small country of Hungary so savoury? These two sons of the "Castilian famines that drove the *conquistadores* to America" think it may be because so many peoples have fought, waged war, won and lost battles on this soil. These peoples have passed away but they left the flavours of their kitchens behind, and the Hungarians, on their part, have used them on the magic altar of their cuisine as a form of thanksgiving. The secret of Hungarian wines is the Sun—the Hungarian Sun which they call a "flashing splendour." And their best spice, they say, is not pepper or ginger or marjoram or the traditional paprika, but the surprise provided in their *blending*.

The book which will not just be tasted, but devoured, is very well produced. It is illustrated with original drawings, photos, graphs, bills of fare, wine cards, inn-signs and so forth; for the typography praise is due to the Corvina Press, for the printing—mainly the nice and captivating offset print in colour—to the Kossuth Printing House of Budapest. *Comiendo en Hungría*—published by Corvina Press in English, Spanish, French, German and Hungarian—will appeal not only to gourmets but also to bibliophiles.

PÉTER RUFFY

# ARTS

## FORTY YEARS OF PAINTING AT SZENTENDRE

The artists' colony at Szentendre, this charming little town on the right bank of the Danube, north of Budapest, was founded forty years ago. A few graduates of the Budapest Art College whose style had been influenced by the neo-classicism of the "Roman School",<sup>1</sup> were the founding members. Soon, however, a number of artists—in the first place Jenő Barcsay<sup>2</sup> and Antal Dely—who were attracted by constructivist principles and who rejected the chill and empty forms of neo-classicism, settled in the colony. After the mid-1930s more and more painters moved to this small town on the Danube. Béla Czóbel, the Hungarian who painted most like the *École de Paris*, and János Kmetty, the Hungarian exponent of cubism, spent their summers there; and so did István Ilosvai Varga, a post-impressionist of the lyrical kind, and the neoprimitive Jenő Paizs Goebel. Beginning with the end of the '30s the Hungarian surrealists, chiefly Lajos Vajda,<sup>3</sup> Dezső Korniss, and also their followers Endre Bálint<sup>4</sup> and Piroska Szántó<sup>5</sup>, gathered at Szentendre.

Thus, "Szentendre painting" is a complex formula. To understand it, one has to discover first of all what distinguishes "Szentendre painting"—in other words, painting done there and linked to the unique atmosphere of the place—from the products of other Hungarian and European art colonies or regional schools of art, more

specifically their classical models. The Barbizon School, and on a Hungarian level the Nagybánya (now Baia Mare in Rumania) School can be looked on as fulfilling that role.

What was common to both Barbizon and Nagybánya was that the artists working in both places had definite objectives in mind. The primary aim of those at Barbizon was the cultivation of *paysage intime* or realistic landscape painting, and of those at Nagybánya the development of the *plein-air* style. Of course, different artists approached the common aim in different ways, and therefore "Barbizon style" and/or "Nagybánya style" are ideal concepts which in their concrete expressions cover highly individualistic traits. Nevertheless, despite variants, certain common features were dominant and determined the style. When the "chief theoretician" of the Nagybánya movement, the painter István Réti described the leading figures of the school saying that "Szinyei Merse cited *nature* as an authority, Hollósy called the most important thing in art *emotion*, whereas Ferenczy wanted above all

<sup>1</sup> A school of Hungarian painters between the wars who had studied in Rome and were influenced by the Italian *novocento*. Vilmos Aba Novák was its most prominent representative.

<sup>2</sup> See *The New Hungarian Quarterly*, Nos. 15 and 25.

<sup>3</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, Nos 16 and 23.

<sup>4</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, Nos. 18 and 29.

<sup>5</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, No. 12.

the quality of art or taste. . .," he was not merely defining the different aspects of the Nagybánya style, but at the same time he established its principal elements. Even though it could not have come about without the inspiration of the French *plein-air* and end-of-the-century German painting in the manner of Herterich, the Nagybánya style is original. This relatively homogenous style was based on a unified aesthetic position and moral attitude, the very points which later enabled István Réti to systematize the principles of the Nagybánya painters so that these could be taught after the '20s at the Budapest College of Art. It was precisely because of their moral purity, as against the prostitution of "official" Hungarian art at the time, that these principles could serve as the foundation of modern Hungarian art.

The creation of the Hungarian version of *plein air*, of the unique Nagybánya style, was the achievement of the Nagybánya movement; the fact, however, that this development took place at Nagybánya, this little mining town, is merely accidental from the point of view of the Nagybánya style. Without a doubt, the beauty of the landscape acted as an inspiration; nevertheless, even if some slight connection may be discovered between the spirit of peoples living there, the town and the landscape on the one hand, and the Nagybánya style on the other, this relationship cannot be regarded as existential. In this way the Nagybánya colony is akin to Barbizon and Worpswede—for the Barbizon programme, too, could have come into being in other parts of France as well.

None of the other Hungarian art colonies or regional schools were able to develop such a relatively homogenous style as Nagybánya—or, if any one of them did, its significance cannot be compared to that of Nagybánya. The only exception is Szentendre—naturally not only the artists who strictly speaking worked within the colony are here considered Szentendre painters. Even so, Szentendre painting cannot be looked on as as

homogenous a style as that of Nagybánya. There are two basic distinctions, one of them negative and the other positive.

Although we can speak of Szentendre painting, we cannot speak of a Szentendre style. It is impossible to reduce to a common denominator the art of Béla Czóbel, István Ilosvai Varga, János Kmetty, Imre Ámos<sup>6</sup>, Jenő Paizs Goebel,<sup>7</sup> Margit Anna<sup>8</sup>, Pál Miháلتz, Jenő Barcsay, Dezső Korniss, Endre Bálint, Erzsébet Vaszkó, Lajos Vajda, Piroska Szántó and Pál Deim—to mention only a few Szentendre painters of a pronounced individuality. Accordingly, we can speak of common aesthetic principles, of ideological and methodological similarities, only with reservations, for they exist only among a few of these artists. At the same time there are good grounds for regarding each of these painters—and other painters attached by certain times to Szentendre at least in some period of their lives—as Szentendre painters.

It cannot even be said that a master capable of establishing a style or school was missing from Szentendre as he was missing from the Hungarian art colonies of Szolnok or Kecskemét; Béla Czóbel, or János Kmetty, Lajos Vajda or Jenő Barcsay, were masters and the art of each of these men has in fact had a number of imitators. This may be the very explanation for the lack of a homogeneous Szentendre style: too many eminent artists lived there in close proximity, whose art represented a completely independent world and therefore maintained its autonomy even when it bordered on the art of someone else. At any event—even if we do not include the neo-classicism of the Roman School among its determining influences—Szentendre painting ranges from post-impressionism, to a surrealism inspired by folk art and ritual; and consequently the lyrical translation of the seen, its transformation according to the autonomous laws

<sup>6</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, No. 16.

<sup>7</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, No. 24.

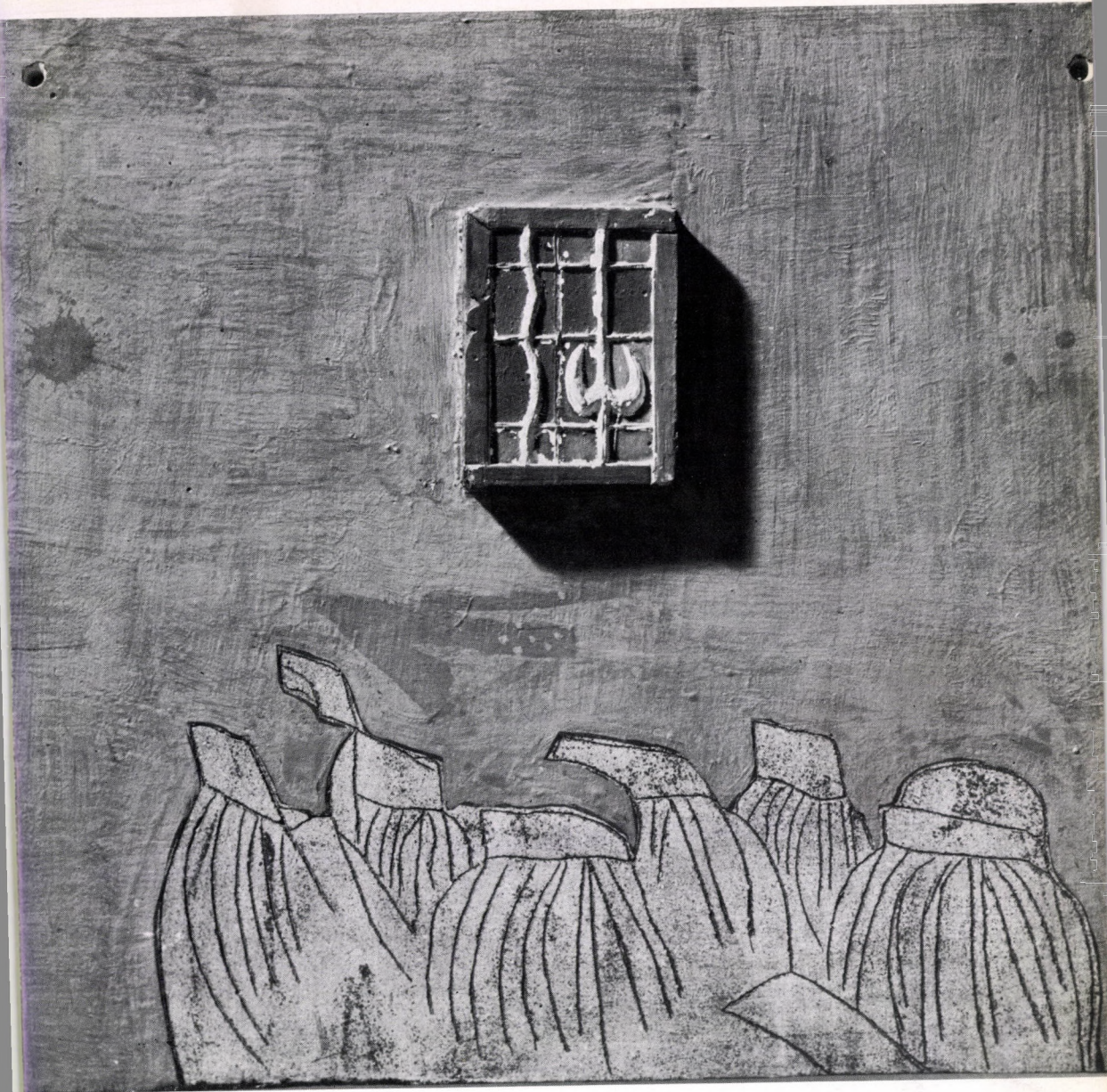
<sup>8</sup> *The N.H.Q.*, No. 32.



LAJOS VAJDA: CHRIST WITH A MASK (COLLAGE, 43 X 30 CMS, 1936)



JENŐ BARCSAY: WORKING GIRL (OIL, 95 X 70 CMS, 1928)



ENDRE BÁLINT: MAGIC NIGHT AT SZENTENDRE (OIL, 80 × 100 CMS, 1966)

Overleaf:  
PÁL DEIM: MEDITATION AT A MONASTERY (MIXED TECHNIQUE, 27 × 40 CMS, 1968)



of pictorial architecture, or the psychologically induced arrangement of association patterns based on the components of what is seen, all have a place in it. We find then—without intending this as a deprecatory statement from the point of view of art history—that a pluralism of styles is in fact typical of Szentendre painting. Szentendre painting is certainly not characterized by a unified style; it must be regarded as an agglomeration of a number of styles and methods. Only what ties each of these to the eponymous Szentendre gives them cohesion.

Yet, it is not entirely by chance that what brought fresh blood to Hungarian painting gushed forth at Szentendre. This little town, just 13 miles north of Budapest with its lovely landscape and unique social environment does have a power to shape and determine art. The rare beauty of the landscape is not rugged, but gentle and soothing. The Danube, Szentendre Island, the Mediterranean looking hills and Italianate townscape of terraced buildings, the Serbian origin of some of the inhabitants, the untouched Baroque buildings, and a fortunate blending of village, small-town and holiday resort, give Szentendre its unique atmosphere. Its proximity to Budapest makes it part of the capital's intellectual life. At the same time it still has a relatively living folklore of its own, a variety of traditions and all this in a small town which is easy to survey, where the most important features appear concentrated and able to set the tone. It is an attractive, self-contained, homogenous world, asking to be painted.

