

LES ACTIVITÉS SECRÈTES ET JOURNALISTIQUES DU COMTE JULES ANDRÁSSY LE JEUNE EN SUISSE ET SES CONCEPTIONS DE L'APRÈS-GUERRE

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Ayant fuit la Hongrie pour un exil de huit mois en Suisse, Jules Andrassy retrouve les milieux contre-révolutionnaires en exil ainsi que le journaliste Félix Vályi pour œuvrer, par un travail de propagande, à la chute de la Commune en Hongrie, au retour du roi en exil et au combat pour l’intégrité territoriale de la Hongrie. Pendant son séjour, Andrassy écrit deux articles dans la *Revue politique internationale*, dirigée à Lausanne par Vályi. Ses articles dévoilent ses conceptions d’après-guerre sur l’avenir de l’Europe centrale et de la Hongrie. Il espère ainsi influencer la politique des vainqueurs de la Grande Guerre dans cette région.

Mots-clefs : Jules Andrassy, Félix Vályi, Suisse, France, légitimisme, Grande-Bretagne, Entente, Quadruple Entente, renseignement, fédéralisme, confédéralisme, ABC (comité anti-bolchevique)

Nous allons présenter ici les destins croisés, en 1919, d’un homme politique hongrois et d’une revue de langue française, le comte Jules (Gyula) Andrassy le jeune et la *Revue politique internationale*, fondée par Félix Vályi et publiée entre 1914 et 1920. Nous nous limiterons aux contributions d’Andrassy, car une analyse plus générale de la revue et de son fondateur dépasserait le cadre d’un simple article. D’autre part, nous nous concentrerons sur 1919, année qu’Andrassy passa pour la plus grande partie en Suisse.

Avant de procéder à l’analyse des articles d’Andrassy, nous allons tout d’abord décrire les circonstances de son séjour en Suisse et de sa collaboration intense avec Vályi, qui prêta de bonne grâce les pages de sa revue pour faire de celle-ci l’instrument momentané du message d’Andrassy le jeune au monde et plus particulièrement aux hommes politiques de l’Entente.

Deux hongrois en Suisse : Félix Vályi et Jules Andrassy le jeune

Au début du siècle, Félix Vályi était le correspondant parisien du *Magyar Szó*, organe des protestants libéraux hongrois publié entre 1900 et 1914. Ce quotidien s'était d'abord illustré comme le défenseur de l'esprit de la Réforme, puis comme celui d'une voie radicale et hongroise.¹ En 1914, Vályi lança sa propre revue qu'il baptisa *Revue politique internationale*, dont il publia le premier numéro à Paris en janvier. Défendant une ligne internationale, objective et impartiale, scientifique et non polémique, la rédaction affirmait vouloir offrir à toutes les nationalités « l'hospitalité française d'une tribune libre ».² Vályi parvint à obtenir la collaboration de personnalités françaises comme Aristide Briand, Paul Deschanel, Louis Eisenmann (historien connu pour ses sympathies slaves, plutôt qu'hongroises, qui allait soutenir la cause tchécoslovaque pendant la guerre), Emile Durkheim, Georges Sorel..., mais aussi des personnalités d'autres pays, comme l'ancien président du Conseil italien, Luigi Luzzatti, l'orientaliste britannique, Edward G. Browne, ou le sociologue et économiste allemand, Franz Oppenheimer, ainsi que le comte Albert Apponyi et bien sûr notre protagoniste, Jules Andrassy le jeune. Le secrétariat de rédaction de la revue fut confié au journaliste puis homme politique, André François-Poncet, qui allait être envoyé en 1917 à l'Ambassade de France à Berne, pour y accomplir une mission de renseignement. Après la guerre, François-Poncet allait accéder à une large notoriété, culminant avec l'élection à l'académie française en 1952.³ C'était donc des gens de qualité qui se rassemblaient autour du berceau de la revue de Vályi, le niveau des publications en est d'ailleurs le reflet.

Après le déclenchement de la Grande Guerre, Vályi fut obligé de déplacer sa rédaction en territoire neutre, en Suisse et plus précisément dans le centre de Lausanne, Place Saint-François. Dès lors, André François-Poncet cessa d'être membre de la rédaction, mais il continua à collaborer à la revue. Dans un avis aux lecteurs, Vályi expliquait que sa revue devait rester « un organe d'études où les esprits du monde entier, sans distinction de nationalités, peuvent se mesurer dans une discussion loyale. »⁴

Jules Andrassy le jeune, quant à lui, était un aristocrate, propriétaire foncier et homme politique, tout comme son père (dit l'aîné) qui avait été l'un des principaux artisans du compromis austro-hongrois en tant que président du conseil hongrois en 1867, avant de devenir Ministre des Affaires étrangères de François-Joseph. Jules Andrassy le jeune (plus loin, Jules Andrassy) était devenu député en 1885, à l'âge de vingt-cinq ans, puis secrétaire d'Etat (en 1892) et enfin ministre de Sa Majesté en 1894, c'est-à-dire ministre hongrois résidant à Vienne auprès du monarque. Il s'était par la suite consacré à la recherche scientifique (les études politiques) en devenant membre de l'Académie des Sciences hongroise. En 1906, il était revenu à la pratique politique en tant que ministre de l'Intérieur du

gouvernement libéral de Sándor Wekerle. Le 25 octobre 1918, il avait été nommé par l'empereur-roi Charles ministre des Affaires étrangères, débarquant à Vienne dans la capitale d'un empire au bord de l'écroulement. Les révoltes, à Budapest comme à Vienne, l'avaient obligé à démissionner le 31 octobre 1918, quelques jours avant l'armistice. Suite à cela, il rentra dans sa propriété de Dénesfa, près de Sopron. Mais dès le mois de janvier 1919, il prit la route de l'exil vers la Suisse.⁵

Jules Andrassy se considérait alors comme investi d'une mission décisive, celle de sauver ce qui pouvait encore l'être de la monarchie des Habsbourg. Il ne considérait pas comme incompatibles la défense des intérêts de la dynastie et celle des intérêts du royaume de Hongrie. Dans le passé, les deux causes avaient souvent divergé ; le propre père d'Andrassy s'était lui-même révolté contre l'absolutisme des Habsbourg, mais il avait été, plus tard, l'un des principaux artisans du compromis austro-hongrois, avec le soutien et grâce à l'influence de l'impératrice Elisabeth d'Autriche. Il est donc, somme toute, peu surprenant que le jeune Andrassy souhaitât préserver l'héritage pour lequel son père avait si longuement travaillé et dont le résultat avait été cinquante années de paix de prospérité pour sa patrie, la Hongrie. De Suisse, pays neutre frontalier avec la France, il allait avoir le loisir de mettre en branle une propagande secrète en vue de la défense des intérêts de sa patrie. La revue de Vályi allait s'avérer un instrumental crucial à cet effet.

Les activités des légitimistes en exil

Andrássy résida en Suisse, de janvier à août 1919, exil pendant lequel eurent lieu les 133 jours de la Commune en Hongrie (du 21 mars au 1^{er} août 1919). Le 15 août, il rentra en Hongrie pour y continuer le combat politique en faveur du retour à la monarchie légitime et à l'intégrité territoriale de la Hongrie.⁶

Au cours de la même période, des hommes politiques hongrois qui avaient également fuit la Commune créèrent à Vienne l'ABC (Le Comité anti-bolchevique). Mais peu de légitimistes, hongrois comme autrichiens, croyaient la restauration de la monarchie possible en Autriche allemande. Dès lors, ils se concentreront sur la mise en échec de la Commune hongroise et sur la restauration, au plus vite, de l'état de droit et de la monarchie parlementaire en Hongrie grâce au retour du monarque légitime, Charles IV de Habsbourg, dans ses fonctions sur le trône de Saint Etienne ; fonctions royales qu'il avait suspendues le 13 novembre 1918 à la demande du Conseil National hongrois, présidé par le comte Mihály Károlyi, pour un laps de temps indéfini.

À l'ABC de Vienne, toutes les nuances de la droite étaient représentées, auxquelles s'ajoutaient des sociaux-démocrates comme Ernő Garami, eux aussi impliqués dans les efforts entrepris pour renverser la Commune.

En Suisse, Andrassy faisait parti d'un petit groupe de légitimistes hongrois qui étaient, eux aussi, proche de l'ABC.⁷ Les membres prééminents du groupe étaient le prince Lajos Windischgraetz et Vilmos Vázsonyi. Pendant la guerre, Lajos Windischgraetz avait été ministre de l'alimentation. Restant un légitimiste convaincu, il allait continuer à défendre les droits des Habsbourg après la guerre. Quant à Vilmos Vázsonyi, c'était un avocat et homme politique libéral démocrate d'origine juive, ancien Ministre de la Justice et fondateur du Cercle démocratique (1894). Vázsonyi s'était en particulier fait connaître pour son combat en faveur de l'admission du Judaïsme comme religion d'Etat en Hongrie en 1895.⁸

Après avoir rendu visite à leur souverain en exil à Prangins, près de Nyon (Canton de Vaud), ces quelques hommes se mirent au travail en vue de constituer une propagande légitimiste en Suisse tout en maintenant le contact avec l'ABC de Vienne.⁹ Le soutien financier d'un riche industriel autrichien résidant à Lucerne, le baron Andreas Veitsberger, leur permit d'établir un organe de presse baptisé *Agence centrale*.¹⁰ De plus, Félix Vályi mettait sa revue à leur disposition comme moyen d'influence de l'opinion publique, surtout française, dans le sens des intérêts de la Hongrie. Et enfin, ils étaient en contact avec le responsable du bureau de presse de l'Ambassade de France à Berne, Emil Haguenin, dont Andrassy avait déjà fait la connaissance pendant la guerre par le truchement de Vályi. Grâce à Haguenin, Andrassy avait accès aux cercles élevés du monde politique français.¹¹

Les membres actifs de l'*Agence* étaient Andrassy, Windischgraetz, Vályi et un certain Harry Schmidt, de Genève, collaborateur de l'*Intelligenz Blatt* de Berne qui bénéficiait d'un passeport diplomatique suisse et faisait office d'agent de liaison entre les légitimistes de Hongrie et ceux qui résidaient en Suisse.¹²

L'agenda politique de l'*Agence centrale* fut très vite démasqué par les diplomates anglais de Berne : le Ministre de Sa Majesté britannique à Berne, Rumbold, affirmait ainsi en mars 1919 que le jeu de l'*Agence* était d'exagérer le danger bolchevique en Hongrie et en Autriche.¹³ Le proche avenir allait au contraire révéler que les légitimistes n'avaient guère exagéré la menace, puisque c'est dès la fin de ce même mois de mars que la République des Conseils allait être proclamée à Budapest. Il semble bien que Rumbold avait omis de souligner le plus important : l'*Agence centrale* avait pour but d'informer les media occidentaux de la vraie situation dans la région et de maintenir le contact avec les partisans du roi dans les différents états successeurs de l'Autriche-Hongrie, tout en influençant la presse internationale dans le sens de la nécessité de confédérer l'espace danubien.¹⁴

Le *modus operandi* de l'*Agence* était de s'appuyer sur une société d'import-export danoise qui avait créé une agence télégraphique économique possédant déjà, selon certaines sources, une filiale dans toutes les villes européennes d'importance, le réseau de bureaux à travers l'Europe serait à même de relayer des nouvelles sur la situation économique des pays de la région danubienne. Le réseau servirait aussi à maintenir le contact avec les milieux légitimistes de la région. En un mois, l'agence eut des filiales à Prague, Belgrade, Budapest, Londres et Paris. Toutes ces filiales étaient elles-mêmes en relation avec les principaux journaux de leurs pays respectifs et diffusaient des informations économiques afin de favoriser l'union économique des Etats danubiens.¹⁵

Nous pouvons déjà tirer certaines conclusions sur le profil des légitimistes de l'ABC, notamment sur ceux de la petite équipe de Suisse. Sociologiquement variés, ils étaient tout de même majoritairement d'origine aristocratique. Fait intéressant : quelle que fut leur origine sociale, les légitimistes que nous avons mentionnés étaient plutôt des libéraux. À la différence des royalistes allemands – ceux de l'entourage du Maréchal Ludendorff, qui se situaient à l'extrême droite – les légitimistes hongrois étaient à forte prédominance libérale démocratique ou conservatrice libérale.

La présence de Félix Vályi dans ce groupe est quelque peu surprenante, car il avait été le correspondant à Paris d'un journal hongrois radical et assez frondeur, pour lequel il avait fait des entretiens avec des hommes politiques français engagés dans l'anticléricalisme, comme Clemenceau qui avait fait l'apologie de la séparation de la Hongrie de l'Autriche des Habsbourg.¹⁶ Toutefois, l'évolution de la situation de la Hongrie après la guerre peut expliquer un rapprochement de Vályi avec le légitimisme. Le roi légitime de Hongrie pouvait en effet représenter pour les personnes de toutes sensibilités politiques un élément rassembleur capable de contribuer à la défense de l'intégrité territoriale de la Hongrie, mise à mal depuis 1918 ; le roi était au dessus de la mêlée des partis politiques et des nationalités (Slovaques, Croates, Roumains...). Ayant quitté l'Autriche-Hongrie en 1918, le roi Charles n'était pas tenu, croyait-on, par les engagements pris par les États successeurs nationaux envers l'Entente (surtout après la signature du traité de paix de Trianon, le 4 juin 1920, dans le cas de la Hongrie). Son retour pouvait donc avoir un effet centripète et permettre à la Hongrie de Saint Etienne de survivre et de retrouver ses territoires occupés. Une Hongrie nouvelle (sans continuité avec le passé), nationale et républicaine avait, en revanche, moins d'arguments légitimes pour justifier le retour de son intégrité d'avant 1918. À l'opposé, les républicains zélés, comme Mihály Károlyi, croyaient que la rupture avec la Double monarchie, qu'ils chargeaient de la responsabilité de la guerre, allait permettre de sauver l'intégrité territoriale. En fin de compte, aucune des deux approches n'allait porter des fruits.

Les Articles d'Andrássy à la *Revue politique internationale*

Outre ses activités de diplomatie secrète au service des Habsbourg et de la Hongrie, Jules Andrássy écrivit deux articles sur le futur de sa patrie dans la *Revue politique internationale* au cours de son exil en Suisse. Les circonstances de sa rencontre avec Vályi ne sont pas connues, mais Andrássy avait déjà publié trois articles dans la revue pendant la guerre. Même si nous concentrerons notre attention sur les articles d'après-guerre, il est intéressant de jeter un coup d'œil sur l'article publié en novembre 1916, intitulé *Le problème de la paix*,¹⁷ car il se projette déjà dans l'après-guerre.

L'article commence par un puissant appel en faveur des négociations de paix associé à la critique de l'Entente, surtout de la France, pour son rejet de la proposition allemande d'engager des discussions.¹⁸ Cet article contribua probablement au démarrage des négociations secrètes de paix entre la France et l'Allemagne, qui se déroulèrent en Suisse en hiver 1916–1917.¹⁹ Andrássy y esquisse déjà les conséquences de la victoire de la Quadruple Entente²⁰ et croit que le partage de l'Europe et du proche et moyen Orient se fera entre la Grande Bretagne et la Russie. Il se trompait, car la révolution allait mettre la Russie hors jeux pour quelques temps. En revanche, Andrássy est pertinent lorsqu'il parle de l'Allemagne comme d'un danger nouveau, si la Quadruple Entente s'engage à fond pour la victoire totale : pour exprimer cette idée, il emploie l'expression de « revanche des peuples vaincus ».²¹ Tout d'abord, il écrit qu'il s'agit d'un peuple de quatre-vingt millions d'habitants sur un territoire compact, « leur science, leur talent d'organisation, leur grand patriotisme, leurs qualités militaires et économiques, leur natalité croissante sont des facteurs dont aucune défaite, aucune humiliation, aucun traité de paix ne pourra les priver et qui seront en contradiction criante avec la situation nouvelle qu'on veut leur imposer. » Même morcelée, même si son unité est supprimée en droit public, « rien ne pourra empêcher que son passé glorieux, le souvenir des vertus admirables qui se manifestent dans la guerre actuelles, ne maintiennent l'unité des âmes en dépit de tous les artifices et de toutes les restrictions. » Andrássy précise aussi que l'esprit militariste ne pourra être supprimé d'un trait. Les Allemands chercheront leur salut dans leur armée qui pourra leur garantir de nouveau « une place au soleil ».²² Et pour illustrer cela, il se tourne vers l'Histoire et décrit l'échec de Napoléon dans sa tentative d'interdire à la Prusse d'avoir une grande armée : « la Prusse inculqua à son peuple une discipline nouvelle, et au moment où la lutte recommença, sa force se révéla plus grande qu'auparavant. »

Connaissant bien sa Hongrie natale, Andrássy explique que « les Hongrois n'ont accepté ni la domination turque, ni l'absolutisme autrichien – contre lequel son père s'est battu et fut même pendu en effigie pour avoir pris les armes en 1848 – : ils ne s'inclineront pas non plus devant les nouveaux dangers, ils ne

laisseront briser ni leur courage ni leur conscience nationale. »²³ Il affirme aussi que les bulgares et surtout les turcs ne se laisseront pas faire non plus, avant de conclure qu'un arrangement grâce auquel tous les pays puissent garder leur dignité serait un meilleur garant pour la paix que la destruction de l'adversaire.

Même si les prévisions de Jules Andrassy sur la domination russe et anglaise se sont révélées plutôt fausse, il faut reconnaître que le Hongrois a réussi à saisir les enjeux de l'Europe d'après-guerre avec une logique toute « bainvillienne » (celle qui va chercher dans l'histoire les dénouements de l'avenir). C'est en effet l'historien et journaliste Jacques Bainville qui allait mener à l'excellence cette science de la prospective non quantitative en s'appuyant sur ses connaissances immenses de l'histoire et de la géographie : dans ses *Conséquences politiques de la paix*, livre publié en 1920 en réponse aux *Conséquences économiques de la paix* de Keynes, il allait annoncer presque tout ce qui allait se passer dans les vingt ans à venir, y compris en Hongrie. Mais sa vision serait basée sur le partage de l'Europe entre l'Allemagne et la Russie, au lieu de l'Angleterre et de la Russie comme l'avait prévu Andrassy. Ce dernier, tout de même, avait eu le mérite d'avoir annoncé, bien avant sa défaite que l'Allemagne allait se relever même si l'on le terrassait après la victoire.

Le premier article publié par Andrassy dans la *Revue* après la guerre, intitulé « La Hongrie et la Paix », était tout comme les précédents principalement destiné aux lecteurs français. Il n'y raisonne plus sur la nécessité d'arrêter la guerre, mais sur celle d'éviter qu'elle ne recommence en Europe orientale dans un conflit entre « les races et les partis ». Éviter, ensuite, que la région devienne le foyer de l'anarchie et de la révolution, et, enfin, faire accepter la victoire à tous les peuples de l'Europe orientale, y compris aux Hongrois.²⁴

Il explique que la Hongrie ne cherche pas à s'opposer aux Traité de Paix et accepte le nouvel ordre des vainqueurs. Selon lui, la Hongrie se réjouit du contrôle anglais sur les Détroits « dont la défense contre toute convoitise moscovite » est dans l'intérêt de son pays. Toutefois, elle risque de tomber dans l'anarchie si elle est dépecée ou de succomber au danger bolchevique. Andrassy poursuit son analyse en affirmant que si la Hongrie est contentée, elle travaillera pour réconcilier les deux camps, tandis qu'une Hongrie lésée se jettera dans le bras du pangermanisme. Il tend la main vers la France, bien qu'il ne comprenne pas pourquoi elle s'acharne à détruire la Hongrie. Enfin, il assure que la Hongrie ne s'opposera désormais plus à la politique de la France et que si cela est arrivé dans le passé, c'était par la faute du système des alliances.²⁵

Jules Andrassy annonçait nombre d'événements à venir : en mars 1919, la République des Conseils était proclamée à Budapest ; en 1927, la Hongrie se liait au premier groupe des mécontents des Traité de Paix chapeauté par l'Italie de Mussolini avant de retomber, malgré elle, dans l'itinéraire forcé de l'alliance avec l'Allemagne après l'*Anschluss* dix ans plus tard. Dans son article de novembre

1916 comme dans celui de janvier 1919, Andrassy prévoyait le relèvement de l'Allemagne et le retour de la Hongrie dans son giron, presque deux décennies avant les faits, et en faisait l'annonce avant Bainville.

Poursuivons l'analyse de l'article de janvier 1919. Andrassy affirmait que le choix de l'Entente entre la lutte contre la Hongrie, qui lui résistait, et la trahison envers les petits alliés était un faux problème. Il proposait plutôt que l'Entente trouvât une manière de respecter les petits alliés tout en maintenant la Hongrie dans son intégrité, qui les respecterait à son tour. Il passe, un après l'autre, les états successeurs au cible de sa logique géopolitique.

La Tchécoslovaquie ne sera pas viable, écrit-il, car elle est multiethnique, étranglée de deux côtés par sa trop grande population allemande de Silésie et de Moravie qui lui donne une forme de guêpe. L'étroite bande de terre unissant la Bohême à la Slovaquie rendra le nouvel Etat impossible à défendre. De plus, si la Tchécoslovaquie voulait respecter la politique des nationalités, elle devrait renoncer à la partie la plus riche de la Bohême à l'avantage des populations allemandes. Selon Andrassy, l'impérialisme économique était à l'origine de la motivation des leaders tchèques ; de la libération des frères on était passé à une guerre de conquête.

En ce qui concerne les Slaves du sud, Andrassy critique l'accroissement territorial de la Serbie déjà très bigarrée aux dépens de la Hongrie, par une région de 4 millions d'habitants dont seulement 700 000 sont Serbes, les autres étant hongrois, allemands ou roumains.

On peut dire, en revanche, qu'Andrassy s'est trompé sur l'avenir proche de la Roumanie, car il prévoyait qu'elle aurait des soucis insurmontables en raison de ses fortes minorités hongroise et saxonne en Transylvanie. Mais ses prédictions sur les problèmes encourus avec la Bulgarie, sur la question de la Dobroudja, et avec la Russie – la Roumanie venait de prendre possession de la Bessarabie – se sont révélés exacts et se sont effectivement matérialisés respectivement au lendemain de la Seconde Guerre mondiale et après la Guerre froide (avec la création de la Transnistrie sous protectorat russe). Andrassy fondait toutes ses observations sur le fait que les pays, en se gonflant d'éléments étrangers, allaient produire de nouveaux irrédentismes et mettraient en danger la région.²⁶

Le deuxième article d'Andrassy est rédigé en anglais, car il était destinée aux anglo-saxons et plus particulièrement aux américains résidant à Paris pendant les conférences de paix. Le Hongrois y fait l'éloge de Wilson « qui sous l'influence du génie de sa nation »²⁷ a été capable de résoudre le problème de l'autodétermination des nationalités en le subordonnant à l'intérêt général. Toutefois, pour Andrassy, les conditions préalables de ce programme sont le maintien de l'intégrité du territoire de la Hongrie, afin que les Hongrois ne soient pas obligés de lutter pour leur existence. Cet objectif n'est pas selon lui de l'expression d'intérêts privés subjuguant l'intérêt commun, mais, au contraire, celle d'un effort

en vue de faire prospérer l'intérêt général. Dès lors, il faut maintenir la Hongrie millénaire en y créant des autonomies pour les différentes minorités ; solution qui ne mettrait pas en danger les pays voisins de la Hongrie. Mais cela implique de faire une exception aux principes de Wilson en contestant l'impérialisme des Tchèques, des Roumains et des Serbes.²⁸ Bien que défendable du point de vue de la Hongrie, l'argument avait bien peu de chance de convaincre les grandes puissances victorieuses, compte tenu des promesses faites pendant la Grande Guerre à chacun des groupes ethniques ou États successeurs – bientôt rassemblés sous l'appellation de « Petite Entente » – et à l'Italie.

Dans ses deux articles de 1919, Andrassy montre qu'il était prêt à considérer l'attribution de larges autonomies aux minorités de la Hongrie, dans l'esprit de la déclaration de confédéralisation de l'Empire faite par l'empereur Charles le 16 octobre 1918.²⁹ L'introduction d'autonomies auraient été un premier pas vers une décentralisation du royaume de Hongrie jusqu'alors très unitaire : « si au lieu de créer des irrédentismes nouveaux, on se contente d'une autonomie complète pour toutes les races du pays ».³⁰ La solution qu'il préconisait était finalement la fédéralisation de la Hongrie, en accordant des autonomies aux différentes nationalités du royaume, et la confédéralisation de l'Europe centrale sous la forme d'une alliance essentiellement économique entre les états successeurs de l'Autriche-Hongrie. Les propositions faites dans ses articles de la *Revue* allaient très loin, aussi loin qu'il pouvait aller. Au pays, à Budapest, il devait taire ce projet fédéraliste qui n'était guère populaire et, au fond, Andrassy ne pouvait imaginer une Hongrie séparée de ces régions d'avant 1918, dont l'indépendance avait été chèrement payée par son père, qui rappelons-le, avait été pendu en effigie après 1848. Aurait-il fallu arriver à l'évidence que les petites concessions proposées ne pourraient ni satisfaire les états successeurs ni convaincre l'Entente? Dans ces articles de 1919, il espère encore arriver à dénouement différent.

Conclusion

Suite aux dispositions extrêmement sévères des Traité de Paix – celui de Trianon pour les Hongrois – la Hongrie allait effectivement être poussée dans les bras de l'Allemagne. Dans ses réflexions prospectives, Andrassy annonçait déjà les thèses de Jacques Bainville qui allait arriver à des conclusions similaires dans ses *Conséquences politiques de la paix*, ouvrage dans lequel ce dernier devait qualifier de « trajectoire forcée »³¹ celle de la Hongrie se rapprochant de l'Allemagne afin de trouver un soutien pour obtenir des réparations territoriales.

Il est indéniable que les écrits d'Andrassy montrent une certaine sympathie envers les anglo-saxons. Il avait eu des contacts avec les Anglais pendant la guerre et avait reçu des signes d'encouragements pour sa politique de sortie de guerre de

la part de Lord Lansdowne (ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères de Sa Majesté).³² Andrassy portait une grande admiration pour le Président Wilson et les États-Unis. Il avait, en revanche, moins de considération pour la France, dont il critiquait la politique en Europe centrale. Cependant les efforts qu'il déploya en Suisse, avec l'aide de Félix Vályi, montrent qu'il ne perdait pas l'espoir de contribuer à la modification la politique de la France dans la région. Du reste, son engagement ne fut pas vain, car, à partir de 1920, la France du gouvernement Millerand commença à s'intéresser à une confédération danubienne centrée à Budapest, en reconnaissant que la multiplication des états successeurs avaient affaibli la région en la rendant plus exposée à l'impérialisme allemand et soviétique. Jules Andrassy, connaissant la carte et l'histoire de sa région, avait été l'un des premiers à tirer la sonnette d'alarme, en langue française, et à stigmatiser la mauvaise paix qui était en train d'être entérinée par l'Entente, en ce qu'elle allait ouvrir deux décennies dites du système de Versailles qui allaient finir tragiquement, comme on le sait.

En ce qui concerne Félix Vályi, ses activités pour la cause légitimiste hongroise et ses contacts avec la France, ses diplomates et ses hommes du renseignement (Haguenin et François-Poncet), révèlent qu'il avait le rôle de rapprocher la France de l'Autriche-Hongrie puis de la Hongrie. Sa revue contribua à alimenter un débat large impliquant des personnalités de gauche comme de droite et à faire connaître les avis de la Hongrie sur la guerre comme sur la paix. Dans le cours de nos recherches, nous n'avons trouvé aucune documentation qui puisse expliquer l'interruption de la publication en 1920. Mais la fin de la revue semble montrer que cette dernière avait pour double objectif d'encourager les belligérants à terminer la guerre au plus vite et à réaliser une paix rapide et juste. Elle échoua tout aussi bien dans son ambition de favoriser une fin de guerre plus rapide que dans sa mission d'empêcher la signature des Traité de Paix tels qu'ils se présentaient, considéré par les vaincus comme des *diktats* destructeurs. Son existence n'avait donc plus lieu d'être.

Notes

¹ La Séparation des Églises et de l'État vue par les journaux étrangers à partir des notes du Service de la Sûreté Générale du Ministère de l'Intérieur, réunies et présentées par Maurice Gelbard, 2005, <http://theses.ulb.ac.be/ETD-db/collection/available/ULB00008272007-103325/>; Henri Montety (de), « Clemenceau et le Magyar Szó », *Hungarian Studies*, vol. 25, juin 2011, Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó, p. 143.

² « Introduction », *Revue politique internationale*, vol. 1, février, 1914, p. 5.

³ <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-immortels/andre-francois-poncet> (consulté le 19 mars 2013).

- ⁴ « Avis au lecteurs » attaché au premier numéro publié à Lausanne, n° 9–10, septembre–octobre 1914.
- ⁵ József Kardos, « Ifjabb Andrassy Gyula Gróf utolsó évei » [Les dernières années du comte Jules Andrassy le jeune], *Történelmi Szemle*, XXXVI, 3–4, 1994, pp. 299–300.
- ⁶ József Kardos, *Legitimizmus : Legitimista politikusok Magyarországon a két világháború között* [Les politiciens légitimistes en Hongrie entre les deux guerres], Budapest, Korona Kiadó, 1998, pp. 11–12.
- ⁷ György Szmrecsányi, du Parti du Peuple, et le Marquis György Pallavicini, du Parti de la Constitution, faisaient parti de ce groupe de légitimistes à l'intérieur de l'ABC. Ignác Romsics, *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946*, Social Science Monographs, Boulder, Colorado, 1995, p. 99.
- ⁸ Raphael Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology*, Wayne State Univ. Press, 1996, p. 382.
- ⁹ Romsics, *op. cit.*, p. 82.
- ¹⁰ ADMAE (Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires étrangères), Z Europe 1918–1929, Hongrie (Z Europe, H.), Propagande 65/1. Berne, 25 mars 1919.
- ¹¹ Az európai és a nemzetközi integráció jelentősége iff. gr. Andrassy Gyula eszmerendszerében [La signification de l'intégration européenne et internationale dans la pensée du comte Jules Andrassy le jeune], http://ifjgprofAndrássygyula.hu/?page_id=107 (consulté le 20 mars 2013) ; « Émile Haguenin (né en 1872) : Ancien élève de l'École normale (promotion 1893), il est catholique mais se dit proche, par ses idées, du Parti socialiste ; il prend fait et cause pour Alfred Dreyfus. Devenu professeur d'allemand à l'École normale. Avant la guerre, il enseigne à l'université de Berlin. Rentré en France à l'éclatement des hostilités, il accepte fin 1915 la proposition de Philippe Berthelot de partir à l'ambassade de France à Berne comme « Directeur du Bureau de presse ». Agent d'influence et de renseignement, propagandiste, Haguenin est en correspondance suivie pendant la Grande Guerre avec le Quai d'Orsay et les services de renseignements français. En décembre 1916, il transmet à Briand – dont il est proche – l'offre de médiation en faveur de la paix de von (Harry) Kessler, ainsi que d'autres propositions, émanant d'émissaires austro-hongrois non officiels (socialistes). À compter de février 1919, Haguenin est donc nommé « chef de la mission d'information française à Berlin ». Dans le cadre de l'édification d'un nouveau système de sécurité collective en Europe, il va certes œuvrer pour un rapprochement franco-allemand, mais par le truchement d'une entente entre industriels des charbonnages et de l'acier des deux pays. » Laharie, Olivier, « Face à l'Allemagne vaincue, les services de renseignement français (novembre 1918–avril 1919) », *Revue Historique des Armées*, 251, 2008, note 57.
- ¹² ADMAE, Z Europe 1918–1929, Hongrie, Propagande 65/1. Berne, 25 Mars 1919. D'autres sources prétendent que c'est un certain Rodolph Kremmer de *United Press* qui en était le directeur. MOL, K64, 3 cs., 1921-1-177, Budapest, 17 avril 1921, Gen. Berzeviczky à Khun-Hederváry du dép. politique et à l'Amb. Kánya.
- ¹³ PRO (Public Record Office, Londres), FO (Foreign office) 371 3529, 36671, Rumbold to Curzon, 1. March 1919.
- ¹⁴ Windischgraetz, *Ein Kaiser kämpft für die Freiheit*, Verlag Herold, Wien, 1957, pp. 137–138.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Henri Montety (de), *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ Jules Andrassy, « Le problème de la Paix », *Revue politique internationale*, no 23–24, déc. 1916.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 101–104.

- ¹⁹ Landry Charrier, « À la recherche d'une paix de compromis : Kessler, Haguenin et la diplomatie officieuse de l'hiver 1916–1917 », *Histoire@Politique. Politique, culture, société*, N°11, mai–août 2010, www.histoire-politique.fr (consulté le 21 mars 2013).
- ²⁰ Traditionnellement : Angleterre, France, Russie, Japon. Ici, Andrassy semble insister sur l'Italie, comme le quatrième Etat.
- ²¹ Andrassy, « Le problème... », p. 107.
- ²² *Ibid.* pp. 107–108.
- ²³ *Ibid.* p. 108.
- ²⁴ Jules Andrassy, « La Hongrie et la Paix », *Revue politique internationale*, no 36, jan–fév. 1919, pp. 3–4.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 5.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 6–10.
- ²⁷ Jules Andrassy, « National Self-Determination », *Revue politique internationale*, n° 37–38, mai–juin 1919, pp. 183, 185.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.* 186.
- ²⁹ Cette déclaration n'impliquait que l'Empire d'Autriche et pas le Royaume de Hongrie.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 20.
- ³¹ Bainville, *op. cit.*, Paris, 1920, pp. 112–113.
- ³² http://ifjgprofAndrássygyula.hu/?page_id=107

The Secret Exploits and Journalism of Count Gyula Andrassy the Younger in Switzerland and His Visions of the Post-War Era

Summary

Having fled Hungary to spend eight months in Switzerland as an exile, Gyula Andrassy sought out counter-revolutionary organs of the media as well as the journalist Félix Vályi in order to promote, through propaganda, the fall of communism in Hungary, the return of the king from exile and the fight for the territorial integrity of Hungary. During his time in Switzerland, Andrassy wrote two articles in the *Revue politique internationale*, headed by Vályi in Lausanne. His articles shed light on his post-war ideas regarding the future of Central Europe and Hungary. He hoped to exert an influence in the politics of the victorious states in the region.

Keywords: Gyula Andrassy, Félix Vályi, Switzerland, France, legitimism, Great Britain, Entente, Quadruple Entente, intelligence, confederation, Anti-Bolshevik League

DEALING WITH DICTATORSHIP: THE US AND HUNGARY DURING THE EARLY KÁDÁR YEARS

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Because of the legacy of 1956 the hardest country to engage behind the iron curtain was Hungary. The history of the Hungarian political amnesty, a milestone in the development of the most liberal system in the Soviet bloc is an anatomy of the hurdles of diplomacy in dealing with a closed dictatorship under the sway of a foreign power. The new Soviet-installed government launched massive reprisals against real and alleged participants of the revolution. For the first time the US was able to influence events in a Soviet controlled country through diplomatic efforts exerted in the UN. In 1962 after years of difficult negotiation the leaders in Budapest agreed to amnesty political prisoners in exchange for the removal of the Hungarian Question. The settlement was in the best interest of the Hungarians. The regime's international position was an embarrassment for Moscow. Hungary was internationally isolated. That the deal was so long in the making showed the difficulty of dealing with a client state supported by a world power. The political committee's view of world matters was formed by the tenets of communist ideology. This and the knowledge that they would be backed by the Soviet Union through thick and thin allowed the Hungarians to adopt a rigid and uncompromising stance. They exploited domestic weakness to garner support in a conflict that Moscow was ready to settle. Kádár expected American officials to deal with Hungary as a proud independent national entity. Communist functionaries struggled to understand the motivations of American policy. American diplomats found it hard to strike the right tone when dealing with their communist counterparts. Also they did not know about the inner power struggle behind the facade of communist unity. The Kádár regime's eventual willingness to strike a deal and put an end to domestic terror had to do with his desire to launch the country on a road to economic modernization. This required a gradual and limited opening to the West. One of the pillars of this new policy would be the normalization of relations with the US. Prudently the State Department made it known that this would not happen until political prisoners were freed.

In the meantime US goals in Eastern Europe went through drastic change. This was matched by a new approach to the Soviet bloc. The liberation of Eastern Europe and the reunification of the continent were deemed unfeasible. Therefore a more moderate aim of "continental re-association" was adopted. In fact the restoration of the independence of states in Eastern Europe no longer seemed an unequivocally more preferable condition than the Soviet control of middle Europe. Rather than destabilizing them as in the fifties the US became interested in the consolidation of more liberal communist regimes as a prerequisite of western security. In other

words as opposed to the doctrine of the 50s western security no longer required the restoration of national independence. Liberation and containment was replaced by the doctrine of bridge building. This aimed at the gradual transformation of communist regimes to more liberal and more autonomous albeit not independent or fully democratic entities within the tolerance limit of the Soviets. By the early seventies the European status quo was “not so bad” for the Americans. The East Europeans’ only hope for liberation would be change within the Soviet Union.

Keywords: 1956, reprisals, UN, Hungarian Question, Hungarian mandate, amnesty, liberation, containment, bridge building, reassociation, autonomy, national independence, western security

Democratic powers have always faced recalcitrant rogue states, and often presumed that the right set of policy pressures could force these contrarian nations to comply with civilized codes of conduct, domestically and internationally. It is often forgotten that even such states have domestic, bureaucratic struggles – disagreements between agencies and decision-makers with divergent agendas. Such states are often nationally self-conscious entities that demand respect from the international community, and thus whose actions are conditioned by foreign pressures and unforeseen events. Accordingly, there is no single, “correct” policy for any regime. Transformations require patience, flexibility, and the quickness to adapt to changing circumstances. When to give in and when to tighten the reigns, how much to expect in a given situation, how to sound out the vulnerabilities of the opponent, and how to avoid to blackmail: problems and dilemmas like these are rarely recognized as factors in international affairs.

The United Nations had been conceived as a supranational organization that would transcend narrow national interests to uphold international harmony. Instead, it became a forum in which the interests of the two superpowers and the blocs they represented were to collide. The UN was incapable of stopping Soviet aggression in Hungary, but, perhaps surprisingly, it became an efficient tool with which to exert pressure on the Kádár regime to bring its bloody rampage of terroristic reprisals to an end.

Shortly after Marshall Konev launched the final assault on Budapest, the UN decided to suspend its decision on the Hungarian mandate in the world organization. Subsequently, on January 10th 1957, the General Assembly formed a fact-finding committee to explore the Hungarian situation in the hope of sending a UN mission to Budapest. A separate proposal, to reject the Hungarian mandate (which would have meant the country’s ejection from the world organization), was not accepted due to fears it could serve as a precedent for excluding Taiwan, which the USSR had refused to accept as the legitimate representative of mainland China. Nevertheless, domestic opponents accused the Eisenhower adminis-

tration of a double standard, of doing less against the aggressor in Eastern Europe than the ones (Israel, France, and Great Britain) in the Middle East.

Even so, the taking up of the Hungarian question and the suspension of the Hungarian mandate isolated the Kádár regime. In the international arena, Kádár's government was forced to concentrate on resolving the Hungarian question, restoring its full status in the UN, and breaking out of its status as an international pariah. This was not a new predicament for Hungarian foreign policy: the country had experienced similar situations in the aftermath of both World Wars. For the United States, the question was whether the Hungarian government was willing to take concrete steps toward a domestic détente. To maximize the pressure, Washington questioned the Soviet-installed regime's legitimacy. In addition to the impasse in the UN, Hungarian-American relations were also complicated by a number of other, interrelated issues, which meant that US contacts with Hungary took place at a lower diplomatic level than its relations with other people's democracies. One such issue was the seemingly intractable problem of Cardinal Mindszenty. Until the problem of his presence in the US embassy in Budapest was resolved, talks on the settlement of financial claims could not even begin. Such efforts were already under way with Romania. Moreover, diplomatic contacts were stuck on the legation level. The new minister, Edward Wailes, had arrived at his post as Soviet tanks were rolling into the Hungarian plain. He had had no time to present his credentials to the Nagy government before it was overthrown, and did not do so afterward. When the UN General Assembly acted on a US proposal to suspend Hungary's mandate, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry asked Wailes to present his credentials or leave the country. Wailes opted for the latter and departed within four days. Nobody suspected that a decade would pass before his successor was appointed. Thus bilateral relations had again reached a nadir. Almost all contact ceased, even at the grass-roots level. Diplomats avoided each other in the corridors of the United Nations; "contacts" were restricted to the mutual expulsion of military attachés; the Hungarian chargé was not received at the State Department for months. Political pressures drove the business community to boycott Hungary, which led *Paprikás Weiss*, a popular delicacy store in New York, to seek State Department approval to import Hungarian salami. American passports were invalid for Hungary, thus almost no one embarked on the trip across the ocean.

In their own way, the Hungarians also created tensions, sometimes seemingly ready to take things to the breaking point. In reality, Budapest would stop at the edge of the precipice, just short of breaking off relations. In May 1957, at the instigation of the Ministry of Interior and the counter-intelligence service, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry demanded that the US Legation reduce its staff of diplomats and administrative personnel.¹ The pretext was that "the American employees are illegally collecting intelligence instead of nurturing relations".² The Hungarians

then offered to exchange ministers,³ but to nobody's surprise this offer was rejected. Dulles would allow minor gestures only to support steps towards the relaxation of tensions and to nurture the peoples' spirit of resistance. This included the relaxation of travel restrictions and a token expansion of cultural exchanges.⁴ The chargé in Budapest opposed the exchange of heads of mission on the grounds that it would entail the acceptance of the Hungarian mandate and the easing of economic controls; at the same time, he saw no chance for UN resolutions to be implemented in Hungary.⁵ Austria's foreign minister, the future chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who would eventually build a special "K und K" relationship with Kádár, offered to mediate negotiations with the regime in Budapest. When Kreisky asked what conditions they would have to fulfill for the sake of normalization, he was told that the Hungarians needed to comply with UN resolutions, admit UN representatives to the country, grant safe passage to Mindszenty, and make peace with the Hungarian people – conditions the chargé in Hungary considered exaggerated.⁶ By the end of 1957, tensions subsided somewhat when it became apparent that the regime in Hungary would last.

Kádár managed to eliminate the Central Workers' Council, his main rival for the hearts and minds of the working class. Meanwhile, his Stalinist foe Rákosi was kept in Moscow, and the chief ideologist of Hungarian Stalinism, József Révai, was neutralized. Most importantly, Kádár won Khrushchev's firm support.⁷ The head of the State Department's Bureau of East European Affairs pointed out that the regime in Budapest was on its way toward domestic and international consolidation. Internationally, the Revolution was fading into oblivion, and it was doubtful whether international pressure could do anything to liberalize the system. He therefore recommended a more flexible course, one more readily adaptable to existing conditions.⁸ On the first anniversary of the Revolution, Eisenhower made clear that no one in the higher echelons of power had contemplated any radical changes in US policy. In response to the president's address, Hungarian Foreign Ministry officials recommended that diplomatic relations with the US be severed, but Kádár rejected such a drastic measure. Instead, a harshly worded note was drafted calling on US leaders to refrain from supporting "counter-revolutionary elements". However, the Soviets prevented the message from being sent.⁹ Moscow exercised restraint, an approach Washington did not expect.

Another push towards normalization came from a rather unexpected quarter. The Hungarian chargé in Washington, Tibor Zádor, a relatively junior diplomat who had distinguished himself in his proclamations of support for Kádár, now advocated "steps towards normalization of relations" with the United States in order to "reduce the intensity of the hostile campaign and improve relations with other Western states". He recommended the release of the Hungarian employees of the US Legation, and a "revision" to the quantitative controls on American

personnel. This diplomat was also in favor of further steps, including an exchange of statements by high-level functionaries; he primarily recommended diplomatic channels and the use of the legation in Washington in pursuing a policy of normalization.¹⁰ On his own initiative, Zádor met Senator Malone with the intention of expanding trade relations.¹¹ Zádor used the modest means at his disposal to break out of his isolation, although some of his efforts may have done more harm than good. These included film screenings at the legation. One of his movies was meant to show that “the situation is quite normal and the traces of the counter-revolution were disappearing”, but since such a film “obviously” did “not exist”, the legation staff pieced one together from some older footage and borrowed a screen from the Romanians. This short film was named “Hungary 1957”, but the Hungarian desk officer at the State Department had justifiable doubts about its authenticity. It was also subject to question whether an audience of American businessmen, lawyers, and diplomats would appreciate scenes like “Workers’ Meetings in Budapest”, “The Formation of the Workers’ Militia”, “Ho Chi Minh’s Visit”, and the like. “Unforgettable April”, a film about the visit of “the Soviet Party and Government Delegation” to Budapest, screened on a different occasion, was probably equally successful.¹²

In 1958, the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, which had showed at least some interest in improving relations with the US, perceived a positive shift in the American attitude toward Hungary, which they hoped to exploit. For the sake of improvements, they made a list of possible measures taking into account mutual grievances. On the Hungarian side these included the closing of the consulates in 1951, the “propaganda campaign” against the Hungarian government including Radio Free Europe, and the lack of economic contacts. The foreign ministry recommended that the Hungarian government make known that it would be receptive to an overture and simultaneously release the US Legation’s imprisoned employees.¹³ The Hungarian security apparatus won this round of the contest: as soon as the employees in question were released, they were immediately relocated to the countryside. At that point the Foreign Ministry was under the close direction of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’s Department of International Relations, so there is no doubt that its recommendations represented the ideas of at least some top leaders.

The international climate favored improvements. Khrushchev launched a peace offensive, and although he made it clear that he would not negotiate on Eastern Europe, he pulled Soviet troops out of Romania and at least one division out of Hungary. Romania made good use of this window of opportunity. Party leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej invited Americans to observe Romanian elections and in 1958, his government announced that it would purchase 100 million dollars’ worth of industrial equipment from the US. The National Security Council noted that Romania was prepared to expand its commercial ties and to

arrange limited cultural, scientific, and technical exchange programs. In 1960, the Battle Act was modified to allow the president to extend economic aid to communist countries if it could be justified by national security, and in March of that year, Romania concluded an agreement to settle outstanding financial claims with the US. An exchange of notes would launch exchange programs between the two countries in 1962, by which time Washington was no longer treating Romania like the “most Sovietized” satellite.¹⁴

On January 25th, 1958, the Political Committee of the HSWP discussed the normalization of Hungarian–American relations and the settling of the Hungarian question at the UN. Foreign Minister Sík gave a speech in Parliament on April 2nd in which he announced that he would take an initiative to repair ties with the US. On May 8th, he told the American chargé, Garret Ackerson, that he had been thinking of exchanging ministers, but that the initiative had been cancelled. Ackerson knew Hungary well. He had worked at the US Legation in the 1930s and had compared the current state of Hungarian affairs unfavorably with the country he had known under Horthy. Sík had studied in Moscow in the 1930s and lived through the Great Terror, which left an indelible imprint on his psyche. His memoir, published in the 1970s, recounts that while he was third secretary in the Hungarian legation in Washington, he made a trip to New York during which the police stopped his car in Central Park after dark. Sík was terrified of the American authorities, convinced that he would disappear and lose his life. Now, the foreign minister was claiming that his initiative had been rescinded because the Hungarian mandate had been rejected during the Maritime Law Conference in Geneva and because the US representative to the UN, James Wadsworth, had demanded information on the whereabouts of the leaders of the Hungarian Revolution. Ackerson pointed out that both events had occurred after Sík had announced his diplomatic initiative.¹⁵ Its cancellation was all the more surprising since Sík had informed Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko of his proposed action on April 7th, and Gromyko had approved it.¹⁶

US diplomats suspected that Khrushchev might have been behind the cancellation of the initiative, but in light of the foregoing, this seems unlikely. The minutes of the Khrushchev–Kádár talks contain no reference to it. In his conversation with Ackerson, Sík hinted that the Foreign Ministry had had nothing to do with the relocation of the legation’s employees, and the fact that Sík needed Béla Biszku’s permission to relax travel restrictions suggests that the Ministry of the Interior may have intervened. Sík made reference to this via metacommunication: Ackerson recorded that during their conversation, Sík nodded towards the Interior Ministry building on the opposite bank of the Danube. This would indicate that the process of formulating foreign policy was more complicated than the Americans suspected. The Soviets did not interfere in relatively minor matters; the two rival ministries were simply pursuing the same

goal by different means. In the 1950s, the Ministry of the Interior would win battles like this even though the foreign minister was part of the old guard that had returned from Moscow.

The Foreign Ministry suspected that the State Department no longer considered it just to “punish the Hungarians for the Soviet intervention” and to continue rejecting overtures.¹⁷ If this idea had any real basis, it would be soon dispelled. The execution of Imre Nagy and his associates on June 16th, 1958 put an end to the lukewarm and sluggish process of improvement. These executions outraged the administration and US diplomats made it clear that relations would turn for the worse. This also meant that the Hungarian question would be kept in the limelight at the UN. On July 11th, State Department officials consulted with their British and French ambassadors on the rejection of the Hungarian mandate and possibly even the rupture of diplomatic relations with Budapest.¹⁸ The drastic step was not ultimately taken, but the latest American offensive at the UN caused a great headache in Hungary. The Political Committee prepared an offensive of its own: they wanted simultaneously to “unmask” American espionage and to show that Nagy’s execution was the outcome of legal procedures against the participants of the 1956 revolt. In this debate, Prime Minister Ferenc Münnich called the American Legation a “spy center” and declared they could “go home if they want”. The *eminence grise* of Hungarian foreign policy, a party historian named Dezső Nemes, did not think it “useful” to sever diplomatic relations.¹⁹ The anti-American campaign would include two more steps. There would be a government press conference on September 12th to denouncing American espionage against Hungary. Then Budapest would present a diplomatic note offering to participate in a dialogue if the US “ceased hostile propaganda and spying against the country”.²⁰ Hungarian leaders were trying to legitimize their terror campaign by alleging threats from a dangerous foreign enemy. The Foreign Ministry’s unveiling of an American “spy center” in front of a large audience invoked the atmosphere of the show trials, though now the “defendant” was a foreign state.

The State Department was in no hurry to reply. Six months passed before the Hungarians were told that normalization would occur if they were to adhere to their commitments to the UN and to the terms of the peace treaty.²¹ In the meantime, US diplomacy was working feverishly to reject the Hungarian mandate, even though China’s membership in the organization would require a two-thirds majority. In this critical situation, the foreign minister initiated the second part of his “diplomatic offensive”, announcing to the General Assembly that judicial proceedings against “counterrevolutionaries” had been closed and terminated. US ambassador to the UN Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. immediately declared that to his knowledge, four other leaders of the uprising had just been convicted.²² The “offensive” was thus defeated and the Hungarian question was inscribed on the agenda of the 13th General Assembly. By rejecting the

Hungarians' mandate, the State Department wanted to draw world attention to communist reprisals there and thereby to deal a psychological defeat on the Soviet Union.²³ Eisenhower did not want to proceed all the way to a rejection of Hungary's membership, so the original situation remained: the Hungarian mandate was merely suspended. The General Assembly did condemn the Hungarians for executions (although the Americans erroneously held the Soviets responsible), and asked Leslie Munro to report on the implementation of the UN resolutions on Hungary.

As if this were not enough, another time bomb exploded, fraying the US–Hungarian relationship. Cardinal Mindszenty, the archbishop of Esztergom and primate of the Hungarian Catholic Church, had been held under house arrest until a Hungarian army unit – the head of which was later executed for this act – briefly liberated him in 1956 and brought him to Budapest to deliver a radio message. Sensing that he was running out of luck, he appeared at the entrance of the US Legation in the small hours of November 4th, just as the Soviet offensive on Budapest was beginning. He was admitted, and, after consultations with Washington, given asylum, even though legation personnel feared that doing so might cause the premises to be attacked. Béla Kovács, whose arrest in 1947 became a symbol of the Soviets' ill-will behind the Iron Curtain, also appealed for refugee status, but was denied. Kovács spent a number of years in Soviet captivity before serving in Imre Nagy's revolutionary government. The Hungarians understood that it was against international law and US government regulations to use diplomatic missions for asylum, but Mindszenty's presence at the US mission eventually provided unforeseen opportunities to influence Hungarian politics, the likes of which did not exist in any other Iron-Curtain state.

Initially, there were only difficulties. Legation employees prepared for an assault on the building by the Hungarian police they expected them to try to abduct the cardinal. In order to minimize risks, he was barred from all correspondence other than discussions of his personal life. Nevertheless, the aged prelate would bombard senior US officials and even presidents with letters. He criticized their foreign policy. He thought it too conciliatory toward the Soviets, too accepting of the status quo in Eastern Europe, and unprincipled in its compromises with communism, a system he detested passionately. He was rarely answered. His views were taken into account in the controversy over the return of Saint Stephen's Holy Crown. Mindszenty also caused problems for the communist authorities. He was regarded as a political criminal, but charging him seemed undesirable because of the public outcry it would likely cause. Both sides took the most convenient course: they kept silent about it for as long as possible. But Mindszenty's fate was to become interlocked with Cold War politics.

The day of reckoning arrived with the death of Pius XII on October 9th, 1958. That afternoon, the US Embassy in Rome recommended that the State Depart-

ment ask the Sacred College of Cardinals to summon Mindszenty to the papal election. Even though the State Department did not like the idea, the Embassy took the necessary steps without waiting for an answer.²⁴ The Vatican saw a chance to get Mindszenty out, so the State Department instructed the American legation in Budapest to negotiate with the Hungarian government on behalf of the Sacred College of Cardinals. After the Vatican sent the appropriate instructions to Mindszenty, officials in Washington decided that if the Hungarians were to allow the cardinal to leave the country, they would guarantee Mindszenty's silence on political matters. A decade and a half later, the Hungarian government would release Mindszenty on this same condition, but the time was not yet ripe in 1958.

Leaders in Budapest so hoped to extract political concessions that it took them a long time to realize that there was no chance for any. Mindszenty himself was fairly unenthusiastic about the prospect of leaving his refuge and agreed to go only after lengthy persuasion. The American note to the Hungarian authorities inexplicably failed to mention the conditions of his silence; it was restricted to the question of whether the authorities would be willing to let Mindszenty travel to the conclave in Rome.²⁵ The reply was firmly negative. The Hungarians were not even willing to explore the possibility at that point. They pointed out that their authorities had condemned the cardinal to a life sentence for "political and other crimes" in 1956, including his escape from custody and his carrying out "criminal activity against the political order of the Hungarian People's Republic". It was also noted that the cardinal's asylum constituted a violation of international law and US government regulations, as well as an attempt to interfere in Hungary's internal affairs. Mindszenty's fate was a Hungarian matter, not "subject to Hungarian-US talks". Finally, the note made it clear that the government would "pay more attention to [the] Mindszenty question in the future".²⁶ The legation concluded that the Hungarians were happy with the situation, or at least less uncomfortable than the US. They emphasized that their "guest" was not making things any easier and should therefore be advised to seek the Pope's "spiritual leadership".²⁷

The Foreign Ministry saw no link between Hungary's intransigence and the poor state of its relations with the Americans. This was attributed to the "sharply antisocialist stance of [American] leading circles", due to which only slow improvements could be expected. The resolution of the Hungarian question and the normalization of ties were expected in the longer run.²⁸ By this time, however, there were debates in the higher echelons of the party about economic reform. This would require financial and economic assistance from the US, but it was well understood that Washington would not agree to expand economic ties until its outstanding financial claims were settled. The balance would favor the Americans. Even if Washington were to accept all Hungarian claims, including frozen assets, the restitution of Hungarian commodities, and compensation for the

property lost on the “Gold Train”, it would not match the amount owed by Hungarians for war damage to US property and nationalizations of American companies.²⁹ Although the “Polish model” presented itself, the Foreign Ministry counseled procrastination. Poland had agreed to a financial settlement with the US using income derived from increased trade resulting from commercial incentives and long-term loans. Romania had increased its trade with the US threefold between 1956 and 1960 and agreed to settle US claims. The Hungarians must have known that Romania had signed to pay only a fraction of the original claims against it, and that Hungary could expect a similar deal. However, the necessary pragmatism and political will seems to have been missing from Budapest.³⁰

Image in Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is formulated not according to some objectively existing reality in the external world, but on the basis of images in the minds of the leaders of one power or another. Eventually this dependence on perception would work in favor of Kádár’s Hungary. Hungary came to be pictured as the most liberal state behind the Iron Curtain, even though, to paraphrase the Nobel-prize-winning author Imre Kertész, it was “so horrible we did not even notice it”. In an analysis of Eastern European satellites prepared in 1959, the CIA noted that Hungary had been consolidated to a considerable extent since 1956, and although the CIA. had been grossly mistaken three years earlier, it predicted again that mass rebellion was unlikely.³¹ Stability was discussed in a positive light, even though prior to 1956 it would have been seen as an unwelcome development, and pro-American sentiment was taken for granted. Senator Charles Vanik wrote that “penetration might be made in this part of the Soviet-dominated world to preserve and keep alive well-developed but silent affection for America. The hope for the restoration of democracy in this part of the world will be strengthened as a result of individual missions of American citizens visiting their relatives.”³² However, the second secretary of the legation in Budapest warned American citizens travelling to Hungary that tourism behind the Iron Curtain was different from a trip to Western Europe. Tourists and people visiting family were to be aware that they were coming to a “police state”, where, if they met with difficulties, they might end up at the mercy of capricious bureaucrats.³³

A correspondent for ABC television named George Bailey traveled across Hungary in 1960 and claimed to have spoken with “hundreds of people”. His overall impression was “depressing”; he found that people had lost faith and did not wish to get into trouble. Most of the people with whom he had spoken were initially suspicious, but after a while they tended to loosen up and begin

condemning the Kádár regime and the country's foreign occupation. He visited the once-upscale holiday resort of Siófok on Lake Balaton, where he saw hotels for workers so depressing that they evoked Orwell's *1984*. It seemed as if everyone were wearing the same uniform and taking part in group activities like building roads. Later in Tihany, Bailey met others more like the Hungarians who lived in his memory – teachers, writers, and intellectuals who openly lambasted the regime. In the agricultural town of Makó, Bailey found beautifully kept farm animals and buildings, "but the cows were better groomed and happier than the people".

While Bailey saw the dreariness of life there, National Geographic deputy director Francis Shor focused on Hungary's standards of living. Shor randomly selected ten families, and since there were two wage-earners in each, every one of them was able to maintain "a tolerable standard of living". Shortages of goods were "annoying", but nothing that would lead to "unrest". He found housing conditions poor, but thought that people tolerated it "philosophically". Shor found, "somewhat to his surprise" (one may wonder why he would find this surprising), "a fairly substantial intellectual middle class – unhappy and by no means enthusiastic about the regime, but tending to accept it for the present". A freelance writer, Lance Wiley, found evidence that standards of living were higher than in Romania, and thus opined that the Hungarians "did win a partial victory in 1956". In contrast to Bailey, one legation officer found that the middle-class way of life had not disappeared. Hungarians went on vacation to "enjoy themselves"; only a few attended the almost compulsory lectures that had become a part of what was called 'vacationing' in other bloc countries. He found "much greater resistance [in] the Hungarians to forced indoctrination" than in other communist countries. When Feld visited the scenic resort of Tihany, he thought it "still preserve[d] some of its upper bourgeois atmosphere". The intense, purposeful flow of motorized traffic to Lake Balaton evoked the "decadent" pursuits of people in the free world.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported on manifestations of a "bourgeois lifestyle" in Romania, where communists "could enjoy the merry-go-round of night clubbing, sailing and opera recitals". Later, the *New York Times* would celebrate changes in Romania in a small press campaign. The US Legation in Budapest reported in 1961 that the number of American visitors to Hungary had grown significantly, and that many were surprised by the courteous treatment they received from Hungarian authorities. A *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent was pleasantly surprised by the significant changes that had taken place in Hungary since 1956, but an American conductor of Hungarian descent, László Halász, found a different reality in 1962. Halász had once thought that changes for the better had occurred in Hungary, but two visits convinced him he had been mistaken. "There is general fear, cultural stagnation and except in showcase

Budapest, a serious food shortage.”³⁴ Dissent notwithstanding, a narrative was being constructed to improve the image of satellites in hopes of earning them better treatment by the US. They were no longer depicted as mortal dangers to American values, but as places that were assuming more human qualities. The psychological barriers to accepting the communist regimes, and that Soviet control of Eastern Europe was a more or less permanent phenomenon, were falling.

Czechoslovakia was a favored spot in the 1960s. Many Americans found reality there far more pleasant than the nightmarish image presented by anticommunists. Journalists found it to be a prosperous country even by Western standards, the only country where “Marx was right”, although some remarked that Prague was just a showcase that hid a less happy truth. Even so, Czechoslovakia was considered the most flourishing state behind the iron curtain.³⁵ Prague had begun to open up in the mid-'50s; Czechoslovakia’s renowned spas in Karlovy Vary and Mariánské Lázně were reopened in 1955. Six thousand Americans visited the country in 1958, and the motivation for allowing them to do so was twofold: an urgent need to earn hard currency and a desire to display the “human face” of socialism.³⁶ Hungary also seemed to be on its way to more prosperity. In the view of the American legation in 1960, Kádár had “every reason” to be satisfied with the performance of his economy. In spite of a claim in *New York Times* – which would later champion the cause of “goulash communism” – there was no shortage of food in Budapest.³⁷ And despite its political pronouncements, the Hungarian government was making cautious overtures to the West. There was interest in increasing the number of visitors. American Express included Hungary in one of its package tours: three nights in Budapest’s *art nouveau* Hotel Gellért, or at the Royal, complete with sightseeing, wine-tasting and a night at the Opera.³⁸ Such images evoked not communist drudgery but a more upscale and colorful middle-class existence.

Hollywood was making a comeback behind the Iron Curtain, as well, though not to the same extent in every country. In 1961, two American movies were among the most popular motion pictures in Hungary. *Cinderella* averaged 339 moviegoers at 3800 (!) screenings, while *Around the World in Eighty Days* was enjoyed by an average of 555 viewers per show. These numbers exceeded by a large margin the averages for Hungarian (206) and Soviet (174) films. Hollywood was equally popular in neighboring Czechoslovakia, where authorities considered cinema a potential tool for political subversion and cultural penetration. The first American film to be shown in Czechoslovakia in the communist period was screened only in 1960, and US movies would seldom appear there after that, although some were allowed into the Karlovy Vary film festival to raise its international prestige.³⁹ Thus in this regard, Hungarian practices were more

liberal. In his study of “soft power”, Joseph Nye has pointed out that while American films may make the US look attractive in some countries, they may have the opposite effect elsewhere. Hollywood images could also attract one segment of the population while repelling others.⁴⁰ Thus showing American movies behind the Iron Curtain was a double-edged sword. Some carried messages critical of the United States and underscored communist propaganda. So, on the basis of a “gentleman’s agreement”, an expert on motion pictures and propaganda in the US Legation in Budapest, Turner Shelton, “censored” whatever products the US movie industry intended to show behind the Iron Curtain. Disney went so far as to negotiate with the Hungarian state film company Hungarofilm to produce a movie in Hungary for distribution in the US. The State Department disapproved, fearing unwanted publicity for Hungary.⁴¹

Washington imagined Eastern Europe as a pro-American region. This was a dubious assessment, though, as there were no public opinion surveys to prove or disprove the assertion. Other evidence was circumstantial and sometimes hard to interpret. An attraction to American-made automobiles, for instance, does not automatically signify approval of US foreign policy. State Department assessments concluded that “the US in Eastern Europe can draw upon considerable assets of goodwill ... This fund of resources is perhaps unique throughout the region and unmatched by any Western country.” America “has the most prestige of any Western nation in Eastern Europe”, and therefore the American presence there had to be increased.⁴² Hungarians had considered mostly pro-American ever since World War II. Lacking reliable statistics, surveyors depended on meta-communication and signs to measure American popularity, such as the reactions of people on the street to an automobile flying a star-spangled banner.

In 1961, the chargé in Budapest perceived a drop in American popularity. He noted that he never saw any signs of hostile sentiment; in fact, people were ready to show their interest and friendship in many ways, including semi-hidden smiles, waves, hearty welcomes, and even gestures of agitation. He attributed the decreasing frequency of such friendly signs to the Berlin crisis and to Titov’s space flight, which had showed that Soviet successes were real. This slide in popularity was also a part of a healthy maturing process, as the image of America as a romantic “white knight” shrank back to reality.⁴³ In spite of the tensions, the US Legation sought to maintain contact with the Hungarian intelligentsia. This was not easy. Some, like the celebrated actress Éva Ruttkay and her spouse, for instance, rejected an invitation to a party organized by a foreign national and claimed that attendance “would not be wise”. Still, the influential poet and translator István Vas did show up, and asserted that “the most exciting and most productive contemporary theater existed in the United States”. The remarks of another poet of national recognition, Ágnes Nemes Nagy, were more characteris-

tic of the paucity of knowledge about American culture in Budapest. Nemes Nagy had no idea that Ezra Pound had been born American, had never heard of Robert Frost, and declared that “only the British produce good poetry in the English language”.⁴⁴

Amnesty under US Pressure

While tensions between the two superpowers were receding, the United Nations became the scene of a dramatic confrontation between the Western bloc and the East over censuring the Soviets and their now staunch allies in the Hungarian government. This would be American diplomats’ first real success behind the Iron Curtain and would demonstrate the usefulness of diplomacy and the strength of the United Nations in exerting pressure on tyrannical governments. While international interest in Hungary was waning, there was not a single outstanding issue between Hungary and the US that was resolved. As long as there was no improvement, the United States would not be able to exert any influence, thus American diplomats in Budapest recommended a favorable response to Hungary’s overtures on trade expansion and a readiness to drop the Hungarian question at the UN.⁴⁵ While the diplomatic mission was closer to the real world in its day-to-day dealings with the communist government and often closer to the truth in arguments with the State Department, this time Washington’s harsher approach turned out to be more productive. There was an impasse: the Hungarians were waiting for an American initiative in a diplomatic game of patience. Only Zádor, the Hungarian minister, took the initiative to find out the Americans’ conditions for reconciliation. He told the State Department that while Hungary stood ready for talks, the government would not even consider any negotiations directed towards “changing Hungary’s social order or provid[ing] unilateral advantage to the opposing political forces in the current international situation”.⁴⁶ In response, Livingstone Merchant, the head of the State Department’s Office of East European Affairs, confided that what mattered for Washington was not the domestic order of an individual country, but its relationship to the Soviet Union. Ceaușescu’s Romania would go on to become the best example of this initially rather rigid, but later more flexibly interpreted formula. In Hungary, there was no apparent sign of autonomy from Moscow or even a domestic ideological thaw. International relations were still seen through the prism of Marxist ideology as a struggle between the “forces of progress” and imperialism. The Hungarians’ “main question” was whether the expansion of American imperialism could be halted.⁴⁷

Referring to the spirit of Camp David and the imperative of reducing international tensions, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vasili Kuznetsov tried to convince the 14th Assembly of the UN to drop the Hungarian question for good, but to

no avail. At Cabot Lodge's initiative, the world organization once again condemned the Soviet Union and the Hungarian regime for failing to implement UN resolutions in Hungary.⁴⁸ Budapest was thus forced to revert to diplomacy and the politics of "small steps", moving from easily resolved problems to more difficult ones.⁴⁹ They began negotiating economic issues such as animal health, hoping to be allowed to sell meat in the US for the first time since the war.⁵⁰ Their main purpose was the "liquidation" of the Hungarian question.⁵¹ Hungarian leaders were willing to make an offer on Mindszenty, but affirmed that no "compromise of principle" would be made, and required that any formula take into account the "prestige and sovereignty" of the Hungarian People's Republic, a condition they would take very seriously.

Budapest wanted to be viewed as an independent entity on the international scene. The Political Committee, the country's highest decision-making organ, concluded that an offer for "normalization" should be made if the four-power summit scheduled for May 1960 were successful. This initiative included an offer to resolve the Mindszenty problem.⁵² The conditions set by the Politburo were wholly unrealistic, betraying an ignorance of the possibilities for Hungarian (and even Soviet) foreign policy. Up to that point, the Party had regarded an exchange of ministers as the precondition of normalization talks; now it was meant to be a "reward" for the Americans if they would stop "spying", cease giving refuge to the Cardinal, and terminate their economic embargo against the socialist bloc. It was as though the Political Committee did not take its own initiative seriously. The best solution for the Hungarians would have been house arrest for Mindszenty, with the Catholic Primate's release from the country dependent on "international conditions".⁵³ That meant the US would have had to guarantee that the cardinal would not publicize his political views, a condition that was not unacceptable to the US.

The Hungarians seemed to forget that any solution would require the approval of the Vatican and the cardinal himself. Budapest insisted that the Vatican remove Mindszenty from his position as head of the Hungarian Catholic Church, thus the affair grew into a quadratic equation the chief variable of which was an obstinate individual who had made it his personal mission to combat communism.⁵⁴ In the meantime, the Political Committee hoped that the US would take the first step. The Hungarian Foreign Ministry may have had a small degree of independence from the country's leadership: the minister in Washington seems to have acted independently in using a Swiss mediator to inform the State Department that the government in Budapest was willing to take into account whatever recommendations the US administration might make, or to make specific recommendations of its own if it would contribute to a normalization of relations. The mediator, Joseph Milleger, added that he and Zádor had discussed the possibility of releasing Mindszenty to Switzerland. He also claimed that the Hungarian foreign minister

was ready to approach the US minister in Budapest to discuss the Mindszenty question, which was then considered the main impediment to a restoration of relations. The State Department refused the Swiss mediator's services, questioning his authenticity, and affirmed that they would keep the Hungarian question on the UN agenda in order to preserve the prestige of the UN and remind the "free world" of the Soviet Union's behavior in world politics.⁵⁵ Hungarian records contain no trace of this strange episode, thus it is hard to say what may have motivated it. Given that it was the most sensitive issue in contemporary Hungarian international relations, it could hardly have been the initiative of a single diplomat. Perhaps it was a trial balloon meant to sound out the State Department. This would indicate that an agreement was more important to Hungary's leaders than the transcripts of the Political Committee's meetings suggest.

The whole thing came to naught as an ill-timed U2 spy mission wrecked the 1960 summit.⁵⁶ Thus, seemingly because of world politics, but more probably because neither side was ready for substantial compromise, the Hungarians dropped their grander schemes for normalization. The Foreign Ministry pointed out that Soviet-American relations had deteriorated and that the US administration was not in a position to relax economic controls without congressional approval.⁵⁷ In 1961, Kádár went to the UN, setting foot in the US for the first – and last – time in his life. On the way there, he enjoyed Khruschev's company on the oceanliner *Baltica*, playing cards and his favorite game, chess. In New York, he asserted that Hungary was ready to discuss normalization, but he also attached a warning: "if possible we would like to avoid severing diplomatic relations with your country".⁵⁸ The American minister in Budapest commented that relations between his government and Kádár's "turncoat" regime had never shown any real signs of change. The State Department's short-term goal in 1961 was to encourage peaceful progress toward a larger measure of national independence and internal freedom for Hungary. Full independence and the free choice of government would remain aims to be achieved in the future; but as was noted then, almost no progress had been made since 1956. US officials believed that communist rule in Hungary rested on Soviet power, police terror, and the suppression of civil rights, but given the tensions between the two countries, American goals had to be modest. They would begin by letting go of the Hungarian Question and restoring the legation's ability to function, thus increasing American influence.⁵⁹ It was added that though the Hungarian Question was already losing currency, the worst was still to come. Despite the standoff, it was thought that the "average non-official Hungarian" still respected the United States.⁶⁰

As the memory of 1956 faded, the Kennedy administration grew eager to "engage" Eastern Europe. The State Department was anxious to get over 1956,

instructing the US ambassador to the UN to drop the Hungarian Question as soon as possible so that the US could make contact with the “Hungarian people”.⁶¹ This coincided with a new Hungarian initiative: Foreign Minister Sík, probably inspired by the forthcoming meetings between Kennedy and Khrushchev, wished to make a “significant” overture to the Americans. He considered eliminating travel restrictions, but since this was a security issue, he would need the consent of the Ministry of the Interior.⁶² In the meantime, the head of the State Department’s Office of Eastern European Affairs declared that the US would regard it very favorably if the travel restrictions imposed on US official personnel were lifted, and suggested such a move would be reciprocated. This, however, would not involve the UN.⁶³ Sík’s measure was rather radical by Eastern European standards; similar restrictions applied to Americans all over the Soviet bloc. As with any decision made by the Political Committee, the Soviet ambassador, Dmitrii Ustinov, was consulted. He gave his blessing to Sík’s initiative, as did Hungarian Minister of the Interior Biszku, and thus the diplomatic note announcing the removal of travel restrictions was handed to the US legation.⁶⁴ Although this move was not insignificant, it paled in comparison with the freedoms Romania was seeking at that time. Gheorghiu-Dej had threatened Moscow that Romania would leave the Comecon, and Khrushchev had rescinded his plan for Comecon unification rather than work at cross purposes with Romania’s economic policy.⁶⁵

If the Hungarians thought that they could offer Mindszenty in exchange for a UN mandate, they were in for a disappointment. On April 5th, 1961, the State Department official in charge of Eastern Europe, Harold Vedeler, told Zádor that there would be no normal relations until the Hungarian Question had reached a “satisfactory” resolution.⁶⁶ Given the ongoing reprisals in Hungary, this was of crucial importance, both to the Hungarians and for America’s prestige as the champion of victims of communism. By then, the affair had become a battle of nerves. The President of the UN General Assembly, Frederick Boland, thought that the US should refrain from raising the issue because the “Asian-African” group that usually supported Western initiatives considered Hungary a “Cold War” matter.⁶⁷ The Soviets were throwing everything they had at jeopardizing the work of the UN’s Special Committee on Hungary. Witnesses were intimidated and the *spiritus rector* behind the investigation, the Danish diplomat Bang Jensen, was found dead in Central Park. It was suspected that he was murdered by the KGB.

The US ambassador to the UN, Adlai Stevenson, thought that the Hungarians might have been ready for a troop withdrawal – Kádár had referred to it in a speech – or for a political amnesty, but that it would not recognize UN authority. On August 3rd, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Richard H. Davis read a note to the interim Hungarian chargé, Károly Hackler, in which he expressed his

“wish” that Hungary would release all political prisoners as part of a general amnesty during Boland’s planned trip to Hungary. Davis intimated that a positive response would result in the Americans’ dropping the Hungarian Question.⁶⁸ Secretary of State Dean Rusk wanted the Hungarians to know that they would be expected to take drastic measures to improve their situation and resolve the Hungarian Question. Amnesty for those imprisoned for their roles in 1956 would contribute significantly.⁶⁹ They worded their note in a way that did not suggest a setting of conditions, but rather “sincere realistic proposals”. If Boland’s trip were successful, Washington would drop the Hungarian Question, accept the mandate, and begin bilateral talks.⁷⁰ This time, it was the Americans who were mistaken in thinking that the Hungarian government’s dire predicament would induce it to seize opportunity to get out of its strangling international isolation.

In his report to the Foreign Ministry, Hackler qualified the American proposal as an effort to interfere. He reported the precise conditions without mentioning the wording of the “sincere proposal”. Then a Hungarian News Agency reporter, Dénes Polgár, told an American journalist of Hungarian descent, André Marton, that the “opportunistic and incompetent” Hackler would not faithfully report what the Americans said and that Budapest would be able to cite interference in its domestic affairs. Marton reported these comments to the State Department,⁷¹ and the following day US chargé Torbert repeated Rusk’s message to Sík. Regarding a Soviet troop withdrawal, Sík referred to the Warsaw Pact and claimed that the party leader would construe any proposal for amnesty as an attempt to interfere in Hungary’s affairs.⁷² Boland’s visit was called off. The Hungarians claimed that it was because the Americans had made “unacceptable demands” concerning eventual Soviet troop withdrawal, liberalization of Hungarian travel abroad, and amnesty for 1956-ers.⁷³

Developments in world politics did not help. The standoff in Berlin and the subsequent construction of the Berlin wall, along with Kennedy’s fiasco at the Bay of Pigs, sharpened tensions between the two blocs. Washington put the Hungarians on the spot with renewed energy, using it as a proxy to put pressure on Moscow. When János Radványi, a former officer of the Hungarian political police and the new Hungarian chargé, tried to convince Presidential Advisor Chester Bowles that the general amnesty was Hungary’s own business, he was told that “1956 was not an internal problem”.⁷⁴ Assistant Secretary of State George Ball called the Hungarian problem a “special affair” that involved the “basic principles of the UN” and warned that it would return to its place on the UN agenda.⁷⁵ Rusk again affirmed that there would be no normalization of relations between the US and Hungary without a satisfactory resolution of the Hungarian Question, which above all meant amnesty for the 1956-ers. Only then would the US begin talks about an exchange of ministers or the eventual elevation of diplomatic representation to the embassy level.⁷⁶ And still there was no sign of an accord.

Deputy Foreign Minister Szarka complained of US intervention and efforts to overthrow his government. When János Péter, an ordained bishop of the Reformed Church, replaced Sík as the new foreign minister, the US Legation in Budapest noted that this did nothing to help relations between the two countries.⁷⁷ At that point, however, Kádár signaled that his country was interested in making progress. He declared that Hungary's desire to settle bilateral relations was motivated by the hope that it could catch up with the West.

At one diplomatic reception, Kádár approached an American diplomat for the first time in his life. In this, as in many other respects, he would go through a remarkable change. After showing genuine hostility to the United States, seemingly in the Leninist belief that it represented the highest and most dangerous phase of capitalist development – imperialism – by the middle of the 1970s, he was eager to visit it. For now, he would strike a conciliatory note, explaining that conflicts in the world were between states, not people. He preferred not to use the word “enemy”, generally referring to the US as an “opponent”. To ease tensions, he would joke that from a certain perspective he would not like to dissuade the Americans from their armament programs because if they were to devote their strength solely to economic expansion, Hungary would find it even harder to catch up. His aims, the party leader explained, were to overcome the inflexibility of his political system and to reach parity with Austria – a somewhat more realistic objective than Khrushchev's plan to overtake the US. He also explained his rationale for peaceful coexistence: though he complained that the US would overthrow his system in thirty minutes if it could, he admitted he would do the same to America's. It had to be recognized that neither eventuality was on the horizon. Torbert interjected that the US had different notions of building interstate relations. Americans were interested in the independence and prosperity of others; poverty and misery anywhere were a disadvantage to all. Kádár revealed his motives in replying that the poor were a problem, a reason progress needed to be made in Hungarian-US relations. They parted with an almost cordial handshake.⁷⁸ Kádár appeared cold and reticent, convinced that he occupied a top spot on the list of America's enemies,⁷⁹ but Hungary's Achilles heel had been revealed: its economy.

The Revolution of 1956 had emerged as a symbol of the struggle for freedom and against oppression. As the State Department's communiqué on the fifth anniversary put it, Hungarian patriots had fought courageously against uneven odds for their freedom and independence, and the free world would not forget their sacrifices. The communiqué emphasized virtues like self-sacrifice and courage, and ideals like freedom and independence. To help promote its own internal cohesion, 1956 was portrayed as a struggle to be emulated by Americans; however, the president and the vice president both rejected invitations to an event organized by the Hungarian Freedom Fighters' Association to commemorate the

uprising.⁸⁰ There was no need to irk the Soviets, and revolution had since been replaced by evolution as the ideal method for transforming Eastern Europe.

Kádár's conversation with Torbert occasioned a shift in the attitudes of Hungarian functionaries, many of whom were accustomed to changing their masks as situations or party interests demanded. Szarka was behaving congenially and broached the opening of a commercial office in New York. Although the legation in Budapest would not reject the idea altogether, the State Department would have none of it. Assistant Secretary of State Chester Bowles instructed Budapest not to enter into any "initiative" with the Hungarians, however minor. He would allow them to discuss proposals to abolish the staff cap, travel restrictions, family unification, and work permits for the legation's Hungarian employees⁸¹ – all of which fell under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry. Szarka also mentioned the negotiation of a cultural agreement, something that the US and Romania were already discussing. Later, Washington would exert considerable pressure to conclude such an agreement, but at this point the State Department would reject Szarka's offer. They claimed that the US did not usually sign formal cultural agreements with foreign states and would negotiate cultural exchanges only after relations were normalized.⁸² Peaceful engagement did not yet include Hungary; the old policy of quarantine still seemed the preferable option.

The legation in Budapest tried to get things moving by suggesting that the regime was attempting to forge a better international image of itself and improve relations, even if it was not yet ready to pay the price. Domestically, the regime's record was mixed. The regime was seen to be countering popular anti-Soviet and anticommunist hostilities with a campaign against contrarianism, indifference and apathy. At the same time, an anti-leftist trend and even an anti-Catholic campaign seemed to have appeared in the party hierarchy. The government had consolidated its stability and self-confidence, and though physical and psychological inculcation had not increased loyalties in the army, resistance to the regime was weak and sporadic.⁸³

As a small sign of opening to the West, the Foreign Ministry appointed a new desk officer responsible for the US, who was thought to be more knowledgable and urbane, as well as intellectually faster than his predecessor. János Bartha also had personal experience of the US and spoke better English, which created expectations that he would improve the dialogue with the US. The appointment of a new chargé d'affaires to Washington was also interpreted as a sign of progress. János Radványi had served as the chief of the protocol section of the Foreign Ministry and was thought to be enthusiastic and discreet. The legation in Budapest understood that Radványi regarded his mission as a great personal opportunity and entertained certain illusions about what he would be able to achieve.⁸⁴ Later, Radványi sought to discredit his predecessor as a hardliner, although he was told

by State Department officials that despite the tensions between the two countries, Zádor had shown a correct and friendly attitude.⁸⁵ Radványi would eventually create a scandal by becoming the first Iron-Curtain ambassador to defect, and would then make a scholarly impact in debunking disingenuous Hungarian efforts to mediate in the Vietnam War. However, the US foreign service did not know about a dark chapter in the diplomat's career, namely Radványi's service as an officer in the feared Hungarian secret police, the ÁVH. The experience with Radványi underlines the fact that the true identities of emissaries from dictatorships are unknowable.

Even before the new chargé's arrival, the State Department made known that a favorable resolution of the Hungarian question at the UN could be expected only if domestic changes were to convince lawmakers and the US public that such a concession could be justified. As an "effective argument", the State Department proposed an announcement that there was no one still in prison as a result of the 1956 revolution.⁸⁶ Since a partial amnesty had already been announced in 1960, this was not an impossible condition. There is no doubt that this condition, which was later called a "recommendation", would have infringed on Hungarian sovereignty if the country had been a sovereign state, but that was not the case. At the UN, Deputy Foreign Minister Péter Mód accused Washington of linking normalization with amnesty. The State Department claimed that Hackler misunderstood what he was told: amnesty was not meant to be a precondition; that *would* have amounted to interference in Hungary's domestic affairs. In an effort to find an acceptable wording, Turner Shelton indicated that some kind of a theatrical gesture would be required lest he dare utter the word amnesty. Radványi, who allegedly⁸⁷ received personal instructions from Kádár to repair US-Hungarian relations,⁸⁸ thought that this formulation was acceptable and told Turner that his government would consider any serious advice.⁸⁹ However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected Turner's formula.⁹⁰ As a result, Radványi backpedalled and adopted a hard-line stance. He sought Foreign Minister Péter's "professional advice" in interpreting communications with the Americans. On April 26th, 1962, he asked the State Department for new "suggestions" on ways to jumpstart bilateral relations, as this was his mission in Washington. He was told that the Hungarian government would be expected to make a gesture clearly demonstrating that the events of 1956 were permanently closed. It was added that amnesty for the participants of the uprising was not a precondition, merely a suggestion.⁹⁰ Radványi reported this exchange to his superiors in Budapest, and to avoid any misunderstandings, he left the word *suggestion* in the original English. Still smarting from the upbraiding he had received from the foreign minister, he reversed his earlier stance and said that there was nothing new in the American formula, which "amounted to an intervention in our domestic affairs".