The members of the neo-classical Roman School looked on the colony only as their place of work and residence, and even though there may have been among them one or two who painted murals in one of the churches of Szentendre, they had nothing to do with the essential spirit of the town. The other movements—which for the sake of simplification we may attach to the names of Béla Czóbel, János Kmetty, Jenő Barcsay

and Lajos Vajda—were bound to Szentendre by stronger ties. The first of these represents lyric post-impressionism; having started out from the Nagybánya school, it absorbed French post-impressionism, blending in an individual way the styles of national tradition and of the École de Paris. In the works of Czóbel and his followers the characteristic townscapes do not appear as mere subjects, they preserve their *couleur locale* as well. This aspect of Szentendre painting is as much part of Szentendre as Nagybánya was part of Nagybánya. Szentendre experiences gave rise to concrete works, but many other landscapes in the country would have provided equal opportunity for a solution of the formal problems which arose here. The situation is somewhat similar as regards János Kmetty, whose art is a living link between the structural trends of the early part of the century and the new constructivist methods. His geometrical cubism had developed before he moved to Szentendre, but the specific motifs of Szentendre, the sharply outlined characteristic houses crowding in on each other were suitable for translating the already thought out style into practice.

The connection with Szentendre of the movements associated with Barcsay and Vajda is, however, deeper; the career and style of these two men would have been inconceivable without their understanding of the unique Szentendre atmosphere. As a given environment, a reality presented ready-made for the painter, Szentendre itself was one of the major factors in the development of Barcsay. The fact is that the essence of Barcsay's method is the projection on a plane of something already shaped, of something defined in space. Just as Barcsay's art—or at least a considerable part of it—was attached to Szentendre, it was no mere chance that Vajda's programme could be realized only there. In his case, too, the small town and its symbolic and associative possibilities provided a base, a starting point. In all his themes he was looking for the meeting point

of the subjectively psychological and the historical and social. Therefore with him not only the town itself and its buildings, but also its objective elements, the local Serbian and Hungarian art and folk-art traditions, the icons and the local memorials—and the experiences connected with them—play a very important part.

In its heyday Nagybánya created the specifically Hungarian forms of *plein-air* painting, becoming the moral and to some extent formal basis of later development. Without Nagybánya the other progressive modern Hungarian movements, some of them perhaps even rising above Nagybánya, could not have come into being. The significance of Szentendre is more or less similar. In the thirties—just when the post-Nagybánya school and Hungarian expressionism were experiencing a crisis—it gave a new start to the Hungarian *avantgarde* and paved the way for *The Eight*<sup>9</sup> and for Hungarian activism. Hungarian constructivism of the Barcsay type and the surrealism—at once lyrical and constructive—represented by Vajda's circle, stood for two cardinal directions of modern art in a specifically Hungarian manner. In this respect, the lines

<sup>9</sup> A group of radical painters who fought impressionism, forerunners of the Hungarian activist movement. György Lukács, the philosopher and Béla Bartók, the composer, were amongst those who maintained close contact with this group. *The Eight* existed from 1909 to 1912.

written by Lajos Vajda in 1936 are interesting and much to the point: *I, who am of western (Transdanubian) origin, look culturally to Russia and Serbia (that is, to the East), whereas Korniss, who is of eastern (Transylvanian) birth, looks to France and Holland (where he lived for a brief period in his childhood). All this shows clearly that our ambitions are the same: to develop a new art, specifically Central European, through the influences of the two great European cultural centres (French and Russian). The position of Hungary in Europe (geographically) is such that it is predestined to be a link between West (France) and East (Russia); we wish to weld the two cultural poles (in art), the expression of the two types of European man; we want to be bridge-builders. That was the distilled outline of the programme of the Szentendre school. Equally important is another statement by Vajda: I am searching for a new group of themes; I want to probe into the secret abstract essence of things. But I always start out from the concrete, from the "real," when I look for the original forms of things.*

Although the aim of Barcsay's constructivism differed from this, it also reached constructivist abstraction taking his starting point from the concrete; and in fact Barcsay always kept returning to objective reality.

These two principal movements, both part of Szentendre art give some indication of the role which Szentendre played in Hungarian and European art.

LAJOS NÉMETH

## A TWELFTH-CENTURY ROYAL TOMB

King Béla III of Hungary (1173–1196) was one of the most important rulers belonging to the Árpád dynasty. He was brought up in the court of his relative the Byzantine Emperor Manuel Comnenus. Pretenders or such persons as were likely to become claimants to a throne were always given a cordial reception at the Byzantine court, which hoped to make political use of them. The situation was somewhat different with Béla. Manuel's mother was a Hungarian princess, Piroska, the daughter of St. László, King of Hungary. She was called Irene in Constantinople. The figure of the Empress Piroska-Irene clad in ornate robes can be seen even today in the mosaics of the southern gallery of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Relying on this relationship Manuel, in whose rivalry with the German Empire Hungary played an important role, invited Béla to his court and raised him to the rank of *Despotes*. He arranged a marriage between Béla and his daughter and declared them to be joint heirs to the throne of the Eastern Empire. At the same time he carefully watched the situation in Hungary and annexed Croatia and Dalmatia to the Empire as part of Béla's inheritance. Later, the Emperor married again and he had a son. Then he abandoned the plan of a Byzantine-Hungarian union which he had based on Béla. His son became his heir and even the Hungarian Prince's engagement with Princess Maria was dissolved; he married off Béla to his wife's older step-sister, Anne de Chatillon. Meanwhile Béla's brother, the King of Hungary, died and Béla was called to the throne of Hungary. In Hungary a great many people received "the Greek" with suspicion and Lukács, Archbishop of Esztergom, refused to crown him. It is not intended to describe Béla's reign, which lasted close to a quarter of a century, at this stage but one thing is certain: his youth spent in Constantinople waiting to succeed

to the Empire had formed him decisively. He maintained friendly relations with Manuel right up to the latter's death but he preserved his independence. After Manuel's death and soon afterwards, after the extinction of the Comnenus dynasty, Manuel's old plan: the Byzantine-Hungarian union again emerged as part of Béla's policy but proved to be a failure again.

The building of the castle and cathedral of Esztergom is linked with Béla III's name. However, it was not here but in his favourite city, Székesfehérvár, that he ordered his body to be buried beside that of his first wife who had died in 1184. (His second wife was Margaret Capet, the daughter of King Louis VII of France and the widow of Henry Plantagenet, the son of King Henry II of England; she outlived Béla by a few years and died in the Holy Land.)

The Basilica of Székesfehérvár was founded by St. Stephen, the first king of Hungary; it was the coronation church of the kings of the Árpád dynasty. In addition to St. Stephen seven more kings were buried there. The other Árpád kings were buried in churches they had built themselves. From the Middle Ages onwards the royal tombs were pillaged several times and finally the church itself perished. The earthly remains of Béla III and Anne de Chatillon escaped complete destruction, which was the fate of all the other Hungarian royal tombs, but even so their history was tempestuous. It was by chance that, in 1848, the two untouched royal tombs were found on the site of the ruins of the Basilica. The find was excavated and placed in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest. There it remained for nearly half a century. Then King Francis Joseph I had an ornate neo-Romanesque sepulchral monument erected in the Church of Our Lady (otherwise known as the Matthias Church) in Buda, where not only the remains of Béla III and his Queen

were placed but out of a misunderstood consideration for the dead whatever was found with them too. Thus, for nearly seventy years this collection of considerable historical and art historical value was inaccessible to research.

In February 1967 these objects were unearthed again and then exhibited at the Hungarian National Museum. At the same time the remains of the royal couple were also examined and then reburied.

#### *The grave goods*

As already mentioned, this is the only case in which funeral accessories have been recovered from an undisturbed royal tomb of the Middle Ages. Besides, it is of particular importance because there is no other collection of a similar character that comprises as many objects as that of King Béla's funeral ornaments.

Out of the robes nothing remained but a few fragments of gold lace and ribbon found in the Queen's grave, who, by the way, had only a crown and a ring. In addition to these a sword, a sceptre, spurs, a bracelet, a processional cross and a pectoral ornament were found in the King's grave. We are probably not mistaken if we surmise that this collection, set up with an unusual completeness, offers a faithful picture of the Hungarian regalia of those times.

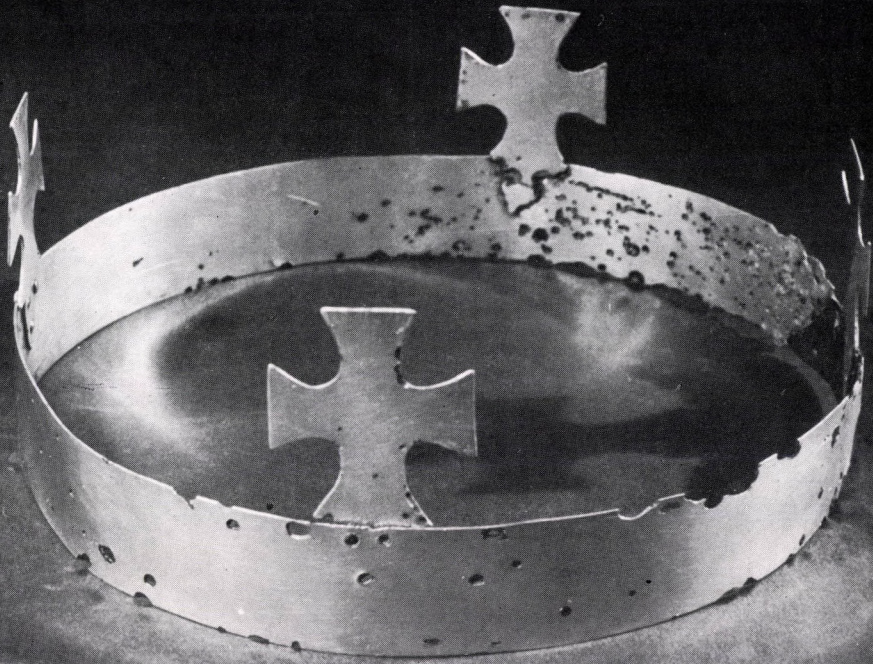
The objects can be divided into three groups: (a) Personal objects belonging to the deceased, such as gold rings. (b) Objects made for the funeral in a hurry of gilt silver or poor silver and substituted for others. Two objects constitute the third: (c) A gilt bronze processional cross and a four-lobed encolpion with cloisonné enamel. Both of them are damaged, repaired and fragmentary. They are not objects of personal use, nor were they made for the funeral, although their role was similar to the objects of the second group; evidently they symbolized and substituted something else.

As far as the meaning and role of the objects are concerned we may state that no meaning connected with the cult of the dead can be attributed to them. Their role seems to have pointed to the dignity the deceased person had been invested with while alive. In all probability no genuine royal or other insignia were ever used at the funeral, even if the crown placed in the grave was, as happened occasionally, of precious metal. Béla III and his Queen were buried with simple fillet-crowns, both of them decorated with four cross-shaped ornaments each. The crowns, like the other objects, were only symbols of the insignia used in reality.

The sword also belonged to the royal insignia. It may have been a substitute for the so-called St. Stephen's sword—kept at present in the treasury of the Cathedral of St. Vitus in Prague—which, along with a part of the treasures of the Árpád dynasty, was taken to Bohemia in the thirteenth century. We do not know of any other sword originating from a royal tomb of a later date than 1000 A.D. Sources mention one sceptre only: the one allegedly placed into the tomb of Edward the Confessor in Westminster. The short funeral sceptre of Béla III may have symbolized the sceptre with the crystal globe in a filigree mounting which has come down to us. The pair of spurs, on the other hand, raised no problem at all. It was an accessory of the king's attire and is often found as part of funeral accessories.

The bracelet found on the King's right wrist is also interesting. Formally it is a plain band linked with simple wires. Its significance is derived from the fact that it proves that a bracelet was part of the regalia, at least in Hungary.

The four-lobed pectoral ornament was suspended on a long, fragmentary silver chain. Originally it had been decorated on both sides by altogether ten enamelled plates: two circular ones and eight in the form of crescents. This exquisite Byzantine jewel must have been damaged when it was



THE SEPULCHRAL CROWN OF KING BÉLA III.



A PROCESSIONAL CROSS AND TWO RINGS

A SILVER ENKOLPION



buried. Originally it may have been a reliquary. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether the King, while alive, had worn it in its badly damaged state; in all likelihood it was taken from the treasury as a substitute for another pectoral ornament which belonged to the royal attire.

The role of the modest processional cross made of gilt bronze and repaired several times is more difficult to determine. It was certainly removed from the treasury of Székesfehérvár Cathedral for the purposes of the funeral. It is a Hungarian work from the middle of the twelfth century. The question is, what was its role or rather what did it substitute for?