Radványi also volunteered his own appraisal of American politics. In the 1950s, Hungarians could not report on the US without including an expression of moral outrage, and Radványi now took up this tradition in asserting that Washington was a “captive of its own propaganda”. “They permeate their own public through and through with the poison of hatred and lies” and were hence “unable to break out of the circle they created even out of self-interest”. At the same time, he warned Budapest that the administration would not pick a fight with Congress or with public opinion, and thus it could be years before the Hungarian Question could be settled. He opined that even “within the Kennedy administration’s subversive activities an American effort towards normalization can be discerned”.⁹¹ The Hungarians were still waiting to make a move,⁹² so the State Department took the initiative. In a conversation with Dénes Polgár, a journalist with connections to the state-security services, Vedeler reiterated that American diplomats had no desire to set conditions, but also stressed that only an amnesty would reassure Congress and the public. If the government decided to exculpate participants in the events of 1956 at its own initiative, the Hungarian question would be resolved and concerns like trade, cultural relations, and Mindszenty could be addressed to their “mutual satisfaction”. Vedeler warned that normalization talks would begin only if the Hungarian question was settled at the initiative of the US, not if it sank into oblivion, or in any other way. The next step would have to be made by the Hungarians.⁹³

A few days later, in what the US chargé described as a generously executed gesture, Kádár indicated that he was ready to make progress, though he failed to mention any concrete steps. The Foreign Ministry signaled that Hungary would be ready to explore any domestic measures that might improve the country’s position at the UN and thereby satisfy American conditions for improved relations. It was also added that “psychologically Hungary could not afford to sacrifice its pride and self-esteem by [giving] in to pressure”. Zádor added that the Americans were mistaken if they thought that the Soviets were still exerting a “decisive influence on the politics of its allies”.⁹⁴ Hence, he suggested, the decision on amnesty was in Hungarian hands. In contrast, Torbert thought that Hungarian independence from the Soviets was nominal at best. In an astute appraisal of the many sources of Hungarian conduct, he argued that Kádár’s freedom of action was insignificant given Hungarian nationalism, Stalinism, Soviet interests, the pragmatism of progress, internal liberalization, and the memory of the role the liberal intelligentsia had played in the 1956 rebellion. Kádár was a successful tightrope walker: he made cosmetic changes, but held himself firmly in place.⁹⁵

Budapest was eager to offer Mindszenty as part of the price of a general settlement, but this intention did not mesh with the Cardinal’s wishes. When the Hungarian deputy prime minister, Gyula Kállai, announced at a press conference that his government was ready to discuss the archbishop’s future, Mindszenty sent a

message to Secretary of State Dean Rusk asking him to forward a letter to the Holy See in which Mindszenty expressed his desire to stay at the legation, even if he were allowed resume his ecclesiastical functions. His position was shared by the papal nuncio in Washington, who had been assured that Mindszenty could stay in the American mission since there was no realistic chance of an agreement.⁹⁶ The Holy See agreed on the grounds that Mindszenty was the Hungarian nation's spiritual leader. His presence in Hungary was desirable; his departure could have a depressive effect on the people.⁹⁷ In spite of all this, the Vatican was not looking for a way out and did not oppose the Cardinal's departure. In fact, the papal state requested Hungarian government permission for Mindszenty to attend the Holy Synod in October 1962, where it hoped he would stay and allow himself to be sidelined. The US also made overtures in support of this solution.⁹⁸ Budapest concluded from all this that the Americans were trying to rid themselves of the affair, and thus that the Hungarians were winning the diplomatic game that had been dragging on for years. The Political Committee's appraisal was that the Americans were trying to dump the cardinal, and that their demands were therefore diminishing. Thus the "package" they put together was utterly disconnected from reality. It included a new condition for the Catholic Primate's departure: the return of the Crown of Saint Stephen. This "political concession for normalization" would further require that Mindszenty stay in the Vatican and be stripped of his ecclesiastical functions. Communist leaders thought they might even be doing the Americans a favor, since the US "would be able to get rid of both Mindszenty and the Hungarian Question". The Hungarian Question was important from many perspectives: beside its "domestic significance", it could have a "demoralizing effect on the hostile circles of the Hungarian emigration", and was also "significant from the perspective of the Soviet government".

In addition to a compromise on Mindszenty, the Political Committee was also ready for a settlement "of the matters relating to 1956 [for the] foreseeable future". Their price, however, would be unrealistic: the resolution of the Hungarian question, an exchange of ministers, and the return of the Crown.⁹⁹ It was true that Mindszenty's refuge was causing problems. A Swedish publisher somehow found out that the aged prelate was working on his memoirs and asked for them to be smuggled out to Stockholm in an American diplomatic pouch. The Americans rejected the idea, partly on the grounds that a diplomatic pouch could not be used for such purposes, and because the "unusual and sensitive" nature of Mindszenty's position would not allow him to use the building for ecclesiastical or political purposes.¹⁰⁰ This does not mean that they were ready to throw him out. Torbert appreciated "this gentleman's freshness and spirit" and his interest in current affairs, even though he was obstinate and spent most of his time reminding people how far he was from being senile. After his inauguration, America's first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy, made a point of greeting Mindszenty, assur-

ing him of his “full sympathy”, and making known that the US government would grant him refuge as long as his personal security and freedom required it.¹⁰¹ Thus the Hungarians misread the situation. On October 9 1962, Radványi declared that Mindszenty would be released from Hungary if he were to plead for amnesty in advance.¹⁰² The Vatican simultaneously suggested that the Archbishop of Vienna, Cardinal König, could pay Mindszenty a visit, but the State Department turned the offer down on the grounds that Mindszenty’s predicament was too sensitive.¹⁰³

In the meantime, the Hungarian chargé launched exploratory discussions after consulting with the Soviet ambassador, Anatolii Dobrynin. Relations between the Soviet Embassy and the East European diplomatic missions in Washington were close and extended to Soviet briefings on world affairs and intelligence activities. Dobrynin agreed with both “the principle and the implementation”.¹⁰⁴ Hungarian émigrés had already protested in the belief that the administration had decided to drop the Hungarian Question. The British also let it be known that they were eager to discard the whole affair.¹⁰⁵ In September, Hungary proposed discussing the Mindszenty question in return for a preliminary American guarantee regarding the Hungarian Question and the amnesty, so as to avoid any semblance of domestic interference.¹⁰⁶ Since it was becoming increasingly difficult to inscribe the issue on the UN agenda, Bruno Kreisky sought to convince Rusk that the Hungarians were more likely to take steps if there were no great external pressure on them.¹⁰⁷ UN envoy Stevenson fretted over the possibility of a Soviet diplomatic victory and recommended other measures to avoid a loss of prestige.¹⁰⁸

Radványi was told that if the Hungarian government were to carry out the amnesty as a public policy, the Americans’ first step would be to take care of the Hungarian Question. As opposed to the Hungarian position, which tied the regulation of all outstanding issues to the amnesty, Radványi indicated that trade, cultural-exchange programs, and the exchange of chiefs of mission could be negotiated after the amnesty was declared. He made no mention of the Crown. Shortly thereafter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Davis presented a “written document” – emphatically not a diplomatic note – which spelled out the American terms. In order to avoid the charge of domestic interference, the word *amnesty* was replaced with formula expressing US hopes that the Hungarian government, at its own initiative, would publicly release any persons still imprisoned for their roles in the Revolution of 1956. If these hopes were satisfied, Washington would see to it that Sir Leslie Munro’s Committee of Five, the group in charge of the Hungarian Question, were terminated; that no more resolutions critical of Hungary would be passed; and that Hungary’s UN mandate would at last be recognized. The US would issue a declaration calling attention to the new circumstances in Hungary and would affirm that the Hungarian Question no longer served the cause of progress. Thereafter, negotiations would begin on the restoration of normal relations.

These would include lifting the travel restrictions imposed on official personnel, as well as financial claims, family unification, cultural exchanges, and Mindszenty. Davis presented the text of the official declaration to Radványi for his personal use. At his government's instruction, the Hungarian chargé showed the document to Dobrinin, who voiced his "personal view" that if the Hungarians had already decided on certain domestic policies, the Soviet Union "can only concur".¹⁰⁹ The whole issue was uncomfortable for Moscow and it is evident that Budapest was procrastinating rather than make a move against the wishes of the Soviet leadership.

In the meantime, the Cuban missile crisis erupted. US–Soviet relations had been troubled for some time, partly as a result of Khrushchev's brinksmanship. First, he had set out to alter the four-power status of West Berlin, threatening to sign a separate peace with the GDR if his demands were not met. Then, succumbing to pressure from East German leaders, he moved to construct the Berlin Wall, which would become the metaphor for Europe's Cold War division. He thereby stabilized the GDR – and the situation in Central Europe.¹¹⁰ But when the German crisis had subsided, Krushchev's efforts to alter the balance of power and preserve Fidel Castro's revolutionary regime led the Soviets to deploy nuclear missiles in Cuba, and it was only the political prudence of President Kennedy that saved the world from a nuclear catastrophe. The Cuban fiasco may have played an important role in Khrushchev's subsequent removal. Kádár later claimed at a meeting with Averell Harriman in Budapest that Khrushchev, with whom he was on excellent personal terms, had confided to him his plan to deploy missiles in Cuba. He claimed to have tried to dissuade Khrushchev from carrying out the scheme, but to no avail. It is hard to say whether his story was true or not. It definitely reveals that the Hungarian leader wanted to be seen as a realist who understood international power. Normally, the Soviet allies in Eastern Europe would not have been formally consulted or even told about Soviet intentions; most were given limited information about the missile crisis, and only after the US had broken the news.

This diplomatic tug-of-war around the general amnesty made clear that the satellite states could defy the power that controlled them in matters relating to a third power as long as that third power was an opponent of their hegemon. Even though Dobrinin gave Budapest a green light for putting an end to the reprisals and accepting Washington's conditions for a settlement, the Hungarians kept dragging their feet. Radványi advised the Foreign Ministry that the amnesty would be equal to surrendering all "our principles", though he was obviously saying what he expected his superiors wanted to hear. Then Khrushchev told his counterpart in Hungary that there was nothing wrong with accepting the American conditions.¹¹¹ Shortly thereafter, the VIIIth Congress of the HSWP announced that 95 per cent of

the people who had been “condemned for counter-revolutionary crimes” as a result of the events of 1956 had been released.

In late November, Harold Vedeler was negotiating with Foreign Ministry officials in Budapest when his hosts explained that it was hard for a small country like Hungary to be seen as bending to external pressure. Vedeler, who was satisfied with the Hungarian attitude, was reminded of Kádár’s statement that the Presidential Council would review the cases of the last 5 percent who were still incarcerated.¹¹² Deputy Foreign Minister Mód also hinted that his government was considering an amnesty,¹¹³ which was finally announced in April 1963. Washington was still dissatisfied with the steps the Hungarians took to implement Davis’s conditions and chose to employ a new strategy. Washington announced the termination of Sir Leslie Munro’s mission, which had been taking a lot of criticism. His assignment was taken over by the General Secretary of the UN, though the US continued to advocate the suspension of Hungary’s mandate. This recommendation hardly made it through the relevant committee – the Greek representative disregarded the instructions of his government and voted against the Hungarian mandate. The Hungarian mandate was eventually accepted at a special session of the UN in May 1963. By then, the Hungarian Question was no longer on the agenda.

The Hungarian amnesty was the first American diplomatic success behind the Iron Curtain since the satellite regimes had established. The UN turned out to be an effective tool for putting strong pressure on Moscow and its client state, the bloody, tyrannical regime of János Kádár. As the Hungarian Foreign Minister would acknowledge, Hungary ended its campaign of reprisals as a result of American pressure. There were important lessons to be learned. The diplomacy of the client states was becoming more autonomous, making it possible to defy Moscow’s will in questions of smaller importance. Hungarians did so, asserting what they perceived to be their sovereignty. US diplomacy was thus forced to reckon with national self-esteem, even though communists were not believed to have such feelings.

Dilemmas of Bridge-Building

American observers noticed that the communist regimes in East Europe were becoming increasingly autonomous. They were beginning to assert that their national interests were not always identical with those of the Soviets. Signs that they were heading toward more independence from Moscow made the European status quo acceptable to the United States, if not necessarily desirable. Some went as far as to argue that the Soviet occupation had produced an unprecedented stability in a former cockpit of continental hostilities. Soviet hegemony thus seemed preferable to an unchecked flow of unbridled nationalism. And while nationalism might

have been part of the antidote to unrestricted Soviet control, it had to be handled with care.

The planned intensification of American trade and cultural contacts with Eastern Europe proved difficult to implement. In the Johnson years, it was propaganda rather than reality. As an exasperated Ceaușescu aptly put it, not a single pillar of the bridge had been put in place. American analysts and policy-makers could not agree whether to offer expanded cultural and commercial contacts as rewards for better behavior, or whether the establishment of trade and cultural exchanges would hasten a political liberalization. There were also security considerations. The battle lines in Eastern Europe were still drawn as if it were the 1950s. The State and Commerce Departments insisted on bridge-building as a way of transforming the lands behind the Iron Curtain and diminishing European tensions. Eastern Europe also offered new markets to the US economy. The Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs, however, were still concerned about possible American contributions to Soviet military might and did their utmost to impede the implementation of the administration's trade new doctrine. Although these dilemmas would remain unresolved, the socialist states' desire for American trade, loans, and technical know-how was increasing. However, due to a combination of interagency rivalries, Congressional resistance, domestic interest-group pressures, and sterile debate about the merits of interaction with the communist world, the United States missed a historical opportunity to transform the East European landscape and save it decades of further devastation under dysfunctional dictators.

On the other hand, dealing with economically backward dictatorships was not a simple matter. Anxious to preserve their power with minimal concessions, these regimes used the increasing American willingness to negotiate as a means of extracting favors. By and large, they remained ideologically hostile to the US, which they suspected of trying to subvert them. There was also the Kremlin to worry about, although the Soviets do not seem to have resented Eastern Europeans' closer ties with the Americans, as long as it suited their interests. Both sides wanted scientific and academic exchanges, but with opposite purposes. The Hungarian communist government wished to bolster itself by bringing modern technology and scientific skill back to Hungary from the US, while minimizing potentially subversive exchanges in the humanities. Washington, on the other hand, hoped to use precisely this sort of cultural exchange as an element in its policy of external transformation. Trade expansion was equally difficult. East Europeans were unable to pay for the US goods they hoped to purchase and had little with which to barter. Hungary hoped American credit would fund a modernization of its economy, allowing it to produce goods worthy of global marketing. The backwardness of the Hungarian economy made loans for badly needed machinery risky, and trade restrictions like Cocom made things even worse. Thus the policy of bridge-building was fraught with contradictions.

The mood swings in Moscow over the Americans' intentions also had to be contended with. The Soviets were concerned about American intervention in various parts of the globe, but perhaps their greatest concern was a NATO proposal to pool nuclear weapons, which suggested to the Soviets that such devices would be shared with the Germans. "What if another Hitler arose?" Prime Minister Kosygin asked.¹¹⁴ Averting such scenarios was the primary focus of Soviet diplomacy. And insofar as the Vietnam conflict hampered Soviet-American relations, it in turn impeded Hungarian efforts to mend fences with Washington.

Towards a Modus Vivendi

A reorientation of US policy was necessitated by the fact that the French, the Germans, and the British were reappraising their relationships with the communist bloc and trying to make them more constructive. British military leaders had concluded that Soviet leaders were unlikely to risk the consequences of a third global conflict.¹¹⁵ In question was the degree of independence with which the nations of Eastern Europe could conduct themselves. Security remained the chief concern and US officials continued to see Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe as a potential threat. Eastern European "vulnerability" could still be exploited, bearing in mind the "realities of power", namely Soviet preponderance in the region. At the same time, Western influence behind the Iron Curtain needed to be increased, and not by circumventing the local communist regimes, but rather with their consent. In 1964, Secretary of State Dean Rusk argued for policies of peaceful engagement, particularly in the cases of Poland and Romania, and even for Hungary, which was commended for having moved toward a more liberal policy of "national reconciliation". President Johnson used the term "bridge-building" to signify commercial, intellectual, and humanitarian exchanges with Eastern Europe, including tourism.¹¹⁶ The earlier policy of "quarantining" Eastern Europe was labeled "passive, sterile, and defeatist".¹¹⁷ The State Department supported Johnson and encouraged an intensification of trade relations in the hope that Romania and Hungary would be willing to go as far as Poland.

The practical implementation of bridge-building would take a long time to catch up with the rhetoric. Romania began making strenuous efforts to purchase US equipment for its oil refineries and synthetic-rubber factories in the final year of the Kennedy administration, and though the project enjoyed the unqualified backing of the US ambassador in Bucharest and (apparently) the president, the purchase never went through. The Department of Commerce made it clear that there would be no rapid expansion of trade relations with Romania because of Cocom regulations and the fact that the American business community was not ready. Despite Congressional resistance, Kennedy permitted the sale of US wheat

to Eastern Europe; however, the AFL-CIO was able to insert a proviso requiring that at least half the shipments sail under the US flag, effectively sabotaging Kennedy's concession. Congressional opposition was at least partly a response to pressure from East European immigrants, many of whom considered opening the American market to communists equivalent to a betrayal of the fatherland.

After his inauguration, Johnson decided that Romania would be the test case for the new approach to East European trade. Up to that point, only Yugoslavia and Poland had been allowed to sell to the US as most favored nations. The US Chamber of Commerce was eager to follow up on the Johnson administration's pledge to intensify American economic interaction with the Soviet bloc. East-West trade had been impeded by denials of MFN status, as well as the fact that the Export-Import Bank had refused to extend commodity credit to countries under communist leadership. US firms also faced difficulties in acquiring licenses to market their products behind the Iron Curtain. These procedures were relaxed only for Romania and Poland. Bucharest made a particular effort to get its purchases licensed; it managed to secure permits for eleven plants' worth of equipment out of the fifteen for which it applied.

The importance of breaking into the untapped East European market was underscored when Firestone announced the construction of a tire factory in Romania and its competitor, Goodyear, immediately launched a counter-campaign. The Johnson administration was divided on the issue. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Defense Secretary Robert McNamara supported an unconditional intensification of trade relations in the belief that commerce was important enough to the communist regimes to force them into political concessions. Rusk and McNamara approved of the sale of any commodity without direct military significance. In contrast, the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture would restrict sales to items that could be "drunk or eaten", and only on a *quid pro quo* basis.¹¹⁸ In April 1965, the Miller committee, set up by the president to investigate the question of trade with the Soviet bloc, presented its findings. Its report stated that US trade policy should promote autonomy in Eastern Europe and that the Soviet bloc should adopt the trade practices of the rest of the world. The committee recommended relaxing US licensing procedures on a country-by-country basis and for the president to be vested with the authority to extend a country's MFN status for a limited period. However, because of the Vietnam war, the committee's recommendations were never implemented. Bridge-building remained an empty doctrine. As Romanian party leader Ceaușescu complained to Johnson, "not a single pillar" of this East-West bridge had been built.¹¹⁹

By 1964, the question was how far the United States wanted the satellites to go. That year, the CIA's Special National Intelligence Estimate asserted that Moscow and the client states had established a new and less rigid relationship. This was partly due to political changes and partly the result of the communist regimes' re-

alization that they could devote more attention to their own national interests.¹²⁰ This statement suggests a misunderstanding of communist ideology common in US appraisals. For most leaders of the communist persuasion, Soviet and national interests were two sides of the same coin, inseparable. The CIA also asserted that Eastern Europe was facing a significant transformation the central components of which would be internal liberalization and economic reform. These problems would be closely tied to the questions of autonomy and relations with the western world. It was assumed that the Soviet bloc would become more diverse and that some countries would move toward political liberalization and more efficient economic principles. Leaders would approach these issues from the perspectives of national interests and local political conditions. And if the satellites were more independent from Moscow and closer to the West, Soviet intervention was thought to be less likely, a possibility only if “vital Soviet interests” were threatened. US officials expected Moscow, absent challenges to its client-state arrangements or defections from the Warsaw Pact, would be willing to tolerate a variety of the political systems and possibly even consent to manifestations of increased autonomy in foreign affairs.¹²¹ Secretary of State Rusk instructed US missions in Eastern Europe to refrain from the use of the term “satellite” in diplomatic correspondence; in his view the term was no longer adequate to describe these countries’ relations to the Soviet Union.¹²² Hence a new image of the Soviet zone was being *constructed* so as to fit the new administration’s more activist doctrine. Yet this new image was also calibrated to accommodate the continued existence of an East–West divide.

Despite improvements, conditions behind the Iron Curtain were still far from perfect. Communist economies remained inefficient and therefore produced mass dissatisfaction, manifestations of which were expected.¹²³ Declining living standards in Poland and Czechoslovakia led the State Department to predict that instability there would grow. On the other hand, Romania, which the *New York Times* had called the most dynamically growing communist economy, and Hungary, where Washington perceived continued improvement, seemed to be stable. The best response to the threat of instability due to sluggish growth was an intensification of economic relations.¹²⁴ There were also security risks inherent in the Soviet-dominated area. The communist governments were involved in a subversive campaign to promote the world-wide victory of communism. Their activities included military and financial aid to the communists of the “free world”, clandestine shipments of arms, and training subversives in guerrilla action, intelligence, propaganda, political oratory, and the indoctrination of youth. Czechoslovakia and the GDR were considered the most active in these areas, followed by Bulgaria. Poland, Romania, and Hungary seemed to limit their activities to intelligence, clandestine broadcasts, and student training, which was “modest” in comparison with the former countries. US intelligence assumed that Hungary was col-

lecting information on missile-launching sites and that there was close cooperation between Soviet, Czechoslovakian, and Hungarian intelligence agents.¹²⁵ This was still a traditional estimate in the sense that it appraised the Soviet bloc according to the threats it posed to the West.

American officials also took a new approach in appraising the dangers of increasing autonomy in Eastern Europe. This line of thought questioned the desirability of eliminating Soviet hegemony. The CIA's SNIE for 1964 assumed that hostilities between East European countries and between Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union would come to the fore again soon. Frictions between Hungary and Romania could already be detected.¹²⁶ The Political Planning Council deemed the division of Europe unacceptable because it put the United States in greater danger of a nuclear war. Yet there were also dangers inherent in the restoration of independence: "Unbridled nationalism in Eastern Europe might lead to possible renewal of the patterns of conflict that made the area such a cockpit prior to *pax communista*. This potential is evident in complex of latent and potentially dangerous territorial and minority issues in the area." This suggested that American goals in the countries then under Soviet domination would have to be less ambitious: "Continuing development of Western unity in close association with the US to a further loosening (*but not severing*) of abnormally tight bonds between the USSR and Eastern Europe, *reduction* in divisions between East and West" [emphasis mine]. In this formulation, American goals fell significantly short of a restoration of European unity. The juxtaposition of Western unity with a recognition of the Soviets' role further amplified the message that Europe's division was no longer seen as unnatural. Thus "reassociation" would not mean "political union or military alliance". The policy of bridge-building would serve to increase US influence and diminish the unnaturally high level of Soviet influence, thus enhancing European security.¹²⁷ At this stage, no unanimous opinion had crystallized around a long-term goal; statements to this effect were contradictory.

Publicly, Secretary of State Rusk defined the long-term American goal in Eastern Europe as "evolution" toward the reestablishment of "national independence". His immediate goals, though, were incremental: work toward independence, a diminution of the danger of war, and slowing the spread of communism.¹²⁸ In contrast, a State Department memorandum prepared for the National Security Council would go all the way: "We seek in Eastern Europe the establishment of conditions under which the people of each country may determine its own society; and where each country may enjoy national independence, security and normal relationship[s] with all other countries. This will mean the final dismantling of the Iron Curtain and the free association of Eastern Europe and the West." Thus the reevaluation of American goals was still in a state of flux. The State Department's ambitious program would link the solution of the German question to the resolution of the status of Eastern Europe and work towards the construction of a "last-

ing” relationship with the Soviet Union. It recommended practical steps to break out of the diplomatic deadlock, including the settlement of outstanding claims with Hungary and Czechoslovakia, compromises on consular issues, and the lifting of travel restrictions on diplomatic personnel. These latter two countries would also be singled out for bilateral talks modeled on negotiations then underway with Romania and the Soviet Union. The elimination of discriminatory tariffs was expected to shift the economic focus of Eastern Europe toward the West, thus reducing its dependence on the USSR. Intellectual bridges would be constructed through the dissemination of American scholarships, library collections, scientific publications, cultural bulletins and films. American officials would encourage English-language instruction and the establishment of Chairs of American studies. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Romania were identified as suitable countries for cultural exchanges because they acknowledged the importance of American scientific and technological aid for the development of their economies. One official recommended a public-relations drive to convince people in the Soviet bloc of America’s peaceful intentions. This was especially important in light of ongoing NATO discussions of its plan to share nuclear arms with West Germany,¹²⁹ an idea that Soviet propagandists exploited, describing it as malicious US support for German “revisionism”.

Washington was struggling to maintain the cohesion of the West at a time when the Soviet threat seemed to be receding. In those circumstances, putting an end to Europe’s division was no longer an unquestioned dogma of American foreign policy. In fact, this ideal was gradually being left behind. “Promotion of Western cohesion is the primary objective. [...] Ending the partition of Europe is not necessarily the same thing as achieving a stable European settlement. The end of division could come about through the fragmentation of both alliances, could contribute to new conflicts and tensions, the end result could be the restoration of a futile past, not shaping a constructive future.”¹³⁰ Washington’s chief ally in NATO, Great Britain, was also reevaluating its stance toward the Soviet Union and its client states. In 1964, the British Foreign Office concluded that the communist regimes were relying less on terror and coercion and more on improvements in living conditions. For these trends to continue, East Europeans would need to modernize their economies with Western capital and technology. Britain could back reforms and détente by developing closer commercial, cultural, and scientific contacts. Any weakening of the Soviet hold over Eastern Europe would now come about through evolution rather than revolution. In the long run, trade and cultural exchanges would help East Europeans gain greater autonomy from the USSR. The British economy would also profit from this trade with the Soviet bloc.¹³¹

Crucially, Hungarian émigré leaders supported the new American strategy. Former Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy and the former Speaker of Parliament Béla

Varga, both influential in émigré circles, claimed that their former countrymen preferred a policy of peaceful liberalization to one of liberation.¹³² Their support mattered: the organization of East European émigrés, the Assembly of Captive Nations in Europe, had condemned the policy of bridge-building, branding trade with the communists “immoral” because it meant importing goods produced by “slave labor”.¹³³ Talks aimed at putting this new doctrine into practice occasionally degenerated into hostile exchanges. Americans and their communist counterparts were not always rowing in the same direction. One legacy of the 1950s was that Congress exerted a strong influence on policies towards Eastern Europe, often opposing ties with communist regimes or insisting on strict preconditions. Finally, there was no meeting of minds within the successive American administrations about the implementation of this new line. Hungary’s case was special in the sense that there were numerous unsolved issues that did not burden relations with other communist states. Hungarian leaders were open to an expansion of ties, but set a hefty price in insisting on the return of Saint Stephen’s Crown. Progress remained painfully slow, even though the situation in Hungary was improving and the regime had managed to stabilize itself.¹³⁴

The CIA concluded that Kádár had consolidated his power over the party while “silently” pushing his country down a path of gradual change and pragmatic improvements in the political and economic climate. He even managed to turn Hungarian nationalism to his advantage and, at least according to CIA analysts, lost the stigma of a Soviet puppet. This relatively liberal line was expected to continue.¹³⁵ In 1963, the US chargé in Budapest suggested that year had been the best for the average Hungarian since the communists had seized power.¹³⁶ The historian János M. Rainer has observed that in Eastern Europe, connotations associated with the ’60s “remain to this day decidedly positive”. It tends to be remembered as a decade of thaw, of breathing more freely, of hopes and chances and greater liberties than the previous decade had afforded. Despite political constraints, even the decade’s cultural revolution managed to creep behind the Iron Curtain. Campaigns of forced collectivization and industrialization, brutal reprisals and discrimination against “class enemies” and “remnants of the old ruling classes”, and protracted attacks on political opposition, lasted until roughly 1963. But then, the profound economic reforms introduced from 1963–1967 led to a measure of intellectual and cultural openness. Discrimination against social groups allegedly hostile to socialism abated. Kádár was not a reformer by instinct. Caught between Moscow and his own population, he ushered in reforms. These brought modest prosperity, the beginnings of a new social stratification in a fragmented and leveled society, some freedom of artistic self-expression, and more openness toward the capitalist world than anywhere else in the Soviet bloc. The youth protested mainstream socialist norms of behavior and tuned in to RFE to follow American trends. Wearing outrageous clothing and hairstyles, they attended rock concerts

where they tolerated cover versions of British and American originals. The fact that the police could bring these youths in for parading around in smuggled, illegally purchased apparel demonstrates the limits of Kádár's little freedoms.¹³⁷

Now that the Hungarians' political amnesty had removed one of the chief hurdles to the normalization of their relations with the West, they introduced an economic reform. It was clear that these reforms could not work without "opening" to the West, thus their most important precondition was to bring ties with the US to a normal footing. Given the Johnson administration's decision to engage with the communist regimes, the stage seemed to be set for rapid progress toward the desired intensification of the American presence in Hungary. In February 1964, Budapest proposed bilateral talks for the mutually acceptable resolution of outstanding issues.¹³⁸ As expected, the main goals were the settlement of economic disputes and the elimination of trade discrimination. The American legation supported the initiative, having heard rumors that Khrushchev was about to announce the withdrawal of Soviet troops. This hope, along with the positive outlook on Budapest's talks with the Vatican, gave rise to optimism that progress could be made with Washington. The legation proposed that the two parties focus on Mindszenty, financial claims, and lifting the Hungarians' restrictions on cultural activities and diplomatic personnel. American officials thought that the Hungarian government would try to link outstanding financial claims to the country's MFN status and would work for a cultural agreement in order to enhance Hungary's prestige.¹³⁹ The Pentagon was optimistic that Soviet occupation forces would be pulled out because they thought – for reasons left unexplained – that the Red Army's position on the central front would be enhanced if the four divisions stationed in Hungary were pulled back to Soviet territory.¹⁴⁰ It was also assumed that Romania's overtures to the US would constrain Budapest to accelerate its normalization process.¹⁴¹ None of these assumptions seem to have been correct.

National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy recommended accepting the Hungarian offer on the grounds that an increased US presence in Budapest promised substantial advantages. Hungary had gone further than any other satellite in de-Stalinizing its communist system, and this trend was continuing. Bundy expected the American owners of nationalized property to be compensated, a consular agreement to be signed, family unifications to be allowed, and commercial and cultural ties to be broadened.¹⁴² In sum, talks would be opened because Hungary had declared an amnesty and the Kádár regime was thought to be pursuing policies of national appeasement, independence, and liberalization.¹⁴³

Bilateral Relations in the Mid-1960s

Theoretically, the conditions were ripe for a rapprochement. Both sides were motivated, but their positions were still widely divergent. The Hungarians were willing to negotiate on Mindszenty and a consular agreement, but shunned a cultural accord. As with all deals, the devil was in the details. Budapest was ready to settle financial claims, but only *after* being granted MFN status, and had no desire to lift its restrictions on diplomatic personnel or its ban on US information activities.¹⁴⁴ The settlement of financial claims proved to be another stumbling block. Washington insisted on payments as a condition of further progress. Hungary's trade balance with the US was negative, and included long- and short-term debt, compensation for nationalized property, the surplus-property loan, and compensation owed for American property damaged in the war. Hungary had only 6 million dollars' worth of property frozen in the US. Most of the Hungarian property, estimated at 100 million dollars, that had been taken into the American zone during World War II was thought to be impossible to collect. This included obligations to Jewish owners of valuables stolen from the "gold train", some of which ended up in the hands of American army personnel and some of which were auctioned off.¹⁴⁵ The US pointed out that the settlement of these claims would help Hungary borrow on international financial markets, which was in fact Kádár's main motivation.¹⁴⁶ Western loans were an indispensable ingredient in the country's modernization and reform program. There was no breakthrough, even though Hungarians understood that without normalizing relations with America, they would not get the loans they needed. A chief factor in stalling these negotiations may have been the Vietnam War, which froze relations for almost a decade.

Even though comprehensive talks started in Budapest in May 1964, no agreement was reached on any of the most problematic questions. Secretary of State Rusk offered to meet his counterpart, János Péter, to break the deadlock. The Political Committee authorized the foreign minister to tell Rusk that Mindszenty could be released and taken out of the country if his "silence" was guaranteed. On the other hand, the party leadership still insisted that the country's MFN status be the prerequisite for any settlement of financial claims.¹⁴⁷ Rusk was not completely opposed to MFN status, but it soon turned out that the differences could not be bridged.¹⁴⁸

Mindszenty was still intractable. Saddled with the cardinal's upkeep, Washington was ready to accept the condition of "silencing" him politically. The problem was the Budapest–Vatican–Mindszenty triangle. Agostini Casaroli, the Vatican's state secretary for foreign affairs, indicated that Mindszenty wanted to retain his title as the Archbishop of Esztergom, i.e., the head of the Catholic Church in Hungary, and acknowledged that it would be hard to keep Mindszenty from making statements related to the Cold War. Mindszenty himself was reluctant to give

up his refuge.¹⁴⁹ His personal beliefs had become intertwined with high politics. Mindszenty was convinced that his departure would constitute “negligence” toward the loyal priests he had appointed.¹⁵⁰ The communist leadership, evidently for the sake of some positive publicity, wanted the cardinal to sue for clemency, for that clemency to be granted by the Presidential Council (the country’s highest legislative organ), and for the settlement to be published in the Hungarian press – as Kádár put it, “even on page 11 in the sports section”. More importantly, they would not hear of Mindszenty’s retaining his ecclesiastical functions, a condition that would freeze the situation for years to come.¹⁵¹

Soon, Mindszenty’s tuberculosis recurred, lending urgency to his departure. In September 1965, Radványi met Raymond Lisle, the State Department official responsible for Eastern European Affairs, to discuss the matter. The Hungarian left with the impression that the Americans feared the cardinal might die on their premises and were therefore eager to rid themselves of the problem. He intimated to Lisle that Budapest expected Washington or the Vatican to come up with a solution. Later that month, the Vatican’s state secretary responsible for Eastern Europe travelled to Budapest for talks with the State Ecclesiastical Office, the government organ that oversaw and controlled church affairs. Casaroli indicated that there was no hurry because Mindszenty’s health was improving. Lisle told Radványi that the Cardinal would not leave the building, and it was his impression that Casaroli supported this position. Lisle also disclosed that the State Department was putting pressure on the Vatican to persuade Mindszenty to leave.¹⁵² Shortly thereafter, the apostolic delegate in Washington told Lisle that the Vatican was interested in the prelate’s departure but could not guarantee his political silence, even though it would serve the Vatican’s interests. While claiming that Mindszenty should not be allowed to set conditions, Lisle called his case a humanitarian matter. Lisle was aware that the staff of the Foreign Ministry might have been more enlightened and more interested in Western contacts than the State Ecclesiastical Office. He therefore wanted the Foreign Ministry to take over and deal with Casaroli. He also indicated that the US would not take the initiative, but would be willing to bring the parties together. Eventually Lisle was told that Casaroli would be received on a “cabinet minister’s level”, but by then it was too late: Mindszenty’s recovery removed the urgency of the matter.¹⁵³

Considering that Budapest wanted to resolve its political issues before settling financial claims – precisely the reverse of American hopes – no positive outcome was in sight. The Hungarians referred to the settlement of financial claims as a burden on the country even though, as in the Romanian and Polish settlements, only a small fraction of its outstanding debt was to be paid; it was obvious that the political will for such a step was missing. Washington would not make progress in other areas until there was a deal on financial claims, but the stakes for Hungary were far higher. The economy had been struggling with a balance-of-payments

deficit for some time, and by 1964, the year when the US–Hungarian talks started, the proportion of short-term debt among Hungary’s obligations was worse than it had been even in the 1930s. Half of the debt to the capitalist world was made up of loans that were due in less than three months. Thus from the mid-’60s, Hungarian leaders were forced to borrow medium-term loans in order to purchase capital goods from the West. The idea that the US could serve as a source of financing for investments was raised during the second and third five-year plans. American financial markets were appealing because they offered dollars at less expensive rates than the European markets. The option to issue bonds would not be available to the Hungarian government until it settled its financial claims with the US; membership in the World Bank and the IMF would also require American support.¹⁵⁴ On paper, at least, an agreement was in the interests of both sides: Hungary was in the process of discarding its inhibitions and using “capitalist” resources to finance its economy, while Washington was interested in stabilizing Eastern Europe and exerting more influence there.

Talks were held up by unforeseen events like the illness of the leader of the US delegation and the accidental forwarding of the necessary documentation from Washington to Bucharest. Again, though, the escalating conflict in Vietnam destabilized the commercial pillar of the bridge the diplomats were building. Americans feared that commodities they sold to Eastern Europe might be forwarded to North Vietnam. In January 1966, President Johnson asked for congressional authorization to use his presidential powers to sign trade agreements with Eastern Europe in the name of bridge-building, but the bill did not make it through the legislature. Instead, the Fino amendment barred the Export-Import Bank from lending to countries that furnished economic or military aid to enemies of the United States, including the Soviet Union and every other communist country except Yugoslavia.¹⁵⁵ For the time being, at least, Budapest would not be able to get what it wanted, and the idea of talks began to lose their significance, even to the Hungarians.

Soft Power

Penetration into Hungary was not an impossible task. The United States Information Agency felt that Hungary was fertile ground for American cultural initiatives. By the mid-1960s, Hungarian leaders were ready to loosen cultural controls in exchange for Western economic assistance. Their calculus was relatively simple. Political stabilization would require some degree of popular contentment, and this sense of satisfaction could be purchased with a hike in the standard of living. This, in turn, would require the inflow of Western capital, “capitalist” consumer goods, machinery, technology, and know-how. Thus, a normalization of relations with

the US was indispensable, and if normalization were to require concessions such as allowing Radio Free Europe to be freely received, Hungary would be penetrated with American popular culture. This threatened the ideological integrity of the state, but because of the previously outlined political and economic pressures facing the regime, it was left with little choice. Washington realized that gradual cultural penetration might encourage a step-by-step liberalization, from domestic reforms to an eventual opening up to the outside world.¹⁵⁶ There is no doubt that the members of the Political Committee also understood this dynamic.

Poland was the main target for American cultural initiatives. Positive developments in Poland led the USIA to an ambitious plan for a library and cultural center in Warsaw. In 1959, Poland signed an agreement for an academic exchange involving 1000 applicants, while Czechoslovakia sent 100 and Hungary only 19.¹⁵⁷ Private foundations also helped build East–West contacts. The Ford Foundation cooperated with the State Department in establishing cultural ties with the countries of Eastern Europe, especially their intellectual elites.¹⁵⁸ The Ford Foundation and the *Kulturális Kapcsolatok Intézete* (Institute of Cultural Relations), the agency responsible for external cultural contacts – also a clandestine subsidiary of the security apparatus – established an exchange program in 1964 whereby Hungarian artists, scholars, and scientists would be able to visit the United States.

The selection procedure for this program illustrates some of the complexities of creating ties with ideological regimes. The list of candidates was carefully selected and vetted on the basis of professional and “political” criteria, meaning that they were screened for reliability by the Institute of Cultural Relations and its close affiliates at the Ministry of Interior. The Ford Foundation was then allowed to invite a short list of 25 people, plus five “outstanding cultural and scientific personalities”, on an annual basis. No more than half of those selected were to be representatives of the social sciences. In theory, at least, the Ford Foundation could also nominate its own candidates, but these nominees would not appear on the list of applicants without the prior approval of the Institute of Cultural Relations. Ford’s short list was then forwarded to an organ called the *Tudományos és Felsőoktatási Tanács* (Council of Science and Higher Education), which vetted it from the perspective of the “interest of the people’s economy”. And this was only the beginning of the convoluted process. Once approved by the Council, the list was then sent to the Ministry of the Interior and the Scientific and Cultural Department of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Party for further winnowing. Finally, the presidium of the Institute of Cultural Relations, with the participation of deputy portfolio ministers and representatives of the party leadership, drew up a final list. It was only then that the Ford Foundation received the final list of candidates.¹⁵⁹

Washington pushed hard to open American libraries in Iron-Curtain capitals and entertained high hopes for the transformative effects thereof. But these

calculations disregarded the fact that Hungarian state-security agents (as well as those of other bloc countries) would monitor visitors to US libraries, registering each individual in a file at the Ministry of Interior. Visitors could then be blackmailed into rendering services for state security organs. There is no doubt that the Hungarian librarian of the USIA facility in Budapest was recruited by state-security agents. Even as late as 1981, freshmen majoring in English were warned that using the American library entailed personal risks.

The Hungarians did make a momentous concession soon after the Hungarian question was resolved: they stopped jamming Radio Free Europe. The regime ostensibly did so to induce the station to alter its radical stances, but the more fundamental cause was probably the expectation that it would lead to US concessions on trade issues. Accidents do play a role in shaping history, however. The party authorized a decision to stop jamming on a provisional basis, but in a fateful misunderstanding, the Foreign Ministry announced it as a permanent measure. Although the Politburo was furious, the decision could not be repealed without risking a loss of face, and was thus grudgingly left in place. The Political Committee also made a highly debated decision to allow the United States to participate in Budapest's 1965 International Trade Fair. This was an important breakthrough for American champions of external transformation, who sought to instill American values in the communist states and to effect the gradual democratization of closed political systems by sending goods and intellectual products behind the Iron Curtain. Participation in the Budapest International Fair was an important beachhead for this economic and cultural penetration.¹⁶⁰

Budapest was not unaware of American successes in this field, and party leaders were alarmed by the popular appeal of US "propaganda". In 1965, the Political Committee devoted several sessions to the evergreen topic of imperialist subversion. Prime Minister Jenő Fock, a leading economic reformer, contradicted those who said "imperialist propaganda in Hungary is unable to undermine the masses' confidence in the socialist system and diminish the attraction of socialist ideas"; this was "not true, it is capable of doing so and is diminishing it".¹⁶¹ The party's leadership thought that the United States and the FRG were "trying to pit the socialist countries against the Soviet Union and each other, to subvert the socialist system, to nurture dissatisfaction towards the party and the government, ultimately against the social order and thus to prepare the restoration of capitalism in the socialist countries. They are trying to achieve all this with the wide[-]range use of foreign policy, economic[,] cultural[,] and personal contacts[,] as well as powerful anticommunist propaganda." They asserted that "subversive attempts mainly manifested themselves in the differentiated treatment of socialist countries", namely that some states got better treatment than others. Hostile intent was attributed to scientific and cultural contacts, which Party leaders warned would "open the door for bourgeois ideology and its products under the pretext of peace-

ful coexistence”. All this had alarming consequences for the future of socialism: “subversive propaganda plays a role in the sense that in the ranks of the public and particularly in certain circles of the youth and the intelligentsia there is an intensification of love of the West and of nationalism which is coupled with the downplaying of the results of socialism”.¹⁶²

What could be done in such a situation? Kádár was not in a position to go back to the isolation of the Stalinist years; the policy of opening up to the West was slowly gaining momentum. The only antidote seemed to be competition with this Western penetration. Gyula Kállai conceded that “the youth is not interested in or asking for the full exposition of Marxism but the satisfaction of their needs and adequate propaganda work in the meantime”. He insisted that Hungarian propaganda continue to point out “the swinishness of imperialism”, but this would obviously not be enough. Politburo member Lajos Méhes called attention to two strategies, one of which was surprising given the communists’ officially antinational stance: he wanted the party’s “agitation and propaganda to do an even better job of referring to our national sentiments and national self-esteem”. Méhes also wanted to improve the quality of Hungarian popular-music programming to offset the attraction of American musical broadcasts like *Teenager Party*. This was precisely what Washington wanted: the national idea, and westernizing popular culture, both produced by the communist governments themselves. The only thing better than Iron-Curtain youths’ listening to *Top of the Pops* on RFE would be their tuning into domestic programming for the same sounds. At that time, Soviet programming still followed Voice of America’s popular show *Music USA*, which had been aired for Soviet audiences since 1955.¹⁶³

One Hungarian refugee recounted that he and a fellow student had listened to music on RFE in their university club every night. Indeed, rock music, including the Hungarians’ domestic version of it, may have played a critical role in the formation of a quasi-autonomous public sphere. In optimistic accounts, it helped dismantle the party-state’s legitimacy.¹⁶⁴ There is little doubt that Hungarian youth used popular musical forms as a first line of resistance to communist indoctrination. In addition, music enhanced the appeal of the US at a time when communist propagandists were trying to destroy America’s image with accusations of murderous imperialism. The appeal of popular music put pressure on the authorities who were no longer able to cut off the ample supply of Western radio programming. Moreover, as Anna Szemere has written, rock music emerged as a lucrative business, and “as such, highlighted and exacerbated the tensions between socialist values and policies and the profit-orientation of the state-run entertainment industry.”¹⁶⁵

Everyday life had overtaken the decision-makers. Kállai complained that if the party’s youth magazine, *Magyar Ifjúság*, was still “a communist journal, I do not understand what communism means”. He noted bitterly that the paper was “popu-

larizing Western lifestyle without [any] critique [of] the West... We do not find a single socialist hero in it except the Beatles".¹⁶⁶ In fact, this publication's cover regularly featured young girls in bikinis exhorting the youth to sign up for the communists' summer-work camps under the slogan "Proletarians of the World, Unite".

Károly Kiss, the hardliner who served as deputy president of the Presidential Council, a select organ of the communist parliament, was openly pushing for an exchange of ministers with the United States, which the Americans interpreted as a sign of important change.¹⁶⁷ In 1965, Kádár declared that he was "willing to travel anytime and anywhere" to mend fences. Although he was hoping to limit his anti-imperialist protests to the area of ideology, the Vietnam conflict was assuming the dimensions of an East-West conflict and impeding progress in bilateral relations. In suspending the normalization process, the Political Committee pointed out that its "main reason" for doing so was "the American aggression in Vietnam and its effect on the international situation".¹⁶⁸ The Foreign Ministry pointed out that "because of the situation created by the Vietnamese policy of the United States[,] we must forego the restoration of normal relations for a while".¹⁶⁹ Thus a geographically unrelated crisis in a remote corner of the globe would alter the course of the Cold War in Europe. Had Kádár been able to achieve this opening to the West in the early 1960s rather than a decade later, the collapse of Hungarian communism would very likely have come sooner, possibly pulling the entire Soviet bloc into crisis.

The US Legation mistakenly believed that the Hungarians were using the Vietnam conflict as an excuse and had actually cancelled the normalization talks as a way of finding out how much the US would be willing to "pay" for an agreement.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, the legation informed the State Department that Budapest made the war in Vietnam a key factor in their bilateral relations, pointing out that the tone and magnitude of the communists' propaganda could hardly be reconciled with Hungary's stated intention to normalize relations.¹⁷¹ The Political Committee discussed the possibility of Hungarian government ministers' avoiding the American exhibition at the Budapest International Trade Fair and using the fair's opening statement to "condemn the aggression[s] in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic".¹⁷²

While some party conservatives might have thought that the time had come to nip the western initiative in the bud, reformers tried to block a reversion to isolationism. A key figure behind the drive to liberalize, Jenő Fock thought that financial talks should be pursued based on economic criteria. Interestingly, another reform-oriented functionary, Rezső Nyers, wanted to suspend the talks. Kádár came out in support of resuming the talks while simultaneously making "political attacks" on the Americans. He also disagreed with the idea of recalling Hungarians from scholarship programs in the US, and with the motion that prominent recipi-

ents of new awards, like the ethnographer Gyula Ortutay, cancel their invitations. Kádár also rejected the idea that the world-renowned composer and musical pedagogist Zoltán Kodály use his upcoming visit to the US to lodge protests. Although he had no formal training in foreign-policy matters, Kádár's views were pronounced, and he usually prevailed. He held that in spite of the Vietnam war, relations with the US should be settled. He added that in order to do so, the allies (meaning the USSR) would have to be consulted.¹⁷³ Kádár saw no reason to discriminate against American exhibitors or use the fair as a forum for anti-American propaganda. He asked rhetorically, "Who should go and when to the American exhibit? I have been working for years to take out the strong politics [from such matters] because it doesn't help us. The Hungarian soul likes the pen knife and goulash but doesn't like cutting rations."¹⁷⁴

American participation in the fair was a double-edged sword for party propagandists. On the one hand, it trumpeted the regime's newfangled policy of tolerance. On the other hand, it underscored the popularity of the United States. Internal surveys conducted a few years later revealed that one million people (ten percent of Hungary's population) visited the American exhibition each year. The luxury items exhibited there fed the perception that "America is the home of unlimited possibilities where one can make a quick fortune".¹⁷⁵ The American legation in Budapest understood the regime's dilemma: the great success of the exhibition was proven by the "enthusiastic reaction" of the people, which suggested that their government had failed to persuade them to condemn the United States. As it basked in the glory of a successful fair, the government seemed likely to enhance its own popularity by opening its gates even wider to American cultural influences.¹⁷⁶

There were many signs of the appeal of American soft power. "American machines and know-how made a positive impact"; 200 "enthusiastic students" had shown up at a movie screening organized by the American legation.¹⁷⁷ American literature, theater, music, architecture, and technological and scientific feats were all well received. According to American reports, Hungarians read, watched, and listened to a wide variety of American novels and plays with unusual enthusiasm. American performers played in front of full houses, making it almost impossible to get tickets to see them. Sometimes these guest performances went sour: the Hungarians were fully in charge of invitations, thus many times "unknown" performers would represent American culture very poorly.¹⁷⁸

Notes

¹ Janos Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 31.

- ² A Magyar Népköztársaság jegyzéke az Egyesült Államok budapesti követségének [Note by the People's Republic of Hungary to the US Legation in Budapest], May 1957. Magyar Országos Levéltár [MOL], Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 4. doboz, 4/a, 002418/1.
- ³ MOL, küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 4. doboz, 4/bd.
- ⁴ Instruction by the State Department to American Diplomatic Missions, 5 December 1957. NARA, RG 59, General Records of the Department of State, 864.181/12-557.
- ⁵ The Chargé in Hungary (Ackerson) to the State Department, 29 October 1959. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 61164/10-2757.; *FRUS*, 1955–57, Vol. XXV, 679–84.
- ⁶ The Chargé in Hungary (Ackerson) to the Department of State, 14 November 1957. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 61164/11-1457.
- ⁷ Melinda Kalmár, *Ennivaló és hozomány – A korai Kádár-korszak ideológiája* [Food and Dowry – The Ideology of the Early Kádár Years] (Budapest: Magvető, 1998).
- ⁸ *FRUS*, 1955–57, Vol. XXV, 685–90.
- ⁹ Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 32–3.
- ¹⁰ Zádor Tibor ideiglenes ügyvivő Horváth Imre külügyminiszternek. Tárgy: a magyar–amerikai kereskedelmet gátoló tényezők [Report by chargé ad interim Tibor Zádor to Minister of Foreign Affairs Imre Horváth. Subject: Factors Impeding US–Hungarian Trade], 31 December 1957. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 1. doboz, 005851.
- ¹¹ Zádor jelentése Horváthnak, látogatás Malone szénátoránál [Report by Zádor to Horváth on Visit to Senator Malone] MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 12. doboz, 5/c, 0028/1958.
- ¹² Zádor Tibor jelentése a Külügyminiszteriumnak, filmbemutató tartásáról [Report to the Foreign Ministry by Zádor on Movie Screening], 28 February 1958. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 1947–1964, 140t., 26. doboz, 002065; Bartha János ideiglenes ügyvivő jelentése Sík Endre külügyminiszternek filmbemutató tartásáról [Report by chargé ad interim Bartha to Foreign Minister Sík on Movie Screening], *ibid.* 104/2, 1958.
- ¹³ Irányelvezek a magyar–amerikai kapcsolatok alakításához, III. számú Politikai Osztály, Amerikai Referatúra [Guiding Principles for the Development of Hungarian–American Relations, III. Political Department, American Desk], 1958. január 16. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 11. doboz, 4/b.
- ¹⁴ Joseph F. Harrington, and Bruce J. Courtney, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians: Fifty Years of American–Romanian Relations, 1940–1990* (New York: East European Monographs, 1991), 194–201.
- ¹⁵ The Chargé in Hungary to the department of State, 5 May 1958. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, 611.64/5-958. Wadsworth, later Cabot Lodge inquired about the fate of political prisoners at Péter Mód, who promised to look into the matter. Eventually, on 13 March he refused to provide information on the basis of interference in Hungarian domestic affairs. See Tamás Magyarics, "Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország, 1957–1967" [The United States and Hungary], *Századok*, 1996. No. 3, 573.
- ¹⁶ "Két összefoglaló a magyar–szovjet tárgyalásokról" [Two Summaries on Hungarian–Soviet Talks]. Published by Magdolna Baráth and István Feitl. *Múltunk*, 1993. No. 4, 82–185.
- ¹⁷ Idézi Magyarics, *Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország*, 576.
- ¹⁸ Memorandum by the Department of State Policy Planning Staff, 11 July 1958. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Deparment of State, Lot File 60D216, Box 2, Wilcox.
- ¹⁹ Lásd erről Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 42–3. On September 2 the Political Committee the measures to be introduced against the US Ferenc Münnich declared that, "if it was in anyone's interest for the American representation to be here and to work with a large number of staff, it is the international enemy, the government of American imperialism. We needn't be bashful. The mission here is a spy center for them, which they will not liquidate..."

- We are an independent sovereign state; no one should poke their nose here... Regarding the missions we have no interest for them to be here. Let us not court them they can go home if they want.”²⁰
- ²¹ MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 3. doboz, 4/a, 00941/5.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* The US published the reply.
- ²² Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 49.
- ²³ Memorandum by Wilcox and Elbrick to Murphy, 7 October 1958. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Lot File 60D216, Box 1, Wilcox.
- ²⁴ NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 864.413/10-2358.
- ²⁵ Az Egyesült Államok jegyzéke [Note by the US], 18 October 1958. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 6. doboz, 4/b, 005726.
- ²⁶ A Magyar Népköztársaság válasza az 1958. október 18-i USA jegyzékre, [Reply by the Hungarian People’s Republic to the October 18 Note of the United States], 21 October 1958. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-k, USA admin, 11. doboz, 4/b.
- ²⁷ Despatch from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State on the future of Mindszenty, 20 November 1958. *FRUS*, 1958–60, Vol. X, 54–9.
- ²⁸ Feljegyzés az USA-val való kapcsolatok normalizálásáról [Memorandum on Normalization of Relations with the US], 30 October 1958. MOL, Küm, USA admin, XIX-J-1-k, 11. doboz, 4/b.
- ²⁹ In January 1960 Deputy Foreign Minister Géza Kardos prepared a memorandum which stated that a financial claims settlement with the US would result in a negative balance. Kardos asserted that the most valuable Hungarian claim, the restitution of property removed during the war, was “impeded by numerous legal obstacles”. Including restitution a Hungarian claim of USD 17 million was matched by a US claim of 81 million dollars. Memorandum by Géza Kardos on Hungarian-American financial issues, 21 January 1960. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 6. doboz, 4/b, 001479.
- ³⁰ Magyarics, *Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország*, 583.
- ³¹ CIA National Intelligence Estimate, “Political Stability in European Satellites”, NIE 12-59, 11 August 1959. *FRUS*, 1958–60, Vol. X, 100–2.
- ³² Letter by Charles Vanik to the Secretary of State, 31 March 1960. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central File 1960–1963, 611. 64. Microfilm, roll 93. “[...] a penetration might be made in this part of the Soviet-dominated world to preserve and keep alive well-developed by silent affection for America. The hope for the restoration of democracy in this part of the world will be strengthened as a result of individual missions of American citizens visiting their relatives”.
- ³³ Theodore Papendorp Second Secretary to the Department of State, “Visiting Hungary”, March 19 1961. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central File 1960–1963, 611. 64, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ³⁴ “The cows looked better groomed and happier than the workers”. For Bailey’s view see: The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, 10 August 1960. NARA, General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File, Internal Affairs of Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 5; Francis Shor is cited in The American Legation in Budapest to the Department of State, 13 June 1961. *Ibid.* “Found somewhat to his surprise, a fairly substantial intellectual middle class – unhappy and by no means enthusiastic about the regime, but tending to accept it for the present”. See Charles Wiley’s view in The American Legation to the Department of State, 11 July 1961. *Ibid.* “The Hungarians did win a partial victory in 1956”. See Nicholas Feld’s opinion in The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, “Trip to Tihany”, 3 August 1961. *Ibid.* According to Feld there was “much greater resistance of the Hungarians to forced indoctrination... Tihany still preserves some of its upper bourgeois atmosphere”. On the impressions of American tourists see The American Legation to the

- Department of State, 23 November 1961. *Ibid.*; For the Christian Science Monitor correspondent see The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, 28 June 1962. *Ibid.* László Halász is cited in The American Legation in Budapest to the Department of State, 14 June 1965. *Ibid.* “There is general fear, cultural stagnation and except in showcase Budapest, a serious food shortage”. *Wall Street Journal* is cited in Courtney-Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 217. Communists could “enjoy the merry-go-round of night clubbing, sailing and opera recitals”.
- ³⁵ Justin Faure, *L'Ami Américain – La Tchécoslovaquie, enjeu de la diplomatie américaine 1943–1968* (Paris: Tallandier, 2004), 372–3.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.* 69.
- ³⁷ The American Legation in Budapest to the Department of State, “The Hungarian Economy in 1959”, 27 January 1960. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 1960–63, The Internal Affairs of Hungary, Microfilm, roll 3; The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, “The Hungarian Economy in 1961”, 27 January 1962. *Ibid.*; The American Legation in Budapest to the Department of State, 3 August 1961. *Ibid.*; The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, 15 March 1962. *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ The American Legation to the Department of State, 30 November 1962. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Hungary, Decimal File 764, Microfilm, roll 5.
- ³⁹ Faure, *L'Ami Américain*, 350.
- ⁴⁰ Joseph S. Nye Sr., *Soft Power – The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004), 12–13.
- ⁴¹ The American Legation to the Department of State, for the USIA, 29 March 1962. *Ibid.*; The State Department to the Legation in Hungary, 7 September 1961. *Ibid.*; The American Legation to the Secretary of State, 22 June 1960, *Ibid.*; The Secretary of State (Herter) to the Legation in Hungary, 13 July 1960. *Ibid.*
- ⁴² “Bridgebuilding in Eastern Europe”, Policy Planning Council, 31 July 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Lindley Files, Lot File 71D273, Box 4. “The US in Eastern Europe can draw upon considerable assets of goodwill [...] This fund of resources is perhaps unique throughout the region and unmatched by any Western country”. In 1966 the Policy Planning Council asserted that the “US has the most prestige of any Western nation in Eastern Europe”. Highlight of Secretary’s Policy Planning Meeting, 27 July 1966. *Ibid.* Box 5.
- ⁴³ The American Legation to the Secretary of State, 24 August 1961. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Central File 1960–63, Internal Affairs of Hungary, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁴⁴ The American Legation to the Department of State, Conversation with Hungarian Intellectuals, 12 April 1961. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Decimal File 764, Microfilm, roll 1.
- ⁴⁵ Despatch from the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, “Recommendations Regarding US Policy Toward Present Hungarian Regime, 23 January 1959. FRUS, 1958–60, Vol. X, 62–71.
- ⁴⁶ Zádor Tibor jelentése Sík Endrének, látogatás Livingstone Merchantnál, az európai ügyek államtitkáránál [Report by Tibor Zádor to Endre Sík on Visit to Livingstone Merchant], 17 February 1959. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 15. doboz, 5/e, 001867.
- ⁴⁷ A typical memorandum by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asserted that “After the war American imperialism significantly sidelined the traditional colonialist countries and took their place and showed an unprecedented example of colonial exploitation... In order to assure colonial exploitation and to preserve its position as the leading Western power the United States... announced a struggle against communism and the progressive forces of the world.”

- At the same time the huge scientific and technological results of the Soviet Union and the ever broader and stronger freedom struggle of colonial peoples has shown that Dulles's foreign policy is untenable." Memorandum by the American Desk, "The Foreign Policy of the United States and Hungarian-American Relations", 30 November 1959. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA admin., 11. doboz, 4/bd.
- ⁴⁸ Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 84–5.
- ⁴⁹ Bitta István feljegyzése Zádor Tibornak [Memorandum by István Bitta to Tibor Zádor], 13 March 1959. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 5/e; A III. sz. politikai osztály javaslata a magyar–amerikai kapcsolatok javítására [Memorandum by the III. Political Department for the Improvement of Hungarian–American Relations], 2 April 1959. *Ibid.* 001479.
- ⁵⁰ The US banned the import of meat products from Hungary in 1938 because of the foot and mouth disease. After the war Hungary sought to sign a new animal health treaty with the US but this could not be done because of the political situation. This seemingly insignificant issue remained unresolved even two decades after the war.
- ⁵¹ Az MSZMP KB Külgüyi Osztályának előterjesztése az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának (Sík Endre, Hollai Imre) [Memorandum by the Foreign Affairs Department of the HSWP Central Committee to the Political Committee of the HSWP Central Committee], 26 February 1960. MOL, KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 172. ōe.
- ⁵² In October 1959 the Hungarian foreign minister told Bruno Kreisky that if Austria had a concrete proposal for the Cardinal's release, Hungary would give it consideration. The US indicated to Kreisky that it would welcome a solution which would give Mindszenty safe passage out of Hungary in case it was acceptable to the Vatican and the Cardinal. Kreisky sent the American position to the Vatican through the papal nuncio in Vienna. Memorandum from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs (Kohler) to Secretary of State Herter, 1959. december 9. *FRUS*, 1958–60, Vol. X, 104–6. At this point Kreisky's mediation effort seems to have petered out.
- ⁵³ Az MSZMP KB Külgüyi Osztályának előterjesztése az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságához, Javaslatok a Mindszenty-kérdés rendezésével kapcsolatban [Recommendation by the Foreign Affairs Department of the HSWP Central Committee to the Political Committee of the HSWP CC], 25 March 1960. MOL, KS, 288. f., 5. cs., 176. ōe.
- ⁵⁴ Az MSZMP KB Külgüyi Osztályának előterjesztése a Politikai Bizottságnak a magyar–amerikai viszony normalizálásáról [Recommendation by the Foreign Affairs Department of the HSWP Central Committee to the Political Committee of the HSWP CC on the Normalization of Hungarian–American Relations], 12 May 1960. MOL, 288. f., 5 cs, 183. ōe.
- ⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, 27 April 1960. Participants: Joseph Mileger, Harold Vedeler, Robert McKisson. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central File, 1960–63, Internal Affairs of Hungary, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁵⁶ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence – Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents (1962–1986)* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 40–1.
- ⁵⁷ The Foreign Ministry thought it unlikely that the US would make an initiative because Soviet–American relations had deteriorated. The ministry also pointed out that there was no realistic chance for the relaxation of export controls since that would require an act of Congress. Memorandum by the IIIrd Territorial Department, 11 August 1960. MOL, Küm, USA admin., XIX-J-1-k, 11. doboz, 4/bd.
- ⁵⁸ Instruction from the Department of State to the Legation in Hungary, 21 October 1960. *FRUS*, 1956–60, Vol. X, 126–30.
- ⁵⁹ Foy Kohler to the Secretary of State regarding US–Hungarian Relations, 26 January 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central File 611.64, Microfilm, roll 93.

- ⁶⁰ The American Legation in Budapest to the Department of State, 1960. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central File 611.64, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁶¹ Memorandum by Foy Kohler, Woodruff Wallner to the Secretary of State (Herter), 21 February 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Hungary, 1960–1963. Microfilm, roll 1.
- ⁶² Sík Endre feljegyzése Biszku Bélának [Memorandum by Endre Sík to Béla Biszku], 14 April 1961. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 4. doboz 4/a, 001745/61.
- ⁶³ Zádor Tibor jelentése Sík Endrének, Beszélgetés Vedelerrel, a State Department főosztály-vezetőjével [Report by Tibor Zádor to Endre Sík, Conversation with State Department Head Harold C. Vedeler], MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 5/e, 003499/1.
- ⁶⁴ Péter János feljegyzése Biszku Bélának [Memorandum by János Péter to Béla Biszku], MOL, KÜM, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 4. doboz, 4/a, 001745/1961.
- ⁶⁵ Courtney – Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 221–2.
- ⁶⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, US–Hungarian Relations, 5 April 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary, 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁶⁷ Telegram from New York (Yost) to the Secretary of State, 5 June 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 1.
- ⁶⁸ Telegram from New York to the Secretary of State, 25 May 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 84–6; Magyarics, *Az Egyesült Államok és Magyarország*, 583.
- ⁷⁰ Rusk to the American Legation in Hungary, 2 August 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 1.
- ⁷¹ Memorandum of Conversation, 3 August 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁷² Telegram from Budapest, 4 August 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ A IV. Területi főosztály Amerikai Referatúrájának feljegyzése Szőke György számára [Memorandum by the American Desk of the IVth Territorial Department for György Szőke], 4 January 1962. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 11. doboz, 4/bd.
- ⁷⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, 13 June 1963. Participants: Chester Bowles, Radványi János, NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁷⁵ Telegram by George Ball to New York, 12 June 1962. *Ibid.* roll 2.
- ⁷⁶ Telegram by Rusk, August 1962. *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ The American Legation to the Department of State, Conversation with Szarka, 12 September 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary 611.64, Microfilm, roll 93; The American Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, 14 September 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁸ The Legation in Hungary to the Secretary of State, Conversation with Kádár, 29 September 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Decimal File 764, Microfilm, roll 3.
- ⁷⁹ The American Legation to the Department of State, 2 October 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ Letter by Roger Tubby, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs to Béla Király, Hungarian Freedom Fighters Federation, 20 October 1961. *Ibid.* Roll 1. “Hungarian patriots bravely struggled against tremendous odds to win national independence and freedoms to which all mankind and all nations are entitled [...] free men everywhere will pay tribute to the valor of the Hungarian people and reaffirm their respect for Hungary’s struggle against Soviet imperialism. The free world will not forget the sacrifices of the Hungarian people.”
- ⁸¹ The American Legation to the Secretary of State, 19 October 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Political Relations Between the US and

- Hungary 611.64, Microfilm, roll 93; The Acting Secretary of State (Bowles) to the US Legation in Hungary, 23 November 1961.
- ⁸² The State Department to the Legation in Hungary, 16 January 1962. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary 611.64 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁸³ The American Legation in Hungary to the Secretary of State, February 1962. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 1.
- ⁸⁴ The American Legation to the Department of State, New US Desk Officer in Hungary, 2 November 1961. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Hungary 1960–1963, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary, 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 93; The American Legation to the Department of State, Radványi Transfer, 15 February 1962. *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Radványi, Zádor, Kohler, Davis, Trost, 21 February 1961. *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁶ Zádor Tibor jelentése Péter Jánosnak, Amerikai külügyi tisztselők meghívása [Report By Tibor Zádor to János Péter, invitation of State Department officials], 23 January 1962. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 5/e, 001234.
- ⁸⁷ Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 92–3. According to Radványi Kádár told him that until the Americans insisted on the amnesty as a precondition of improvement the amnesty would not take place.
- ⁸⁸ Radványi János jelentése Péter Jánosnak [Report by János Radványi to János Péter], 24 March 1962. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j 15. doboz, 001224/13.
- ⁸⁹ A Külügyminisztérium feljegyzése [Memorandum by the Foreign Ministry], 16 April 1962. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 01224/2.
- ⁹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, 26 April 1962. Participants: Radványi, McGhee, McKisson. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Political Relations Between Hungary and the United States Microfilm, reel 93.
- ⁹¹ Radványi János jelentése Péter Jánosnak, McGhee államtitkárral folytatott megbeszélés [Report by Radványi to Péter, Conversation with McGhee], 29 April 1962. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 5/e, 005115.
- ⁹² Rácz Pál Radványi Jánosnak, Beszélgetés McGheevvel, 1962. május 24. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, 15 doboz, 5/e, 005115.
- ⁹³ Polgár Dénes feljegyzése, 1962. május 21. és Radványi János jelentése [Memorandum by Dénes Polgár, 21 May 1962 and Report by János Radványi, 25 May 1962]. MOL, Küm, USA tük, XIX-J-1-j, 15. doboz, 5/e, 005413. American diplomacy used Dénes Polgár as a kind of back channel to the Hungarian leadership. Since the Political Committee referred to a report by Polgár it is evident that he was used to circumvent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ⁹⁴ The American Legation in Budapest to the Secretary of State, 31 May 1962. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Political Relations between Hungary and the United States, 611.64, 1960–63, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, 13 Februar 1962. Participants: Edigio Vagnozzi, Harold C. Vedeler, August Velletri. *FRUS*, 1961–63, Vol. XVI, 14–16.
- ⁹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, Situation of Mindszenty, 2 May 1962. Participants: Edigio Vagnozzi, Harold C. Vedeler, August Velletri. *Ibid.* 22–3.
- ⁹⁸ Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának üléséről [Record of the Meeting of the HSWP Political Committee], 7 August 1962. MOL, KS 288. f., 5. cs., 274. ōe.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Előterjesztés az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának. Határozati javaslat a magyar-amerikai viszony normalizálásáról és a Mindszenty-ügyről folytatandó tárgyalások kérdésében [Recommendation to the HSWP Political Committee. Draft Resolution on the Normalization of the Hungarian-American Relations and the Trial of Cardinal Mindszenty].

- tion of Hungarian–American Relations and Regarding Talks concerning Mindszenty], 10 August 1962. *Ibid.* 275. ōe. Polgár reported that Turner Shelton would come with detailed instructions regarding the normalization talks.
- ¹⁰⁰ The American Embassy in Stockholm to the American Legation in Budapest, 21 January 1961. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Political Relations Between the US and Hungary, 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 93; The Department of State to the Embassy in Stockholm, 29 January 1960. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰¹ Torbert to the Department of State, 14 March 1961. *Ibid.* John F. Kennedy to Cardinal Mindszenty, 2 February 1961. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰² NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 5.
- ¹⁰³ Memorandum of Conversation – Situation of Cardinal Mindszenty, Participants: Vagnozzi, Vedeler, 2 May 1962. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁴ Radványi János összefoglalója Péter János külügyminiszternek [Summary by Radványi for Foreign Minister János Péter], 11 September 1962. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 6. doboz, 001224/6.
- ¹⁰⁵ Telegram from New York to the Secretary of State, 15 May 1962. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Hungary 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 2.
- ¹⁰⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, 1 September 1962. Participants: Radvanyi, Vedeler, Davis. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Political Relations between Hungary and the United States, Microfilm, roll 93.
- ¹⁰⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, 26 September 1962. Participants: Kreisky, Rusk. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Internal Affairs of Hungary, 1960–1963, Microfilm, roll 2.
- ¹⁰⁸ Telegram to the Secretary of State, 26 September 1962. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁹ Az amerikai Külügyminisztérium emlékeztetője a magyarkérdés és az amneszia tárgyában [Memorandum by the State Department regarding the Hungarian Question and the amnesty], 20 October 1962. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 4/bd, 6. doboz; [Report by Radványi regarding the State Department Memorandum], 7 November 1962. *Ibid.* 001224/8/1962.
- ¹¹⁰ Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall – Soviet–East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton University Press, 2003).
- ¹¹¹ Radványi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 140–1.
- ¹¹² The American Legation in Hungary to the Secretary of State, 24 November 1962. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Political Relations between Hungary and the United States, 611.64, 1960–63, Microfilm, reel 93.
- ¹¹³ Radványi jelentése Péter Jánosnak [Report by Radványi to Péter], 21 December 1962. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 6. doboz, 00598.
- ¹¹⁴ Jonathan Haslam, *Russia's Cold War – From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 229–30.
- ¹¹⁵ Geraint Hughes, *Harold Wilson's Cold War – The Labour Government and East–West Conflict 1964–1970* (The Royal Historical Society, 2009), 39.
- ¹¹⁶ Bennet Kovrig, *Of Walls and Bridges: The United States and Eastern Europe*, (New York University Press, 1991) 107–8.
- ¹¹⁷ “The Bloc Countries and Eastern-Europe”, Department of State Guidelines for policy and Operations, February 1963. NARA, RG 59 General Records of the Department of State, Executive Secretariat, 1961–1966, Box 5.
- ¹¹⁸ Courtney – Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 252.
- ¹¹⁹ Courtney – Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 268.
- ¹²⁰ Special Report by the CIA, 27 March 1964. *FRUS*, 1964–68, Vol. XVII, 2–8.

- ¹²¹ “Changing Patterns in Eastern Europe”, submitted by the Director of CIA, concurred by the US Intelligence Board, National Intelligence Estimate 12-64, 22 July 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Policy Planning Council, Lot File 70D199, 1963–64, Box 260. “East European leaders are increasingly free to approach these questions in light of national aspirations and local political conditions”.
- ¹²² NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Policy Planning Council Lot File 70D199, Box 260.
- ¹²³ “Changing Patterns in Eastern Europe”. *Op. cit.*
- ¹²⁴ “The Situation in Eastern Europe”, The Director of Research and Intelligence of the Department of State to the Acting Secretary of State, 16 April 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, PPC, Lot File 70D199 1963–64, Box 260.
- ¹²⁵ “Eastern Europe’s involvement in Communist Conspiratorial Activities”, Director of Research and Intelligence of the Department of State, 9 July 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, PPC, Lot File 70D199 1963–64, Box 260.
- ¹²⁶ “Changing Patterns in Eastern Europe”. *Op. cit.*
- ¹²⁷ “Bridgebuilding in Eastern Europe”, 31 July 1964. *Op. cit.*
- ¹²⁸ Courtney – Harrington, *Tweaking the Nose of the Russians*, 230.
- ¹²⁹ NSAM 304, Action program for US Relations with Eastern Europe, August 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, PPC, Lot File 70D199 1963–64, Box 260.
- ¹³⁰ “The US and East–West Relations in Europe”, Memorandum by the Department of State, 3 August 1963. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Ernest K. Lindley Files 1961–1969, Lot File 71D273, Box 4.
- ¹³¹ Hughes, *Harold Wilson’s Cold War*, 44–7.
- ¹³² Memorandum of Conversation, “The Hungarian Situation and US–Hungarian Relations”, 10 September 1964. Participants: Ferenc Nagy, Béla Varga, Richard H. Davis, Harold C. Vedeler, Robert B. Wright, Robert McKisson, Christopher Squire. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central Files 1964–66, Box 2275.
- ¹³³ Faure, *Ami Américain*, 336.
- ¹³⁴ The Director of the Department of State Research and Analysis Branch to the Acting Secretary of State, 16 April 1964. *Op. cit.*
- ¹³⁵ “Changing Patterns in Eastern Europe”, NIE 12-64, 22 July 1964. *Op. cit.*
- ¹³⁶ Owen T. Jones to the Secretary of State: Political Assessment of Hungary 1964. NARA, RG 59 Central Files, 1964–1966, Hungary, Box 2275.
- ¹³⁷ János M. Rainer, “The Sixties in Hungary – Some Historical and Social Approaches,” in János M. Rainer and György Péteri (eds), *Muddling Through the Long 1960s. Ideas and Every Day Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary* (Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, Budapest – Trondheim, 2005), 4–26. Sándor Horváth, “Hooligans, Spivs and Gangs – Youth Subcultures in the 1960s.” *Ibid.* 199–223.
- ¹³⁸ A Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány 3062/1964 számú határozata [Resolution Number 3062/1964 by the Hungarian Revolutionary Workers Peasants Government] 19 February 1964. MOL, Küm, XIX-J-1-j, USA tük, 6. doboz, 4/b 002812; A Külgüminisztérium jegyzéke [Memorandum by the Foreign Ministry], 24 February 1964. *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁹ The American Legation in Budapest to the Secretary of State, 26 February 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central Files 1964–66, Hungary, Box 2277.
- ¹⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, Retention of Soviet Armed Forces in Hungary, 21 January 1964. Participants: R. Heath Mason, Counsellor of British Embassy; Harold C. Vedeler. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴¹ The Legation in Hungary to the Department of State, 18 July 1964. *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴² Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant for National Security (Bundy) to President Johnson, 14 April 1964. *FRUS*, 1964–68, Vol. XVII, 301.

- ¹⁴³ The American Legation in Budapest to the Secretary of State, 8 December 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central Files 1964–66, Hungary, Box 2278.
- ¹⁴⁴ A Külgüminiszterium feljegyzése a magyar–amerikai tárgyalásokról [The Foreign Ministry's Memorandum on Hungarian–American Talks], 18 February 1964. MOL, KS 288. f., 5. cs., 327. ōe. Memorandum of Conversation, Claims Settlement, 30 November 1964. NARA, RG 59 Records of the Department of State, Central Files 1964–66, Hungary, Box 2278.
- ¹⁴⁵ János Honvári, "Gazdasági kapcsolatok Magyarország és az USA között 1945–1978" [Economic Relations Between the US and Hungary] *Századok*, 143. évf., 1. sz. (2009), 43–4; 47; 55.
- ¹⁴⁶ Csaba Békés, "A Kádári külpolitika 1956–1968: Látványos sikerek – «láthatatlan konfliktusok»" [Kádár's Foreign Policy – Spectacular Successes, 'Invisible Conflicts'] in Békés, *Európából Európába: Magyarország konfliktusok keresztüvében, 1945–1990* [From Europe to Europe: Hungary in the Crossfire of Conflicts] (Budapest: Gondolat, 2004) 245–6. Hungarian–West German relations after 1963 are another example for the economic motivations of the policy of opening up.
- ¹⁴⁷ Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának üléséről. Előterjesztés az Egyesült Államok külgüminiszterével folytatandó tárgyalásokkal kapcsolatban [Record of the Meeting of the HSWP CC Political Committee. Recommendation Regarding Negotiations with the Secretary of State of the United States], 26 November 1964. MOL KS 288. f., 5. cs., 352. ōe.
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,HOCH‘ UND ,NIEDRIG‘ – DIE DISKUSSION ÜBER POPULÄRLITERATUR IN DER ZEITSCHRIFT *NYUGAT*

ÜBERLEGUNGEN ZU EINER MÖGLICHEN GRENZZIEHUNG

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In dieser Arbeit geht es um die Schwierigkeit der Grenzziehung zwischen ‚niederer‘ und ‚hoher‘ Literatur. Nach einem kurzen Blick auf die Entwicklung der Unterhaltungsliteratur in Ungarn folgt eine Darstellung der in der ungarischen literarischen Zeitschrift *Nyugat* (1908–1941) zu diesem Thema erschienenen Beiträge und Gedanken, die trotz der großen zeitlichen Entfernung bis heute gültig geblieben sind.

Schlagwörter: Unterhaltungsliteratur, Populärliteratur, Trivialliteratur, Massenunterhaltung, *Nyugat*

Die Grenze zwischen ‚niederer‘ und ‚hoher‘ Literatur ist eine schwer zu bestimmende, obwohl natürlich die Populär-/Trivial-/Unterhaltungsliteratur¹ bestimmte Unterscheidungsmerkmale besitzt. Ein wichtiges Merkmal ist auf jeden Fall die starke Bindung der Unterhaltungsliteratur an ihr Publikum – was natürlich auf alle Populärmedien zutrifft. Wir haben es hier also mit einer (literarischen) Erscheinung zu tun, die in erster Linie nicht auf die Schaffung ästhetisch hochwertiger Werke abzielt, sondern auf die Anziehung und Unterhaltung möglichst vieler Menschen. Solche Medien und mediale Erscheinungen sind von den Veränderungen der Gesellschaft, von Modeerscheinungen und Trends auf jeden Fall abhängiger, als ihre ‚hohen‘ Pendants, da sie ja Produkte der Konsumgesellschaft sind. Kurz: Sie leben von ihrem Publikum.

Die Charakteristika der Unterhaltungsliteratur werden hier anhand der exemplarisch ausgewählten (bis heute Allgemeingültigkeit besitzenden) Beiträge und Diskussionen in der ungarischen literarischen Zeitschrift *Nyugat* aus der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts veranschaulicht.²

Um Entwicklungen und Zusammenhänge analysieren zu können, wenden wir uns den Anfängen der Unterhaltungsliteratur in Ungarn zu. In diesem kurzen historischen Überblick liegt der Schwerpunkt auf der direkten Vorgängerin der heutigen Populärliteratur, der Prosaliteratur.

Zur Vorgeschichte

Die Erzählung von Geschichten (mit unterhaltenden Absichten) ist so alt wie die Menschheit selbst – orale Traditionen reichen weit in die Vergangenheit zurück. Die schriftliche Verbreitung der unterhaltenden Literatur geschah anfangs meist in dichterischer Form – denken wir nur an die Epigramme der Antike. Die erotischen Sinngedichte des Marcus Valerius Martialis haben auch Janus Pannonius, einen ungarischen Gelehrten des 15. Jahrhunderts, angeregt und zu ähnlichen kreativen Ausbrüchen inspiriert.³

Im Unterschied zum Westen Europas hat sich die ungarische Prosa mit ziemlicher Verzögerung erst im 16. Jahrhundert allmählich verbreitet. Die populäre Form – die Volksbücher sind in großen Teilen Europas schon bald nach der Erfindung der Druckerpresse durch Johannes Gutenberg im 15. Jahrhundert aufgetaucht –, die ersten ungarischen Volksbücher waren allerdings Übersetzungen aus der deutschen Sprache. Während die deutschen Volksbücher in Prosa verfasst wurden, sind die ungarischen Übersetzungen größtenteils der lyrischen Tradition treu geblieben.⁴

Ohne Buchdruck und die dadurch möglich gewordene massenhafte Textverbreitung wäre eine in vernakularen Sprachen erscheinende Unterhaltungsliteratur vermutlich unmöglich gewesen. Schon hier wird deren enge Bindung an die gesellschaftliche Entwicklung sichtbar: Es gab zwar auch lateinische Unterhaltungsliteratur, eine ‚leichte‘ Richtung, die aber nur einen kleinen, elitären Kreis erreicht hatte – Leser, die der lateinischen Sprache mächtig waren. Mit den Volksbüchern hat sich die Situation jedoch verändert: Sie waren in den Volks-sprachen abgefasst und erreichten dadurch ein breiteres Publikum an potenziellen Lesern beziehungsweise Zuhörern, da Lesen und Schreiben damals noch wenig verbreitete Fertigkeiten waren.

Als Vorreiter der ungarischen Prosaliteratur gilt Gáspár Heltai (1490 o. 1510 – 1574).⁵ Seine Muttersprache war Deutsch, er schrieb im 16. Jahrhundert jedoch auf Ungarisch. Heltai war ein vom katholischen Glauben zum Protestantismus übergetretener Geistlicher, der moralische Erziehungsschriften und Fabelsamm-lungen sowie eine Chronik über die Ungarn verfasste.⁶ Heltai hat sich zudem mit Bibelübersetzung beschäftigt und auch die Vereinheitlichung der ungarischen Orthographie ist auf ihn zurückzuführen. Er besaß eine eigene Druckerei, was die Publikation seiner literarischen Werke wohl begünstigte.⁷

In der frühen Neuzeit brachte die Entwicklung der Verwaltungsstrukturen (im Königreich Ungarn mit erheblicher zeitlicher Verschiebung) einen beträchtlichen Aufschwung der Alphabetisierung mit sich. Obwohl Bildung nach wie vor noch in geistlicher Hand lag, wuchs der Bedarf an schriftkundigen Personen mit der Vermehrung weltlicher Aufgaben. Die Schreiber als Berufsgruppe gewannen zunehmend an Bedeutung.