A digression is needed if an answer is to be attempted. It is often said about Béla III that on his return from Byzantium he carried out several changes in Hungarian regalia to bring them into line with the Byzantine model. For a time the closed form of the Hungarian crown was considered to have been his idea and so was the inclusion of the coronation cloak—which had originally been a chasuble—among the royal insignia. It was on Béla's coins that the dual cross, which later became an important part of the

Hungarian coat of arms, first appeared. Originally it had been a Byzantine emblem. Recently the adaptation of the orb with the dual cross has also been attributed to Béla III, it was on the wax seal of his son and successor King Imre that this latter symbol first appeared.

In our opinion the appearance of the dual cross in the royal coat of arms was not simply the taking over of an existing symbol but a clue to a more complex situation. The Byzantine form of the dual cross always referred to the relic of the cross, the True Cross, which enjoyed a special cult in the whole empire. It was venerated mainly as a relic helping in warfare and bringing victory and as such it was taken by the emperors on their campaigns. The cult spread to the territory of the Holy Roman Empire and survived in the Latin Empire too. In Hungary it emerged enriched with local associations: the different relics of the cross had got connected with St. Stephen's name. His experience in Byzantium prompted Béla III to make use of the existing cult and develop it by including the cross in the coat of arms of the country, which, by the way, was a purely western idea.

ÉVA KOVÁCS

## FROM OUR NEXT NUMBERS

A HUNGARIAN FILM HISTORY

*Roger Manwell*

THE BOROGROVES WERE VERY MIMAY

*Miklós Vajda*

SÁNDOR SZOKOLAY'S HAMLET

*Ossia Trilling*

BARTÓK AND WAGNER

*Ferenc Bónis*

# FILM

## FILM REVIEW

### *A Shot in the Head*

In this film—as in so many others throughout the world—we witness the rebellion of self-destructive youth, of young people who have lost their connection with life, a rebellion which irrevocably turns into tragedy. The title *A Shot in the Head*, not only points to the plot, but also to the effect of this hair-raising and hard-to-explain gesture.

A real life case—an item of police news—formed the basis of the film. Three teenagers, two boys and one girl, make up their minds together to end it all. With a stolen car they go on a last wild spree, for, having dropped out of society and everyday life, they feel that only death can offer a solution. But they are just as much afraid of the final act as they are attracted by its nerve-racking spell. So they ride, and then race, taking the long way round and delaying suicide—until finally the inevitable moment is there. The boy who had the idea carries out the common decision. He raises his revolver and shoots himself in the head. The other two shrink back in terror, and then, stricken by the sense of shame over their betrayal, they, hesitant and disturbed, look at each other, at their future—and at the spectator.

That is the story. It is simple, there is no appeal from it and it has an elementary impact as death itself. But on the screen this play with death lacks any element of playfulness;

despite the romantic overtones which so often haunt this theme, it is presented in its harsh bleakness and hopeless stupidity. Yet, remarkably, the film gains depth and intensity through the very fact that it strips any thought of melodrama off the deed and the dreams, off the narrowly confined lives, of these young people. The analysis is admirably ruthless and consistent. Bacsó has done the almost impossible. He took all the usual excitement out of a crime story—and with it all sentimental sympathy, its inevitable accompaniment—and yet his film keeps up the tension. This direct close-up on individual lives, the unbiased accuracy of portrayal, has as a result that “Why?” is at least as interesting as the more usual curiosity of “What next?” While, together with the camera, we practically attach ourselves to the characters in our endeavour to find out how they live, or rather drift on the peripheries of existence, we cannot find a second’s relief from our unease: how did they get there, what lured them to the bare emptiness whose name is death. The film does not get lost in the complexities of motivation, it does not try to track down the influence of the environment, its sins of omission, its indifference and lack of understanding—or just plain lack of love. It only explores. It records a thousand-and-one small incidents, deliberately without emphasis, for not each one in itself leads to the mad action, but all together in their indivisible total effect.

We get to know overgrown adolescents. They are like orphans and this impotence—caused by their inner emptiness—is heart-breaking. The opening scenes of the film sketch a love affair between the girl and one of the boys. What awkwardness, what sad clumsiness! Not only do they lack words for their emotions, even their gestures seem to have lost all natural warmth. Whether because they are ashamed of love, or because they consider tenderness a sign of weakness—one hardly knows. "Don't smoke now!" the boy reproachfully tells the girl in the one-room-kitchen flat they have borrowed to make love. Evidently he would like to think of the moment as something beautiful and sacred, but with what a sense of grievance and in what wounding words of rebuke this feeling is expressed! Or let us think of the girl's visit home to her parents. After her long absence, both mother and daughter are full of good intentions. And yet how much mistrust and mutual suspicion spoils this reunion right from the start. The girl arrives at her village home by car in the company of two boys who are completely unknown to the family. To mask her alarm, the mother gets on with the housework with confused zeal. She is full of incertitude, repressed worry. The girl is living rough again? Who are her friends, what will become of her? And the girl turns her back on her mother, nag, nag, nag, that's all she gets at home. Can't they understand that she is independent, and grown up, and can do as she pleases? This chasm includes everything, complete defencelessness, and beyond this defencelessness the uselessness of defiant rebellion. But just as it is evident that her mother's old-fashioned and clumsy warnings mean nothing to her, it is clear that there is nothing to replace them or fight them with. For what does this rebellion have to offer? What are the dangers involved? True, early independence has freed these young people from many prejudices. Of what use are the outworn truths, shoddy lies and even shoddier ideals of their parents to them? But the

ideas they themselves have put in the place of their discarded heritage—which they got rid off even before they got to know it—what are they? Is it possible to define them?

These are the questions which engage the attention and interest of the spectator. It is director Péter Bacsó's strength that he brings them out. That is why he can permit himself the luxury of simplicity and the deliberate avoidance of psychologizing. He makes no attempt to dissect that which does not exist. He approaches the lack of meaning in these lives, this peculiar deficiency disease, through its symptoms. That is how he tries to help in the discovery of its antecedents and causes.

In concentrating on the detailed precision of presentation *A Shot in the Head* makes constructive uses of the finest traditions of modern documentary realism. We share in a single "trip" of increasing tension and increasing pace during which the inner nature of a whole way of life is exposed. Even the closed form of the story emphasizes what a closed, self-contained world this is, one which is separated by an ever wider gulf from the "normal", from the life of adult society. It breeds and destroys itself.

Hungarian critics have pointed out some connection between Bacsó's film and Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. The latter is also a work in which facts are more eloquent than the novelistic plot. What particularly impressed me in *A Shot in the Head*, especially in comparison with Richard Brooks' film version of *In Cold Blood*, is that Bacsó does not permit himself even as much emotion as the otherwise excellent director of the film. Bacsó's matter-of-fact dryness is justified by having his feet fiercely planted in reality. It never leaves the accepted dimensions of everyday existence. Here, of course, both the crime and its victims are more modest, and the gap between everyday reality and the irrationality of death is not made as wide as by those who made *In Cold Blood*. Interestingly enough this does not take away, however, from the sweeping force of the story, but adds to it. Apparently the more naturally

this type of attitude thrives and flourishes in the everyday world, the less distortion, aberration, physical and spiritual injury is needed for its development, the more frightening it is, and the greater the danger about which the film warns us.

The genre and character of the documentary film has determined every aspect of the style. Objectivity abhors insistence on aesthetic qualities, and this explains why even the composition of the individual frames of the film is dominated by an impressive authenticity rather than artistic beauty. It hardly needs to be said that this puritanism takes no less knowledge and invention, and especially agility, than other, more conventional, approaches. Luckily this dynamism is one of the most sympathetic characteristics of the whole of János Zsombolyai, the young cameraman.

Bacsó has been admirably daring in his casting. He chose to do entirely without professional actors. Three "lay" teenagers with marked personalities live on the screen, and even though those who play the roles are not young people with the same kind of life, they belong to the same category of young moderns. They take us through this tragic adventure in a matter-of-fact manner, with the hesitant gestures of a vulnerable and really wounded sensibility. We believe them that they are speed crazy, that their craving for freedom finds release in reckless racing, that they can't do anything but

search restlessly and always in a rush. They are full of excesses, of unharmonious contrasts, uncertainty and rough edges; they are clumsy and yet have a peculiar sense of rhythm and style. It is to the credit of these lay actors that all this is clearly put across. They deserve to have their names mentioned here. The girl is played by Kati Kovács, one of the most popular Hungarian pop singers, whose throaty voice and boyish hardness are very expressive in the role; and the two boys are memorably portrayed by József Müller and Károly Horváth.

*A Shot in the Head* is a well-disciplined work, terse and tension-producing. It is not the dialogues or the generalizing ability of those who made it but rather the accurate presentation in all its elements of an important social phenomenon that gives this picture its strongly intellectual character. The logic of presentation leads directly to the sentence, and the spectators are invited to take part in pronouncing it, which is the case only in the best contemporary works. Perhaps now and then this logic becomes tiresome, and as the steps in it are too easily foreseen, the end of the film does not surprise enough. Although this leads to a temporary lessening of tension, the final effect is still a crescendo of force. Bacsó covers up his commitment right to the end, nevertheless this modest withdrawal conceals passion. This commitment consists precisely in this persistent exposure of truth.

YVETTE BÍRÓ

GYÖRGY MOLDOVA

## THE TATTOOED CROSS

### I

State Remand Home of the Ministry of Culture, Zápor utca 47, Budapest III.

Before I ring the bell I have another look around: an insignificant little street in Óbuda, a barber-shop—closed—on the corner, only one big building in the street; the Home itself, with its three-meters-high brick wall. On the other side there is a garden where children are planting out seedlings in the warm March sunshine. I ring the bell, and the big iron door without a handle opens before me.

In the porter's lodge are three instructors. Each of them is at least twenty pounds overweight—the food cannot be that bad. Two are wearing blue capes, the third one white.

"Whom do you want?"

"The Comrade Headmaster."

"He's in conference. Could you tell us what it's about?"

I tell them that I'm writing a story on children at approved schools, and would like to start with this institution. The three instructors look at each other, ask for my identity card, enter me into a sort of book, the one in the white cloak invites me to follow him:

"I am Dr. N., the psychologist. Come with me."

(I shan't give names in this report. I shan't give the names of the children because it's forbidden by law; even their

photographs can only be published if they remain unrecognizable; and I shan't give the names of the tutors and other authorities, because I don't want to see a number of libel cases added to the work of our already overburdened courts.)

Iron doors open, iron doors close as we walk along the corridors. Worn, neglected walls, a few girls washing the stone floor, a boy with a sooty face mounting the stairs, obviously coming from the boiler-room.

We sit down in his room.

"Who are sent here?"

"Young people from 14 to 18 who have been sent to approved school or ordered remedial training by the court. Those sent to approved school only stay here one or two months for psychological and aptitudinal observation—then the boys are sent to Aszód, and the girls to Rákospalota. Those ordered remedial training stay here."

"What's the average number of pupils?"

"About 120. They are divided into six sections: four for boys and two for girls. Boys who have completed the full eight years of general schooling are put into the first section, and when they get to Aszód they will be taught a trade; those with less schooling are put in the second section, they are given an agricultural training at Aszód. The third and fourth sections are children ordered remedial education—RE's; the first and second girls' sections is the same as the boys'."

"Why are they sent here?"

"Mostly for theft, in about 40 per cent of the cases; then robbery with violence, rape or prostitution; attempting to cross the border illegally, incitement against the régime, disorderly behaviour in public, etc."

"What do you think are the personal reasons which drive them to these sort of offences?"

"First of all, and above all, an unhappy home. This is a contributory cause in 82 per cent of cases."

(This figure surprises me; I would never have thought that as many as eighteen families in a hundred could be considered happy.)

He continued with a list of reasons with which psychologists all over the world have come to be familiar; drink—either on the part of the parents, or increasingly, among the children themselves, the need for love and emotional contact—"instead of talking to their children, the parents ring them up at home or leave messages on notes"—the increased demand for material possessions—"The parents are only too happy to satisfy it, if only out of remorse. They give them things instead of their time. The demands grow, the parent cannot fulfil them, and the crime follows."

And then, as in other countries, no way has been found to satisfy the child's desire for action of some sort. School is out, and the children simply don't know what to do. "In our experience," said the psychologist, "the KISZ (Young Communist League) does not fill the bill; membership figures are exaggerated, all the paper work makes a show, the activities are not real. I can tell you we've had more than one KISZ leader here."