Auch die weltlichen literarischen Unterhaltungsformen entwickelten sich: Vor allem am Hofe Matthias Corvinus', dessen Humor zur Legende wurde, waren Scherzreden und Apophthegmata beliebt. Diese wurden im 16. Jahrhundert auch in ungarischer Sprache niedergeschrieben und verbreitet. Die erste gedruckte Sammlung erschien in Heltais Druckerei im Jahre 1577, und trug den Titel *Salomon királynak, az Dávid király fiának Markalffal való tréfabelsédeknek rövid könyve*. Es handelt sich hierbei um eine Übersetzung aus dem Lateinischen – der Verfasser ist allerdings unbekannt.⁸

Bis zum 18. Jahrhundert vermochte sich die volkssprachliche Literatur im Königreich Ungarn nur langsam zu entwickeln. Durch die zwei Jahrhunderte währende Belagerung durch die Türken, die daraus resultierende Dreiteilung des Landes und die damit verbundenen Fremdherrschaften – und weiteren hemmenden Umständen, wie die zahlreichen, nicht ungarischsprachigen Ethnien im Land –, war Ungarn im europäischen Vergleich extrem benachteiligt, was sich letztendlich auch auf die Entfaltung der weltlichen Prosa auswirkte. Es gab zwar Volksbücher, Märchensammlungen, Kurzprosa, Selbstbekenntnisse, später (ab dem 17. Jahrhundert) auch Reisebeschreibungen und erweiterte Kalendarien (im 18. Jahrhundert) – die dichterische Form der unterhaltenden Erzählung genoss dennoch größere Anerkennung. Die Themen kreisten meist um Liebe und Abenteuer – Ritterthemen und Räuberromantik waren sehr beliebt.

Sage und Volksmärchen sind interessante Sonderformen der Folkloreprosa. Die Unterscheidung ist einfach: Das Märchen gehört in das Reich der Fantasie, während der Sage weitgehend wahre Wurzeln nachgesagt werden.⁹ Beide sind tief in oralen Traditionen verankert – das Volksmärchen lebt von der Vielseitigkeit der mündlichen Weitergabe, mit der Niederschrift hat es viel an Vitalität eingebüßt und ist gewissermaßen erstarrt. Es ist stark schablonisiert – vor allem, weil man sich vorgefertigte Module leichter merken konnte, aber auch, weil dadurch eine größere Variationsvielfalt geboten ist. Auch die typischen Phrasen (Es war einmal / Sie lebten glücklich bis an ihr Lebensende / Ende gut, alles gut) sind ein Merkmal des Märchens und deuten ebenfalls auf den Modulcharakter hin.¹⁰

Gedruckte Märchensammlungen und Volksbücher wurden häufig auf Märkten verkauft, weshalb auch die Plane (ung. *ponyva*), auf der die billige Massenware ausgelegt war, zum ungarischen Begriff für anspruchslose Massenliteratur wurde.¹¹

Die Folkloreatradition ist allerdings nicht nur als Unterhaltung, sondern auch als Quellenmaterial für die ‚hohe‘ Literatur von Wichtigkeit. Sowohl Stil als auch die Thematiken von Folkloregattungen wurden von Literaten aufgegriffen und in den eigenen Werkbestand integriert.¹² So geschah es auch mit Werken ausländischer Autoren: Oft wurden die Erzählungen kurzerhand an ungarische Schauspielplätze und in einen ungarischen historischen Kontext versetzt, um einerseits den

fremden Stoff für die Leser und Zuhörer verständlich zu machen, und andererseits die Volkssprache zu festigen.¹³

Dass diesem Verfahren Erfolg beschieden war, beweist ein Detail: Die statistische Tatsache, dass *ponyva* so beliebt war, dass die Menschen große Mengen an Druckwerken gekauft hatten, obwohl ca. Zweidrittel der Bevölkerung nicht lesen konnte.¹⁴ László Pál Galuska gibt in einem Artikel folgende Zahlen aus dem Lagerbuch der Druckerei der Stadt Debrecen an:

Das Lagerbuch der Druckerei der Stadt Debrecen verrät die Nachfrage nach den in den 1730er Jahren erschienenen ersten trivialliterarischen Werken: 28 000 Exemplare der Trivialliteratur wurden in wenigen Jahren in nur einer Stadt in einem solchen Ungarn verkauft, wo die Analphabetenrate bei 70–80 % lag.¹⁵

Einen großen Schritt in Richtung Entwicklung der Massenverbreitung von Texten unternahm Maria Theresia: Die Ratio Educationis, das erste Bildungsdekrete aus dem Jahre 1777 führte die Pflichtschule ein und nahm weitgehend die Macht über das Unterrichtssystem aus den Händen des (katholischen) Klerus.¹⁶ Durch sie erfuhr die Bildung des Volkes langfristig einen Aufschwung, die Alphabetisierung stieg erheblich an.¹⁷ Dies bedeutete nicht unbedingt auch die Stärkung der Nationalsprache: Joseph II. führte kurze Zeit später im Zuge seiner Reformen das Deutsche als Sprache der Verwaltung auch für das Königreich Ungarn ein. Der Widerstand der Ungarn führte jedoch dazu, dass der Kaiser/König seine Verordnung zurücknehmen musste und sich breite Teile der Gesellschaft umso mehr der rapiden Entwicklung der Nationalsprache annahmen.¹⁸ Vermutlich hängt damit auch die Tatsache zusammen, dass die Massenunterhaltung florierte:

Auch aus 1809 sind Verkaufsdaten erhalten geblieben, die Zeitschrift *Hazai és Külföldi Tudósítások* hatte sie veröffentlicht; die damals eine Bevölkerung von 5 Millionen zählende ungarische Nation beanspruchte 150 000 Kalender im Jahr, abonnierte aber nur 2000 Stück Zeitungen und kaufte nicht mehr als 500 Bücher jährlich [...]¹⁹

Laut Galuska wurden diese wenigen Buchexemplare allerdings weitergegeben und im Endeffekt kaputtgelesen – Leselust war also vorhanden, man wollte (oder konnte) nur nicht unbedingt Geld dafür ausgeben.

Die Entwicklung des Schulsystems, dessen Festigung und Verbreitung waren wiederum die Voraussetzungen des nächsten Meilensteins: der Herausbildung des Pressewesens. Die Presse wurde zum dankbaren Abnehmer erzählender Gattungen. Mit steigenden Auflagezahlen wuchs auch der Bedarf an Textmaterial – oft erschienen ganze Romane als Fortsetzungen in der Presse, bevor sie als Buch herausgegeben wurden.

Massenherstellung und Kunst

Für die Massenherstellung von Literatur sorgte schließlich die Erfindung der Rotationsdruckmaschine gegen Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts. Die überlieferten Zahlen zeigen die Auswirkungen der Technik am besten: 1867 gab es 80 ungarische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, 1894 bereits 735 und 1910 sage und schreibe – 1600.²⁰ Zum Vergleich gab es im Jahr 2005 „nur“ mehr 901 Presseerzeugnisse in Ungarn.²¹

Die Massenherstellung bewirkte auch eine Textselektion – Massentexte waren immer öfter von geringer Qualität und begannen sich mehr und mehr vom Kunstartext abzusetzen. Die Produktion und Herausgabe von billigen Romanheftreihen, die teils häufiger erschienen als manche Zeitschrift, wurde ein lukratives (Neben-)Geschäft für viele Druckereien und (Boulevardpresse-)Verlage.²²

Da am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts die meisten Literaten ihren Unterhalt durch Journalismus verdienten, war der Qualitätsunterschied anfangs noch nicht besonders groß, die Konsumgesellschaft forderte aber mit der Zeit ihren Tribut: Aus Einzel- und Familienbetrieben wurden Unternehmen, aus Literaten Redakteure, deren Tagesgeschäft die schnellen Nachrichten waren.

Ein Betroffener – Aladár Schöpflin – drückt dies folgendermaßen aus:

Der überwiegende Teil der Literaten war Journalist oder hat zumindest für Zeitungen gearbeitet. Die Presse gab der Literatur Brot, als Gegenleistung forderte sie aber ihre Dienste.²³

Für die Literaten war diese Spaltung ihrer Interessen meist ein lohnender Kompromiss – sie erkannten die Vorteile der journalistischen Plackerei: finanzielle Sicherheit, um an ihren wahren Kunstwerken feilen zu können. Dieser Meinung war 1910 auch der Autor und Journalist Menyhért Lengyel:²⁴ Ein Literat, der seine Kunst in die Dienste des Massenkonsums stellte, war für ihn nicht verwerflich, denn wenn die Finanzen gesichert sind, bekommt der Autor im Gegenzug das Wichtigste überhaupt für das Schaffen von Kunstwerken: Ruhe. Die Gefahr sah er darin, dass der Literat nicht nur beim Vertrieb des fertigen Werkes, sondern bereits in der Schaffensphase geschäftliche Erwägungen in den Vordergrund stellte. Auch sein Kollege Gyula Szini sah genau dies als Problem in der Beziehung von hoher Literatur und Journalismus an:²⁵ Seiner Meinung nach war es evident, dass die auf Drängen der Zeitungen und Zeitschriften produzierten Texte (auch wenn sie mit Recht das Prädikat der hohen Literatur fordern) alleine schon deswegen keine positive Wirkung haben könnten, weil der Leser durch diese Textflut mit der Zeit abstumpfen würde. Hinzu käme, dass das Niveau bei solch einer Menge auf lange Sicht nicht haltbar wäre und früher oder später den Weg vor „den Missgeburten der Massenproduktion“²⁶ öffnen würde. Er zieht auch die Konsequenz: Die rastlosen journalistischen Gattungen und die zeitinten-

siven, künstlerisch wertvollen Werke würden erneut getrennte Wege gehen, wobei Letztere wieder in die Buchform zurückfänden. Nichtsdestotrotz hielt er den literarischen Bemühungen der Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenproduktion zugute, dass dadurch auch Interessierte erreicht werden konnten, die sonst wohl aus finanziellen oder zeitlichen Gründen nicht in den Genuss von Literatur gekommen wären.

In Ungarn gab es eine lange und fruchtbare Tradition von literarischen Zeitschriften; und diese Tradition wird – eingeschränkt zwar – bis heute fortgesetzt. Die Blütezeit erlebte die literarische Zeitschriftenproduktion in der bereits erwähnten Glanzphase des Pressewesens um 1910: 1908 wurde die einflussreichste literarische Zeitschrift, *Nyugat*, gegründet, die 33 Jahre die Literaturszene Ungarns prägte.²⁷ In dieser Zeitschrift standen Fortschriftlichkeit, Moderne, humanistisches Gedankengut, Toleranz und die Liebe zur Kunst im Vordergrund. Zielpublikum der Zeitschrift war das liberale Bürgertum.²⁸

Das liberale, großstädtische Bürgertum hatte wichtige gesellschaftliche Funktionen, war aber von der Macht abgeschnitten. Diese war immer noch in adeliger Hand, und diese Gesellschaftsschicht präferierte konservativere Töne. So erreichte *Nyugat* nie wirklich hohe Auflagenzahlen und war immer wieder auf Geldgeber angewiesen, um überleben zu können, obwohl die Zeitschrift eine enorme Wirkung ausübte und den konservativen Stimmen bis zum Schluss trotzen konnte.

Möglich wurde die 33 Jahre lange Existenz durch glückliche Vorbedingungen – so hatte die liberale Wochenzeitschrift von Chefredakteur József Kiss *A Hét*²⁹ vielen Autoren und Redakteuren des *Nyugat* als gute Schule gedient.³⁰

Warum *Nyugat* bei so niedrigen Auflagezahlen dennoch einen großen Einfluss haben konnte, erklärt die damalige Lesekultur. Die Presse lebte in den Kaffeehäusern, ob in Autorform oder als Produkt. Die Autoren arbeiteten – lebten fast – in den Kaffeehäusern, das Publikum las dort. Viele Kaffeehäuser rühmten sich mit der vorhandenen Menge der abonnierten Zeitungen und Zeitschriften. So erreichte auch *Nyugat* bei niedriger Auflagezahl eine Menge Rezipienten – geschäftlich gesehen ein Desaster, aber ein Segen für die Literatur.³¹

Die Autoren des *Nyugat* beschäftigten sich unter anderem mit theoretischen Fragen der Kunst, so auch mit dem Thema Populärliteratur. Sie waren selbst mit Unterhaltungsliteratur groß geworden und nutzten sie als Quelle für die eigene literarische Produktion.³² Kurz ausgeführt sollen nun einige Meinungen der *Nyugat*-Autoren die Problematik der Trivialliteratur exemplarisch beleuchten – wir werden sehen, dass die Ansichten und Themen bis heute Gültigkeit haben und immer wieder (teils auch transmedialisiert) diskutiert werden.

Die Diskussion um den Wert der Literatur in der Zeitschrift *Nyugat*

Das Verhältnis zwischen hoher und niederer Literatur war in der Zeitschrift *Nyugat* von Anfang an ein Thema. Bereits in der ersten Nummer erschien eine Abhandlung über die moderne Prosa, genauer über Novellen. Gyula Szini thematisierte deren Massenherstellung und war der Meinung, dass die ökonomischen Umstände die Produktion schwacher Novellen begünstigten. Durch den riesigen Bedarf der diversen Periodika wurde laufend überproduziert – eine Überproduktion, die allerdings Abnehmer fand. Seiner Meinung nach ist der allgemeine Narrativenbestand zwar limitiert, „Geschichten“ würden aber dennoch nicht aussterben, denn wenn ein richtiger Künstler oder eine Künstlerin ans Werk gingen, könne auch aus dem gewöhnlichsten Klischee etwas Wunderbares entstehen. Die Form als Modeerscheinung mag gefährdet sein, die Erzählung selbst wird aber weiterleben.³³

Aladár Schöpflin war kein Befürworter der Unterhaltungsliteratur. In seinen Augen geht die Massenproduktion selbstverständlich mit sinkendem Niveau einher. Die Verbreitung der Presse hatte die Autoren dazu gezwungen, ihr Talent in den Dienst der Massenunterhaltung zu stellen und Tag für Tag dem Geschmack der Menge angepasste Banalitäten auszuschütten, die frei von sozialer Empathie, Interesse und Gewissen waren. Darüber hinaus befriedige die Trivialliteratur die „*primitiven geistigen Bedürfnisse*“³⁴ der Leser. Ihre Autoren befänden sich aber auf einem ähnlich niedrigen Niveau, während der Autor von hoher Literatur seine Leser in höhere Sphären geleiten könne. Zum vollständigen Literaturbegriff gehören für Schöpflin allerdings beide Richtungen – nach dem Motto: Wo kein Schatten, da kein Licht. Der Kritiker stehe vor der Herausforderung, dem Leser den Weg zu den höheren Sphären zu zeigen.³⁵

Im Jahr 1930 schrieb Endre Gergő einen Artikel in *Nyugat*, in dem er ebenfalls über das Verhältnis von hoher und niederer Literatur sinnierte. Dabei wies er darauf hin, dass sich die Unterhaltungsliteratur zu einer eigenen Gattung entwickelt habe und deshalb als Untersuchungsobjekt interessant sein könne – im schlimmsten Fall als abschreckendes Beispiel. Obwohl er die Populärliteratur als degeneriert und rückschrittlich bezeichnete, als Ergebnis dessen, dass die Massen die Literatur auf ihr primitives Niveau heruntergezogen hätten, räumt er ein, dass die Trivialliteratur einige Dinge besser könne als die Belletristik, wie beispielsweise den Aufbau und die Aufrechterhaltung von Spannung und einer ausgeklügelten Erzählstruktur. Für die Zukunft hoffte er, dass sich die Gesellschaft in eine Richtung entwickelte, in der sich echte Kunst über die „Ersatzliteratur“ zu positionieren vermag.³⁶

Eine kleine Anekdote von Miklós Surányi aus dem Jahre 1931 belegt dies nicht: Er beschreibt eine Runde befreundeter Intellektueller, die allesamt kaum

Zeit zum Lesen fanden. So wandten sie sich in ihrer spärlichen Freizeit der leichten Lektüre zu und auch in ihren Büchersammlungen fand man eher Weltliteratur als ungarische Klassiker.³⁷

Gábor Tolnai beschrieb 1940 genau diese Problematik: In Ungarn kosteten die Klassiker ein Vermögen, während sie in Frankreich für wenig Geld zu haben seien, denn dort hingen die Preise von den Tantiemen ab. Werke lebender Autoren (auch von Trivialliteratur) seien also teuer, Klassiker günstiger.³⁸

Iván Boldizsár antwortet ihm in der nächsten Nummer des *Nyugat*: Das Problem sei seiner Meinung nach, dass die Trivialliteratur dermaßen verbreitet sei, dass kein Bedarf mehr an der hohen (wenn auch günstigen) Literatur bestünde. Er selbst verschmähte die Unterhaltung nicht, denn „[...] ein guter *Detektivroman* kann einem starken *Espresso* gleichen“.³⁹ Er meinte, der ausschließliche Konsum von Trivialliteratur hätte seine Wurzeln in der Gesellschaft – der Erfolg des Trivialen sei somit ein Symptom von gesellschaftlichen Problemen, nicht ihre Ursache. Billigen Klassikern gegenüber gab er sich skeptisch und wies darauf hin, dass hübsch gestaltete Ausgaben oft aus dekorativen Gründen oder zu Prestigezwecken gekauft würden – und wenn jemand die schönen Büchlein schon zu Hause hätte, dann würde er in einer Mußestunde vielleicht sogar hineinblicken.

Eine kleinere Enquête aus 1941 behandelt ebenfalls die hohe und niedere Literatur. Im ersten Beitrag bezeichnete István Nagypál die trivialen Formen als Literatur-Ersatz (statt Literatur-Träger). Der Unterschied zwischen hoher und niederer Literatur mache sich in den Freiheiten des Autors bemerkbar: Der Trivialliterat sei stark an sein Material gebunden, da es gebunden und extrem schablonenhaft sei (wobei dies für ihn ausschließlich Negatives bedeutete: einfache Erzählstrukturen – wie der Kampf zwischen Gut und Böse, das obligatorische Happy End, eindimensionale Figuren, unwahre oder sogar falsche Schauplätze usw.) – der Belletristiker wäre dagegen ungebunden und könne mit seinem Material nach eigenem Gutdünken umgehen. Ein anderes Unterscheidungsmerkmal sei der Stil – im Falle der Populärliteratur sei er schlicht und einfach nicht vorhanden, da er ja auch unnötige Mühe mache und damit unwirtschaftlich wäre. Trivialliteratur würde darüber hinaus die Instinkte ansprechen und nur über diese mit der Emotionswelt der Leser in Kontakt treten. Wieder ein Gegensatz zur hohen Literatur, in der man sich entsprechend mit höheren – gesellschaftlichen, psychologischen, ethischen und moralischen – Themen beschäftigen und auch die Leser dazu anhalten könne. Deshalb wären die trivialen Erscheinungen als Literatur-Ersatz zu betrachten, da sie als Ventil für die Ableitung von Emotionen dienten. Dies käme natürlich auch den Machthabern entgegen, weshalb man bei trivialen Texten auf die Zensur verzichten könne.⁴⁰

Von der Zensur war die Populärliteratur anfangs tatsächlich kaum betroffen – deshalb konnten auch mitunter versteckt kritische Stimmen veröffentlicht werden.

Der Flut der Trivialliteratur versuchte man weitgehend erfolglos mit günstigen Klassikerreihen in Heftchenformat entgegenzusteuern. 1942, ein Jahr nach Nagypáls Artikel, wurden jedoch billige trivialliterarische Ausgaben erneut erschwert – angeblich aufgrund von Papierengpässen wegen des Krieges. Tatsächlich hatten die Machthaber die Trivialliteratur (und ihre gesellschaftliche Wirkung) schon länger mit „Besorgnis“ betrachtet, die weit über die gemäßigten Bedenken der *Nyugat*-Beiträge hinausging und Populärliteratur wurde geradewegs als gefährlich eingestuft.⁴¹ Die Verordnung von 1942 scheint die lang ersehnte staatliche Maßnahme gegen die „schädliche“ Trivialliteratur gewesen zu sein. Offiziell wurde nicht gegen die Populärliteratur selbst vorgegangen, allein die Herstellung billiger Ausgaben war – ob des hohen Papierverbrauchs – an Bewilligung und Gebühren gebunden (drei Jahre rückwirkend). Als Entscheidungsgrundlage diente eine Statistik aus demselben Jahr, wonach pro Monat 3 550 000 Stück von trivialliterarischen Werken erscheinen würden. Für viele Reihen bedeutete die Verordnung das Aus, die meisten Verlage hielten sich allerdings hartnäckig.⁴²

Die Machthaber erkannten allerdings auch das Potenzial und verwendeten billige Massenwerke zu Propagandazwecken. Es gab ganze Reihen und nicht nur einen Verlag, der sich „[...] in den Dienst der verstaatlichten Bewusstseinsindustrie stellte“.⁴³

Aber zurück zu Nagypáls Artikel im *Nyugat*: Trotz der Kritik beinhaltet er auch Positives: Er weist darauf hin, dass das Triviale auch literarische Lücken zu füllen vermöge, da in der Belletristik das Geschichtenerzählen immer mehr zurückginge und die Leser manchmal auch Geschichten und Märchen bräuchten.

Márton Lovászy reagierte auf den Artikel von Nagypál und griff das Thema dort auf, wo dieser aufgehört hatte: bei der Kluft zwischen Autor und Leser. Er vertrat die Meinung, dass der Siegeszug der Trivialliteratur auch literaturhistorische Wurzeln besäße: Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts wurde die Romantik durch den Realismus abgelöst, und die Autoren fingen an, die Märchenhaftigkeit, den Topos des Kampfes zwischen Gut und Böse, zu verschmähen. Die hohe Literatur wurde abstrakter, und man erkannte, dass die von ihr nicht behandelten Inhalte ein gutes Geschäft für die Massenunterhaltung darstellten. Als Musterbeispiel dafür, dass diese Kluft nicht zwingend notwendig wäre, erwähnte Lovászy neben den ungarischen Autoren Jókai, Mikszáth und Babits auch Shakespeare, der – obwohl seine wahre Größe erst posthum entdeckt wurde – einerseits der Menge erstklassige Unterhaltung bot, andererseits aber auch meisterhaft mit der Sprache umging, großartige Figuren erschuf und es auch wagte, Ideen zu vermitteln. Alles in allem: „[...] wenn sich die guten Autoren nicht um die Menge kümmern, dann kümmern sich schlechte Autoren darum.“⁴⁴

Zoltán Nagy stimmte in seinem Beitrag zu, dass Abenteuer und Märchen in der Literatur eine Existenzberechtigung hätten, glaubte aber nicht, dass sie als

literarische Form tatsächlich erfolgreich einen Platz in der hohen Literatur beanspruchen könnten, da das Masseninteresse an der seichten Trivialfiktion höchstwahrscheinlich nicht von einer aussagekräftigen, literarisch wertvollen Erzählung ausgestochen werden kann. Nagy gefällt außerdem nicht, dass Lovászy den Kampf zwischen Gut und Böse in die hohe Literatur zurückwünscht, da seiner Meinung nach die Literatur genau dadurch in die Absurdität abgleitet: Im wahren Leben passiert es meist umgekehrt. Von der Niederlage einer sympathischen Heldenfigur gegenüber einem siegreichen, aber verabscheungswürdigen Gegenspieler könne das Publikum mehr profitieren.⁴⁵

Dies ist eine kontroverse Ansicht, denn gerade in einer Welt, in der nicht das Gute, sondern das Böse zu siegen pflegt, mag der Leser ins Reich der Fantasie flüchten, in dem er sicher sein kann, dass das Gute den Sieg davontragen wird – was nebenbei vermittelt, dass es sich lohnt, für das Gute zu kämpfen. Hat hingegen das Böse die Oberhand, kann die Aussage – statt die Realität widerzuspiegeln – ins Resulative abrutschen oder sogar das Gegenteil bewirken: Warum sollte für das Gute gekämpft werden, wenn der Kampf nicht nur schwierig, sondern auch zum Scheitern verurteilt ist? In einer Welt, in der man sich ständig gehetzt vorkommt, fühlt man sich zu den fiktiven Welten der Fantasie hingezogen. Das Beispiel der intellektuellen Runde von Surányi ist heute aktueller denn je: Wenn man in der Arbeitswelt tagtäglich komplexe geistige Aufgaben lösen muss, ist die berechenbare Schablonenliteratur zur Entspannung für viele Menschen genau das Richtige. Lányi vergleicht die Wirkung von Unterhaltung mit der Katharsis der Traumarbeit:

Genau wie während der so genannten Traumarbeit [...] lebt auch der sich unterhaltende Leser seine Ängste aus und führt längst fällige Selbstgeißelungsprozesse durch – indem er sie auf ein imaginäres Objekt projiziert, womit er sich identifiziert –, er beschwört seine aus dem Alltag verbannten Dämonen und rechnet mit ihnen ab, ohne sich einer echten Gefahr auszusetzen.⁴⁶

Unterhaltungsliteratur hat somit nicht nur auf der Ebene der instinktiven Bedürfnisse eine Ventilfunktion. Sie muss eine literarische Lücke ausfüllen dürfen – zumal es auch in dieser Nische durchaus niveauvolle, sprachlich meisterhaft ausgeführte Werke gibt. Literatur sollte auch unterhalten dürfen – und die vorwiegend auf Unterhaltung abzielende Literatur muss nicht unbedingt minderwertig sein.⁴⁷

Unterhaltung hat wichtige Funktionen, und obwohl das folgende Zitat sich grundsätzlich auf die Populärliteratur bezieht, gilt es durchaus auch für andere Unterhaltungsformen:

[...] Unterhaltung [kann] wohl nur von notorischem Kultursnobismus für insgesamt oder vorwiegend negativ gehalten werden.

Das Bedürfnis der Unterhaltung, das Trivialliteratur befriedigt, ist so legitim (und so alt) wie irgendein anderes menschliches Bedürfnis [...]. »Unterhaltung« liefert z. B. Abwechslung, Zerstreuung und Ablenkung durch Darbietung von interessierenden und engagierenden, dabei entrückenden und Evasion ermöglichen Kontrastwelten; sie bringt Entspannung und Erholung durch Zurruhesetzung der im Arbeitsprozeß vor allem beanspruchten Leistungsfunktionen, [...] »Unterhaltung« erbringt so zunächst die in unserer Leistungsgesellschaft so entscheidend wichtige Regeneration der Kräfte für den Arbeitsprozeß. Sie kompensiert darüber hinaus durch den Lustgewinn, den sie bietet, die durch die Arbeits- und Lebenswelt aufgenötigten Entbehrungen und Versagungen, sie gleicht die durch diese bewirkten Frustrationen aus, lenkt die hier erzeugten Aggressionen ab. [...] Vor allem aber versöhnt sie positiv mit den für den einzelnen unausweichlichen Normen, Forderungen und Zwängen der Gesellschaft, indem sie in allem Aufbau von Kontrastwelten doch seine tatsächliche Lebenswelt wiederholt und affimiert, nämlich seine Leistungen als wichtig, seine Versagungen als notwendig, seine Verhaltensnormen als richtig bestätigt, indem sie also den einzelnen in seine soziale Bezugsgruppe ein- und an ihre Normen anpaßt [...].⁴⁸

Der letzte Punkt ist durchaus ambivalent zu betrachten, da an dieser Stelle der (mögliche) Ideologietransport stattfindet. Nicht jede Unterhaltung vermittelt Ideologien, beziehungsweise muss die transportierte Wertauffassung nicht zwangsweise mit dem bestehenden System übereinstimmen. So kann Unterhaltung durchaus auch (Gesellschafts-)Kritik formulieren, Warnungen aussprechen und auf Problematiken hinweisen oder aber auch weitgehend ideologiefrei mit dem Leben versöhnen.

Die Flucht vor dem Alltag ist auch die Ursache dafür, dass Unterhaltungsliteratur gerne exotische oder gar ganz irreale Schauplätze wählt – und damit steht wohl auch die Verwendung von Pseudonymen in Zusammenhang. Ein „Hans Müller“ würde allein durch seinen alltäglichen Namen die Abenteuer im fernen Indien schmälern – da musste der Name eines glaubwürdigen Globetrotters herhalten.⁴⁹

Literatur als Gebrauchsgegenstand

In dem Moment also, in dem aus Literatur Massenware wurde, bekam sie den Charakter eines Gebrauchsgegenstandes. Walter Ong beschreibt das Schreiben als Handwerk,⁵⁰ und genau da ist auch die Literatur nun wieder angekommen. Literarische Werke erschienen zu Beginn der Neuzeit anonym und sie blieben dies zum Teil bis ins 18. Jahrhundert hinein. Nach Gutenbergs Erfindung erst

veränderte sich die Situation allmählich: Der Autor wurde zum Aushängeschild seiner Ware und schließlich selbst zum Handelsobjekt. Als der Text als Massenprodukt die Bühne betrat, hatte der Autor wieder neue Gründe für Anonymität und erreichte sie meist durch Pseudonyme. Solche Gründe konnten zum Beispiel Folgende gewesen sein: Als renommierter Autor hatte er sich weniger angesehene oder experimentelle Projekte in Genres vorgenommen, die wohl seinem Ruf geschadet hätten; oder der Autor vertrat politische oder ideologische Ansichten, die er entweder selbst fürchtete oder wiederum nicht auf seine literarische Karriere übertragen sehen wollte. In journalistischen Kreisen gehör(t)en Pseudonyme zum guten Ton – Journalisten spiel(t)en gerne mit diesen Masken, hinter denen man sich verstecken oder sogar Charakterexperimente durchführen konnte (und immer noch kann).⁵¹

Pseudonyme konnten dem Autor aber eben auch aus Verkaufsgründen aufgezwungen werden – András Lányi zeigt die Hintergründe auf, die gleichzeitig auch einen großen Unterschied zwischen der Folklore und der Populärliteratur darlegen: Während die Folklore das Exotische zähmt und in ihre eigene Umgebung einbettet, versucht die Trivialliteratur den Alltag in etwas Besonderes, Aufregendes zu verwandeln und den Leser an exotische Orte, in wahnwitzige Situationen zu entführen. Zu solchen Erzählungen passten „gewöhnliche“ Namen nicht, also verhofften sich die Verlage mehr Umsatz durch ungewöhnliche, fremdklingende Pseudonyme.⁵²

Der Aufstieg der Populärliteratur brachte also den Warencharakter der Literatur wieder zurück in den Fokus und die Bedeutung des Autors wurde dadurch ebenfalls wieder in den Hintergrund gedrückt – der Erzeuger einer Handelsware ist ja im Grunde kaum erwähnenswert. Die Bedeutungslosigkeit des Autors brachte auch mit sich, dass die Urheberrechte nicht allzu genau genommen wurden. Seit der Verbreitung der Trivialliteratur war und blieb die „Intertextualität“ an der Tagesordnung.⁵³

Der Kommerzgedanke ist ein berechtigter Vorwurf: Unterhaltungsliteratur will gefallen und ein möglichst weites Publikum ansprechen. Manchmal ist dabei jedes Mittel recht. Und vielleicht ist hier der Unterschied zwischen schwachen Fließbandheftchen und der Unterhaltungsliteratur von hohem Niveau zu suchen: Es liegt nicht in der Schablonenhaftigkeit und dem Ventilcharakter, auch nicht in der Massenherstellung, sondern im Umgang mit dem Material und in der schriftstellerischen Fertigkeit.

Gewissermaßen sind die Ansichten Schöpflins und Nagypáls verständlich, da sie sich gegen die „Dummheit“ der Trivialliteratur stellen, worunter sie Seichtigkeit und Niveaulosigkeit verstehen. Das Problem dabei ist wieder die Definition einer Grenze – so kann auch die hohe Literatur ebenso unterhalten wie die niedere, die wiederum nicht ausschließlich seichte Unterhaltung auf niedrigstem Niveau zu bieten vermag. (Gerade deshalb ist meiner Meinung nach Lovászys

Beitrag besonders wichtig, der besagt, dass sich auch gute Autoren der Menge widmen sollten, um zu verhindern, dass sich dilettantische Werke verbreiten.)

Die Beiträge aus *Nyugat* umkreisten das Problem wunderbar und die einzelnen Punkte sind bis heute gültig geblieben. In den letzten hundert Jahren hat sich nur die Medienlandschaft verändert – die Probleme und Ansichten sind durchaus gleich. Die Grenze zwischen Hoch und Niedrig, zwischen Kunst und Entertainment oder auch Information und Unterhaltung ist immer schwerer zu erkennen – die Literatur hat sich in viele weitere Nischen eingenistet und viele Richtungen hervorgebracht, die zwar meist nach wie vor ambivalentes Ansehen genießen, aber ihrerseits mittlerweile eigene Klassiker haben. (Denken wir da nur an Comics, Krimiliteratur usw.⁵⁴) Dies gilt für andere erzählende Formen umso mehr, da sie in einer noch größeren Vielfalt existieren. Die Bestimmung der Grenze wird wohl nicht leichter werden – da helfen auch Versuche nicht, wie die Idee von Klaus Gerth, über ein Punktesystem den „Trivialitätsgrad“ von Literatur zu bestimmen.⁵⁵ Der oft unternommene Versuch, eine Dreiteilung hohe Literatur – Unterhaltungsliteratur – Trivialliteratur zu schaffen,⁵⁶ ist wenig zufriedenstellend, da sich hier der individuelle alltägliche Sprachgebrauch und die erschaffene Terminologie gegenseitig im Wege stehen und wiederum kaum für eine Abgrenzung sorgen – zumal Unterhaltungsliteratur häufig auch unter dem Stichwort Trivialliteratur geführt und behandelt wird:

Die ebenso häufige wie simple, schier unausrottbare Gleichsetzung von Unterhaltungs- und Trivialliteratur verwechselt Funktions- mit Wertkriterien und diffamiert pauschal eine zentrale Aufgabe der Literatur. [...]⁵⁷

Die Grenze zwischen Hoch und Niedrig ist jedenfalls sehr schwer zu ziehen – darin sind sich auch die Forscher einig. So schreibt Peter Domagalski:

Unklar bleibt, was den trivialen Gemeinplatz, das Klischee, vom dichterischen Gemeinplatz, dem Topos, trennt und welche Aspekte für die Frage der Funktionslosigkeit von Textbestandteilen maßgebend sind.⁵⁸

Michael Fleischer und Christian Sappok weisen ebenfalls darauf hin, dass sich in jeder Kultur bestimmte Bewertungskriterien durchsetzen, nach denen die Kunst beurteilt wird. Somit entsteht der Kanon, der sich im Zentrum der Zuordnung befindet:

Darüber hinaus gibt es die Peripherie, in der Texte angesiedelt sind, die den tradierten Ansprüchen bzw. Kriterien der hohen Kunst als nicht entsprechend eingestuft wurden und werden. In diesem Bereich lässt sich das Phänomen beobachten, daß der Inhalt der Textmenge instabil ist, d. h. er variiert in der Zeit und im Raum.⁵⁹

Gerade wegen der Veränderbarkeit der Normen in Zeit und Raum ist eine Zuordnung so extrem schwierig. Es gibt Forscher, die Versuche in diese Richtung wagen – andere wiederum distanzieren sich von der Formulierung eines ästhetischen Urteils und klammern den subjektiven Geschmackswert aus den Aufgabenbereichen der Wissenschaft weitgehend aus – außer als empirisches Untersuchungsmittel zur (historischen) Rezeptionsforschung.⁶⁰

Das Zentrum und die Peripherie sind laut Fleischer und Sappok zwei kulturelle Erscheinungen mit eigenen Normen – ein Werk des Trivialen ist nicht unbedingt ein „abgerutschtes“ Kunstwerk, sondern muss eben eigene Voraussetzungen erfüllen.⁶¹ Dies geht in die Richtung, Populärliteratur als Gattung zu betrachten. Obwohl es Stimmen gibt, die dagegen sprechen, da sie die Populärliteratur als Oberbegriff ohne einheitlich bestimmbarer Merkmale sehen,⁶² gibt es durchaus interessante Vorstöße: Hans Dieter Zimmermanns Begriff „Schema-Literatur“ zum Beispiel.⁶³ Damit wäre ein Oberbegriff geschaffen, den man tatsächlich mit (von Zeit und Raum abhängigen) Gattungsmerkmalen bestücken kann – relativ unabhängig von konnotationsbedingten Missverständnissen und qualitativen (Vor-)Urteilen.

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Anmerkungen

- ¹ „Unterhaltungsliteratur“ ist – wie wir noch sehen werden – ein schwieriger Begriff. Hier soll er weitgehend als Oberbegriff für populäre, unterhaltende Formen der Literatur verwendet werden, ohne weiterführende qualitative Differenzierung im Sinne irgendeiner vordefinierten Terminologie.
- ² Zu den Eigenschaften, die als typisch für Trivialliteratur aufgezählt werden, siehe auch: Domagalski, Peter: *Trivialliteratur*. Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1981, S. 101–105.
Klein, Albert – Hecker, Heinz: *Trivialliteratur*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1977, S. 20–31.
Melzer, Helmut: *Trivialliteratur I*. München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1974, S. 60–62.
Nusser, Peter: *Trivialliteratur*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991, S. 5–7.
- ³ Siehe: Janus Pannonius: *Epigrammata lascivia – Pajzán epigrammák*. Budapest: Helikon Kiadó, 1986.
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Siehe auch: Szerb, Antal: *Magyar irodalomtörténet*. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1972, S. 85–87.
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Siehe auch: Kenyeres, Ágnes (Hrsg.): *Magyar életrajzi lexikon 1000–1990*. 2002.
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- ⁹ Siehe: Stichwort *monda*. In: Ortutay et al. (Hrsg.): *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*. III. kötet, K–Né. 1977–1982.
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- ¹¹ Siehe: Stichwort *ponyva*. In: Ortutay, Gyula et al. (Hrsg.): *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon*, IV. kötet, N–Szé. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1977–1982. <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
- ¹² Vgl. Szegedy-Maszák, Mihály: Szájhagyomány és irodalom: kapcsolat vagy ellentét? In: Szemeréki, Ágnes (Hrsg.): *Folklór és irodalom*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 2005, S. 27–39.
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- ¹⁴ Siehe Elekes, Dezső: Régi statisztikai adatok – Írni-olvasni tudás. *Statisztikai Szemle*, 1930/10, S. 934. http://www.ksh.hu/statszemle_archive/viewer.html?ev=1930&szam=10&old=68&lap=4 [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
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- leforgása alatt egyetlen városban azon a Magyarországon, ahol az analfabétizmus 70–80%-os mértékű volt.” Galuska László Pál: Üzletszerű népművelés vagy butítás? – Ponyva az egykori Magyarországon. BOSS Magazin, 2005/Februar–März (eigene Übersetzung). <http://www.gmconsulting.hu/inf/cikkek/236/index.php> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]*
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- ¹⁶ Die protestantischen Schulen lehnten die Ratio Educationis entschieden ab.
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- ¹⁹ „1809-ből is fönnyomadt eladási adat, a Hazai és Külföldi Tudósítások c. lap közli; az akkor ötmilliós magyar nemzet évi 150.000 kalendáriumra tartott igényt, viszont újságot éppen csak 2.000 példányban járatott, könyvből pedig nem vásárolt évi 500 példánynál többet [...]” Galuska: *Üzletszerű népművelés vagy butítás? – Ponyva az egykori Magyarországon*, 2005 (eigene Übersetzung).
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- ²⁰ Siehe: Kókay, György – Buzinkay, Géza – Murányi, Gábor: *A magyar sajtó története*. Budapest: Sajtóház Kiadó, 2001, S. 152. Siehe auch: Kovács, Máté: Az olvasóközönség, könyvkiadás, könyvtárak a dualizmus korában. In: Kovács Máté (Hrsg.): *A könyv és a könyvtár a magyar társadalom életében 1849-től 1945-ig*. I. rész: 1963–1970, S. 96. <http://mek.niif.hu/06800/06832/pdf/> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
- ²¹ Siehe: Nyomtatott és on-line sajtótermékek. *Statisztikai Tükör*, 2007/2. www.mediainfo.hu/file/download.php?id=79 [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
- ²² Siehe: Lányi, András: *Az írástudók áru(vá)lása*. Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1988, S. 131–132.
- ²³ „Az írók túlnyomó része újságíró volt, vagy legalábbis újságok számára dolgozott. A sajtó adott az irodalomnak kenyemet, de viszonyzásul szolgálatára kényszerítette.“ Schöpflin, Aladár: *A magyar irodalom története a XX. században*. Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1990, S. 106 (eigene Übersetzung).
- ²⁴ Lengyel, Menyhért: *Üzlet és irodalom*. Nyugat, 1910/10. <http://www.epa.oszk.hu/00000/00022/00056/01590.htm> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
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- ²⁶ „a gyors termelés szörnyezője“ Ebd., S. 175 (eigene Übersetzung).
- ²⁷ Zum Thema *Nyugat* siehe z. B.:
- Angyalosi, Gergely et al. (Hrsg.): *Nyugat népe – tanulmányok a Nyugatról és koráról*. Budapest: Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, 2009.
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Nyugat (Zeitschrift). In: Országos Széchényi Könyvtár: Elektronikus Periodika Archívum és Adatbázis, Elektronische Periodika-Datenbank der Ungarischen Nationalbibliothek. <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00022/nyugat.htm> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]

Die Zeitschrift *Nyugat* hatte es in ihrer über drei Jahrzehnte dauernden Existenz nicht leicht: Vom liberalen Bürgertum abhängig, das selbst keine allzu gefestigte soziale Stellung hatte, musste sie sich der konservativen und weitaus finanzstärkeren Konkurrenz stellen. Die politische Situation stellte für liberale Gedanken ebenfalls ein hartes Pflaster dar: Nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg, der demokratischen Herbstrosenrevolution von 1918, der kurzen kommunistischen Räterepublik von 1919 „konsolidierte“ sich die Lage schließlich in der rechtsgerichteten und konservativen Horthy-Ära. Ab dieser Zeit war Antisemitismus und in Folge auch unverhüllte Judenverfolgung (Numerus Clausus 1920, Judengesetze von 1938, 1939, 1941) an der Tagesordnung, was auf geradem Weg zum Holocaust im Zweiten Weltkrieg (Deportationen 1944) führte. Dass die Redakteure und Autoren auch zu den widrigsten Zeiten die Stellung hielten – teils sogar aus dem Exil –, bewundernswert. Die Mitarbeiter schafften es, die Zeitschrift auch finanziell über Wasser zu halten, auch wenn die Auflagenzahlen von Viertausend in den Glanzzeiten (1917–1918) auf einige wenige Hundert zurückgingen. 1941 erlosch mit dem Tod des letzten Chefredakteurs Mihály Babits die Publikationsgenehmigung. Einer der Redakteure, Gyula Illyés, führte allerdings eine Nachfolgezeitschrift mit dem Titel *Magyar Csillag* (1941–1944) weiter.