Plus a good many other reasons. Overcrowding and bad housing are terrible generators of delinquency.

And it's the most incompetent families which breed fastest. These unfortunate, inadequate children meet at school, the

teacher cannot be bothered with them, the other children laugh at them; and finally, to achieve some sort of success, they form gangs, break and enter, or even kill.

The state does a lot for the prevention of delinquency. 35,000 children are in state care; the keep of one child amounts to 1,385 forints a month. The Ministry of Culture has issued instructions laying stress on work for the protection of children, yet none the less, looked at objectively, conditions of education, and especially in approved schools, are worse than before 1945.

"How do you account for that?"

"At the beginning of the fifties it was commonly believed that with the development of socialism juvenile delinquency would automatically disappear; as a result a number of institutions were closed, like the one in Székesfehérvár, and those remaining were allowed to run down."

"How much money would be needed to bring these schools to a satisfactory level?"

"At least 90 million forints. But as far as I know, the financial authorities won't even discuss it. They don't allow new investments, only repairs. You'll see our new building, for instance. We built it from the repair fund, so that it didn't count as a new building, we left a few bricks of the old one."

\*

My first visit was to the remedial training section. The children's room is a combined day room and dormitory; the school benches are separated by a curtain from the two-decker bunks.

The boys seem to be either tall and broad-shouldered, or underdeveloped for their age. They lean back uninhibitedly, laughing and throwing things at each other behind the teacher's back, or they slump over their desk dejectedly, at best pottering around to try to make something in honour of Liberation Day.

A tall boy, with a Beatle haircut, sits

disconsolately in the first row, a white bandage on his left wrist.

"What happened to him?"—I ask the tutor.

"He tried to commit suicide yesterday."

"Can I talk to him?"

The boy is called forward. He wears the usual pullover of the school, and the trousers of a blue track suit. The key of his box hangs on a string around his neck.

"What did you do before you got here?"

"I was a builders' labourer."

I wait to see whether he will volunteer anything more, but he keeps silent, making patterns on the wooden floor with the point of his shoe.

"How many children are there at home?"

"Another five."

"How much brandy did you drink a day?"

He lifts his eyes for the first time:

"Sometimes half a litre."

"How did you get caught?"

"I worked near the Czech border. I used to cross over to get hold of leather coats and bring them back."

"How much did you get for them?"

"200 forints for each coat."

"And why did you try to commit suicide just now?"

"There's a girl here from Kecskemét—Csöpi—I am not allowed to write to her, three of my letters have been seized. So I soaked fifteen Kossuth cigarettes in the wash basin, and drank it, but nothing happened, so then I cut my wrist."

He smiles a little diffidently:

"I have a girl back home—as well," he added.

"Go and sit down, son," says the instructor and turns to me:

"You see, that's how it is. Hundreds of these romances develop here; if the girls escape from Rákospalota, they go down after the boys at Aszód. Sometimes they even get married."

\*

The section lines up for lunch. The deputy commander of the section, a thin moustached young man with an uncanny resemblance to Hitler's pictures in his youth, gives the orders. The others grudgingly obey.

"Don't show off, Prophet."

"I'll twist the ears off you, Prophet!"

"Why do you call him Prophet?"

"Because he's a know-all. Now he's decided he wants to build a wireless for Liberation Day. I'll see it working before I leave if I'm lucky!"

"Why is he here?"

"Heaven knows. They say for incitement."

\*

I go over to the office, and ask for the Prophet's papers.

In 1964 he read in a magazine that Soviet children had prepared and distributed leaflets during the German occupation. So he decided to do the same to annoy the police. So at the beginning of 1964 he printed about forty leaflets with the inscription "Heil Hitler!" on them on his toy printing set. Then he showed them to his brother, and they reprinted them on sticky tape.

They said "Heil Hitler!"—with the imprint of a swastika—and "death to the Russians," and they stuck them on benches and kiosks. And to distinguish them from those of other people, they over stamped them.

They were bored. So they took down the red flags and the national colours on Váci út, but later Prophet's younger brother put the red-white-and-green ones back, because they were the Hungarian flag.

They persecuted an old woman in the district, whom they thought had reported them to the police; they blocked up her door, and smeared excrement on her door-handle...

\*

"And then?" I ask Prophet.

"One night I went home, and forgot to look through the window first and there was a detective.

"Had I printed the leaflets? No. Then who had? How should I know? There were seven other kids in the settlement alone, who had a rubber printing set. But, of course, they made proofs on the set and everything was found out."

"And now?"

"Oh, I've changed completely. Honestly."

He hastily opens his cupboard and takes out a few fusty pamphlets, perhaps no longer taken seriously even by their authors, and begins to sputter:

"The working class is on the march. . ."

\*

"While you're here," says the assistant headmaster, "wouldn't you like to take charge of a section session yourself?"

"Yes? Then take over the Second Section from nine to one."

"What's the syllabus?"

"There is no syllabus. Just keep them occupied and quiet. Let them write letters, or play, or draw. Do you want to make any preparations?"

What preparations? What with? I take out of my bag a German pocket chess set and a chest expander with five springs.

"Let's go."

\*

The expander makes an impression; I pull it out, then take out a spring and let them try. To my surprise, none succeed. Then I join the crowd, and we chat.

In one corner they are absorbed in tattooing with four needles bound together; they know that this is strictly forbidden, but they don't care.

"What's that inscription you're tattooing on him?"

"Forward, Murderers!"

The little fair, cross-eyed boy stands the needle pricks without flinching.

I saw the strangest tattooed texts and drawings at that school. One boy, for a box of cigarettes, allowed them to tattoo on his forehead: "I am an idiot."

M. is a living museum of tattoo-marks. "Cut here" is inscribed across the main artery on his neck; on his upper arm is a dog, in the corner of his mouth two stubs, under his heart a few blue drops of blood. On his right thigh, a speedometer "measures" his speed; on his buttocks two giant cats watch out for the mouse which has hidden in the cleavage. But M. is not satisfied; he implored everybody for the picture of a naked woman so he can have it tattooed on his chest.

The girls tattoo themselves too, and their phrases and drawings are even more unmentionable. One had the words "It's yours" tattooed below the navel with an arrow pointing downwards.

\*

The agenda for the day—with a few comments.

6.00 a.m. Reveille. 8.00 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. Work in the workshops, locksmiths, cabinet makers, etc., or the laundry or garden. Or under the name of "classroom activities," the monotonous repetition of things they have learned before. They do nothing.

Each section gets a newspaper, paid from their earnings, which rise to a maximum of 30 forints a month, and the price of the three T.V. sets was deducted from their earnings as well, at their own suggestion.

Further cultural equipment: two (!) pianos for the RE's, a photographic laboratory, a gymnasium, billiards table.

1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. Lunch. The food cannot be criticized, it is said to be better than what university students get. The daily board of a boy costs 20.40 forints.

2-4 p.m. Various activities and work.

4-6 p.m. Free.

6-8 p.m. Supper. Preparation for bed.

From 8. Television. Lights out at 9, but if there is a good programme on the inmates are allowed to stay up until ten or eleven.

As can be seen, there are few fixed pro-

grammes, except meals. The boys have a lot of free time, which they use in the worst possible way. They swap experiences and news about Aszód. That they get some training is clear; I saw with my own eyes two Gypsy boys giving a practical demonstration of the technique of picking pockets.

The children are not sent to Aszód for a set period, but the minimum is a year. At the end of the year the approved school council decides, on the request of the parent or on its own initiative, whether the period is to be prolonged, depending on the boy's behaviour during the year, the suitability of his home environment, and the assurance of further vocational training.

In practice boys doing an industrial apprenticeship do not leave Aszód when the year is up. They want to stay for two or three years, and leave with a trade in their hands. It is those who work on the farm who try to get out as fast as possible.

When they turn eighteen, and wish to leave, the approved school has no powers to keep them.

\*

"I cannot imagine a greater blessing than if God or the Party freed us of X," says the headmaster. "The lesson of his that you saw was relatively normal; on occasion it happens that the boys throw shoes at him or spit into his hat."

"And why can't he be dismissed?"

"We have tried, believe me, there have even been protests in the papers about him, but he has some kind of pull; his wife has some important connection who always protects him. But at the next scandal, I shall downgrade him, no matter what."

\*

This scandal came pretty soon.

In the First Section there was a boy called Szecska, a friendly boy whom everyone liked. The boy made paintings and drawings for decorations for Liberation Day, and was

given a lemon as a reward, which he promptly cut into eight parts and shared with his comrades.

At first X. appeared to like Szecska too, then he turned against him.

"You're nothing but scum," he shouted, "and I shall inform your dear parents accordingly."

And at the next visit, he abused Szecska so violently to his parents that they immediately packed up and left. Szecska had a crying fit and did not recover for days. So the First Section vowed vengeance on X.

The headmaster disliked nothing more than the teachers using the boys for their own private cleaning or mending jobs. And every class in turn knew this. So the First Section promptly reported X. to the headmaster in writing, claiming that the tutor has had his briefcase and his electric iron repaired by them in secret.

X. was furious, but none of his denials helped. The headmaster was still unable to dismiss him, but he ruthlessly downgraded him. Since then he has been supervising the girls and boys cleaning the corridor.

\*

The last Sunday in March we open the gate at one o'clock for the visitors. But as early as eleven people are sitting on the footpath opposite waiting to come in.

On paper, only two visitors are allowed to each child, but we do not stick to the regulations. An entire caravan turns up to visit some of the Gypsy boys. We only watch out for one thing: the visitor has to be a relative.

Towards the end a timid youth of about twenty approaches. He wants to see Vera H. No, he is not a relative, he says hopelessly, he's her fiancé. Then no admittance.

"Forgive me for asking," says the instructor, "but you're a good-looking, smart boy; can't you find yourself another fiancée than a girl from an approved school?"

"When we met, I didn't know; it only turned out later that she had stolen a coat."

"Then why did you stay?"

The boy looks away.

"And what would you do if you discovered that a girl was expecting a child by you?"

H. whistles.

"How far gone?"

"Fifth month."

"Then there's nothing to be done."

When the boy has left, I ask H. what they did with the girls who came in pregnant.

"Mostly arrange for an abortion," he said.

\*

I wander round. Visitors are everywhere, a few Gypsy women have laid themselves down on the floor and are asleep on their colourful bundles. I look curiously at the parents of each child, trying to fit them to the facts I already have. This divorced couple are F.'s parents. They have even come separately to the remand home, the father in his car, the mother by tram; while one talks to the child, the other stands outside in the corridor. This kind flower-vendor, whom I have known for a long time, is the foster-mother of my favourite, Rongy-kuvik.

One boy is bored with his parents, and would like them to go; another even forgets the food his mother has brought him as he snuggles up to her.

An instructor passes me in a hurry and whispers:

"Go up to No. 2. Banyo has tried to commit suicide."

I rush up to the second floor. Banyo, the shrewd perennially gay Gypsy boy is lying on his bed crying; a few of his friends are standing round him.

"What happened?"

"Banyo has a younger step-brother in the remand home. His mother came to visit, but she only went to the younger brother, 'because she does not love Banyo any longer.'

Banyo saw his mother from the window, went berserk, and wanted to attack her, but was prevented by the instructor. So he tried to put his fingers into a live socket to commit suicide."

\*

I am playing chess with my favourite, Rongy-kuvik.

"Would you like to know how I got here, sir?"

"Yes, I would."

"You know that my mother was run over by a tank in 1956, and my father died in prison; since then we have been brought up by an old foster mother. My sister had already been to this remand home, my old nurse cried a lot on her account, and I swore it would never happen to me. Then I lived in a state home for children. I wanted to be a plumber. I was quite all right. I was even allowed to go out and work during the holidays.

"So I worked with a group of cleaners for an hourly wage of 10 forints in daylight, and 15 at night; and earned 500 forints, and with four hundred of this I bought myself a pair of shoes. But when I returned to the home, the headmaster went for me and took the shoes away. I told him that I had worked honestly for them, he wouldn't believe me or give them back."

"Is that really true?"

"Scoundrel's honour, Sir."

This is the most binding oath of them all; woe to the one who breaks it. If he ever swears again he is immediately told: "You left your scoundrel's honour in the Danube bend."

Rongy-kuvik continues:

"I told my friend, and the same night we ran away. In the mountains we met two boys who had escaped from Aszód; the four of us looked for a weekend cottage and broke in.

"In the house we found some wine and preserves. When they were gone, two of us went down to town, one stole milk bottles

from the delicatessen shop and the other returned them and got the deposit.