²⁸ Das Bürgertum war in Ungarn durch seine späte Entwicklung eine ambivalente Gesellschaftsschicht – lange Zeit gab es nur Adel und Bauerntum. Als in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts durch die gesellschaftliche und technische Entwicklung die Ausübung von „bürgerlichen Funktionen“ immer dringlicher wurde, waren die meisten Bauern nicht in der Lage, diese Rollen zu übernehmen, und die Gentry betrachtete solche Aufgaben als unter ihrer Würde. Die Industrialisierung hatte zur Folge, dass viele Einwanderer und Einwanderinnen – „Fremde“ – im Land benötigt wurden. Fremd blieben diese Menschen freilich nicht lange, die Assimilation vollzog sich in kürzester Zeit – auch bedingt durch die parallel dazu verlaufenden grundlegenden Veränderungen der Urbanisation. Siehe: Schöpflin: *A magyar irodalom története a XX. században*, 1990, S. 50.

²⁹ Siehe: Fábri, Anna – Steinert, Ágota (Hrsg.): *A Hét. Politikai és irodalmi szemle. 1890–1899 Válogatás*. Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1978. Vgl.: Erki, Edit: *Kávéház-sírató*. Budapest: Officia Nova, 1995, S. 10.

³⁰ Zoltán Kenyeres zählt die „Zutaten“ des Erfolgkrezeptes *Nyugat* auf: „Neben dem durchschlagskräftigen Dichter Endre Ady und dem bahnbrechenden Band *Új Versek* wurde eine besondere Herausgeber-Persönlichkeit benötigt, auf deren richtungsweisenden Ruf die Autoren reagieren. Diese Herausgeber-Persönlichkeit war Ernő Osvát. Ein Publizist mit scharfer Feder wurde gebraucht, den das Publikum kennt und akzeptiert und der das Gefechtsrasseln von Debatten auf sich nimmt. Dieser Publizist war Ignatius. Ein besonnener, rationaler Kritiker wurde benötigt, dessen Meinung Autoren und Leser zugleich schätzen. Das war Aladár Schöpflin. Ein gesetzter, älterer Autor wurde gebraucht, der Ansehen genießt und der schon allein durch Zur-Verfügung-Stellung seines Namens hilft. Dieser Autor war Zoltán Ambrus (obwohl er sich bis Oktober ziert). Ein gebildeter Literaturliebhaber wurde benötigt, der kritische Angriffe vorbereitet kontern kann, der sich auch in finanziellen Kreisen sicher bewegt und auf den auch bei der Erschließung finanzieller Quellen Verlass ist. Das war Miksa Fenyő. Schließlich wurde ein junger Mann gebraucht, der empfindsam genug war, um selbst Literat zu sein, aber gleichgültig genug, um die Rolle des Mädchens für alles in der Redaktion übernehmen zu können. Dieser junge Mann war Oszkár Gellért. Aus ihnen setzte sich die *Nyugat* ins Leben rufende Gruppe zusammen. Von denen, die noch zu ihnen stießen, ist – in

Hinsicht auf die spätere Geschichte von Nyugat – der im Figyelő noch als Dichter geführte Lajos Hatvany hervorgehoben zu erwähnen.“

„Az átütő erejű költő, Ady Endre és a korlátokat áttörő kötet, az *Új versek* mellett kellett egy rendkívüli szerkesztő egyéniségek, akinek hívó szavát elfogadják az irányba tartó írók. Ez a szerkesztő egyénisége volt Osvát Ernő. Kellett egy éles tollú publicista, akit ismer és elfogad a közönség, és aki vállalja a viták vivőcsörtéit. Ez a publicista volt Ignatius. Kellett egy higgadt, józan műbíráló, akinek véleményét írók és olvasók egyaránt méltányolják. Ez volt Schöpflin Aladár. Kellett egy megállapodott, idősebb író, aki köztiszteletben áll, és aki már avval is segít, ha szerepelhetetik a nevét. Ez az író volt Ambrus Zoltán (igaz, októberig kérte magát). Kellett egy művelt irodalombarát, aki felkészülten tud visszaválaszolni kritikai támadásokra, emellett jól forgolódik pénzügyi körökben, és számítani lehet rá az anyagi források felkutatásában. Ez volt Fenyő Miksa. Végül kellett egy fiatalembert, aki elég érzékeny ahhoz, hogy maga is író legyen, és elég érzékenység nélküli, hogy betöltsse a szerkesztőségi minden szerepét. Ez a fiatalembert volt Gellért Oszkár. Belőlük toborzódott össze a Nyugatot életre hívó kis tábor. A hozzájuk csatlakozók közül – a Nyugat későbbi története szempontjából – a Figyelőben még költőként is szereplő Hatvany Lajost kell külön kiemelni.“ Kenyeres, Zoltán: *A Nyugat periódusai. 1989* (eigene Übersetzung). <http://kenyeres.zoltan.googlepages.com/> [anyugatperi%C3%B3dusai] [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]

³¹

Zum Thema *Kaffehausliteratur* siehe z. B.:

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- 43 „[...] államosított tudatipar szolgálatában állt.“ Lányi: *Az írástudók áru(vá válása*, 1988, S. 148 (eigene Übersetzung).
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- 46 „Ugyanúgy, mint az úgynévezett álommunka során [...], a szórakozó olvasó is kiéli félelméit, régóta esedékes önbüntető preocedúrákat hajt végre – kivetítve egy képzeletheli tárgyra, mellyel azonosul –, felidézi a nappali életéből szárműzzött démonokat, s leszámol velük anélküül, hogy magát valódi veszélynek tenné ki.“ Lányi: *Az írástudók áru(vá válása*, 1988, S. 139 (eigene Übersetzung).
- 47 Siehe: Klein, Hecker: *Trivialliteratur*, 1977, S. 90–91.
- 48 Waldmann, Günter: *Theorie und Didaktik der Trivialliteratur*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1973, S. 12–13.
- 49 Einige Beispiele aus der ungarischen Literatur: Jenő Rejtő, der „König der Schundliteratur“ hatte sowieso schon eine herkunftsbedingte Namensänderung von Jenő Reich hinter sich, veröffentlichte unter den Pseudonymen P. Howard oder auch Gibson Lavery. Heutige Beispiele sind der Orientforscher und Autor von Abenteuerromanen László L. Lőrincz alias Leslie L. Lawrence und Éva Molnár alias Vavyan Fable, eine erfolgreiche Krimiautorin.
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Rufschädigung: László Garaczi wird hinter Laura Spiegelmann, einer pornographischen Bloggerin, vermutet.
Interview: *Garaczi: Nem én vagyok Spiegelmann Laura*, 31. 10. 2008; In: Litera.hu <http://www.litera.hu/hirek/garaczi-nem-en-vagyok-spiegelmann-laura> [Letzter Besuch der angegebenen Websites am 17. 07. 2013.]
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- ⁵⁵ Siehe: Melzer: *Trivialliteratur I*, 1974, S. 62.
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- ⁶⁰ Siehe: Kreuzer, Helmut: Trivialliteratur als Forschungsproblem. In: Dettmar, Ute (Hrsg.): *Kitsch: Texte und Theorien*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun. GmbH & Co., 2007, S. 261–264.
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‘High’ and ‘Low’ – The Discussion of Popular Literature in the Journal *Nyugat*

Summary

This article addresses the complexities of the distinction between “high” and “low” literature. I offer a brief survey of the development of so-called *Unterhaltungsliteratur*, or light fiction, in Hungary, followed by a presentation of the essays and articles on this topic in the Hungarian literary journal *Nyugat* (1908–1941), which the passing of time notwithstanding retain much of their relevance today.

Keywords: Unterhaltungsliteratur, popular literature, trivial literature, mass entertainment, *Nyugat*

SIX SECRETS DU COQ DE MADAME CLÉOPHAS

(PRÉFACE À LA TRADUCTION FRANÇAISE,
À PARAÎTRE EN 2013 AUX ÉDITIONS CIRCÉ)

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À l'occasion de la prochaine parution française du roman de Gyula Krúdy, intitulé *Le Coq de madame Cléophas*, cette brève préface tente d'éclairer quelques particularités du texte, tout en imitant la structure de celui-ci. Regroupé autour de six aspects fondamentaux de l'écriture krudyenne, le petit essai introductif propose autant d'incursions dans l'univers très complexe de ce grand écrivain hongrois, disparu il y a 80 ans.

Mots-clés : Nyirség, mythocritique, littérature fantastique, Autriche-Hongrie

(disparitions)

En général, c'est au premier chant du coq que les fantômes s'en vont. Signal infaillible de la retraite des esprits, c'est aussi le moment du soulagement pour les humains. Il arrive cependant que le revenant cherche à attirer ses confrères précisément par l'intermédiaire de ce gallinacé dont la crête rouge se prête si bien, paraît-il, à la fabrication d'une délicieuse soupe à effet libidinal. Quoi qu'il en soit, Krúdy semble ériger le coq en une sorte de messager de l'au-delà, envoyé pour avertir le monde des vivants. La place honorifique tenue par le coq dans le titre de ce récit singulier reste néanmoins énigmatique ; il en va de même pour l'intrigue. Si l'incipit nous informe que Pistoli est ressuscité et qu'il se montre discret sur son expérience d'outre-tombe, le lecteur s'attend surtout au développement des aventures de ce séducteur fantasque, connu du roman *Héliotrope* où l'on assistait à sa mort et à son enterrement. Et pourtant, surprise : non seulement on apprend rien sur ce qui lui est arrivé au royaume des morts, mais l'incorrigible noceur d'autrefois s'intéresse à présent davantage à l'injustice sociale qu'aux femmes. Parti à la recherche du volatile disparu, il écoute attentivement l'histoire de la vie d'une femme déchue dont le véritable nom restera dans l'ombre jusqu'au bout. Cette femme mystérieuse retrouve le coq perdu, avant de disparaître elle-même, tandis que le cheval de Pistoli s'éclipse à son

tour sans laisser de traces. Les énigmes persistent tout au long du récit, les circonstances de ces multiples disparitions ne sont jamais éclaircies, le lecteur ensorcelé se perd en conjectures délicieuses. De quoi se régaler.

(superstitions)

On se retrouve donc d'entrée de jeu devant des mystères qui ne font que s'épaissir dans le paysage brumeux de l'Est hongrois, la patrie de l'écrivain. Parente éloignée des contrées de Tourgueniev, la région du *Nyírség* est l'empire des bouleaux et des cigales, le royaume de la jeunesse de l'écrivain, immortalisé aussi dans le très beau roman au titre quelque peu intrigant, *N.N.* Dans cette région, rêves et croyances se côtoient : à propos de la lune (la pleine lune favorise la croissance de l'argent), des Tsiganes (ces nomades indomptables se passionnent pour les enfants blonds et pour les coqs « à la tête rouge »), ou du diable qui, fidèle compagnon des êtres humains, se transforme à sa guise en bouc cornu ou bien en chien noir. Et les croyances qui se rattachent aux revenants sont aussi à l'honneur : le feu tremble, la porte claque, les draps se mettent à flotter, les arbres ouvrent leurs bras et la chouette hulule. Le texte a tout d'un conte fantastique, voire gothique, où le temps se trouve suspendu à la manière des *Mille et une nuits* et où une seule nuit, grâce à la magie du verbe, équivaut au cycle des saisons. Ainsi, Pistoli franchit la porte de l'auberge lors d'une venteuse nuit printanière et en ressort le lendemain matin, comme à l'issue d'un rêve, par un temps d'automne déjà touchée par la gelée blanche. Pas étonnant qu'une fois sa mission remplie, le chercheur de coq se félicite d'avoir échappé à la perdition et se barricade à jamais dans sa maison fortifiée. Même les revenants tiennent à leur sécurité personnelle.

(musique)

Il faut bien noter qu'un atout stylistique majeur accompagne ce tableau spectral : le rythme haletant de la prose. Krúdy, ce prophète de la génialité sensuelle, sait parfaitement alterner description littéraire et langue parlée, mais il réussit ici un vrai coup de maître par la transposition en prose de la langue des animaux, réputée impénétrable. Constituée de six chapitres, la structure du récit semble imiter le chant du coq. Nous avons quatre brefs chapitres préparatoires, axés sur la figure de Pistoli, ensuite un très long monologue, comme d'une seule traite, qui narre les périples de la femme vagabonde ; et pour finir, il y a le bref épilogue de l'aube. Si le long chapitre rappelle la situation récurrente dans l'œuvre de Krúdy, celle du voyageur désabusé qui relate à son interlocuteur l'histoire de sa propre vie tourmentée – tel est aussi le contexte dans *Le Compagnon de voyage* –, com-

ment ne pas songer ici aux saccades du cocorico, à ces vocalises hésitantes suivies d'un cri prolongé qui s'achève sur une note finale brusque et rauque? Le rythme musical arrive à tenir en haleine le lecteur non seulement par une époustouflante technique d'amplification mais aussi grâce au joyau de l'art « krudyen » : la comparaison, porteuse d'un surprenant effet esthétique. À titre d'exemple, voici le tableau décrivant l'assaut des mendiants hideux : « ils nous suivaient, se roulaient comme des mottes de terre mises en mouvement, rampaient à la façon de crapauds hideux, sautaient tels des pies boiteuses, aboyaient comme des chiens touchés à la patte ». C'est du grotesque, digne du pinceau d'un Jérôme Bosch.

(noms)

Chez Krúdy, les noms ne sont pas fortuits et participent toujours, bien que subrepticement, de la symbolique du texte. *Sinbad*, son héros le plus connu, semble ne rien avoir en commun avec le marin des contes orientaux, excepté le nom ; il navigue pourtant, à sa façon, à travers le temps et l'espace magyar. Le propriétaire du coq, Cléophas, fait d'abord penser au personnage de l'évangile de Luc [Luc 24:13–35], à ce disciple qui a rencontré Jésus sur la route d'Emmaüs et qui a eu droit, au cours du repas consommé en compagnie du ressuscité, au miracle christique. Sauf que chez Krúdy, le porteur de ce nom est d'emblée absent du récit car il se trouve en prison pour quelque délit inhérent à son patronyme ! La dissémination ludique, voire ironique de l'épisode biblique transparaît alors au fil des motifs. Pistoli, le ressuscité impie se dit apôtre, il emprunte la route pour arriver à l'auberge, comme le font les disciples bibliques. La femme anonyme disparaît après avoir révélé sa vie, à l'instar de Jésus. Quant à l'auberge du repas évangélique, elle s'appelle ici « Affriole » : elle incite, comme l'endroit apostolique, à retrouver la joie de vivre, et Pistoli est sur le point de redevenir le galant d'autrefois. Mais, comparé au lieu saint d'Emmaüs, l'auberge reste un espace trompeur qui éveille la sensualité plutôt que la foi. Si Cléophas retrouvait la joie en apprenant le retour du Sauveur, ici c'est madame Cléophas qui sera joyeuse, et cela en récupérant son coq, non pas Pistoli. Le texte opère un habile détournement du motif de la résurrection et nous offre également un bel exemple de cohabitation entre croyances païennes et foi chrétienne.

(perversions)

Le récit se lit cependant, avant tout, comme le catalogue des pathologies humaines. Et du moment que le coq symbolise la virilité, il n'est pas fortuit de voir défiler dans ce texte une pléthore d'hommes tourmentés par les passions les plus

diverses. Celles-ci sont insolites, sulfureuses et violentes, et nous offrent le spectacle d'une véritable descente aux enfers des vices, tout comme dans *Le Prix des Dames*. Il y a le père incestueux dépressif qui ne peut se dominer et qui, à l'issue de ses aveux pour le moins surprenants, passe à l'acte en déshonorant sa fille. Il y a le roi des mendiants, une sorte de guérisseur sadomasochiste, qui donne et reçoit le fouet avec le même plaisir exacerbé. Il y a l'ingénieur fou, jaloux à l'extrême, à la fois fétichiste et voyeur qui couvre de baisers ses lettres d'amour, comme si elles étaient ses maîtresses, et trouve son plaisir à regarder par le trou de la serrure mère et fille couchées ensemble dans le même lit. Pistoli est, lui aussi, adepte du voyeurisme : il épie ses visiteurs par un trou du haut de son grenier. Le poète donquichottesque, asexué, n'a qu'un seul désir : qu'on appelle par son prénom le grand coq qu'il apporte en cadeau à la famille de sa bien-aimée. Et que penser de l'acteur, cet ignoble faux-monnayeur, escroc invétéré, qui utilise la femme comme source de revenus et finit par la troquer contre un dogue danois ? « Dans chaque être humain, la passion est un enfer à part entière », constate notre femme errante. Pour quelqu'un qui, comme elle, est passée par l'enfer de la perversion, le seul homme digne d'être étudié reste le revenant : Pistoli. Le coq retrouvé pourrait être le gage de leur union.

(encyclopédie)

Enfin, le récit peut se lire également sous un angle sociohistorique, comme l'encyclopédie nostalgique de la Hongrie d'autan, celle de la Double Monarchie. On y évoque des bals où l'on danse sur les airs de la valse viennoise, on y détaille de succulentes recettes de repas princiers, héritées du temps de l'impératrice Marie-Thérèse, on y disserte sur le code de conduite de l'aristocratie déclassée faisant l'éloge du sentiment de l'honneur mais s'adonnant déjà à de honteuses machinations, on nous renseigne sur les pratiques vestimentaires des suicidés et sur les astuces du cosmétique féminin des dames flétries, on y décrit d'extatiques processions religieuses et l'austère vie au couvent, on y détaille d'atroces maladies du corps et leurs vigoureux remèdes populaires. Et que dire alors de la géographie des vins et des bières, des techniques inépuisables de la séduction féminine ou du gai savoir des fleurs ? On retrouve donc toutes les facettes du pays d'avant la Grande Guerre que Krúdy n'a cessé de chanter toute sa vie, cette époque d'un âge d'or imaginaire, figée dans son intemporalité. *Le Coq de madame Cléophas*, commencé à l'automne de 1919, soit peu après la chute de la République des Conseils (1 août 1919) et publié dans un recueil de nouvelles [*Le rêve du brigand*, Budapest, Athenaeum, 1920] peu avant le Traité de Trianon (4 juin 1920), ne s'intéresse guère aux événements historiques qui ont secoué de fond en comble la Hongrie. Ce texte n'est rien moins que la « révolte silencieuse de l'âme lyrique »

contre les temps troubles, le triomphe de la poésie sur la réalité, un petit chef-d'œuvre d'un grand écrivain.

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Six Secrets of Kleofásné kakasa (preface to the French translation, 2013, Éditions Circé)

Summary

This short preface, written on the occasion of the publication in French of Gyula Krúdy's novel *Le Coq de madame Cléophas* (*Kleofásné kakasa*), explains some of the peculiarities of the text while also mimicking its structure. Centering on six fundamental aspects of Krúdy's writing, this essay make six incursions into the complex universe of this great Hungarian writer, who passed away 80 years ago.

Keywords: Nyírség, myth-criticism, fantastic literature, Austria-Hungary

THE AESTHETICS OF THE PERIODICAL *MAGYAR MŰHELY*

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The Hungarian Avant-Garde periodical *Magyar Műhely* has been published in Paris since 1962, from the mid-1960s on with the collaboration of Hungarian emigrants living in Vienna. The paper deals with the periodical (layout, cover design, typography) and with the published contributions (works of art, illustrations, photo documentation on the one side, texts on the other: literature, theoretical essays and documentary material) focusing on their materiality. The process of production as well as of the reception of *Magyar Műhely* seem to be describable correctly if its diverse media formats (periodical, text, picture, hybrid formats, such as, for example, picture poems) are understood in their materiality. The special variant of the avantgardistic aesthetics embodied in *Magyar Műhely*, that it provided a platform for experiment and innovation as well as for the “other”, correspond with the fact that it was published by people on the margins for a marginalised, emigrant public. The paper discusses these aesthetic, organizational and political issues focusing on works of geometric art and visual poetry printed in the periodical.

Keywords: *Magyar Műhely*, neo-avant-garde, Alpár Bujdosó, János Mogyik, Pál Nagy, emigration, avantgardistic aesthetics, Cold War

Magyar Műhely, a Hungarian language periodical, published in Paris since 1962, recently¹ reached its 50th anniversary.² During this time the periodical changed significantly – not least because the political and cultural environment changed. The most radical change happened around 1990 when the Soviet-dominated Eastern European political system fell apart and when *Magyar Műhely* moved to Budapest. This paper focuses on one of the changes in the history of the periodical, the shift from modernism to Avant-Garde which happened in the early 1970s.

The environment of *Magyar Műhely* was defined in its early years after 1962 by the non-acceptance of the Stalinist rupture in the Hungarian cultural history between 1948 and 1956. These two dates mark decisive events in the cultural history of Hungary as well as in the lives of the editors of the periodical. In 1948 the Stalinist version of the socialist cultural politics was established in Hungary. The periodical *Újhold* was withheld in May 1948, the artist society *Europai Iskola* was at

the end of the year 1948 also withheld: the two circles where most of those mentioned below belonged. There remained only one version of the modernism, the so-called Socialist Realism, possible. On the other hand in 1956 emigrated those who founded the periodical six years later. As they lived outside Hungary they were able to discuss alternative modernist traditions openly. That was the reason for their interest in the people who were silenced in Hungary after 1948 such as the poet Sándor Weöres. That was the reason for their interest in the central figure of the Hungarian Avant-Garde, the writer, artist and organizer Lajos Kassák. How was this interest awakened, by which impulses was it motivated and formed? The interest in Kassák, to mention just one, was motivated by the activities of the gallery owner Denise René and the artist Victor Vasarely who succeeded in organizing Kassák exhibitions in Paris in 1960 and 1963 and who invited Kassák to Paris in 1961 and 1963 – thus at least partly by activities outside Hungary.

What the editors of *Magyar Műhely* were looking for and what they found – especially in the more progressive institutions of the migration such as in the Márton Szepsi Csombor, Kelemen Mikes and Peter Bornemisza circles, in *Irodalmi Újság* and in *Új Látóhatár*³ – was precisely this tradition. That is why they published Milán Füst and Miklós Szentkuthy. In the end, what Weöres, Füst, Szentkuthy, Kassák stood for in 1948, can be summarized in the word ‘modernity’. After 1948 Kassák produced art too. Nevertheless, what he made in the 1960s can be called productive only in a limited sense. The works were partly a specific version of the actual lyric abstract mood and mainly reproductions of his own works of the 1920s or recreations in the style of the 1920s. What was exhibited in the Gallery Denise René in 1960 and 1963 can be therefore called neither Avant-Garde nor Neo-Avant-Garde.

Austria

Magyar Műhely was published in Paris but it represented the Hungarian emigration of the time throughout Western Europe and the US and was produced with the collaboration of Hungarian emigrants living in Vienna as well as others. The distribution of issues Nos 1 and 2 in Austria was managed by Sándor Lóránd Surányi, after issue No. 2 by the bookseller Rudolf Novák; contributions came from the theoretician Tibor Hanák (issues No. 6 and No. 10), the sculptor Sándor Lóránd Surányi (issue No. 10), the painter János Mogyik (issue No. 11), Friedrich Czagan wrote a text on sculpture symposia (issue No. 19); on 21 April, 1967 a *Magyar Műhely* presentation took place in Vienna (issue No. 27); Alpár Bujdosó's *Elbeszélés* was published in issue No. 31 (1968). That Austria was a place where the periodical was distributed, from whence contributions came and where the periodical was presented through readings, was based on the fact that

Austria had been the first stop of most migrants of 1956 and had therefore a relatively large Hungarian minority.

To understand *Magyar Műhely* we have to see the Hungarian emigration to the West as a group of people aware of each other, we have to take into consideration the emigration wave of 1956 and to appreciate the role of the emigrant student organization UFHS.⁴ At the same time we have to take into account that in Hungary and not only in the West there existed a dissident culture and a public for it. And it is important to emphasize that figures of the non-Stalinist culture had a place in Hungary as well. This can be shown e.g. with the exhibitions of Kassák in Városi Könyvtár Esztergom 1957, Csók István Galéria Budapest 1957, Magyar Írók Szövetsége Budapest 1962, Fiatal Művészek Klubja Budapest 1965, Műveszklub Kecskemét 1965, Megyei Könyvtár Kaposvár 1966, Fényes Adolf Terem Budapest 1967, etc. Thus artists whose public presentations were withheld in 1948 slowly found places on the margins of the official cultural politics.

Despite the fact that a list of similar names could be compiled regarding other Western European migrant centres, it is apparent that in the shift from the openness for and interest in the Hungarian modern of the 1940s (motivated by its general suppression in Hungary) to a more radical, experimental and productive cultural praxis, a “group” in Austria played a decisive role. In 1972 János Megyik and Alpár Bujdosó presented at a *Magyar Műhely* meeting a manifest on the Nothing,⁵ Tibor Gáyör, Dóra Maurer and János Megyik turned to the geometric abstraction, the plan was agreed to organize the meetings of the periodical alternately in France and in Austria. These meetings had the primary goal of unfolding the artistic praxis: each participant had a limited time to present something, collective works were made, the work of others were commented upon and discussions took place. What happened at those meetings was printed in the following issues of the periodical. And: What happened at those meetings is called Neo-Avant-Garde in cultural history.

The Neo-Avant-Garde Periodical as a Cultural Form

The Periodical *Magyar Műhely* was intended to be published by a series of editorial boards six times per year. The formation of these editorial boards and its changes were determining what *Magyar Műhely* stood for. An editorial board with six members was responsible for the first issues, after issue No. 6 (1963) the board included Ervin Pátkai as an editor for art, after issue No. 10 (1964) the editorial board was reduced to four – among others because one of them, János Parancs, returned to Hungary –, after issue No. 14 (1966) the board was reduced to three members. After issue Nos 41–42 (1973) the board was joined by Magyar Műhely – Írók és Olvasók Szervezete (Hungarian Atelier – Society of Writers and

Readers); after issue Nos 43–44 (1974) by Magyar Műhely Munkaközösség (Hungarian Atelier Working Group). After this issue Pál Nagy and Tibor Papp were editors until issue Nos 56–57 (1978) when they together with Alpár Bujdosó, took over the responsibility. This board was dissolved only with issue No. 75 (1990) as a new period in the history of the periodical, according to the political changes, started. From the moment the neoavantgardistic shift of the periodical was grasped, there were Hungarian migrants in Vienna who were active as editorial members: Bujdosó and Mogyik as the leaders of Magyar Műhely – Írók és Olvasók Szervezete and Bujdosó becoming the third editor.

Magyar Műhely was the place as well as the means of cultural production. Numerous contributions came into being, commissioned by the editorial board or were conceived by their authors for this opportunity for publication. It was no accident that the periodical was named Műhely, that is a common working place, an atelier.

Looking at the contributions in *Magyar Műhely* the questions to be asked are: Which ideas and concepts are disseminated here? How are they related to the contemporary social and political regime? What is the ideological and symbolic work established here? What is their part in the recreation of their world?

The place of *Magyar Műhely* in the field of force of the Cold War has yet to be defined. Three examples illustrate that this definition will be not a simple task: in the first issue the editors published an (unpaid) advertisement for a periodical in Budapest – which caused sharp criticism of the emigration. The argument was that they supported the murderous regime of János Kádár who was responsible for killing the fellow combatants of the 1956 uprising who had been unable to flee abroad. The return of János Parancs, one of the determining editors of the first years, can be seen as a betrayal of the emigration too. Pál Nagy, one of the editors, was at the same time assistant to Dezső Albrecht and Eugene L. Metz in the Fellowship Bureau of Free Europe, a US financed centre of Cold War agitation. And the third: at the *Magyar Műhely* meetings in Marly-le-Roi and in Hadersdorf Béla Pomogáts and Miklós Béládi participated, two deputies of the official Hungarian cultural policy, together with a few others whose names are nowhere mentioned, who were all official and unofficial collaborators of the Hungarian State Police.

The aesthetic solution of the first years of the magazine was characterized by the cover design on the one hand and with Ervin Pátkai as editor for art on the other. Remarkably these two did not fit seamlessly together. Whereas the cover design follows the rules of the pop-aesthetics of the moment (and is comparable to the design of lifestyle magazines and covers of pop music records of the time), Pátkai belonged to the European abstract movement *Informel*. Thus *Magyar Műhely* also gave in this visual sense a place for a whole range of up-to-date movements (the new, so to speak). What Marie-Joseph Philippon, Erika Éliás and Tibor Papp, the three successive designers of the covers, produced, was, together

with the art represented by Ervin Pátkai part of the fashionable and established modernism of the time.

In *Magyar Műhely* modernistic ideas and concepts were disseminated in the early years. The editors and most of the contributors were students involved in emigrant politics establishing the cultural space where representatives of the Hungarian and international modern could meet. So they printed James Joyce and Miklós Szentkuthy. They provided space for discussions of geometric art and for the interpretation of non-Marxist philosophy. After the neoavantgardistic turn of the magazine the decisive idea was to have a space for creativity, allowing for the reception and discussion of the contemporary avantgardistic developments. Thus *Magyar Műhely* was a sort of extra territory in which to work and to create, free from the repressions of real socialism.

Which does not mean that there are no traces of repression here, because the activities of *Magyar Műhely* were formed precisely by the consciousness of being an exception. One of the driving forces was to unfold a creative process uninterrupted by ideologically-motivated police intervention. Nevertheless, since all these activities took place, beginning in 1962, at a time when the socialist Eastern Block was becoming less and less hermetically closed, the Iron Curtain proved to be more and more permeable, modern and avantgardistic ideas circulated between the different Western and Eastern European countries. Modernistic and avantgardistic movements were formed in the socialist countries, unfolding specific local variants. A communication network came into existence and *Magyar Műhely* became one of the junctions in this network.

What were the social conditions where all that, the periodical and the meetings of *Magyar Műhely*, took place? At first it was that of the emigration. The special variant of the avantgardistic aesthetics embodied in *Magyar Műhely*, that it provided a platform for experiment and innovation as well as for the “other”, corresponds with the fact that it was published by people on the margins for a marginalised, emigrant public. At the same time it was the social condition generated by the creative space itself. But first of all it was formed and distorted by the conditions of the Cold War.

To be the “other” was not intended by *Magyar Műhely* but it happened implicitly. Bujdosó was seen by his Austrian colleague Friedrich Hahn as the “other”. The same was agreed by Dóra Maurer regarding the fact that she had no connections to her Austrian colleagues.⁶ This otherness motivated the migrants to work on their own oeuvre in intellectual isolation and made them to a high degree the embodiment of characteristic features of international trends of the time such as e.g. the existentialistic estrangement.

What does emigration mean here? It means that they were rooted neither and at the same time both in the Hungarian and in the West European (French, Austrian) cultural life. This is visible in *Magyar Műhely* and this is confirmed by the autobi-

ography of Pál Nagy,⁷ in discussions with Alpár Bujdosó and by documents in Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum and in private archives. As a matter of fact, considering the Hungarian developments,⁸ considering the Hungarian-language avant-gardistic periodical in Yugoslavia *Új Symposion*, considering what happened in comparable French and Austrian journals like *Tel Quel* after 1960 and in *Neue Texte* after 1968, what *Magyar Műhely* had was the migration. It gave an identity and a task and it provided, during the changing circumstances of the Cold War, the background to be able to invent and unfold Strategies to increase the grade of influence in Hungary itself.

What was, as to be discussed further below, not a detached space from the social and political reality. This is visible in any social and political analysis of what happened, the presence of Hungarian creative artists, the members of the State Police and the emigrants at the meetings, the inbound voyage of the emigrants and the outbound voyage of the Hungarian writers and artists or in the fact that it happened on “neutral territory”.

Since *Magyar Műhely* was an institutionalized cultural form, it justified the society which made it possible. It was what the young, culturally open-minded migrants presented after the successful completion of their studies as an addition to the established emigrant panels and the same time what, according to the official cultural policy of Hungary the loyal emigration had to be: an enrichment, an alternative which accepted and supported the existing Hungarian culture.

Materiality

Looking at the periodical (layout, cover design, typography) and the published contributions (art works, illustrations, photo documentation on the one side, texts such as literature, theoretical essays and documentary material on the other) by focusing on their materiality we can find a series of characteristics.

Magyar Műhely has a traditional format. When compared to the other Hungarian emigrant periodicals it nevertheless gives a modernistic impression. It is a small format and therefore looks convenient. It is not made for a dignified reader but rather for a mobile one with rationalized space.

In 1972 *Magyar Műhely* celebrated its tenth anniversary. This obviously brought about the change. The periodical did not appear for months. The editors seem to have been standing before a psychological barrier. The question was how to continue the project.

The shift happened without a clear long term intention: in the beginning the editors published a progressive student periodical. They were interested in the new, what they encountered in Paris and what was in a sort of contrast with the rest of the emigration. What they looked for was on the modernistic edge of what the

Szepsi Csombor etc. circles, *Irodalmi Újság* and *Új Látóhatár* appreciated and propagated. *Magyar Műhely* was thus in contrast with the rest of the emigration in the sense that it favoured one-sidedly the modernistic arts and literature. They invited everybody successful. So e.g., Ervin Pátkai who was presented at the second (1961) as well as at the third (1963) Paris Biennale and for whom Informel and Fluxus were important. That was what for instance Dóra Maurer's art characterized at that time too. Pátkai was at the same time an editor not narrow-minded and gave geometrical abstraction a place. The editors were also interested in the progressive movements in Hungary. They used the term "Avant-Garde" infrequently too. What followed was therefore there as a germ from the beginning. It only needed an impulse to make the next step, in the early 1970s.

The shift to the Neo-Avant-Garde happened as the covers started to follow idiosyncratic ideas, as the geometric abstraction received more and more place and as the possibilities of concrete poetry came into view. With these three decisions the periodical became more consistent and consequent. A differentiated identity, adequate to the social reality (the incrementally complicated situation of the migrants) was formed. A direction was found.

The (here relevant) aesthetic, organizational and political issues can be discussed, concentrating on the development of the so-called geometric art visible in the periodical. The formal reductions of this art form allow the examination of the limits of the abstraction drawn here. The comparison with the published manifestos permits the examination of the correspondence of the theoretical statements and the results of the artistic praxis. A parallel view of the published literary, artistic etc. production allows the examination of the praxis of appropriation in the artistic circle represented by *Magyar Műhely*.

The process of production as well as the reception of *Magyar Műhely* seem to be described correctly if its diverse media formats (the periodical, text, picture, hybrid formats such as, for example, picture poems) are understood in their materiality since the handling of this stood in the centre of the mentioned processes. At the shift to the Neo-Avant-Garde there was little the editors could hold on to. So came the materiality: the format, the receipt of the manuscripts and the illustrations, the discussions in the reduced editorial board and the work at the printing machines. This generated the meaning *Magyar Műhely* was intended to elicit.

What they found was the materiality of the language and of the text. Picture poems are conditioned by the definitive force of the visual appearances of the language as text, and as signs – and not only as phonetic signs but as visual elements. Concrete poetry is defined precisely by its work on the materiality of the language and of the text. Starting from the materiality of the language in the visual poetry everything which is connected to *Magyar Műhely* seems to be distinguished by the primacy of materiality: the performance, the presentation of texts at lectures and at the meetings emphasizes the materiality (determined by the visual, the

acoustics, the time, the transience, the singularity, the experience) as well as the montage do: in the cases of guest texts, quotations, palimpsest and in the case of the montage of the issues of *Magyar Műhely*.

The next characteristic is estrangement. Nagy in front of his composing machine, Bujdosó at his desk or in front of the projector, worked with text pieces and fragments in a way which shows the distance, the non-arrival, the strangeness – that is estrangement. That way they reach a new level of decontextualisation. The previous level was the cutting and montage of what the Avant-Garde (Kurt Schwitters) and Neo-Avant-Garde (Eugen Gomringer) did. The next step was the theoretization of the Nothing and the works by Nagy, Papp and Bujdosó.

A semmi konstrukciója by Bujdosó and Mogyik was inspired by philosophy, first of all by Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. This is obvious in its structure and its subject. The structure follows that of the *Tractatus* presenting similarly numbered lines of arguments. The subject here too was the tension between what can be talked about and what cannot. In opposition to Wittgenstein according to whom, in front of the unsayable we have to be silent, Bujdosó and Mogyik spell out that the arts are talking about it (which is the opinion of Wittgenstein too, only he is naturally not saying so). There is nonetheless a big difference between the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus* and *A semmi konstrukciója*. The first is a philosophical text, the second a statement by two artists and itself belongs rather to art.

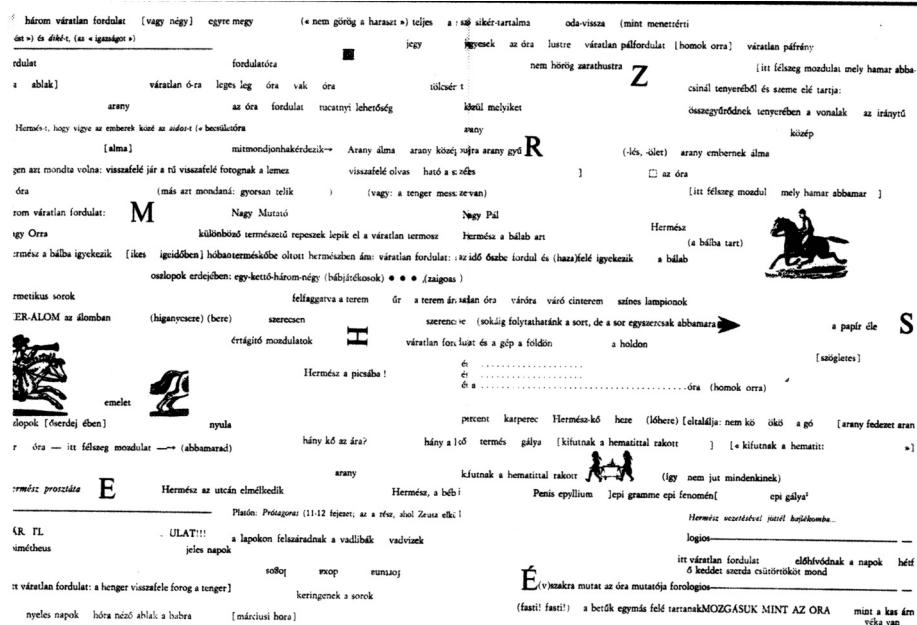
The Neo-Avant-Garde Cultural Practice

Neo-Avant-Garde as a cultural practice appeared in the periodical *Magyar Műhely* and at the *Magyar Műhely* meetings. The radical modernistic aesthetics of the individual contributors served as means of intensifying the artistic production, to create a productive environment, to share a creative space. In the centre of this activity the intention was to stress the defamiliarising effects of language use. A text was taken, cut into pieces, rearranged etc., thus it was handled as material and was not written in the traditional sense. In the same way the geometric abstraction was reduced. Here the reduction went to geometry, that means elementary forms. These forms were varied, altered, set in a series. They were taken as simple elements, as signs, and were worked with. The same is true for the theoretical texts.⁹

Neo-Avant-Garde can be characterized by a qualitatively different way of dealing with materiality (of language, etc.). What in the case of the Avant-Garde happened because of external circumstances (they had not the technical and financial means to do it otherwise) and mostly without any theoretical reflection, was central in the case of the Neo-Avant-Garde. They reflected it thoroughly and only in these broken forms, as estranged, turned into works of art. Neo-Avant-Garde

differentiated itself from the Avant-Garde by the fact that what in the first case was driven by the belief in the possibilities of an open future was in the second case placed on a more reflected, theoretically saturated basis, oscillating between irony and obsession, that means on a far higher level.

Labyrinth by Pál Nagy¹⁰ is composed from textual elements taken from the realm of the classics (Greek philosophy, Greek mythology) and popular science, completed with associative groups of words. This fills carpet like a double page, without a beginning or an end. Not only the content is important here but also the textual appearance. The text is set in normal rows and allows it to be read continually. The omissions between the words and the phrases, the over-the-surface distributed capitals Z, R, M, S, H, E, É, the four pictures (two riders and two servants from children books, a sign for labyrinth from a popular science work on ancient architecture and an arrow) appear to be part of a joke and is at the same time a step toward picture poems.



Pál Nagy, *Labyrinth*, 1974

In *A semmi konstrukciója* Bujdosó and Mégik wrote:

The arts with different methods approach the inconceivable and bring information about it.¹¹

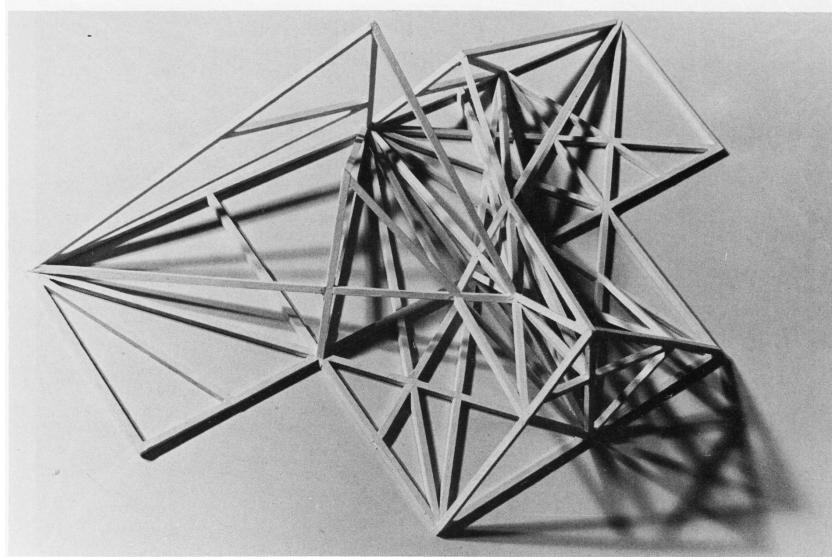
and further:

Since the inconceivable is not material, it can be handled by the material methods of art only as a complex sign. It seems that the complex sign can be handled in at least two ways.

One of these ways is the concept art (3.2). The other is what Bujdosó and Mogyik want to use (3.3):

Our experimental settings are directed towards the searching for non-controversial elements and the construction of non-controversial, one poled works from these.