"One day a chap with a briefcase stopped in front of the house. We laughed and pointed him out to each other. 'Look, here's someone who meant to break in too.' But the chap didn't try to pinch anything, he only looked at the house and then left."

"Was that the owner?"

"Yes. The police came and took all six of us away."

"A moment ago there were only four of you."

"We picked up two girls in the meantime. We had to admit everything in court. One thing upset me; the chap swore that the weekend cottage had just been cleaned and repainted, and we were made to pay 1,000 forints for cleaning it, although scoundrel's honour, sir, everything had been sticky with dirt. So I escaped, and went to the cottage to see whether it had been cleaned. Everything was exactly as we had left it four months earlier. I came back and told the headmaster about it, asked him to have the cottage checked and the 1,000 forints credited to our account."

\*

The great day has finally come. The boys appear before the committee that selects them for the different sections in Aszód. E. the headmaster, and N. the director, have come from Aszód, the "big noise," M., from the Ministry of Culture, is here; so is L. from the Ministry of Justice, and of course those in charge of the Zápór utca remand home.

The inmates have been given new blue dungarees and a white shirt from the store-room for the occasion; they all look as innocent as a choir of angels. They wait to be called in the care of Z., the other psychologist.

"I have brought my transistor-radio," says Z., "they are happy, there will be no trouble."

This is Z.'s basic attitude, he has stuck to it right through his long career.

After the liberation, when Countess Károlyi founded the Hungarian Howard Institution for homeless children, it was entrusted to Z. The institution worked on the "open door" principle, no fences or bars prevented the children from escaping. Z. himself asked them only to tell him if they wanted to leave, he even gave them their fares. It was his conviction that the children should not be threatened; they should be helped to put down roots. They learned a trade, they built a soccer field together; true, we have no information as to how many of them escaped.

When the Howard Institution was disbanded, Z. was transferred to the state reformatories. Here he was warned to abandon his bourgeois methods—"we do not want to bring up bourgeois artisans"—and was also reprimanded for reading to the children at lunch.

He was removed from the headmastership when the building in Völgy utca was occupied by others and the institution moved to the old Holy Land Museum, and he now works in Zápór utca as a psychologist. But he still sticks to his principles.

The boys are called in one by one; the atmosphere is very friendly, even a bit oily. E., the Aszód headmaster, promises everything: to Janó a driving course, to the hardly literate Gonosz training as a tractor driver, and a trade at least for everyone. There will be plenty of food, a chance to learn music, a fortnight's holidays each summer, a recreation camp on the Balaton. I feel almost sorry that I am too old to qualify for Aszód.

Only Rongykuvik looks distrustfully sideways. He is told he can continue his plumber's training. No, he doesn't want to. His hands shake, he can't weld any more.

"Would you rather be an unskilled labourer for a year?"

"Yes."

When he has left the room, E. mumbles, dissatisfied:

"He doesn't want to learn a trade, because he's afraid that then we'd keep him there when his year was up."

And then, of course, the personnel officer bursts in to announce that twelve out of eighteen boys left in Z.'s charge have done a bunk through the window.

A few of them got tired of wandering. They played a few pranks, they rang for the fire-engine, they got drunk in the evening and eventually returned. Others were brought back by the police. In the end nine out of the twelve returned. But Rongykuvik could not be caught. He had asked for my telephone number earlier, and I waited for his call, but for the time being he did not ring.

## II

Off to Aszód at last, sitting with the boys in a sort of Black Maria. After about ninety minutes we arrive.

I leave the car, bag in hand, and face the worn, yellow three-storey building. This is the approved school—this is Aszód. The doors are closed, all the windows are covered by bars.

The building, as I said, is divided into two separate institutions, for trades and for farming, with separate headmasters, teachers and tutors, workshops and administration; only the dining room and a few other social amenities are common to both, but they never use them at the same time. The division is about three to one in favour of the "tradesmen."

The relationship between the two institutions is not too good; the tutors greet each other in the courtyard, but mix only with their colleagues in their own institution, and there is a sort of tension between the pupils too. Old Aszód hands say that whenever a section of the "tradesmen" mutinied and barricaded themselves in, the "farmers" were called out to overpower them.

H. divides the boys into the two groups.

I go with the "tradesmen," I shall be the guest of this institution for most of the time.

The boys enter the reception office, E. the headmaster comes and puts his arm round my shoulder.

"Hullo, old man. Come on, I'll show you the school."

We take a walk in the huge garden, in the middle of which a violet tulip-tree is in bloom; further away is a football pitch and a basket-ball court, and opposite a low row of workshops.

He gives me a brief history of the institution. Built in the 1880's. One of the first in Europe where the inmates were not punished but taught to work. After the war passed from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Agriculture respectively, and finally taken over by the Ministry of Culture. "Our name is the Ministry of Culture Approved School for Boys No. 2.; the "farmers" are No. 3. More than a dozen trades taught: locksmith, blacksmith, joiner, tailor, plumber, motor mechanic, turner, etc., schooling and training the same as for ordinary apprentices. Especially well-behaved pupils are allowed to finish their secondary education as well through evening courses.

Those who don't want to train for a trade do unskilled work about the place for a regular 8-hour day.

"What is the capacity of the institution?"

"275 pupils. Can take 300."

We look into the workshops; we glance at the sports grounds, where a thin man with a moustache is conducting a gymnastic class. E. waves to him, and we go on.

"The church used to stand here."

"What kind of church?"

"It was divided to hold Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran and Jewish services. We needed the space for the sports grounds, so we tore it down, and when the parish priest heard of it, he came in and consigned us all to damnation here in the middle of the courtyard. The children enjoyed pulling it

down enormously; they fought over who should pull on the ropes. We built the large outpatient clinic opposite out of the bricks, as a present to the municipality of Aszód."

What are relations between the approved school and the village like?"

"Not so bad now. Two years ago we still gave the kids leave on Sundays; they were rowdy in the cinema, made passes at the women, stole fruit. The council demanded that the boys should be put into striped suits, so they could be recognized. We didn't want to do that, we preferred to stop them going to the village any more. But if something happens at Aszód, the school is still the first to be suspected."

\*

I go together with the boys to Section Five, which is also called the preparatory section. All pupils at Aszód go to this Section first; this is where they spend the weeks of acclimatization.

The sections are generally in charge of an instructor. This section has two, Géza P. and P., who was a prison-warder and is now enrolled in the second grade of a correspondence course of secondary school education.

The boys line up in the tutors' room. Géza greets them and promises them that they will feel happy at Aszód, he only asks them not to escape the first month; he will open the door with his own key, he says, for those who wish to escape after the month is up. It's an old gag, but it goes down.

He answers their questions patiently; they may go on leave after three months, the time spent in Zápor utca counts in their sentence, there are opportunities for sports. He promises everything, then he takes over and lists the money and valuables of the new pupils. Earnings will be entered on these lists later; they vary according to average study marks, from one hundred to four hundred and eighty forints. If somebody

wants to buy cigarettes, sweets or an envelope in the basement canteen, he can take it from this money.

Most of the boys do not give all their money up; they instinctively hide ten or twenty forints, and later sew it into their suits.

Géza then calls the section prefect, Béla F. He is small and bespectacled, but exceptionally strong. He has stayed beyond his time to finish his last year's training as a blacksmith.

There is a unanimous opinion that he is worth more than the average tutor; recently, when through some confusion the section commanders lead almost the entire institution to lunch at the same time and it was impossible to distribute the food, mutiny was in the air. It was Béla who firmly led the howling mob out and lined them up in the corridor.

He takes over the boys, and gets them to bed. The friendliness of the reception has freed them of their anxieties. I go between the rows of double bunks. Janó calls out:

"It's quite different here, Sir, from Zápor utca."

"Good night, boys."

"Good night, Sir."

\*

I have been given the guest room at the hospital. When I report to the superintendent, the old man nods with compassion.

"Well, you have been given a nice job, and no mistake. You'll be lucky if you don't get murdered."

"Why? What's wrong?"

"No discipline. The kids run wild. They destroy everything, they dig their knives into the freshly painted doors. They have a fixed idea that they want to catch a jackdaw, and they drill through the chimney to find a daw's nest. They've smashed sixty attic padlocks in one year; sometimes they inject sulphuric acid into the padlock, which then burns to bits."

"Didn't they look for jackdaws in the old days?"

"They wouldn't have dared—not before the war. But now there's no discipline, no cell punishment, no deprivation of food. At the very most they are locked into the sports depot, but then food is taken in to them on a tray, if you please. Before? The supervisors had the right to cane them, and there was a dark dungeon under the building, one day water only, next day nothing but a little vegetable; they'd think twice before they'd escape or play up."

\*

The group from Zápór utca arrived at Aszód at a wrong time of the year. It was in the middle of the term, so except for the two tailor's apprentices none of them could join a training course. They dug ditches—the service flats of the instructors were to be connected to the water mains—they helped in the garden or in the boiler-room.

They asked me to bring them "Balaton" and "Pique Dame" notepaper from the village, and in the afternoon they wrote their first letters. They asked their parents to visit them for Easter—except for the special visits when on holiday, the inmates could generally meet their relatives on the one but last Sunday in the month. They sent poems to their girls and to the friends left behind in Zápór utca.

Their fear of the institution, which had begun to lift on the first evening, never returned. Fear was replaced by the real Aszód punishment, boredom.

This was of course primarily the fault of the tutors and teachers. There are perhaps only two tutors who can approach or reach the level of Géza P. who is a born teacher; the others are simply unqualified to deal with the children properly.

"And where," says E., with a shrug, "am I going to get first-class teachers and instructors? There aren't that many in the whole country. Why should they come here?

Busy from two to ten, or even later. They lose the taste for culture, stop going to Pest, like me. When I first came, my wife and I took a season ticket to the Opera but we got home around three and four o'clock in the morning after a performance—so—now we content ourselves with television."

"The instructors get an extra allowance, but there is no extra work available to earn additional money to supplement their salaries. And the dangers and responsibility are far greater than in an ordinary school. Consequently many consider Aszód a provisional job; one of the instructors has just asked to go to a regional homestead school, he prefers even that to Aszód. My only hope is that in a couple of years, when the university will be unable to place all its graduates, some will be prepared to come to Aszód."

Till then he has men like N., a university graduate who came to Aszód with literary ambitions. He wanted to write an essay on "Wrecked family lives in Hungarian literature," and he kept chasing out of the instructor's room the pupils who want to talk to him about the wrecked lives of their own families.

Or B., who was once an unskilled labourer in a flour-mill. The committee of six under the Ministry found the decisive factor in favour of B. was that he was domiciled at Aszód and that his father too had worked in the school, as a gardener. First he became deputy administrator, now he is a section instructor. Clever, experienced, but at the age of 48 has only been able to complete the eight classes of primary school.

Or K., another instructor—"Porkey" to the boys—was such a drunkard that he even drank with the kids. After disciplinary action he gave up spirits; he now sticks to wine.

\*

In the afternoon we play football on the clay pitch behind the buildings. A boy of seventeen or eighteen plays centre-forward against us; he handles the ball beautifully,

gives the slip to three opposing players on an area no bigger than a handkerchief. I ask our goalie:

"Why isn't this boy playing in one of the district teams?"

"Last year people were down here from the Ferencváros Juniors, and he was asked up for a trial. He went up, but couldn't bring himself to undress in the dressing room."

"Why not?"

"He is tattooed from top to toe. He was ashamed. And how he would have liked to play for Ferencváros!"

\*

At Aszód tattooing is also prohibited, and goes on as imperturbably as in Zápor utca. The designs are more or less the same, with two exceptions.

1. The approved school cross. Above a plain cross tattooed on the right hand as many horizontal lines are drawn as the number of years spent at the school. When shaking hands, former inmates recognize each other from this sign.

2. The Chinese character. This is an undefinable drawing, something like a Cyrillic capital C. It is supposed to be Chinese for "one for all, all for one." I knew a section where each boy had this character tattooed on his chest. It was taken very seriously, like a compact sealed with blood.

\*

"Would you like to talk to a baron?"

"What is he doing here? Is he a gardener?"

"Hell, no. He's an inmate, brought here for stealing a bicycle."

Baron Árpád L. is a fair boy with good manners; but nothing betrays his birth. His hobby is that he likes to correspond in German. He shows me the file in which he keeps his letters. I notice a typed green sheet of paper.

"May I have a look at this?"

Árpád smiles:

"It's my father's letter to me, but please go ahead. The other instructors have asked to see this one as well. It's been read several times."

"My dear beloved Árpád," wrote his father. "Having received your letter, I hasten to reply. You are right to want to go on studying. To tell the truth, one cannot get far today on eight primary school classes, except perhaps agricultural labourers, peasants and other kindred individuals.

"I now ask you again, kindly in your own interest, to be obedient and of exemplary conduct, and to be diligent in order to win the approval of your teachers. A sound mind in a sound body.

"Incidentally, if you have to learn a trade, I ask you to chose carpentering and joinery. This would be very useful here at home, we could save a lot. Doors, large five-piece French windows, double doors, flooring, parquetry, several hundred egg boxes for the chickens, and according to my plans, the making of modern Baconádi beehives, etc. etc.

"It is a beautiful occupation. Several of my friends, artillery officers and two hussar officer comrades of mine are working today at Szeged, Budapest, Kiskunfélegyháza with several men and make a good living, because today manual work pays well. If you like to go on learning, do so; if not, you'll find a healthy and well paying job here at home, poultry, bee-keeping. And as I told you, the colonel comrade of mine, who is in a leading position in the land survey, and knows you, will employ you on work in the open air building canals, dams, etc.

"My gracious God has not left us but works for us, and is very beautiful and good; I do not regret that I married the daughter of the much martyred Uncle László Zsiga Endre, although they have all been hanged; but let us draw a veil over the past, today anybody who works diligently has a future.

"If you learn with love, and put your shoulder to the wheel to become a joiner, trade is a sort of art too. Every tradesman is

creative, is an artist, especially if he is intelligent."

I look up from the letter; Baron Árpád L. jr. who is close cropped on account of an attempt to escape, grins:

"The old man's crackers. But he blows beautiful bubbles."

\*

An instructor said that Aszód pupils could be divided into two groups: those preparing to escape, and those who have already gone. This is of course an exaggeration, but it is true that on occasion more than 10 per cent of the whole school have been absent without leave at one and the same time.

The fact is that escaping does not involve anything very much in the way of a risk. They are not watched by plain-clothes or uniformed guards; it is easy to climb over the low brick wall, and the lazier ones can easily invent a trick to walk out at the front door, which is open all day.

To issue a warrant for their arrest costs three thousand forints, but it's not they who pay it. Under the juvenile criminal code, the escape itself is no offence, it only becomes one if larceny or breaking and entering is involved. Such "duplication" occurs as a rule only when the pupil is fed up with serving an indeterminate sentence which can be extended for years on the recommendation of his supervisors, and makes, up his mind to go to prison at Tököl, because then he knows exactly when he will be released. The usual types of offence when on the run are breaking into a food shop, or stealing a bicycle to get away more quickly.

When the boy is brought back by the police, he might have some of his privileges withdrawn; deprived of leave, forbidden to write letters, or downgraded in his job. But since Aszód is in Hungary, the boys are mostly forgiven. So it is no wonder that there are pupils who escape two or three times in a day.

Some of the great escapes are now legendary. In the joinery shop the boys worked behind a curtain, and the master checked their presence by counting their boots; the boys stepped out of the boots and went off barefoot.

Teddy was locked in the sports depot in his underpants in December; he rolled a blanket round himself and crossed the river Galga, which was full of drift-ice.

Those who know their map, may wonder why, if Teddy wanted to go to Budapest—and almost all of them want to go to Budapest—he went via the Galga. The reason is that the "Old Man" lives on the outskirts of Galgamácsa, and the "Old Man" is the mysterious helper of fugitives, who gives them a bed, clothes and money.

I have never been able to find out exactly who the "Old Man" is. Boys who were otherwise communicative, clammed up when he was mentioned. I have gathered from words they have let drop that he is possibly some forest ranger or night-watchman who was once a pupil at Aszód himself, had a bad time there, and now does it to get even with the school authorities.

The boys know that if they are caught they'll get a couple of blows or so, so they behave with an impudent assurance. After one of his innumerable escapes, Teophil was asked by the policeman:

"What do you want to be when your time is up at Aszód?"

"Oh, a policeman," said Teophil sweetly.

Another time he saw a policeman with a tattooed hand and ticked him off roundly. A policeman? Tattooed? Wasn't he ashamed? Teddy, on the other hand, falls into a very authentic-looking faint, and gets himself carried back to the approved school in the policeman's arms.

\*

"Not all escapes end so gaily and impudently," says the instructor, Géza P. "Let me tell you the story of 'the Sailor'."

"When the children first come to me, I get them to write their *curriculum vitae*. Look, here is the Sailor's exercise-book."

"His father was an army officer and moved from service flat to service flat with his family, the boy has written down seventeen garrisons." (After the names of the towns there is a pathetic sentence: "When I was little, my parents loved me very much and looked after me.")

"Following 1956, the father returned to his original trade and became a joiner in an artisans' cooperative. He moved to Budapest on his own, having decided first to earn the price of a house and build it, and only then let his family join him. So the Sailor was left without a father."

(Note in the exercise book: "In the seventh class I failed in three subjects and had to repeat the class. It was then that I began to loaf about. On several occasions I stayed out all night.")

"The father built a big house for his family in the Kőbánya district of Budapest, with a separate room for each member of the family, a bathroom, and a toolshed in the middle of the courtyard. But there was no happiness for the family in the new house. The father had become estranged from his wife, wanted to drive her away, and beat his children."

"The Sailor joined a gang in the Luna Park, became one of their leaders, cut out the head of the gang with his girl, Csilla, and from then on went with her."

"On New Year's Eve they stole some bottled beer at the railway station, took it back to the toolshed, and organized a party with another pair. They got drunk, and his father heard them, tried to get into the shed, and eventually forced the door and beat up his son and the other children."

"The Sailor hit back, and the father reported him to the police. Despite the theft of the beer the magistrate would have let Sailor go if his parents had put up a bond for his good behaviour; but the father asked for the Sailor to be sent to Aszód."

"Down here he was put into the preparatory section, and I often talked with him," said Géza P. "He told me quite openly he wasn't going to reform, not if they killed him for it; he was going to show the gang what he was."

"On the 20th August we heard there was going to be a 'hooligan party' on Margaret Island and that one girl after another was escaping from Rákospalota."

"The night before there was a film show, *La Chartreuse de Parme*. I accompanied the boys up to their dormitories, checked everything carefully, and then, reassured, went to sleep."

"The Sailor had pinched a rope from the gardener; as soon as I had locked them in he tried it out. He threw it across the pipe and hung on; the rope held. Then he put gym shoes on, a belt round his waist and gloves on his hands. He'd got the idea from Gérard Philippe in the film. At that time there were no bars on the second floor windows."

"First he tried to inch his way down, but the rope cut his hands; then he tied it to his waist, being given double assurance that way. He was let down gradually from above, but after a distance of seven metres, the rope broke. The Sailor crashed on the stone below, so terribly that his flesh and his blood mixed inextricably on the ground."

"I was in charge of his section, I had to break the news to his family."

Géza fell silent.

"What did they say?"

"It's better like this," said his father. "He'd have ended on the gallows otherwise." Then he added: "My wife will be sure to agree to a divorce now." Another thing: they asked the approved school for a funeral grant of 500 forints."

I leaf through the old exercise-book. I read the last entry: "The happiest memory of my life: once, while angling, I caught a boot with my friend. We both had a good laugh, but frankly I was a bit ashamed that I was unable to catch anything but a boot."

On Easter-eve I went home for an hour or so. In the middle of lunch, the phone rang. I answer; Rongykvik is at the other end; he escaped from Zápor utca more than a fortnight ago, and since then the police have failed to find him.

"Pleasant holidays, to you, Sir."

"The same to you. How are you?"

"I'm all right, thank you. I am on the run with Csizmás."

"When are you coming back?"

"I don't know yet. Tomorrow and the day after I am going sprinkling.\* Perhaps I'll come back towards the end of the month, we'll meet at Aszód. Excuse me, please, but there's a girl waiting for me in front of the telephone booth."

\*

The boys are free on Easter morning. After their visitors have gone. They brought up the parcels, meat, cake, ham, chocolate, and lump sugar. Teophil invited me to lunch upstairs with them.

"Why, thank you, but you need the food yourselves. You won't get any more parcels for at least a month."

"Never mind. We want to celebrate today. I've made up my quarrel with Rizsa and it's also a farewell party for Cirmos. He's eighteen next week and going to prison."

I ask the other instructor to take down the other boys for lunch and to lock us in. Teophil and his friends have laid the table, using white handkerchiefs for serviettes, they have made sandwiches. The highlight is the chocolate cake, into the glaze of which they have pressed a few lumps of sugar. Some drink turns up as well, I clink glasses with the boys:

"What happened, Cirmos?"

"While I was on the run the other day, I pinched a bicycle. I left it somewhere, but still they charged me and I got twelve months."

\* The Easter custom of going round sprinkling the girls with scent.

"You're a fool, Cirmos," says Teophil. "If you had thrown the bicycle into a pond, it would never have been found."

"Oh well, it's done now. I'm going to escape tonight, I have to go home. I want to be engaged to a girl; my mother bought the rings long ago."

"Do you have to get engaged just now, just before twelve months quod?"

"That's exactly why. Until now we could at least meet from time to time, but now I shan't see her for a year. If she doesn't get the ring, she may marry somebody else."

Cirmos escaped that night—luckily I was already off duty—and next day the escape fever spread like fire in Teophil's section. It might perhaps have been possible to prevent it if the pupils' free time had been occupied with some sensible activity, but the teachers and instructors were digesting their Easter dinners peacefully in their service flats.

Already by twelve Teophil and his friends were beginning to prepare for their escape. The other sections collected money for those who intended to go, and the latter distributed their cigarettes. Friends said good-bye to each other:

"If you find a hole-up, write; you know the signal. We'll come after you and then we can go together to my brother's place."

At eight o'clock, I hand over to T., the party secretary, but I don't go home. I sit down in front of the telly and wait for events to unfold. The boys meet every fifteen minutes in one dormitory or another; they have to advance the time of their attempt, because they are afraid that a stool-pigeon may inform on them and then they may be locked in.

At nine o'clock Teophil, with a tense air, passes carrying a carpet strip. The corridor carpets in Aszód are so long that if hung over the broken end of a sawn bar at the window they will reach the ground; the fugitive hangs on to their sides with both hands and simply slides down. Nobody has as yet thought of cutting them into several

sections, which would not impair their use, but would stop them being used for escapes.

In the morning I hear that nineteen boys have escaped.

\*

I asked Miklós, the instructor, about some of the boys who had been through his hands.

"Believe me, after two or three years it is not the interesting things that you see in the boys, but the problems. Still. . ."

"R. was afraid of meat. When he saw a steak or stew, he screamed: 'But this has lived, I can't eat it!' He dived under the bed, and, I had to pull him out. Nonetheless R. was by no means stupid. He had learned a trade, but when I asked him what he was going to do afterwards, he said 'Housework'."

"Housework? And you a man!"

"Why? Don't we have equality of the sexes? My wife'll work and I shall stay at home."

And he found himself a hairdresser.

The mother of Z. lives in Bratislava and the boy wanted to cross the Czech border to visit her. It's illegal, and he got caught, and was brought to us.

The television people came to make a film of Aszód. They talked to Z. too:

"Where did you want to go?"

Z. wanted to show off. He didn't want to admit to his friends that he wanted only to go to as far as Bratislava, just on the other side, and to top it all, only to see his mother. So he said:

"To Greece."

"Why?"

"Because there's capitalism there."

The television people believed him, the film was shown, and for a week the whole country was buzzing with it.

On the 1st of May—as he promised—Rongykvik arrives back at Aszód. He bows politely:

"Hallo, Sir, how are you?"

"Where did you hide?"

"Oh, it's easy in summer. We made ourselves a small hut at a timber yard out of the logs. But there are much better places. For instance, right on the top of the Millennium Monument in Budapest there's a two-by-three meter room; unfortunately, the police have already found out about it."

"What's happened to Csizmás?"

"He went home to Pécs. He lives in the old stable of a shut-down mine, he gets down through the shaft. He's already furnished the place very nicely; he has taken down blankets and lamps."

\*

I move on to my last stop, to the Farming Section.

My first impressions are much more unfavourable than at the "tradesmen". There, the boys wear their dark suit outside working hours, here they go around in the institution in worn, dirty work-clothes. As I found out later, the suits for the "farmers" are duly allocated by the Ministry, but—probably out of laziness—they are simply not distributed.

The time to be spent in the farming school is fixed: the sentences are for one year. After a year, the school asks the council of the relevant town or village, whether the return of the pupil is desirable. If not, the boy is kept for another six months, and perhaps then a further six months, but the greater part of this second year is more generally spent on the run than in the approved school.