What this ‘other way’ is is not entirely clear from *A semmi konstrukciója*, only the above claims that this is possible. The text should therefore be seen rather as an invitation to study the work of Bujdosó and Mogyik as examples. And instead of describing these works it is better to show them.



János Mogyik, *Construction*, 1974

A brief analysis of these two texts makes it obvious that these are productive ones. They are productive in the sense that they are what they are searching for. And they are productive in the sense that they take a position. They articulate certain ideological contents, reject others and allow themselves to be innovative in ideological considerations, e.g. in their opposition of matter and idea:

1. The arts approach with different methods the inconceivable and bring information about it.

1.1. The inconceivable is not material, the means of the conceptualization are first of all material. The colour, the form, the sound, the word are material. Everything we can experience with our senses. In this sense the communicated thought is material too, precisely because of the materiality of conceptualization needed for the communication.

1.1.1. Because we have only material tools and the inconceivable is not material, because of this qualitative difference we are using the term inconceivable. We could use as well the terms transimaginable subject or the nothing. The ‘nothing’ in this sense is not identical with the concept of absence.

Thus they are engaged texts, embedded in concrete ideological discussions.

Magyar Műhely helped to reproduce the existing social order by taking a contradictory place in the culture of the Cold War. This corresponded, according the order of the Cold War, to a West where the Neo-Avant-Garde was the culturally progressive and an East where the Neo-Avant-Garde was the divergent, the rebellious and the dissident. The emigration had its place in this too. It mediated not only the results of the Neo-Avant-Garde of the West but provided an extraterritorial place of production and an own version of it as well.

What happened in the periodical and at the meetings was nevertheless the constitution of not only a creative space but at the same time the expression of a critical attitude against the phenomena of representation. The material estrangement of the periodical and of the singular works created in its context correspond with this attitude. This was the exceptional situation providing the place and the structures which enabled the coming into being of the Hungarian Neo-Avant-Garde.

Notes

¹ This article is based on a text presented at the 3rd Conference of the European Network for Avantgarde and Modernism Studies on *Material Meanings* in Canterbury, 7–9 September 2012.

² The anniversary was celebrated among others at the conference *A Magyar Műhely évtizedei* and with the exhibition *Betűk kockajátéka – A párizsi Magyar Műhely öt évtizede* [The Dice Game of Letters – Five Decades of the Parisian Magyar Műhely] both in Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum in Budapest in May 2012.

³ See Gyula Borbándi, *A magyar emigráció életrajza 1945–1985* [A Biography of Hungarian Emigration 1945–1985] (Bern: Európai Protestáns Magyar Szabadegyetem, 1985).

⁴ The Union of Free Hungarian Students existed between 1957 and 1967. Among its activists were members of the circle of *Magyar Műhely* as well, e.g., Alpár Bujdosó and Pál Nagy.

- ⁵ Alpár Bujdosó and János Mogyik, “A semmi konstrukciója,” *Magyar Műhely* Nos 43–44, 33–39, 1974.
- ⁶ Both reported similar experiences in two separate discussions with the author in December 2011.
- ⁷ Pál Nagy, *journal in-time él(e)tem* [journal in-time my life] 3 volumes (Budapest: Kortárs Kiadó 2001, 2002, 2004).
- ⁸ See e.g., Mihály Vajda et al. (eds), *Hatvanas évek* [Sixties] (Budapest: Képzőművészeti Kiadó, 1991).
- ⁹ Beside the mentioned text of Bujdosó and Mogyik e.g., in Miklós Erdély *Marly tézisek* [The Marly theses]. *Magyar Műhely*, Nos 60–61, 1–3, 1980.
- ¹⁰ Pál Nagy’s work was published in *Magyar Műhely* issue Nos 43–44, 8–9, 1974. The title appeared in the content table of the issue as a non-alphanumeric sign which could be interpreted as “labyrinth”.
- ¹¹ Translation by Károly Kókai.

NÉRON, OU LA TOLÉRANCE DE L'HISTOIRE

À PROPOS DU ROMAN DE DEZSŐ KOSZTOLÁNYI

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Le roman de Kosztolányi fait suite à une expérience personnelle de l'écrivain en Italie. Ce projet lui a permis de concilier l'idée de correspondances entre le passé et le présent avec d'autres thèmes qui lui sont chers, comme la vie quotidienne, l'esprit de la langue, l'esthétique. Sur le fond, l'influence de Nietzsche, Freud et Thomas Mann l'ont conduit à s'interroger sur les qualités de poète et d'empereur, et sur la condition humaine d'un écrivain sanguinaire-sanglant. Ecrivain sans talent, ou empereur sans talent ? C'est la question que se posait en son temps Sénèque, dont l'échec dans son rôle de mentor est mis en évidence par Kosztolányi, à l'égal de la descente aux enfers de son héros halluciné.

Mots-clés : histoire-littérature-spectacle, antiquité romaine, modernité littéraire, expérience esthétique, poésie et violence, le rôle du mentor

Dans une lettre à Maxime Gorki,¹ suite à leur rencontre en Italie, Dezső Kosztolányi évoque en ces termes les circonstances qui ont présidé à sa décision d'écrire un roman sur l'empereur Néron :

J'ai conçu l'idée de ce livre à Rome ; alors que je flânais dans la Ville éternelle, j'ai vu les Latins d'aujourd'hui, les Italiens, j'ai entendu la langue latine d'aujourd'hui, l'italien, et j'ai imaginé que le passé classique ne ressemblait pas à ce que nous lisons dans les poésies théâtrales ou dans la rigidité des essais historiques, et que Néron et Sénèque ne parlaient certainement pas comme de purs classiques latins.²

D'emblée, l'expérience d'un lien entre passé et présent, Antiquité et modernité, apparaît essentielle. Dans le texte d'une interview accordée quelques années plus tard, Kosztolányi revient sur cet épisode et précise :

J'étais seul dans une petite auberge du Trastevere. J'écoutais en silence les bavardages et les jugements de plusieurs personnages, de quelques artisans, qui buvaient du vin rouge et mangeaient des

spaghettis à la table voisine. Et alors je me suis mis à penser qu'il y a un millier d'années aussi la vie avait dû être la même [...].

Au cours de la même soirée, je me suis retrouvé, plus tard, « chez Aragno ». Un groupe d'écrivains et de peintres parlaient et discutaient beaucoup. On argumentait sur les questions éternelles et insolubles de la littérature et de la peinture, de la beauté et de l'art, de la tradition et des expressions les plus récentes. Je me taisais. J'avais le sentiment de revenir en arrière, de remonter le cours des siècles, de rêver pour mon plaisir exclusif le passé de Rome, la période de l'Empire, l'époque de Néron.³

Tous les éléments du roman que Kosztolányi s'apprête à écrire se retrouvent ici résumés. Dans l'entretien qu'il donne au journaliste italien, plus complet que la lettre à Gorki, le romancier prend soin de préciser que cette expérience d'un lien entre modernité et Antiquité s'est répétée à deux reprises dans deux contextes quelque peu différents. Rêve et imagination ont su, à cette occasion, déclencher un voyage dans l'histoire par le simple biais de la vie quotidienne, mais aussi de l'esprit d'une langue, puis finalement de la question esthétique et littéraire : trois domaines chers au romancier.

Nous sommes donc loin, déjà, de la simple perspective du « roman historique ».

Cette expérience inaugurale ne rend d'ailleurs pas compte d'un rapport tout aussi essentiel, qui établit une passerelle dans le sens inverse également. Si cette expérience le conduit, à travers le présent, à s'immerger dans le passé, le projet romanesque évoquant la lointaine Antiquité ne pourra guère être conçu sans être nourri de certains éléments du présent ou de l'actualité vécue par l'auteur, comme nous le rappelle Ilona Harmos dans sa biographie de l'écrivain.⁴

Mais que ce soit dans un sens ou dans l'autre, tous ces éléments qui traversent le temps n'auront finalement leur raison d'être que s'ils sont replacés dans un projet littéraire global. Dans cette œuvre, l'écrivain « n'exprime pas directement son opinion négative, mais peut parler plus librement à travers le porte-parole du passé latin ; il peut le déformer plus hardiment ».⁵

L'histoire, autrement dit, est d'abord un moyen de rendre l'écriture plus libre et plus audacieuse. Et si Kosztolányi reste étranger à tout projet de « roman historique », il l'est donc tout autant, en dépit des allusions ou clins d'œil à nombre d'éléments actuels ou biographiques, du « roman à clé ».

Ce qui intéresse le romancier, c'est d'abord l'existence d'une porosité entre les époques, qui lui offrira les moyens de traiter de thèmes et de sujets qui transcendent toute temporalité. Évoquer une période historique précise, certes, mais avec suffisamment de liberté pour provoquer chez le lecteur contemporain des questions et réflexions auxquelles il sera immédiatement et intimement sensible. L'histoire agit comme un filtre, ou comme une médiation de la vérité romanesque.

Il ne faut toutefois pas se méprendre. La liberté selon Kosztolányi ne consiste naturellement pas à traiter l'histoire à la légère. Il prendra certes quelque libertés avec celle-ci, avec la chronologie des événements, avec leur interprétation, il se permettra – consciemment ou non – un certain nombre d'anachronismes, inventera quelques personnages, fera l'impasse sur d'autres thèmes, personnages ou événements notables,⁶ mais dans l'ensemble restera fidèle à l'historiographie néronienne, qu'il ne dénature pas au profit d'une invention détachée de toute assise historique. Contrairement à ce que lui-même et sa femme laisseront d'ailleurs croire, et contrairement à ce que les critiques et les lecteurs auront longtemps préjugé à tort, Kosztolányi, nous le savons aujourd'hui, s'était largement documenté en cours de rédaction sur son sujet, lisant les auteurs classiques tels Suétone, Tacite ou Dion Cassius ou un certain nombre d'historiens modernes, et il avait en outre jugé opportun de faire contrôler son tapuscrit par un spécialiste éminent de la question, József Révay, au titre de caution scientifique.

Nous sommes en 1921. Kosztolányi vient d'achever son premier roman, *Le Mauvais Médecin*,⁷ et sans même attendre la publication de ce dernier, il s'engage aussitôt dans la rédaction de cette seconde œuvre. La mise en route est laborieuse, les premiers chapitres ont dû, selon Ilona Harmos, être écrits et réécrits plusieurs fois. Mais une fois le rythme trouvé, Kosztolányi ne mettra guère plus de quatre mois pour mettre un point final à ce texte pourtant long et complexe dans sa structure.

Jamais l'auteur ne donnera la moindre explicitation concernant son choix de prendre Néron pour thème. Il est un fait qu'il aime l'Italie, profondément, et depuis l'enfance :

Mon premier amour a pour nom Italie, déclare-t-il en 1928. [...] À dix-neuf ans, comme pour réaliser un vœu, je suis parti pour la première fois en Italie. Et mon voyage fut un véritable pèlerinage mystique. Depuis ce temps, tous les ans [...] je me rends à Venise, à Florence, à Naples ou à Rome. Je ne pourrais plus m'en passer.

Puis il précise que cette attirance, si elle n'est pas étrangère à l'architecture, à l'art, à la culture italienne en général, voire... au soleil, trouve ses racines ailleurs : « Ce que je viens chercher surtout, c'est la vie, c'est votre vie ; je viens la vivre au milieu de vous, dans ses manifestations les plus spontanées, les plus pleines. » Il va même jusqu'à considérer l'« homme italien » comme le meilleur échantillon, le plus présentable de cette humanité avec laquelle, en Italie dit-il, il entend venir « se réconcilier ».¹⁰ Il reste également fort sensible, nous l'avons vu, à la langue italienne, à son pouvoir d'évocation de la langue latine qu'il qualifiera de langue « maternelle »,¹¹ non sans quelque exagération puisqu'il avoue ne plus guère maîtriser le latin à l'époque de la rédaction du roman.¹² Enfin, lorsqu'il pense à

l'Italie, c'est l'histoire moderne du pays qui lui revient à l'esprit, avec ses héros révolutionnaires, comme Silvio Pellico ou Garibaldi.¹³

Alors pourquoi Néron ?

Le personnage, en réalité, l'intéresse depuis longtemps. Le nom de l'empereur apparaît pour la première fois sous la plume de l'écrivain alors qu'il n'a encore que 16 ans, et, curieusement, lié à un autre nom célèbre à l'époque :

J'aimerais bien écrire sur Néron, et c'est D'Annunzio qui me vient à l'esprit.¹²

Ce lien semble d'ailleurs tenace, puisque Kosztolányi associera encore ces deux noms bien des années plus tard, quelques mois après la parution du roman, sur un ton nettement sarcastique et défavorable à l'auteur italien, qu'il connaissait mais qu'il n'appréciait guère.¹³

Les deux noms se sont associés, sans doute, sur un premier parallèle entre les caractères autoritaires des deux personnages, l'un ayant régné sur l'Empire de la Rome antique comme l'autre régna sur le monde des Lettres italiennes, voire européennes du début du siècle. Mais c'est naturellement autour de la notion de *médiocrité littéraire* que les deux noms sont indissolublement liés dans l'esprit de Kosztolányi, qui semble donc avoir été prioritairement sensible à cette thématique. Il suffit du reste de remarquer les termes utilisés sous sa plume pour présenter son roman : « Un roman sur l'empereur Néron, écrivain sans talent » ; « Le protagoniste est un dilettante littéraire, l'empereur sans talent Néron » ;¹⁴ ou de lire, dans le texte même du roman, les traits sous lesquels apparaît régulièrement l'empereur – trahi par l'attitude de Sénèque ou par les propos de Lucain, notamment.¹⁵

Notons d'ailleurs, en passant, que sur cette prétendue médiocrité, l'opinion des contemporains de l'empereur ou des historiens ne semble pas aussi catégorique. Sénèque – le Sénèque historique – remarque que l'empereur s'exprimait « excellamment » (*dissertissime*), et que son écriture était claire et précise.¹⁶ Suétone, qui ne passe pas pour être particulièrement favorable à Néron, affirme que l'empereur « composait des vers par plaisir et sans peine », et que ces vers étaient composés « par un homme qui médite et compose ».¹⁷ La plume de Tacite est certes plus acerbe, mais la synthèse que s'efforce d'établir de nos jours le grand spécialiste de l'époque néronienne, Eugen Cizek, si elle exprime une incertitude sur les talents poétiques de Néron, lui permet toutefois d'affirmer qu'« à partir des témoignages dont nous disposons se dégage l'image d'un poète érudit, raffiné et passionné ».¹⁸

Le thème de la médiocrité littéraire, central pour Kosztolányi, semble donc avoir été volontairement maintenu, en dépit des témoignages contradictoires qu'il connaissait.

Ce thème, néanmoins, est absent du titre. L'auteur lui préfère le qualificatif de « sanglant ». L'articulation des différents thèmes présents dans le titre est d'ailleurs subtile, et ne semble pas se produire là où on l'attend. Lorsque pour la troisième fois Kosztolányi revient sur l'épisode inaugural du café Aragno, prenant clairement ses distances avec l'histoire romaine, il brosse un tableau général pour finalement épingle l'ensemble des poètes d'un qualificatif inattendu dans ce contexte :

J'ai vu un café où grouillaient, les uns sur les autres, les poètes,
écrivains en herbe, sanguinaires amateurs. Rien à voir avec l'histoire
latine.¹⁹

Le poète n'est plus seulement médiocre, ou débutant. Il est surtout, *in nuce*, sanguinaire. Néron est encore absent. Mais lorsque, dans une lettre plus tardive, il sera mentionné, ce sera exactement sous les mêmes termes.²⁰ L'empereur, autrement dit, ne se présente plus comme un poète d'un genre particulier parce que sanguinaire, mais c'est bien plus parce qu'il est poète qu'il est sanguinaire, comme les autres. L'argument s'est donc retourné :

Mon Néron est un sanguinaire amateur ; je veux dire qu'il aimerait écrire de la poésie épique, et qu'il n'y parvient pas. Alors il a recours à la cruauté. Il vit en tant qu'homme ce qu'il n'a pas su créer en tant qu'artiste. Bref, il s'adapte, il transige. Il descend. Il aurait voulu être poète. Et en fait, le malheureux n'a pas de chance. Il ne peut être qu'empereur.

La tragédie est là.

On voit ici se dégager ce que l'on pourrait lire comme un troisième temps logique du roman.²¹ Et ce n'est qu'après cette assimilation au commun des poètes que le nom de Néron peut enfin devenir lisible, pertinent, et qu'il pourra représenter une rupture spécifique avec le statut du poète pour enrichir le roman d'une nouvelle lecture.

Poésie et pouvoir. Néron, ou l'histoire d'une cohabitation impossible... Si la poésie se révèle indissolublement liée au sang, quel sera le destin d'un être de pouvoir dès lors qu'il s'avise de poétiser ?

*

À cette époque, Kosztolányi se sent, qu'il le veuille ou non, rattrapé par l'histoire. Profondément déçu après avoir pris position en faveur de la République des Conseils de Béla Kun, il change radicalement de cap, collabore avec un journal conservateur, mais finit par critiquer tout aussi sévèrement le régime de l'amiral Horthy. Il se sent donc isolé, et tente donc de répondre comme il peut.

Notamment par ce roman. C'est sur ce terrain littéraire que l'écrivain isolé par l'histoire entend trouver certains appuis, et certains repères, non pas pour donner prise à son désenchantement en y trouvant refuge, mais plutôt pour donner à lire une histoire qu'il entend écrire autrement. Où l'élément humain transcende la spécificité des époques :

Le drame de Néron m'intéresse parce qu'il me rapproche de son humanité. [...] J'ai dépeint le gribouilleur amateur dans mon roman, le bel esprit, qui ensuite n'a pas pu être poète.²²

Si Kosztolányi entend proposer une autre lecture de l'histoire, certains commentateurs, plus concrètement, ont voulu y voir, entre autres, une dénonciation des violences de la Terreur blanche perpétrées après la chute de la République des Conseils par les Gardes blancs.²³ D'autres y ont décelé, plus généralement, la volonté chez l'auteur, de brosser une peinture des mœurs de l'époque, à travers une série de portraits ou de situations archétypales, plus profondément que ne le feraient de simples clins d'œil.²⁴ De manière sans doute plus récurrente, l'interprétation s'est orientée, dès les premières critiques mais aussi plus tardivement, vers une lecture suggérant une intention d'autojustification de l'auteur, cherchant à expliquer son attitude pendant les événements récents.²⁵

Il n'y a certes aucune raison de rejeter ces différents éclairages, même si les désirs de dénoncer, peindre ou justifier doivent plutôt se concevoir comme autant de facteurs surdéterminés pour une interprétation qui par définition reste interminable. Les enjeux se situent au-delà. Kosztolányi, lui, entend écrire. L'histoire, mais avec sa propre histoire.

En Italie, il est venu chercher la vie et a trouvé Néron. Tout comme il a su faire son entrée dans la littérature par la poésie et a trouvé la violence et la guerre. L'écrivain cherche une voie nouvelle pour l'écriture. Et c'est probablement vers une autre terre d'asile que celui-ci s'oriente, plus ou moins consciemment. Du côté, cette fois, de l'Allemagne. À ce titre, le rapprochement qui aura d'ailleurs lieu avec Thomas Mann – qui écrira pour son *Néron* une lettre-préface admirable, où il résume les enjeux essentiels du roman²⁶ – possède sans doute des racines profondes. Ne serait-ce que parce que l'auteur allemand a vécu une situation fort semblable à la sienne, au moment, notamment, où il rédige ses *Confessions d'un apolitique*, en 1918 – ouvrage que Kosztolányi connaissait.

L'esprit allemand, en effet, est alors dans l'air du temps et irradie sur toute une partie de l'Europe. Son influence se fait sentir, en particulier, à travers les conceptions de l'histoire élaborées par le cercle de Stefan George, personnalité dont Kosztolányi ne semble avoir retenu que l'œuvre poétique, mais dont il a dû connaître les théories à travers Ludwig Friedländer, historien membre du cercle que le romancier a lu pour préparer son roman.

La véritable histoire, selon le cercle, engage la vie même de l'historien, ses valeurs, son mode de pensée. Elle est non seulement création littéraire, mais elle construit, édifie, provoque l'enthousiasme. Rien de moins éloigné, semble-t-il, de la conception que se fait Kosztolányi de l'histoire et de son roman...

À la confluence de cette irradiation de la culture allemande se situe Nietzsche, qui trône, survole même ce premier quart de siècle, et que Kosztolányi a soigneusement lu et étudié au cours de ses études de philosophie à Vienne. Nietzsche constitue à l'évidence le point commun à tous ces auteurs déjà cités, parmi de nombreux autres. On a beaucoup écrit sur l'influence durable du philosophe sur le romancier, même si Kosztolányi, passées les années 1905-1906, ne le cite plus guère explicitement.

*

Au cours de la rédaction, le romancier s'est donc aménagé un vaste espace de liberté pour faire parler l'histoire, pour la faire vivre et la faire respirer.

Le roman *Néron* a la particularité de se présenter, avant tout, comme une vaste scène de théâtre, sans que l'on puisse jamais définir si la pièce qui se joue relève du tragique, du comique, voire de la farce. Une tragi-comédie, peut-être. De fait, il s'agit, de bout en bout, d'un *spectacle* laissant évoluer les divers protagonistes comme autant de comédiens ou d'acteurs, avec leur lot de masques, symboles et accessoires. Néron, bien sûr, n'a de cesse de les manier, au fil des pages, au sens propre comme au sens figuré, en les arborant, en les retirant, en s'en protégeant, en les rejetant. Mais il n'est pas le seul. Poppée, par exemple, finira elle aussi par monter sur le trône, « devenue impératrice, aérienne et délicate, pareille à une actrice ».²⁷ Les conjurés auront « des gestes, théâtraux autant que leurs actions ».²⁸ Et que dire de ce glaive, « accessoire de théâtre au tranchant émoussé »,²⁹ avec lequel l'empereur finit – non sans aide – par se donner la mort, comme pour conclure cette tragédie par une ultime bouffonnerie ?

Le regard de Kosztolányi a le pouvoir de couvrir un large spectre, et son écriture nous découvre finalement une scène plus vaste que celle d'un simple théâtre. C'est le pouvoir du roman d'ouvrir l'espace, aussi, sur cette Autre Scène dont parle Freud, où l'on voit se profiler, sous les masques et les costumes, ce que Kosztolányi appelle la vraie vie, ou, pour parler comme Nietzsche, l'espace de la Grande Raison qui finalement gouverne le monde. Bien loin d'assister à une représentation qui se déroulerait sur le seul *proscenium* à la lumière du jour, Kosztolányi nous convie dans les coulisses – pénombre et ténèbres de la psyché tout autant que bas-fonds scabreux de la société. C'est là que règne Kosztolányi, qui, comme il le dit lui-même,³⁰ s'est invité à la table de Néron, dans la salle de ce vaste café populaire qu'est l'Empire.

Le récit commence par une absence et par son masque, figure d'un père que l'enfant « n'avait jamais connu, et n'avait même jamais vu », mais qu'il parvient à idéaliser, l'imaginant « plein de bonté », avec « un visage doux et indécis ».³¹ Mais ce masque du père ne vient faire écran, finalement, que sur un grand vide. La bonté ne sera jamais qu'un rêve douloureux qui s'effritera bien vite, ne laissant qu'une souffrance qui le poursuivra, et que Néron tentera de neutraliser en idéalisant par la suite toute une série de modèles. Comme tout humain. À commencer par Sénèque, qui viendra combler ce manque. Pour un temps.

Au père absent s'est donc substituée la figure du père présent. Le texte n'en reste naturellement pas à cet élément d'identification psychologique somme toute banal. Kosztolányi prend soin d'intercaler dans la narration une succession de trois rencontres, apparemment secondaires, mais qui ouvrent aussitôt sur d'autres horizons : un musicien, d'abord, un flûtiste qui, « comme la cigale, demeure invisible » ;³² puis, à l'occasion de rêveries insomniaques dans le désert de la nuit, Néron se remémore son enfance, chez sa tante Lépida qui l'éleva dans la compagnie d'un danseur et... d'un ventriloque. Le texte s'est enrichi, passant de la psychologie à celui de la poésie. Néron, semble nous suggérer le récit, découvre très tôt l'art de la danse, cet art qui permet d'évoluer dans les airs et au-dessus du vide ; mais il est aussi confronté aux farces et à la technique d'un barbier ventriloque, capable « de berner tout le monde ».³³

La musique, la danse, le ventriloque. Néron se trouve ainsi résolument plongé, pour ainsi dire, dans un univers nietzschéen. Par la musique, bien sûr, emblème du monde dionysiaque si cher au philosophe, mais aussi par cette rencontre de deux figures, l'une solaire, le danseur, frère du danseur sur corde admiré par Zarathoustra, et l'autre sombre, le ventriloque, figure nihiliste et adepte du mensonge :

C'est pour le ventriloque de la Terre que je te tiens ; et lorsque des diables de subversion et de déjection j'ouïs le discours, pareils toujours à toi je les ai trouvés : saumâtres, menteurs et plats.³⁴

L'interpellation de Zarathoustra pourrait ici faire illusion, et sonner comme une prémonition. Mais Kosztolányi a soin de mettre Sénèque sur la route de l'empereur qui, mort d'angoisse et d'ennui, lui lance un appel :

Tu devrais d'abord commencer par vivre, dit Sénèque.
[...] – D'accord, balbutia l'empereur obéissant. Guide-moi, fit-il, comme on guide un somnambule.³⁵

Sénèque sera présent, et le guidera. C'est encore sous la plume de Nietzsche que semble s'inscrire la réponse de l'empereur :

Il me *faudra* continuer de rêver encore pour ne point périr : comme il faut que le somnambule continue de rêver pour ne pas faire de chute.³⁶

Sénèque, lui, ne répond pas par le rêve. Il faut, lui dit-il, commencer par vivre et descendre un peu des hauteurs du trône pour tout observer... Mais il ajoute aussi :

Peut-être pourrais-tu lire les tragédies grecques. Elles portent le deuil en elles. Sur les plaies à yif elles sont un sombre remède. On dit aussi que l'écriture guérit...³⁷

L'Écriture, l'écriture tragique. Parole quasiment oraculaire que Néron entendra.

Il commence par s'isoler comme pour obéir au Sage, qui espère bien encore inculquer au jeune empereur « la douceur et la bienveillance ».³⁸ Bref, l'art de bien gouverner. Pour lui complaire encore Néron descendra dans les bas-fonds, tel Zarathoustra descendant de la montagne pour y rencontrer les hommes. À l'instar de Kosztolányi, il y cherchera la vie, certes, et y trouvera prostituées, estropiés, indigents de toutes sortes. Et ses ailes poussent. Mais vient un moment où brusquement « sa tête s'embrouille », « tout lui devient brumeux ».³⁹ Une certaine confusion s'installe. Les repères se diluent et les frontières entre l'espace du rêve et l'ordre de la réalité s'estompent.

Alors il s'emballe. Parmi les déshérités, Néron a rencontré Vatinius, le nain difforme, et Zodique et Fannius, piétres poètes. En les ramenant tous les trois à sa cour, il montre qu'il n'a pas compris la leçon de Sénèque. Il intègre au réel l'expérience qu'il n'a pas su transposer dans les mots.

Ce sera le premier malentendu. Néron prend les choses pour des mots. Contre Sénèque, il entend, pour réformer le monde, prôner la sauvagerie, dans la poésie comme dans la réalité de ses actes. On sent bien, au fil des lignes, la présence d'un déchaînement aux allures dionysiaques, mais à la différence du philosophe, Néron – d'ailleurs contre toute véracité historique – a oublié le versant apollinien de la vie et de la poésie. Et l'identification, de Sénèque passe à Britannicus, qui de modèle devient persécuteur.

Néron, alors, tuera Britannicus et ce sera le second malentendu. Il le tuera en croyant supprimer l'idée qui l'empêche de créer, le complexe qui le rend malade. Sous l'influence d'une pensée magique. Mais inversée. Ne transperçant pas la figurine pour tuer l'homme, mais tuant l'homme pour tenter de supprimer le symbole. Il a même des hallucinations.

Néron, à partir de cet instant, entre dans la psychose, et « jouit des ténèbres ».⁴⁰ Il entend reconstruire sur ce vide et se sent prêt à devenir ce poète attendu, nécessaire, capable de gouverner le monde. Le meurtre accompli, sa tâche se dessine. Refondre les valeurs de la Rome décadente sur le modèle de l'Athènes

hellénistique, rêvant aussi d’Alexandrie, la capitale orientale de la culture au sein de l’empire.⁴¹ Poursuivre le rêve. Une tâche qui semble une fois encore, chez Kosztolányi, faire écho à la voix du philosophe allemand appelant à la « transmutation de toutes les valeurs », mais aussi à celle de l’historien, à travers ce qu’Eugen Cizek nomme si justement la « réforme axiologique » de Néron, qui engage toute une vision du monde, sensible au fil des pages dans le portrait dressé par le romancier. Cizek parle d’une audace, et confirme en effet :

L’audace néronienne est d’une certaine façon le fruit d’une rencontre entre la pulsion d’un homme et une manière d’envisager le monde et d’y agir, une *Weltanschaung*, en l’occurrence la culture grecque, hellénistique et orientale.⁴²

Néron a tué pour pouvoir continuer à rêver. Mais le rêve n’y change rien. Rien ne se transforme. Si ce n’est que le danseur impérial finira par chuter, comme chutera le funambule de Nietzsche.

Le malentendu de Néron ira ensuite de répétition en répétition. Après Britannicus, Octavie fera figure de nouvel empêchement, parce que « stérile elle le rend stérile ».⁴³ Et Néron poursuivra son rêve encore, chargé d’une nouvelle illusion, l’amour, en la personne de Poppée qui, dans l’initiale de Dionysos qu’elle dessine dans une flaue de vin devenu sang, n’y verra par erreur que le dieu de l’amour, tandis qu’en experte elle applique ce que Kosztolányi intitule si joliment la « technique du cerceau ».

Le roman, certes, est cyclique, et s’inscrit avec obsession dans un éternel retour du même. Au-delà de l’histoire mais en gardant la leçon du philosophe, qui considère « ne devoir la servir que dans la mesure où elle sert la vie ».⁴⁴ Nietzsche, admirateur des Grecs anciens, l’était d’ailleurs tout autant de *l’imperium romanum*, « cet admirable chef-d’œuvre de grand style, écrit-il, qui n’était qu’un début ». Et le philosophe d’ajouter :

Cette organisation était assez solide pour tolérer les mauvais empereurs. Le hasard des personnes ne devait pas entrer en ligne de compte.⁴⁵

Pourtant, à la différence de Nietzsche – ou plutôt pour creuser davantage dans le droit fil de cette idée –, c’est pour Kosztolányi cette *tolérance de l’histoire* qui fait problème. Et le hasard de la personne qui l’intéresse.

Néron était sans aucun doute nietzschéen. Fondamentalement. Mais il a raté quelque chose. « Quelque chose lui a manqué, dit l’affranchi Phaon. Très peu. Mais ce quelque chose est énorme. »⁴⁶

Plus sans doute que les fantômes de Britannicus ou d’Octavie, c’est le pouvoir qui constitua peut-être l’empêchement ultime qu’une écriture insuffisamment

puissante n'a pas su rejeter vers les limites d'une réalité trop fuyante. Son destin ignora les règles du jeu. « Le contraire du jeu, nous rappelle Freud, n'est pas le sérieux, mais la réalité ». Mais pour Néron, les contraires n'existent pas, le jeu *est* la réalité.

Le poète fait comme l'enfant qui joue, dit encore le psychanalyste. Il se crée un monde imaginaire qu'il prend très au sérieux, c'est-à-dire qu'il dote de grandes quantités d'affect, tout en le distinguant nettement de la réalité.⁴⁷

C'est ce dont Néron est incapable. Et c'est pourquoi il ne peut être poète. Non pas parce qu'il est médiocre ou sanguinaire, mais parce que son empire est un monde sans frontières. À mesure qu'il s'avance masqué dans son règne, l'empereur s'enfonce dans une forme d'hallucination psychotique, incapable de distinguer durablement son rêve de la réalité du pouvoir. Le roman est d'abord le récit de cette déroute, bien sûr, et Kosztolányi s'efforce de montrer la mécanique infernale dans laquelle l'empereur se trouve piégé, résistant au fil des pages à la menace de la folie. Mais Néron connaît parfaitement l'art de jouer avec les masques. Autant de facettes, ou de pelures d'un moi multiple, interchangeables, dont se pare le prince toujours plus angoissé. Frère de cet autre prince du conte oriental qui, en quête d'identité, commence à se défaire d'un premier masque, derrière lequel s'en trouvent un deuxième, puis un troisième, et qui finit, lorsque le dernier masque tombe, par découvrir avec terreur son visage écorché, sanguinolent.⁴⁸ Néron, le poète sanglant, Néron, le poète ensanglé.⁴⁹ Si la conscience morale constitue pour Nietzsche – comme pour Freud d'ailleurs – non pas « la voix de Dieu, mais l'instinct de cruauté qui se retourne contre soi »,⁵⁰ Néron, lui, nous montre le revers de la médaille, où l'instinct de cruauté reste effroyablement tourné vers le monde.

S'il s'agit bien, certes, d'un théâtre de la cruauté, comme Antonin Artaud l'appelait de ses vœux, le drame qui se noue et qui se joue finalement sur l'autre scène sort des limites du simple plateau pour envahir la scène du monde. Rien, sans doute, ne résume mieux la situation dramatique de l'acteur Néron que la scène qu'il joue, à la manière d'une farce ou d'une comédie, avec Pâris.⁵¹ L'acteur lui annonce la réalité d'un complot, que celui-ci entend comme un simple jeu dont il est incapable de sortir. Il résiste autant qu'il peut. Ce n'est qu'à la faveur d'un « pli de sa bouche » que Pâris brise le rêve. Le jeu possédant son revers, le voile se lève sur la vérité. Néron, en quelque sorte, passe à l'acte et mord de toutes ses dents le coussin qu'il déchire. Unique amorce d'un acte poétique, peut-être, puisqu'il s'attaque au symbole, mais passage à l'acte tout de même puisqu'il mord et ne parle pas. Il commet finalement le matricide, mais rien n'y fait, le voile retombe encore une fois sur l'acteur perpétuel d'une nouvelle tragédie théâtrale. La confusion est à son comble. Il n'y a pas de scène plus forte ni plus emblématique que la

scène qui suivra, où Néron, à terre et accablé, continue à chercher l'impossible, *physiquement*, voulant marquer de son corps la dureté inaltérable du réel par l'inscription même de la lettre :

Ses mains continuaient à s'agiter, elles grattaient, comme si elles avaient voulu graver les lettres sur le sol.⁵²

Entre réel et langage, aucun passage n'est possible. L'homme est un être de symboles, qui de ce fait se coupe du réel pour mieux évoluer dans ses images, qu'il peut à loisir découper au moyen de ses mots. L'homme est poète, par définition, tout en sachant, aussi, que le réel est là, qui lui est interdit. Vérité à laquelle Néron n'a pas accès.

Il y a bien Sénèque, qui est toujours présent. Sachant depuis longtemps que Néron ne saurait être poète, mais que par destin il reste l'empereur du monde. Ou plus exactement il fait semblant d'y croire. Kosztolányi entend, par sa bouche, nous offrir en des pages somptueuses une leçon quelque peu désabusée de *Realpolitik*, mâtinée d'un cynisme parfois nietzschéen, parfois plus pragmatique. Kosztolányi, en effet, a l'art de faire du slalom entre les idées de Nietzsche, qu'il place occasionnellement dans la bouche d'un Sénèque un tantinet sceptique, pour s'en éloigner à la phrase suivante.⁵³ Mais la parole essentielle finit par tomber, comme un couperet :

Néron, en fait, n'était né ni pour être artiste ni pour être politicien [...]. Mauvais écrivain et mauvais politicien.⁵⁴

Sénèque, en quelque sorte, bat sa coulpe, comprenant que les deux rôles – du moins sous un même masque – se révèlent inconciliables. Le politicien ne saurait s'aviser de poétiser le réel, sous peine de se voir immédiatement destitué ; quant au poète, il doit abandonner tout espoir de gouverner les hommes, non pas parce que l'acte poétique lui interdirait toute dimension politique, mais parce que le temps du poète est sans mesure avec celui du politicien, dont les actes espèrent un effet immédiat sur la société qu'il gouverne. Le temps du poète n'a pas cette prétention.

Et d'ailleurs, le poète peut-il éduquer quiconque ?

Comment un poète pourrait-il éduquer quelqu'un, lui qui ne sait pas se former lui-même à la vie et au bonheur, puisque c'est pour cette raison qu'il est devenu poète ?⁵⁵

Le poète albatros... Et c'est le cercle, une fois encore. Sénèque, lui, s'arrête là. Perdant sur les deux tableaux, comme le sera tout autant son élève. N'ayant su amener celui-ci à la poésie, il n'a plus guère le temps de le convaincre à bien

gouverner. Sénèque mourra d'avoir trop aimé, comme Néron se tuera, anéanti par ses angoisses et par son impuissance.

*

Néron, chef-d'œuvre de Kosztolányi, reste sans doute, parmi les cinq romans de l'auteur, le plus ambitieux, mais aussi le plus riche et le plus profond. Le romancier y règne en maître. Il aborde de front, certes, la question récurrente du rapport entre pouvoir et écriture, culture et politique. Mais il finit par soulever un dernier masque, placé sur le visage de l'empereur mort. Ce sont deux affranchis qui parlent :

Regarde son visage, dit [Épaphrodite]. Comme il est violent, même dans la mort [...]. Il veut encore quelque chose. Quelque chose de plus grand que le reste des hommes [...]. Il est étrange à présent, intéressant. Comme ce visage m'apparaît beau. [...]
 – C'est un homme mauvais, dit Phaon. Terrifiant.
 – Les poètes sont tous terrifiants, dit Épaphrodite. En eux croissent les fleurs et la beauté. Mais leurs racines plongent dans la terre visqueuse et pleine de vers.⁵⁶

Les poètes sont sanglants parce que la terre est pleine de mort et de sang, et qu'ils s'en abreuvent et s'en inspirent. Au moment de décrire la figure cadavérique de Caligula, cet autre empereur dont Néron, dit Eutrope, « est la copie très fidèle »,⁵⁷ l'écrivain sera plus radical encore :

Son visage était blanc, exsangue et simple. Le masque de la démence était tombé. Seul restait le visage. Un soldat le fixa longuement. Il lui semblait désormais le reconnaître. En lui-même il pensa :
 « Un humain ! »⁵⁸

Il n'est plus question de sang, ni de pouvoir, de folie ou de poésie. *Ember*, dit le mot hongrois. Humain. Si humain. Néron pas plus que Caligula ne furent sans doute de bons poètes ni de bons empereurs. Mais si les deux princes se rejoignent finalement dans la mort, c'est parce qu'en eux Kosztolányi ne perçoit plus que l'homme. *Ecce homo*. Ni messie ou homme-dieu, ni même cet aspirant surhomme ou antéchrist que rêvait d'être Nietzsche. *Ecce homo*, l'anti-surhomme tel qu'en lui-même. Par-delà le pouvoir et la poésie. Une fois les masques ôtés, arrachés les uns après les autres. Au visage de chair et de sang. En prince écorché. Mais surtout homme dans sa solitude mortelle et radicale. Privé de dieux. Sans Dieu.

Presque à la même époque, un autre grand écrivain, Marguerite Yourcenar, écrivait au moment de rédiger ses *Mémoires d'Hadrien* :⁵⁹

Retrouvé dans un volume de la correspondance de Flaubert, fort lu et fort souligné par moi en 1927, la phrase inoubliable : « Les dieux n'étant plus, et le Christ n'étant pas encore, il y a eu de Cicéron à Marc-Aurèle un moment unique où l'homme seul a été. »

Une très grande partie de ma vie allait se passer à essayer de définir, puis à peindre, cet homme seul et d'ailleurs relié à tout.

Notes

- ¹ Le présent article est une version remaniée de la préface rédigée pour la traduction française du roman de Dezső Kosztolányi, *Néron, le poète sanglant*, Paris, Éd. Non Lieu, 2012.
- ² Lettre à Maxime Gorki (écrite en italien), du 15 septembre 1924 ; dans Dezső Kosztolányi, *Levelek – Naplók* [Lettres et journaux], Pál Réz (éd.), Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 1988, pp. 501–502.
- ³ Entretien avec Gustavo Brigante Colonna, du 4 mai 1928 ; document inédit aimablement communiqué par László Takács, auteur d'une très belle édition critique du roman (Bratislava, Éd. Kalligram, 2011).
- ⁴ « Presque tous les personnages du roman ont un modèle vivant et en demi-teinte », Ilona Harmos, *Kosztolányi Dezső*, Budapest, Aspi Stúdió Kiadó, 2004, p. 247.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ Quelques exemples, respectivement : la mort de Britannicus est située de manière inexacte après la retraite de Sénèque ; celle d'Octavie précède le meurtre d'Agrippine ; Zodique et Fannius sont des personnages inventés ; l'incendie de Rome est à peine mentionné, le voyage en Grèce pas du tout ; Acté n'apparaît que dans une allusion anonyme, et Pétrone est totalement absent.
- ⁷ La traduction française de ce roman a été publiée en 2011, également aux Éditions Non Lieu.
- ⁸ Entretien avec Gustavo Brigante Colonna.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* – le latin était encore, un siècle plus tôt, la langue officielle en Hongrie, parlée couramment par les grands-parents de Kosztolányi.
- ¹⁰ « Mes restes de latin sont maintenant bien pauvres », écrit-il à Révay (lettre du 24 mai 1921 ; dans *Levelek – Naplók*, p. 457).
- ¹¹ Entretien avec Gustavo Brigante Colonna.
- ¹² Dezső Kosztolányi, *Tinta*, Gyoma, 1916 (citant un texte de 1901) ; cité dans M. Szegedy-Maszák, *Kosztolányi Dezső*, Bratislava, Kalligram, 2010, p. 206.
- ¹³ « Néron, c'est son ancêtre », écrit-il encore à propos de D'Annunzio dans un article paru dans le *Pesti Hírlap* du 15 oct. 1922 (repris dans Id., *Szabadkikötő*, Budapest, Osiris, 2006, p. 241).
- ¹⁴ Respectivement lettre à Révay (mars 1921), et lettre à Gorki (mars 1924) déjà citées.
- ¹⁵ Voir Dezső Kosztolányi, *Néron, le poète sanglant*, respect. p. 87 s. et 109 s.
- ¹⁶ Sénèque, *Questions naturelles*, 1, 6.
- ¹⁷ Suétone, *Vie des douze Césars*, VI, 50 ; trad. Henri Ailloud, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Folio », 1975, p. 361.
- ¹⁸ Eugen Cizek, *Néron*, Paris, Fayard, 1982, p. 44 ; voir aussi, dans le même sens, Jean-Michel Croisille, *Néron a tué Agrippine*, Bruxelles, Éd. Complexe, 1994, p. 105.
- ¹⁹ Dezső Kosztolányi, *Abécé*, 1931, p. 151.
- ²⁰ La première fois en hongrois – vérszomjas műkedvelők –, la seconde fois en italien – *dilettante sanguinario*.