I sit down to talk to one of the farm managers.

"The farm is 185 *bold* in area; 164 ploughland, 10 meadow land, 5 kitchen-garden, 5 an orchard, and 1 is a vineyard.

"The crops, as you can imagine, are not too good. We sow mainly autumn wheat and autumn barley, in a good year we get about 120 quintals of hay. We got nothing from the vineyard last year, the boys ate the grapes

while they were still green. It ought to be renewed of course, but with kids like this it's not worth it. They eat half the fruit too."

"And how many children work on the farm?"

"About 190."

"There are twelve grown men and seven old-age pensioners employed on the farm. They do all the responsible work, nothing that is a bit delicate can be left to the kids. When they hoe, they cut the corn. We bought a horse for 5,000 forints and the next day they gouged its eye out. The boys mainly carry sacks and spread manure."

I try to meet the boys who came with me from Záporköcs. They work in the turnip-field.

We go along a marshy, swampy road; the whole institution is in unhealthy surroundings; the water has to be disinfected; even compared to Budapest water it is undrinkable. We pass an abandoned football pitch and a few barrack-like buildings with broken windows.

Following the winding road, I find the boys. They are hoeing, hardly very enthusiastically. They stop, start, and stop again. The foreman nods:

"Two and a half hours' afternoon work is not worth one."

I seek out Banyó and Gonosz.

"How are you, Banyó?"

"Quite well," he says, looking down, and picking at the sods with his bare toes.

I take them away from the others, and there Banyó starts to speak, but even then he whispers:

"I've been beaten, Sir, because I escaped."

"Who beat you?"

"It is not the instructor who hits one here; he tells the section to beat me up; six or seven go for me. Only don't say anything, I'll only get into more trouble. Gonosz has been beaten up too, they kicked his throat."

"Aren't you exaggerating a bit, Banyó?"

He pulls his pants down, and shows his bottom; his skin is black and blue from the

beating, as if shoe polish had been spread over it.

"And why were you beaten up, Gonosz?"

"I called one of them a Gypsy, and so they went for me and said no one was to be called a Gypsy here."

As I found out later, in some sections 80-85 per cent of the boys are Gypsies, and a veritable Gypsy terror reigns. When the boys are alone together the others are forced to talk the Gypsy language too.

As they beg me to say nothing, I can only distribute the cigarettes I brought with me, and we rejoin the others.

\*

T., the party secretary in the "tradesmen's" section is in charge of after-care.

"When did after-care begin at Aszód?"

"1958 on."

"How many leave each year?"

"Depends on the total number of inmates. In 1958, for instance, 67; in 1965, 120."

"What happens to them?"

"Those who leave in the first or the second year, before passing a trade exam, can go on learning at an apprentice school of the Ministry of Culture, but 90 per cent become labourers. They need the money. Those who have learnt a trade can generally be placed in a skilled job."

"And what else do you do for them?"

"A year after they have left we send everyone a letter and ask him to write and tell us what has happened to him."

He picks out a large packet of letters:

"Quite a few reply, and tell us about their problems. In the villages those who have been in an approved school are despised, and in many places they are not admitted to the Young Communists League either."

From a letter:

"After a week I came before the admission committee. When I had told my life story, a young girl asked me aloud, in front of anyone, whether there wasn't an approved school at Aszód. She pronounced the words

'approved school' in such a particular tone of voice that I got up and left."

"There are problems with the army too. If the age group is large enough, it doesn't even call up the boys who have been to Aszód. Yet the majority have got used to discipline here, and know how to carry out orders."

T. smiles:

"True, there are sometimes a few very special young scoundrels amongst them.

"One boy who had been called up went to the colonel commanding the barracks the first week:

"'Tell me,' he said, 'my dear Sergeant, where is the canteen?'"

"Naturally he was promptly put into detention. As soon as he got out, he met the colonel again, and patted him on the back:

"'My little Summer Father Christmas, do you think you can get the better of me?'"

T. leafs through the letters:

"Most of them send greetings to M., the P. E. instructor; when we organized a meeting of former Aszód pupils, and the 'old boys' come with their wives and families, they always form a group around M."

"Don't they hate the other teachers?"

"As a general rule, no, but there are of course, letters like this as well," he said, handing me one.

"Esteemed Headmaster!"

"It has rather surprised me that you addressed me as your 'friend.' I have not had any friends for a long time. People do not like the smell of corpses, and everybody who passes me looks at me with disgust. I love the dead, and so have become a corpse washer in Soroksár and Erzsébet morgues."

"Luckily, the undertaker pays well, and so if a few good people know when to die, I earn quite well. I hope, Headmaster, that you belong to the good people and will not disappoint the man who will wash your earthly covering for your last journey.

Yours faithfully:

R.

Soroksár-Pesterzsébet  
corpse-washer"

"The chap's really an electrician," said T. "He's simply putting it on when he says he's a corpse washer."

"Why was he bitter?"

"I don't know exactly. I heard that at an inspection a fag was found under his bed, and though he protested he never smoked, he was punished: for two months he had to shovel snow in the courtyard. So he made a joke of it; turned up every morning in the courtyard, and if there was no snow he shovelled air."

T. puts the letters away:

"I visit old pupils too. Here's a survey made two years after these boys were released. Out of sixty-seven pupils, thirty-seven had made good, thirteen got along somehow, and seventeen were failures; they are either in prison, or have been, or have nowhere to live, or live from hand to mouth. We try to help them financially or through our connections. There are boys who later became doctors; there are others who have taken to serious crime, or committed suicide."

"And don't they take revenge?"

"No, whatever anger is in them peters out while they are still in the approved school. I myself know of only one serious case of revenge. Judge A. sentenced a hooligan gang for rape. The gang was divided into two groups, some were sent to Tököl and others to Aszód, but after their release, they got together again and swore to take revenge. They ambushed and caught A's high-school daughter, took her in a car to Kamara woods, and ten of them went over her. The father went mad and had to be pensioned off."

\*

I left Aszód in May 1965, and since then have often met boys who were on leave or have been released. I was greeted at a building site by N., the Gypsy boy whom his mother had forced to kill his step-brother. I saw the thief S., in a smart fur cap and in a quilted foreign anorak. He is now working as a messenger boy.

But I was happiest to meet Béla F. Béla

would have been left alone as a third-year apprentice blacksmith, so he preferred to return to his parents in Budapest.

"Has anything interesting happened, Béla?"

"Oh, a terrific scandal, Sir. Just imagine, the Eighth Section smuggled a girl into the dormitory, the fiancée of one of the boys, and she stayed for a fortnight in the school. Every day two boys said that they were sick and stayed with her."

"Wasn't she caught?"

"She was given a boy's uniform."

"But in the evening, when the numbers were checked, they must have seen that there

was one person too many. Where did she hide?"

"She clung to the wire mattress under the bed. She was only noticed after a fortnight, when she tried to leave through the gate."

Béla took leave politely, he was waiting for his girl. He is going steady with the daughter of a lieutenant-colonel, he gets along well with the parents, and it seems that the affair will end in a wedding.

"Would you go back to Aszód, Béla?"

"For two or three days I wouldn't mind, but if I had to stay a year I'd rather gas myself."

FERENC ÓSZ

## STRIP-TEASE HUNGARIAN STYLE

The Champagne Bar. No empty tables half an hour before the floor show begins. Squeezed round the edge of a floor with scarcely room to swing a cat they sit, most of them ageing members of the male sex. This is one of the four places of night entertainment in Budapest where strip-tease is already part of the show.

A gentleman with a double chin at the next table informs his companion:

"Now the strip-tease I saw at the Pigalle..." and he goes into detail. "But of course you can't expect anything like that here," he adds.

"We're slowly beginning to be part of Europe, though," declares a gentleman on the wrong side of forty in an over-smart suit. His partner, a well-known fashion model, nods approvingly.

The lights go out, the show begins.

The songs, sung by two girls more com-

petently than one might expect, are received with half-hearted applause. Even the expert dancer fails to rouse the audience, though she has very little on and during her number seats herself on my neighbour's lap, ruffles the few hairs on his scalp, and croons into his ear. The assured man of the world of a few minutes before fidgets uncomfortably in his chair and turns red. At this point the audience laughs.

Then comes the strip-tease.

A girl comes out on to the floor. Her voice, accompanied by music, has been taped. Apparently she is only going to mime the story. She has just come home, unhappy. Mournfully she tells the fancy doll she picks up from the top of the piano that she has fallen out with Hans. But how well their night together had begun... They had dined at a restaurant and had then gone over to the bar, where they danced very happily. And

she proceeds to show how. Shuffling to and fro on the floor she fondles her own back and neck and runs her fingers caressingly through her hair. But then—who knows why—she fell out with him, and now she has come home alone. Putting the doll down despondently, she begins to undress. One by one the outer garments fall. Pausing at the petticoat, she winds her way amongst the tables before the petticoat flies as well. The taped music amplifies to the sound barrier, announcing the approaching dénouement. Snap goes the fastening, off comes the bra, off with a flick come the tiny panties. And there stands the forlorn girl in the cross-fire of heated looks, in still tinier panties and a pair of minuscule ornaments fixed on her nipples by some ingenious technical trick unknown to me.

The audience still hopes.

The girl begins to wash herself with a sponge. To heighten the illusion the gurgle and splash of tap water can be heard on the tape. After a most thorough cleaning operation extending to every nook and cranny the girl steps out of the imaginary bath, dries herself, slips into a nightie, and picking her way among the tables goes off to bed.

The eyes of the spectators follow her, disappointed.

At the Poppy Bar two girls strip. Their act is right up to date with the aid of modern technical development. As they undress ultra-violet lighting is switched on which gives each article of clothing a fluorescent glow. In this trick lighting the body itself remains in the dark, and so, when they have stepped out of the last stitch of clothing, the spectator can imagine them with nothing on. But of course the spectator does not come here to exercise his imagination but his eyes.

"We're only just beginning," says one of the girls. "In the West they have special schools to teach the art of strip-tease."

"How did you become a strip-tease girl?"

"I was in the chorus at the 'Budapest' night-club and my contract expired. I was offered this job. I had no choice."

"Don't you feel any... well... hm... inhibition—embarrassment?"

"You get used to it. The only thing I don't like is young couples. I feel ashamed in front of them."

"What did you want to do originally?"

"I wanted to be an actress. I toured the country with the Mme. Déry Company for a year."

"Haven't you tried anything else?"

"What? Work in an office for fourteen hundred a month? Or at the bench in a textile factory? My mother works for a thousand a month; I get a hundred and twenty here for ten minutes' work every night."

The other girl has a loftier sense of vocation. She takes an interest in her art; she is conscious of the winds of progress.

"It's all very new to our public. You have to accustom people to it."

"What line is progress taking?"

"The bra is getting smaller. In the next stage of development it will be replaced by little artificial stones, and then, in the next, may be by nothing at all. There is a great debate going on as to whether a plot is necessary or not. I myself am of the opinion not. We are not the National Theatre."

"Did your parents object to your profession?"

"My father did. He never comes to see me. My mother has come to see me three times."

"Does she like it?"

"Is there anything a mother won't like if it's done by her own child?"

Most of the smart places of entertainment in Budapest are run by the Pannonia Catering Enterprise. At the central office is the man who is responsible for planning the programmes. It's no easy job he has on his hands, since the programmes pull in a bigger audience every night than the biggest theatre in Budapest.

I happen to know the programme organizer of Pannonia. Our acquaintance dates back to 1961. He was then the manager of

the Tünde Night Club at the Balaton lake-side resort of Siófok. One night the members of the Hungarian State Folk Company were having a good time at the Tünde. They had recently returned from a tour abroad, where they had learned the newest dance, the twist. Kati Latabár and her partner began to twist. The manager stopped the band, and sternly ordered the couple off the floor. He justified this draconian act:

"We cannot permit these western crazes to take root in our country."

I now reminded him of this incident.

"I didn't do it off my own bat. It was the official line. Orders."

And strip-tease?

"We have to keep pace with new developments. Of course we were worried at the beginning that there would be a great outcry against it, and so we didn't advertise it on our posters. But nothing happened. If a well-known dancer can appear in a U-film of one of Mór Jókai's novels with completely bare breasts, then a girl can strip in the Poppy Bar, which is also not for people under 18."

"Would you say this is genuine strip-ping?"

"Not yet. But that's very understandable. In the West this art has many years of tradition behind it. With us there is still a great deal of debating and discussion to be done."

"What's there to debate about?"

"I, and indeed the Budapest Council as well maintain the view that strip-tease cannot be considered an end in itself."

"What do you mean?"

"There must be a theme, a story that provides grounds for undressing."

"I've just seen the strip-tease number at the Champagne Bar."

"I wrote the story for it."

"You said just now that that was not genuine stripping. Can we expect further progress?"

"Naturally. At present we're experimenting with a very advanced version at the

Budapest Night Club. I simply don't know what the Council is going to say to it. And next summer we're going to put on a great strip-tease panorama at the Siófok Poppy Bar. A three-girl affair. Unfortunately we find bureaucracy impeding our work. I mean that at present we can only employ people with licences. But the authorities will only issue licences to dancers, and a professional dancer is hardly going to strip for 120 forints, and that's our limit. At the moment my biggest headache is that I have to send all the girls I've got down to the Balaton for the summer. . . ."

"And so the Budapest Night Club—sorry, the Moulin Rouge now, isn't it?—will be left without a single strip-tease turn?"

"Well, I've managed to get hold of an art model from the Academy."

"And what about her licence? Isn't that going to be a problem?"

"We'll have to try and tackle it by some dodge or other, and get her a temporary dancer's licence."

"Is strip-tease exclusive to the Pannonia bars?"

"I understand one other place has followed our example so far. That's quite natural. The competition can't just look on with folded arms while we pinch their customers off them."

"So we may expect to see a bit of stripping in quite a number of places soon?"

"Very likely. The snag is that replacements are difficult to get hold of."

"Does that mean that Hungarian girls are unwilling to strip?"

"Peculiar as it may appear, it does. As a matter of fact, do you know of anyone?"

Dezso Kellér, the actor and writer of cabaret sketches, wrote an amusing cabaret sketch ten years ago. A girl, hidden behind a folding screen, began to take her clothes off. One intimate garment after another flew over the screen, and when the last piece had been shed Kellér announced that he would count three, and the screen would be removed. At three the screen disappeared, but

so had the girl. Kellér apologized. The act, he said, had to be shown to the District Council Cultural Department first, and their permission obtained before it could be shown.

The point is that night-club programmes are licenced by the Department for Popular Education and Culture of the District Council concerned. Their decision goes. The heads of these Departments are usually teachers, responsible for directing the cultural and educational activities of the district.

"We're simply left on our own to decide," one of them expostulated. "In other countries the limits of allowable exposure are exactly defined by regulation."

"What do you think of strip-tease?"

"There's a demand for it, so I do not question its right to exist."

"Do you mean that whatever is in demand can be done?"

"No... no... not exactly... well, anyway, what we have is not real stripping."

"And are you going to give the go-ahead to real stripping in the next programme they submit to you?"

"I shall consult my superiors."

"Can't you decide on your own?"

"I told you, there are no regulations on this matter. I must be able to support my refusal by reference to something."

"Why not to your own official authority, or your own taste?"

"That's a very naive way of looking at it. The district next door might well have given permission already. What we need in this matter is some kind of coordination of opinion to guide us."

I telephoned the appropriate official on the Budapest Council, and asked for an appointment.

"I have no authority to make statements on this question. All I can advise you to do is to go to the head of the Cultural Affairs Department, or better still to address your enquiries to the Ministry of Education."

I did as he suggested. At the Ministry I gave a few officials apoplexy by deferentially requesting speech with the comrade in charge

of strip-tease. At the end of a week the secretary of the Head of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Budapest Council informed me that her chief had authorized the prescribed executive to make a statement on the matter.

"As far as I see there is no serious demand for strip-tease in Hungary. Apart—perhaps—from elderly men."

"Would you say that a young man is not interested in attractive girls?"

"Where there's an interest, there's a way."

"Many people suggest that the foreign tourists..."

"It isn't what they come to Hungary for."

"If that's so then there's no need for strip-tease."

"I wouldn't say that. For the present, however, there's no stripping proper, only undressing, up to a certain point, need I say."

"Where's the certain point? Are there any regulations defining it?"

"Certainly. A directive put out by the Departmental Head lays down that what is or is not permissible will be regulated by the generally accepted standard of public taste."

"Who's to determine where public taste draws the line at any given time? What are we to understand by public taste at all? There was a time when Sándor Weöres's poem 'An Ancient Eclogue' was fiercely attacked in the name of public taste... Am I to understand that the strip-tease shows now running do not offend public taste?"

"They are the outside limit. For the time being anyway."

"So it's possible the limit will be stretched a little further later on?"

"Yes. Provided the level of public taste rises."

"I take that to mean that at some future time the girls may strip completely?"

"Yes. But that won't be today, I assure you. The standard of taste of the Hungarian public has not yet reached that level. Strip-tease is a very complex art form."

"Art form?"

"Yes, indeed. Undressing is not an end in itself. Oh, by no means. The dancing, the music, the text, even if they play a subordinate role, are all complementary to the performance."

"Do you think that the spectator demands an aesthetic experience from strip-tease?"

"It's not what I think that counts. I have to represent the view of the Council."

I then interviewed the head of the Department of Popular Education and Culture of one of the Budapest districts. What, I asked him, would his reaction have been ten years ago if he had had to view a strip-tease act for a licence.

"Naturally I should have refused it. At that time even the papers were all denouncing strip-tease as a form of entertainment of decadent middle-class sex fiends in the West."

"And now?"

"What do you expect me to do? I cannot make my district a state within a state all by myself."

"Do you consider the present state of

affairs as a forward or a backward step, compared to the attitude adopted ten years ago?"

"I've been in popular culture for twenty years now. Just think how many times I've had to readjust to a new line. I know as well as any one that changes have had to be made in a great many things, but as things are I really can't be sure nowadays whether I'm taking a step forward or back. Well, after all, I'm only a clerk in the Council. Mind you, if it depended on me I wouldn't allow strip-tease. I'm convinced myself that it's in bad taste, it's like spying through a keyhole. But at the preview everybody round me was in ecstasies. So what could I do? They brought up the tourists... I think the foreign visitor would have a better opinion of us if we had stuck to our earlier attitude which, in my opinion, was the right one. But of course this is just my own private point of view, you understand, and I know lots of people say that I develop very slowly."

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

BIRÓ, Yvette. Our regular film reviewer.

CSIKÓS-NAGY, Béla (b. 1915). Economist, Secretary of State, President of the National Prices Board. Has published numerous studies and lectured on price policy and other economic questions in Hungary and abroad. See also his "New Aspects of the Profit Incentive" in No. 20, and "Socialist Economic Theory and the New Mechanism" in No. 28 of *The N.H.Q.*

DÉRY, Tibor (b. 1894). Novelist and short story writer, and outstanding and internationally known figure of contemporary Hungarian writing. An excerpt from his autobiography in progress, *Ítélet nincs* ("No verdict") appeared in No. 32. This is a further excerpt from the same work.

FELDMÁR, Andrew (b. 1938). Mathematician of Hungarian extraction, living in Canada. Works in computer mathematics and writes poetry. Has published some of his translations in Canadian magazines and in No. 23 of *The N.H.Q.*

FULCHIGNONI, Enrico (b. 1913). Professor of Psychology at Rome University, Chief of the Film and Cultural Television Section of UNESCO in Paris. Has published works on problems of the theatre, the cinema and communication. His book, *La moderna civiltà del immaggio*, won the 1966 Marzotto Prize. See also his "The Responsibility of Midcult" in No. 12, and "National Stereotypes" in No. 25 of *The N.H.Q.*

GOLDSMITH, Maurice B. Sc. Director of the Science of Science Foundation. Member of the Royal Institute, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts; former Science Editor of *Unesco*. Editor of "The scientist and You" (1959). Main works: "The Young Scientists' Companion" (1961); "The Young Physicist's Companion" (1962)

"Careers in Technology" (1963); "The Science of Science" (1964).

GÖMÖRI, Endre (b. 1922). Journalist, specializing in foreign affairs. In 1946 he became a member of the staff of *Szabadság*, a daily, and in 1948 of *Szabad Nép*, at the time the central party daily. Since 1964 foreign editor of *Magyarország*, a Budapest political weekly. Has travelled extensively in Europe, North America and Asia.

HALÁSZ, Zoltán (b. 1914). Journalist and author. Deputy Editor of *The N.H.Q.*

ILLÉS, Endre (b. 1902). Short story writer, playwright, essayist and translator. Literary manager of Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó Publishing House. Besides his numerous short stories and plays, his essays and criticism as well as his translations of Stendhal have made him an influential figure on the Hungarian literary scene. Among other previous contributions, see his story "The Lieutenant's Wife" in No. 18 of *The N.H.Q.*

ILLYÉS, Gyula (b. 1902). Poet, writer, dramatist, essayist and translator, one of the most important Hungarian writers of today. In addition to "The People of the Puszta" (*Puszták Népe*), now also available in English, he has published poetry, essays, criticism, dramas and a novel. Among his most recent contributions see his "Orator in the Night," in No. 28 of *The N.H.Q.*

KERESZTURY, Dezső (b. 1904). Poet, literary historian, essayist, departmental head at the National Széchényi Library in Budapest, a member of our Editorial Board. Among his more recent contributions see his "Kodály—the Man and the Achievement" in No. 26 of *The N.H.Q.*

KÉRY, László (b. 1920). Professor of English at Eötvös University in Budapest,

critic, General Secretary of the Hungarian P.E.N. Club. Has published books on Shakespeare and edited a Hungarian collected edition of Shakespeare's works. See also his "Shakespeare in Washington, Lorenzo in Taos" in No. 23 of The N.H.Q.

KOROLOVSZKI, Lajos (b. 1915). Journalist, foreign editor of Hungarian TV. For a time he was London correspondent of the Hungarian News Agency; for two years he worked as a staff member of this review. See also his "Between Edo and Tokyo" in No. 18 and "Problems of Peaceful Co-existence" in No. 31. of The N.H.Q.

KOVÁCS, Éva. Art historian. Her main field of study is the history of the goldsmith's art and textiles during the Árpád Dynasty as well as modern painting. See her "Noémi Ferenczy, Artist of Tapestry" in No. 9 of The N.H.Q.

LENGYEL, József (b. 1896). Novelist and short-story writer. Was a founding member of the Hungarian Communist Party in 1918. Edited a paper during the 1919 Council Republic, later went into exile and settled in the Soviet Union in 1930. During the thirties he was a victim of the purges and was sent to a camp in Siberia. Returned to Hungary in 1955. Some of his works were published in English by Peter Owen. See his story, "Hohem and Freier" in No. 19 of The N.H.Q.

MOLDOVA, György (b. 1934). Writer. Worked as miner, building labourer, waiter, stonemason, boilerman and factory hand before training at the Budapest Academy of the Theatre and Cinema. Has published novels, volumes of short stories, and satirical sketches. See his "Rags and Riches" in No. 21, and the story "The Invincible Eleven" in No. 24 of The N.H.Q.

NAGY, Lajos (1883-1954). Writer and journalist. His art as a writer of fiction represents the peak in realistic, committed

Hungarian writing between the wars. His social criticism is always sharp and his satirical humour is mostly bitter. See also his story "The Wolves and the Lamb" in No. 9 of The N.H.Q.

NAGY, Zsuzsa. Historian, research worker at the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Secretary of the Hungarian Historical Society. Published numerous studies on the problems of revolution and counterrevolution and *A párizsi békekonferencia és Magyarország 1918-1919* ("The Paris Peace Conference and Hungary, 1918-1919", 1965). See her "The 1918 Revolution—50 Years After", in No. 31 of The N.H.Q.

NÉMETH, Lajos (b. 1929). Art historian, our regular art reviewer.

ORBÁN, Ottó (b. 1936). Poet and translator. Studied literature at Eötvös University. Now supports himself entirely by his writing. Has published three volumes of poetry and a great number of translations, including the work of English, American, Czech, Greek, Yugoslav, Chinese, German, Russian, Spanish and Scandinavian poets.

ÓSZ, Ferenc (b. 1930). Journalist. Has worked for numerous journals and newspapers and written a number of satirical sketches for political cabarets. At present he is on the staff of *Ludas Matyi*, a satirical weekly.

RUFFY, Péter (b. 1914). Journalist, on the editorial staff of the Budapest daily *Magyar Nemzet*. His publications include books on travel, collections of articles and a novel. See his previous contributions in Nos. 14, 15 and 22 of The N.H.Q.

SELYE, Hans (b. 1907). Ph.D., D.Sc., M.D., F.R.S., (C); Canadian university professor of Hungarian origin; he sent the article published in this issue to the organizers of a memorial meeting held in Budapest on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Ignác Semmelweis.



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