- ²¹ Néron cruel parce que médiocre ; Néron poète sanguinaire ; Néron sanglant parce que poète.
- ²² Dezső Kosztolányi, « R. V. Cripps » (1925) ; repris dans *Szabadkikötő*, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2006, p. 361.
- ²³ Détachements paramilitaires sévissant avant et pendant l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'amiral Horthy, en 1919–1920 ; voir notamment, sur cette interprétation Antal Mádl, « Le Roman historique d'esprit antifasciste en Hongrie et dans la littérature allemande », *Littérature hongroise, littérature européenne*, Budapest, Corvina, 1964, pp. 423–433 ; cité par Sophie Kepes, « Néron, le poète sanglant et *Absolve Domine*, Enquête sur l'histoire de deux traductions » (1985), dans *Regards sur Kosztolányi*, Adefo/Akadémiai Kiadó, 1988, p. 110.
- ²⁴ Voir par exemple Tamás Adamik, « Néron, le Poète sanglant, de Désiré Kosztolányi », dans *Neronia V, Latomus, revue d'histoire latine*, Bruxelles, 1999, p. 304.
- ²⁵ Voir par exemple György Bodnár, *Panorama de la littérature hongroise du XXe siècle*, Budapest, Corvina, 1965, p. 136 ; cité par Sophie Kepes, p. 110 ; András Lengyel, « Játék és valóság közt » [Entre le jeu et la réalité], Szeged, *Tiszatáj*, 2000, pp. 100–122.
- ²⁶ Voir Dezső Kosztolányi, *Néron, le poète sanglant*, p. 45 s.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 328.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 376.
- ³⁰ « J'ai pris un petit noir avec l'empereur Néron dans un café budapestois » ; Id, *Abécé*, p. 34.
- ³¹ *Néron*, p. 69.
- ³² *Ibid.*, p. 80.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ³⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra* ; dans *Œuvres complètes*, t. V, trad. M. de Gandillac, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p. 151.
- ³⁵ *Néron*, p. 98.
- ³⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Le Gai Savoir*, § 54 ; dans *Œuvres complètes*, t. V, trad. P. Klossowski, Paris, Gallimard, p. 79.
- ³⁷ *Néron*, p. 77.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 368.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 368.
- ⁴² Eugen Cizek, p. 163.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- ⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Considérations inactuelles* (2^e) ; dans *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, trad. P. Rusch, Paris, Gallimard, 1990, p. 93.
- ⁴⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *L'Antéchrist* ; dans *Œuvres complètes*, t. VIII, trad. J.-Cl. Hémery, Paris, Gallimard, 1974, p. 228.
- ⁴⁶ *Néron*, p. 378.
- ⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, « La création littéraire et le rêve éveillé » ; dans *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée*, trad. M. Bonaparte et E. Marty, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Idées », 1983, p. 70.
- ⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, *L'Insu-que-sait-de l'une-bévue...* Séminaire 1976–1977, inédit.
- ⁴⁹ Et non « sanguinaire », comme le suggérait Aurélien Sauvageot (*Souvenirs...*, p. 69) pour la traduction du titre ; suggestion reprise également par György Tverdota, « Kosztolányi et la mort. Néron ou le poète sanglant », *Cahiers d'études hongroises*, Paris, 2006, p. 75. Dans ce roman, le sang – qui est celui d'un poète et non celui d'un empereur –, est le sang dont lui-même est victime tout autant que les autres.
- ⁵⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *La Généalogie de la morale* ; dans *Œuvres complètes*, t. VII, trad. I. Hildenbrand et J. Gratien, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, pp. 258–259.

⁵¹ *Néron*, pp. 278–280.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 297.

⁵³ Voir *ibid.*, p. 302 s. Dans une allusion claire à la morale des esclaves, Sénèque nomme, sous la plume de Kosztolányi, les doux, les rêveurs, mais aussi les poètes – rien de moins nietzschéen ; quant aux forts, ce sont les criminels, les politiciens entre autres, mais ils incarnent plutôt l'idée d'un *mal nécessaire*, plus proche de Freud, voire d'un René Girard que du généalogiste qui entend se situer au-delà du bien et du mal ; quant à l'idée d'un certain darwinisme social, où « les forts dévorent les faibles », elle va nettement à l'encontre de la conception nietzschéenne, qui estime, au contraire, que les faibles sont vainqueurs en raison de leur nombre...

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁵⁶ *Néron*, p. 378.

⁵⁷ Eutrope, *Abrégé de l'histoire romaine*, Livre VIII, 9 ; trad. A. Dubois, Paris, Garnier Frères, 1865.

⁵⁸ *Caligula*, nouvelle latine, repris dans D. Kosztolányi, *Néron...*, p. 415 s.

⁵⁹ Marguerite Yourcenar, *Carnet de notes de « Mémoires d'Hadrien »* ; dans *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, Paris, Gallimard, coll. « Folio », 1974, p. 321.

Nero, or the Tolerance of History. On the Novel by Dezső Kosztolányi

Summary

Dezső Kosztolányi's novel *Nero, a véres költő* (translated into English from German by Clifton Fadiman as *The Bloody Poet: A Novel about Nero* and from Hungarian by George Szirtes as *Dark Muses, The Poet Nero*) was a consequence of a personal experience of the author in Italy. The novel enabled him to reconcile the idea of correspondences between the past and the present with other themes that preoccupied him, such as everyday life, the spirit of language, and the aesthetic. Fundamentally, the influence of Nietzsche, Freud and Thomas Mann prompted him to muse on Nero as poet and emperor, as well as on the condition of a writer who was the perpetrator of bloodthirsty acts. Was he a talentless poet or a talentless emperor? This is the question that was raised by Seneca, whose failure in his role as mentor is presented by Kosztolányi, along with the descent into hell of his distraught pupil.

Keywords: history, literature, spectacle, Roman Antiquity, literary modernity, aesthetic experience, poetry and violence, the role of mentor

QUELQUES POÈMES DE PETÓFI

EXTRAITS DU RECUEIL *NUAGES*
(TRAD. GUILLAUME MÉTAYER, 2013)

J'avais des amis...

J'avais des amis, gens de bien...
Hélas, que ne sont-ils défunts !
Sur leurs tombes mes pleurs désormais
Couleraient, et, au-dessus d'eux, des fleurs
Naîtraient du flot de mes pleurs. –
Ils finiront bien un jour par mourir
Mais aucun de ces vieux amis
De moi n'obtiendra une larme : rien qu'un soupir,
Un cuisant soupir de dépit ;
Que ce souffle visite leurs tombeaux
Les fleurs y faneront aussitôt.

Un sage allait...

Un sage allait à dos d'âne jadis. –
Les temps ont changé depuis,
Oui, bien changé,
Ce sont les ânes à présent
Qui vont chevauchant,
Et le sage, lui, va à pied.

Nuit sublime !...

Nuit sublime !
Dans le ciel, brillantes, s'égarent
La grande lune et la petite étoile du soir.
Nuit sublime !
La rosée scintille dans le velours du gazon.
Le rossignol fredonne sous la tente du buisson.
Nuit sublime !
Le garçon rejoint sa bien-aimée...
C'est l'heure où le brigand s'en va assassiner.
Nuit sublime !

Il était des altesses...

Il était des altesses.
On élevait à leur mémoire
Des colonnes altières, pleines de gloire.
Elles proclamaient leur noblesse,
Elles proclamaient leur bonté.
Et où sont leurs colonnes ?...
Écroulées !
Elles ne pouvaient que s'affaler :
Elles n'étaient que fausseté.
Le temps est vrai
Et décide ce qui ne l'est.
Elles restent là-bas sans mémoire, leurs tombes,
Rien n'a été construit sur leurs décombres...
Mais si ! L'éternelle malédiction d'une nation,
Colonne obscure, pèse sur leur nom.

LA « SAISON EN ENFER » DE SÁNDOR PETÓFI

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Ce recueil de poèmes composés dans les années 1845–46 présente au lecteur français un pan méconnu de l’œuvre de Sándor Petőfi, marqué par le pessimisme romantique. Du reste, le traducteur y retrouve la même radicalité (cette fois, dans le désespoir) qui caractérise la pensée plus connue du révolutionnaire. Les références bibliques et l’influence sur Nietzsche, avouée par l’intéressé lui-même, placent Petőfi (et la Hongrie ?) à la croisée de la mutation moderne.

Mots-clés : poésie romantique, l’Ecclésiaste, Nietzsche

Le volume que nous avons donné aux éditions *Sillage*¹ est la première traduction en français de poèmes de Sándor Petőfi depuis plus de trente ans.² C’est aussi la première fois que l’un des plus importants recueils du poète, *Nuages*,³ sommet du byronisme hongrois, ainsi que l’une de ses œuvres les plus célèbres, le récit en vers *Féerie*,⁴ sont présentés au lecteur français, alors qu’il existe déjà, depuis le XIX^e siècle, des éditions séparées en allemand et en italien de ces deux chefs d’œuvre.⁵

Pourquoi ce choix ? Probablement pour prendre un peu à revers la gloire écrasante du poète politique de la Révolution,⁶ et mettre en lumière un moment très particulier de sa vie créative, celui du reflux de l’optimisme messianique et de l’étiole de l’espoir, une crise plus riche peut-être d’anticipations poétiques et philosophiques, cristallisées autour du recueil court, mais décisif de *Nuages*.

Nuages, composé entre novembre 1845 et mars 1846, est un mince volume de soixante-six brefs poèmes qui souvent s’apparentent à de simples notations prises dans l’obscurité d’une « nuit sans étoiles ».⁷ Le poète de vingt-trois ans y rencontre, par ses propres moyens et dans la logique de son évolution personnelle, le pessimisme européen. Il revivifie l’ironie romantique, exalte le fragment, s’essaye à l’aphorisme en vers, découvre une forme nouvelle, lyrique, de l’épigramme. Sa ponctuation même, souvent brisée, qui recourt volontiers aux traits d’union, aux points de suspension, témoigne de l’énergie paradoxale de cet

abattement créateur. La poésie renoue avec la brièveté parce qu'elle cherche à dire un dernier mot sur les choses – l'un de ces derniers mots excessifs de jeune homme sans doute, mais d'un jeune homme extraordinairement doué, si probe qu'il scellera son destin dans une mort héroïque.

Nulle surprise à ce titre que ce poète de la forme brève désespérée ait eu un disciple célèbre : le jeune Friedrich Nietzsche se découvre, très jeune, une passion pour la Hongrie et, en particulier, pour Petőfi.⁸ Il met en musique la traduction allemande de certains de ses poèmes, surtout de cette période, tels que « J'aimerais laisser là ce monde lumineux... »⁹ sous le titre « *Nachspiel* ». *Nuages* en particulier semble avoir laissé sur le philosophe allemand une empreinte plus profonde qu'on ne le croit généralement.

Ce qui définit ce recueil, c'est l'exercice d'une mélancolie radicale qui, comme un ciel peu à peu se couvre, gagne un à un tous les thèmes, toute l'histoire du monde, tout l'héritage moral. Car il ne s'agit pas ici des « merveilleux nuages », auxquels rêve « l'Étranger » de Baudelaire¹⁰ (chez Petőfi ce sont les étoiles qui jouent ce rôle idéal). Véritable « saison en enfer », ce recueil renvoie aux masses informes des jours sombres et dessine, notation après notation, la cartographie céleste d'une âme au désespoir. Il montre comment la mélancolie se projette en tout et transforme tout ce qu'elle touche non pas en or, mais en nuées : en reliefs déchirés, en vapeurs fugaces, en ténèbres pesantes.

La métaphore du « nuage » sert aussi à rendre compte des formes poétiques de la mélancolie qu'utilise le poète. Elle correspond bien aux fragments de longueur inégale, mais toujours très brefs,¹¹ qui composent le recueil, tantôt moments poétiques et méditatifs comme on parle de « moments musicaux », tantôt courts emblèmes allégoriques, vignettes définitionnelles ciselées en un distique cinglant, voire un quatrain à la clausule parfaite :

Le chagrin ? Un vaste océan.
Et la joie ?
La menue perle qu'en remontant
Il est possible que je broie.¹²

Pour autant, le poète cède rarement à la tentation de créer des systèmes clos : son propos n'est pas d'enfermer dans une forme parfaite et esthétisante des états d'âme ou des idées, mais d'offrir le fidèle reflet de leurs déchirures. Ainsi, s'il reprend certainement l'héritage formel de l'épigramme et ouvre ainsi la voie à Nietzsche,¹³ il en radicalise le programme, par exemple en osant des chutes stridentes, morbides, dont le surgissement imprévu est déjà presque surréaliste. Ainsi, la fin de « Tes yeux sont, mignonne... » refuse la rime pour faire entendre la dissonance et transformer subitement l'élegie en vision d'horreur :

Tes yeux sont, mignonne,
 Sombres, oh tellement,
 Pourtant ils rayonnent ;
 Surtout quand
 Tu les poses sur moi,
 Alors ils chatoient
 Comme au feu de l'éclair
 De la nuit en colère,
 Le glaive du bourreau !¹⁴

L'humeur noire n'attaque ainsi les formes que pour mieux atteindre les principes. Elle s'empare des lieux communs philosophiques pour les miner, les corroder, et utilise à cette fin toutes les ressources de l'imaginaire poétique. Le poème « Accueille bon et mauvais sort d'un même cœur »¹⁵ ne s'ouvre sur cet impératif classique de l'ataraxie que pour mieux lui faire subir une démolition en règle, à l'aide du déploiement progressif d'une image : celle de la Nature toute-puissante, capable d'accueillir en elle toutes les forces, qu'elles soient heureuses ou destructrices. En somme, c'est une manière nouvelle de penser l'exigence topique de vivre « selon la nature » que propose le poète romantique, un déplacement qui, là encore, est, d'un point de vue philosophique et littéraire, comparable à celui que Nietzsche effectuera. Semblablement, l'idée, traditionnelle encore, d'une vie après la mort¹⁶ et celle de la Justice suprême d'un Jugement dernier¹⁷ s'abîment dans l'incertitude d'un rire amer. Les formes brèves figurent alors les éclats de cette destruction, les restes de cette corrosion. Bien sûr, un nouvel Ecclésiaste hante ces poèmes, et les nuages sont aussi des êtres de « fumée » qui renouent avec l'image de la « vanité » dans *Qohelet*, le « *hèvèl* » vaporeux. Ce sont des nuages vains et fuyants que les émotions humaines (« Où s'en va l'éclat de rire », « Le roi des rois, c'est la fugacité »¹⁸), et la mélancolie enseigne l'éphémère à ce tout jeune homme entraîné à se projeter déjà dans une vieillesse cruelle (« Je coupe une boucle à mes cheveux », « Jeunesse, tu es un tourbillon », « Le temps retourne aussi nos traits,/ Mais sans les aplanir après »¹⁹). L'être humain lui-même est bien sûr inclus dans cette volatilité et versatilité universelles (« Ondes d'un fleuve fuyant... »²⁰). Le poète retrouve même alors le thème éternel du *carpe diem* (« Jeune obstinée... »²¹), signe que ce bréviaire de mélancolie est aussi une manière de rejouer, sous cet éclairage, la tradition philosophique et poétique.

Dans « Ma chandelle brûle blême »,²² le thème de l'Ecclésiaste est renouvelé et intensifié. D'abord, par cette « ombre de la fumée »²³ de sa pipe qu'examine le poète, une mise en abyme du vide qui fait office de paraphrase incarnée en des symboles concrets, du superlatif hébreïque de « vanité des vanités ». Ensuite, parce que cette réflexion n'est pas générale, mais s'insinue dans l'unité la plus ténue et du plus furtive du moment présent pour y recueillir une observation infime, habituellement refoulée comme insignifiante, pour l'ériger en symbole –

une stratégie qui annonce une tendance profonde de la poésie d'en Europe Centrale. De la même manière, le poème célèbre « Derrière moi, la belle forêt bleue du passé » offre une peinture originale du présent, cette fois sous la forme de l'enfermement, quelque part entre la pensée du temps augustinienne et quelque malédiction kafkaïenne :

Devant moi, les beaux semis verts de l'avenir ;
 Toujours loin, sans me distancer,
 Toujours près, sans que je puisse y parvenir.
 Ainsi, sur la grand-route, je vais errant,
 Dans ce désert luxuriant,
 Abattu et toujours errant
 Au sein de l'éternel présent.²⁴

Paradoxalement, l'élément premier, l'unité foncière de la fugacité – le présent pur, sans cesse en fuite – semble fixé durablement, pour le meilleur et pour le pire, par le miracle poétique de ces proverbes laïques. Le thème de l'Ecclésiaste est alors dépassé par l'esthétique. La transcription immédiate de l'humeur, la transparence de l'état d'âme culminent en une capacité, souvent comparable au haïku autant qu'à l'épigramme, de graver l'instant, de capter le moment absolu. L'insolite rencontre à distance du poète et du paysan (« Au milieu de la plaine... »²⁵), scandée par de nombreuses références au moment présent, fixe l'éclair d'une méditation infime et profonde, encore dans son mystère :

Bien loin de moi, un homme moissonne ;
 Il s'arrête à présent,
 Et affûte sa faux... Sans que sonne
 A mon oreille l'instrument.

Je ne vois que ceci : sa main en mouvement.
 Il regarde ici à présent,
 Me dévisage, mais je ne cille même pas ...
 Que peut-il penser que je pense, moi ?²⁶

Le silence de la grande plaine est à la mesure de l'énigme, qui touche à la fois à la différence inaliénable d'un homme à l'autre, la distance infranchissable de deux pensées qui se cherchent, se croisent sans jamais savoir si effectivement elles se rencontrent. Il porte aussi, bien sûr, une dimension sociale, et un symbolisme de la mort discret, mais évident, est bien sûr sensible dans ce faucheur attentif et muet.

La radicalité de la déception juvénile, où le dépit amoureux²⁷ et la déception amicale²⁸ jouent chacun un rôle déterminant, se décline dans tous les domaines et contamine toutes les pensées, toutes les imaginations et toutes les réflexions. Sa portée philosophique se traduit par des méditations cosmiques qui conduisent le plus souvent à des visions d'apocalypse. C'est une « tornade » qui brise l'univers,

c'est la fin du monde qui advient le jour où le dernier homme se retrouve face à la dernière étoile,²⁹ ou quand « l'ordre du monde » se délite et que des « ruisseaux d'étoiles » inondent la terre, image qui trahit le plaisir mélancolique d'avoir sous les yeux la beauté de la destruction du monde. Le spectacle est aussi ici « *in the eye of the beholder* » : le feu qui brûle, coule et scintille à la fois dans ces fleuves de feu stellaire, ce sont aussi les yeux mouillés de larmes du poète.³⁰ L'image d'un embrasement final est récurrente (« Si les cœurs séchés au tombeau »³¹) et elle radicalise celle d'un vieillissement général des choses.³² Petőfi brise l'idée de cycle quotidien du soleil exactement comme, dans le premier des *Nuages*, il avait brisé celle d'un cycle saisonnier, en identifiant la vie à un oiseau migrateur qui ne revient pas. Finalement, le seul cercle qu'il ne rompt pas, le seul « éternel retour » qu'il concède, c'est celui du Mal, si l'on en croit cette fable terrible d'une fin de l'humanité qui revient au fratricide initial de Caïn, et qui, au lieu de se régénérer, mettra au monde une nouvelle engueance, mâtinée de bête sauvage, qui s'avèrera peut-être plus douce que l'Homme.³³ De la même manière, le thème de l'égalité morale à travers les siècles³⁴ déploie un paradoxe amer digne de Schopenhauer, surprenant chez un poète du progrès :

Elle était tout aussi mauvaise autrefois,
Aussi mauvaise dès ses premiers pas...³⁵

L'argument qui consiste à prendre les inventions moralisatrices comme preuve de l'immoralité humaine est tout aussi significatif :

Sinon, n'auraient pas été nécessaires
Contes de mille manières,
Ciel, divinités,
Diables et enfer,
Imaginés pour la brider.³⁶

L'idée de l'immoralité de l'espèce humaine est obsédante. Elle revient dans « L'hiver habille » :

L'Homme est-il la progéniture
La plus inique de la nature ?³⁷

Cette déception morale se mue nécessairement en critique sociale³⁸ et touche, même dans ces poèmes intimistes, à la politique, de plus en plus présente à mesure que le recueil avance.³⁹

Ces imaginations noires, ces esquisses griffonnées dans la nuit, ces nuages qui arrivent à tout occuper et tout opacifier, finissent par prendre les formes inquiétantes de « Caprices » à la Goya : « Mon cœur est un gîte souterrain » « de

monstres [...] rempli, rempli ! », écrit Petőfi.⁴⁰ Et encore « dans ma tête, c'est la nuit », « nuit de spectres remplie » :⁴¹

Les pensées l'une l'autre s'enfantent dans mon cerveau,
Et l'une l'autre se dévorent, tels des animaux.⁴²

Deux chefs-d'œuvre de la même époque, « Le Fou » et « Le Dernier Homme »⁴³ développent ce même imaginaire des extrêmes, dont le cynisme morbide est le nerf électrique.

Finalement, ce recueil saturnien se clôt sur le thème pessimiste par excellence, ce que Nietzsche, dont on comprend mieux l'intérêt qu'il éprouva dans sa jeunesse pour le grand poète hongrois, appelait « la terrible sagesse de Silène », suivant laquelle il vaut mieux ne jamais être né :

Malédiction sur la terre
Où cet arbre a poussé
Dans lequel fut pour moi
Un berceau façonné.⁴⁴

Notes

¹ Ce texte est une version légèrement amendée de la préface de l'ouvrage : Sándor Petőfi, *Nuages et autres poèmes*, Paris, Sillage, avril 2013, 80 p. Pour la version hongroise, on pourra se référer à : Sándor Petőfi *Összes versei*. Révision du texte et postface de Ferenc Kerényi, Budapest, Osiris Kiadó, 2007, p. 417–418 pour « Az utolsó ember » (« Le dernier homme »), p. 454–456 pour « Az őrült » (« Le Fou », p. 466–472 pour « Tünderálom » (Féerie), 474–498 pour les poèmes de « Felhők » (Nuages).

² Les dernières traductions de Petőfi parues en France remontent à 1975. Il s'agit de *L'Apôtre*, un récit politique en vers libre (Paris, Les Éditeurs Français Réunis), et d'une anthologie Trois époques, trois poètes hongrois : poèmes choisis de Sándor Petőfi, Endre Ady, Attila József ; traduits et présentés par Paul A. Loffler, Bassac, E. Thomas, 68 p. Un peu plus récemment, une maison hongroise a publié un *Jean le Preux*, traduction de László Pódör et Anne-Marie de Backer. Illustrations de Ádám Würtz, Budapest, Corvina, 1980. Les précédentes versions des poèmes de Petőfi sont introuvables : Sándor Petőfi, *Poèmes*. Présentation et choix par Jean Rousselot, Budapest, Corvina, 1971. *L'Irréconciliable, Petőfi, poète et révolutionnaire*, Budapest, Corvina, 1973. On se reportera aussi, la même année, à *Poésie et révolution. Cent cinquantenaire de Petőfi*, Revue Europe, 1973.

³ *Felhők* (1846).

⁴ *Tünderálom* (1846). Les trois premières strophes de ce poème ont été traduites par Jean Rousselot et publiées dans son : Gyula Illyés, *Vie de Petőfi*, Paris, Gallimard, 1962, p. 160–161, puis dans son anthologie de *Poèmes* citée ci-dessus (p. 82) et enfin dans *l'Anthologie de la Poésie hongroise* établie par Ladislas Gara, Paris, Seuil, 1962, p. 162–163.

⁵ Pour *Nuages*, voir : *Wolken* (« Felhők »), *lyrischer Cyklus von Alexander Petőfi. Zum erstenmale ins Deutsche übersetzt, nebst einer Biographie des Dichters aus bisher unbenutzten Quellen*, von Hugo Meltzl von Lomnitz, Lübeck, Schmidt und Erdtmann, 1880,

- 123 p. En italien, voir : Petőfi, A. (Alessandro = Sándor), *Nuvole*, prima traduzione italiana di G. Cassone, Noto, 1891. Notons qu'il s'agit d'une traduction réalisée dans un esprit ouvertement schopenhauerien. Puis Roberto Ruspanti anti a donné *Nuvole*, Rubbettino, Coll. « Colibri », 2002. Pour Féerie, voir : *Sogno incantato*, Assisi, 1874, par Giuseppe Cassone et, en allemand, *Feentraum*, Kolozsvár, 1846, par Wilhelm Berger.
- 6 Cela a déjà été fait, certes il y a soixante ans, dans Petőfi, *Poèmes révolutionnaires*, 1844–1849, traduit du hongrois par Jacques Gaucheron, Paris, P. Seghers, « Autour du monde », 6, 1953, 61 p.
- 7 C'est le titre que donne Karl-Maria Kertbeny à cette période dans sa grande traduction en allemand. Voir infra.
- 8 Pour des exposés circonstanciés de ces questions, on se reportera à : Gyula Kornis, *Nietzsche és Petőfi*, Budapest, Franklin Társulat, 1942, et à Béla Lengyel, « Nietzsche's Image von Ungarn », *Hungarian Studies*, 2, n° 2, 1986, p. 243–263.
- 9 « Szeretném itthagyni a fényes világot ».
- 10 Le *Spleen de Paris*, « L'Étranger », *Oeuvres complètes*, Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1961, p. 231.
- 11 Le huitain est la longueur la plus représentée (17), suivi du quatrain (12), du dizaine (11) et du sizain (9). Le poème le plus long est composé de 17 vers, mais en deux parties séparées par des tirets.
- 12 « A báнат? egy nagy óceán. / S az öröm? / Az óceán kis gyöngye. Talán, / Mire fölhozom, össze is töröm ».
- 13 Voir Nietzsche, *Épigrammes*, Paris, Sillage, 2011.
- 14 « Oh lyány! szemed / Milyen sötét, / S mégis ragyog; / Kivált midőn / Reám tekintesz, / Ugy tündököl, / Mint zordon éjben / Villám tüzénél / A hóhérpallos! »
- 15 « Viseld egyformán jó-s balsorsodat! ».
- 16 « L'âme serait-elle l'amante du corps » (« Szeretője-e vajon a testnek a lélek? »).
- 17 « Que devient donc l'être humain ?... » (« Az ember ugyan hova lesz?... »).
- 18 « Hová lesz a kacaj », « Mulandóság a királyok királya ».
- 19 « Hajamnak egy fürtjét levágom », « Te ifjúság, te forgószél! », « Képünket az idő felszántja, / De be nem boronálja ».
- 20 « Futó folyam hullámai ».
- 21 « Dacos leány! »
- 22 « Gyertyám homályosan lobog... »,
- 23 « A füst árnyékát ».
- 24 « Mögöttem a múlt szép kék erdősége, / Előttem a jövő szép zöld vetése; / Az mindig messze, és mégsem hagy el, / Ezt el nem érem, bár mindig közel. / Ekkép vándorlok az országuton, / Mely pusztta, vadon, / Vándorlok csürgedetten / Az örökkétartó jelenben ».
- 25 « Itt állok a rónaközépen ».
- 26 « Nagymessze tőlem egy ember kaszál; / Mostan megáll, / S köszörűli a kaszát... / Pengése hozzá nem hallatszik át, / Csak azt látom: mint mozog a kéz. És most idenéz, / Engem bámul, de én szemem sem mozdítom... / Mit gondolhat, hogy én miről gondolkodom? ».
- 27 « La jeune fille qui était ma belle... (« Elváltam a lyánykától... ») / « Souriez-moi, oh souriez moi » (« Mosolygjatok rám, oh mosolygjatok »).
- 28 « J'avais des amis » (« Voltak barátom ») / « et je pense à l'amitié » (« És a barátságról gondolkodom ») « Vous êtes, dites-vous, mes amis » (« Barátaim vagytok, azt mondjátok »), « Mes amis me prennent dans les bras » (« Barátaim megölélek... »), etc.
- 29 « Chacun de nous a une étoile... » (« Mondják, hogy mindenikünk bir egy csillaggal... »).
- 30 C'est bien l'idée d'un poème antérieur (« L'étoile tombe du ciel / De mes yeux tombent les larmes » (« Le az égrôle hull a csillag; – Szemeimból könnyek hullnak »), Pest, janvier 1845).

- ³¹ « Ha a sírban megszáradt szíveket... ».
³² « Nous ne sommes pas seuls à vieillir » (« Nemcsak mi vénülünk... »).
³³ « Quand les hommes sur terre... » (« Midőn a földön... »).
³⁴ « L'humanité ne décline pas ! » (Nem súlyed az emberiség!).
³⁵ « Ilyen gonosz vala rég, / Ilyen gonosz már kezdet óta... »
³⁶ « Hisz különben nem kellett vóna / Százfélé mesét, / Eget, isteneket, / Pokolt és ördögöket / Gondolni ki, hogy zaboláztassék ».
³⁷ « Tehát a természetnek / Az ember a legmostohább fia? ».
³⁸ « Le rêve » (« Az álm »), « Cet homme riche » (« E gazdag úr »), « Croix » (« Kereszt »).
³⁹ « Justice es-tu endormie ? » (« Igazság! alszol? ») « Il était des altesses... » (« Voltak fejedelmek »).
⁴⁰ « Az én szivem egy földalatti lak [...] [a szörnyeket] / Mikkel televan, tele! »
⁴¹ « Fejemenben éj van [...] S ez éj kisértetekkel van tele ».
⁴² « Agyamban egymást szűlik a gondolatok, / S egymást tépik szét, mint vadállatok ».
⁴³ « Az Őrült », « Az utolsó ember ».
⁴⁴ « Legyen átok a földön, / Hol ama fa termett, / Amelyből énnekem / Bölcő készíteték ».

Sándor Petőfi's "Season in Hell"

Summary

This collection of poems composed in 1845–46 offers the French reader a glance at a less familiar side of the work of Sándor Petőfi, marked by a strain of Romantic pessimism. The translator also finds in these poems the same radicalness (this time in the hopelessness) that characterizes the better known ideas of the revolutionary. The biblical references and the influence of Nietzsche (an influence acknowledged by Petőfi himself) placed the poet (and Hungary itself perhaps) at the crossroads of the shift to the modern.

Keywords: Romantic poetry, Ecclesiastes, Nietzsche

APPROACHING FROM BOTH SIDES – CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN-GERMAN MINORITY LITERATURE AS A CHALLENGE FOR THE HUNGARIAN STUDIES

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The aim of this paper is to propose a cross-cultural approach to contemporary Hungarian-German minority literature comprising texts written both in German and in Hungarian in order to give an adequate description of the Hungarian-German minority's literary scene. Also, the significance of this specific minority literature within the context of culture and heritage conservation and its true identity-forming potential can be analysed that way. First results indicate that Hungarian-German literature can help to (re)gain an authentic minority consciousness, but this requires not only a revaluation of the Hungarian-German literary institutions but also the capability to reinvent Hungarian-German literature on the part of the youngest generation of minority writers.

Keywords: minority literature, Hungarian-German literature, identity, minority culture, cross-cultural studies

Cultural homogenization is regarded as one of the main characteristics of a globalised world. It refers to the loss of cultural diversity, the growth of “sameness” and the loss of cultural autonomy – usually conceived on a national level.¹ While cultural homogenization is believed to have a negative impact on national identity and culture, critics of the theory emphasize that the process of cultural homogenization is not one-way, but involves a number of cultures exchanging various elements.² Considering these developments happening on a national level and consequently affecting national cultures, it seems all the more important to take minority cultures within a nation into account as their survival is already endangered by the dominant national culture. However, there are a number of problems that come with the study of minority cultures or certain aspects of them, which vary in terms of intensity from minority to minority. Hence, for the sake of clarity, this paper deals with only one minority and only one aspect of their culture, namely contemporary Hungarian-German literature. This being stated, the crucial problem arising from approaching this specific subject is, who to assign the task to.

Why this is the case and what possible solutions can be found, shall be discussed in the following. To begin with, some preliminary remarks may help to see the importance of engaging in the study of contemporary Hungarian-German literature even though the actual literary output of the minority may appear discouraging at first sight.

Before approaching texts of a minority literature, one has to bear in mind, why minority literature itself is of great importance for the respective minority. In order to form a personal identity, the individual must live in a shared symbolic “world of sense” with others. In order to become a collective identity, this common ground must be made and kept aware for and by the individuals.³

A collective identity is [...] social affiliation that became reflexive.
Accordingly, cultural identity is participation in and the commitment
to a culture that became reflexive.⁴

Benedict Anderson argues that categories such as “nation” and “people” have to be considered as imagined and are alterable and historic due to their constructedness.⁵ Following Anderson’s ideas the categories of “ethnos” and “nationality” are also imagined and therefore alterable categories. John C. Swanson states:

If we accept the argument that ‘nations’ are imagined, then Hungarian-Germans, or any other group seen as an ‘other’ in a nation-state, is also a constructed group. The definition of an ethnic minority is different, depending on who is doing the defining.⁶

Swanson emphasizes: “minority-building is a multilayered, ever-changing phenomenon [...].⁷ Essential aspects of nation-building include the adoption of a group consciousness, the use of national symbols and the cultural demarcation against the outside. In a modified form, these aspects are also crucial for the process of what Swanson calls minority-building: Similar to national literature, minority literature, for example, fulfills important tasks – especially within the context of personal and collective identity formation. In connection with the concept of collective identity Jan Assmann emphasizes the need for an explicit commitment of the individuals within a group to the group. He argues that a collective identity or “we-identity” is essentially a picture that a group paints of itself and with which the members of the group can identify. Collective identity is basically a question of identification, it does not exist as such but only to that extent as the individuals are willing to be part of a group and identify with it. Consequently, collective identity can only be as strong or weak as it is alive within the minds of the group members and as much as it is able to motivate their thinking and actions

in everyday life.⁸ Bearing Assmann's thoughts in mind, it becomes evident why literature plays such an important role in this context:

By talking about mutual memories, life stories and customs, groups envision those aspects of their past that characterizes them as that specific group and therefore must not be forgotten. Through the active participation of individual protagonists in such a collective memory they are not only provided with group-specific memories, but also perception schemes that frame the individual's self-understanding. The practice of shared interpretation of the past is also linked to the emergence of new collective horizons within meaning and identity construction. The collective identity of a group is the result of the shared interpretation of the past.⁹

Literary works can be considered one form of communicating mutual memories and life stories that may even trigger other forms of communication (e.g., book discussions, reviews, a.o.). With regard to content, literary works may not only give insights into past constructions of reality and collective ideas, but can also be exploited for the constitution of a particular perspective on the past and function as support for the self-understanding of a group or nation deriving from that particular perspective. But the potential of literature in the context of cultural memory is not only limited to the affirmation of existing self-perceptions and collective values, it also includes the direct opposite, namely their critical reflection or even the accentuation and dissemination of subversive counter-memories that enable the development of alternative models of identity.¹⁰ This aspect of literature is all the more important within the context of minority literature, because minorities undergo changes within the course of history. The members of a minority are confronted with political, social and cultural challenges that need to be addressed, one way or another. Artists are said to be the seismographs of society – writers can become the mouthpiece of the minority they belong to and as such not only articulate their issues for the outside but the inside world, raising awareness for them amongst the group members and help the minority coping with change in an adequate way. One of the greatest dangers for a minority is to get caught in repetitive anachronistic behaviour while missing the moment to adapt to changing social and cultural conditions. In this regard, Paola Bozzi emphasizes, that the concepts of identity, nationality and culture must not be considered as static values but rather interactive processes:

We live in border regions of the present, in times of historical transformation, within processes and moments produced by the articulation of cultural difference; in interspaces that bring a new understanding of individual or communal identity and society. This entirely new historical context draws one's attention away from the differences between cultures and more and more towards the differ-

ences within one and the same culture, producing a multi-dimensional, decentralized, dynamic, pluralistic image of culture and subject, of identity and collective. [...] The construct and understanding of culture and subject (as well as that of ethnicity) have to be questioned, deconstructed and to be considered as moving aspects of a whole, which constantly undergoes change itself.¹¹

Bozzi takes up the idea of identity as a variation of different identities, which are not to be located within purely ethnic categories. According to that idea, there is a modern heterogeneous society of individuals with multiple, split and/or fractured identities. Especially with regard to the younger generations of a minority, this idea must necessarily be accepted as a prerequisite for any further consideration.

After this rather theoretical start, some hard numbers and historical as well as sociological facts shall demonstrate how Hungarian-Germans – and among them especially those belonging to the younger generations – deal with questions of identity, minority culture and minority literature. Does the latter play an outstanding role in their lives in terms of identity formation?

First, we need to take a look at the Hungarian-German minority as it presents itself at the beginning of the 21st century. At no time in their long history were the Hungarian-Germans a homogeneous group disposing of a very distinct collective identity. On the contrary, it was rather a more of a state-specific Hungarian patriotism which dominated amongst the Hungarian-Germans. The processes of social change, such as urbanization, industrialization and increasing mobility, accelerated their assimilation. After World War II, the authorities took strong measures against the Hungarian-German minority: while in 1941 the German minority still counted a total of 302,198 persons, the number of people who stood up and declared themselves as Hungarian-German decreased to 2,617 in 1949. The reasons for this included war losses, deportations to labor camps and resettlement abroad.¹² Thanks to the changes in Hungarian politics over time, a steady increase of those numbers can be detected since 1960: While the Hungarian-German minority counted a total of 8,640 persons in 1960, it counted 11,310 persons in 1980.

In the 2001 census, a total of 62,105 people have indicated that they belonged to the Hungarian-German minority. Of these, 3,559 persons are between 0 and 14 years old, 15,136 persons are between 15 and 39 years, 15,813 persons are between 40 and 59 years and 18,404 persons are 60 years old or older.¹³ According to these numbers, more than 18,000 members of the Hungarian-German minority belong to the younger generation(s). This is of great importance inasmuch as it is the younger generation that is responsible for the continued existence of the minority and can produce new writers (and readers) of minority literature and ensure the evolution of the latter. This would require a sense of belonging to a minority and the will to keep up the minority culture necessary. However, Györgyi Bindorffer states that the primary basis for the minority-awareness among the mi-

norities in Hungary is their respective origin which is represented towards the outside world through the practice of folk dance and folkloristic dressing at the most. Modernization and assimilation have led to a life which is no longer totally imbued with elements signaling the affiliation to a minority.¹⁴ Still, in her article about identity concepts of the Hungarian-Germans at the turn of the millennium published in 2004, Zsuzsanna Gerner emphasizes the possible personal benefits as a motivating factor for the Hungarian-Germans to act as a member of a minority:

The Hungarian-German minority forms a community of interest with access to economic resources due to the current national and international conditions. Therefore, it perhaps seems promising to be organized according to ethnic criteria. There is no denying that the Hungarian-German minority was financially supported significantly by different German and Austrian organizations and institutions.¹⁵

While Gerner considers these financial benefits as positive incentive measures, critics like Wolfgang Aschauer believe, that they cannot trigger enough *real* personal commitment amongst the members of the minority in order to achieve a *real* sense of togetherness. He actually goes so far as to question even the existence of a Hungarian-German nationality or minority, even if the Hungarian-Germans try to prove it by various clubs and associations to maintain their culture – again culture being understood more in the sense of folk art and folklore.¹⁶ But Aschauer's question seems to be justified, especially if one follows the definition of the Hungarian Minority Act of 1993, where an "awareness of belonging"¹⁷ is explicitly required as a prerequisite for the recognition as a minority. In opposition to that, Aschauer underlines the high level of artificiality, the choreographic character of Hungarian-German cultural manifestations, which is also confirmed by Bindorffer's research. According to her, the traditional elements and customs of minority culture exist only within a festive dimension and are not expressed in everyday life. The festive habits live on in a dramatic, choreographed, modified way on stage during village festivals, local, regional, ethnic and national meetings or galas.¹⁸ It is almost needless to say at this point, that this does not include the public presentation (reading or discussion) of minority literature.

But why is this the case, when considering on the one hand, the great potential of literature in terms of identity formation while on the other hand the survival of an authentic, *real* Hungarian-German identity and culture is at risk?

The first and foremost reason for the almost total ignorance of Hungarian-German literature within the minority itself is quite simple: language. Within her research about the formation of minority identities, Györgyi Bindorffer states that in the case of the Hungarian-Germans German can be considered as native language only among the members of the older generations. Younger members of the mi-

nority automatically speak Hungarian, even if they are able to speak German on a native level, which only a few of them are capable of. In reality, a total change of language has taken place among the young Hungarian-Germans due to their linguistic assimilation.¹⁹ Maria Erb also confirms that the functional first language of the Hungarian-Germans is Hungarian, which they not only know best, but also use the most in the private and public spheres alike.²⁰ In 2004, Norbert Spannenberger gets to the heart of the problem: "Among the Hungarian-Germans, bilingualism is a utopia, certainly not reality."²¹ Very revealing, in this regard, is a study²² conducted in a Hungarian-German settlement, namely Mecseknádasd near Pécs, that examines the specific characteristics of individual identity that are perceived as a primary building element for a minority identity by the respondents. In spite of the developments already described above, 75% of the respondents between 45–55 years of age regarded the knowledge of the German language or German dialect as absolutely necessary for belonging to the Hungarian-German minority. 79.2% of the younger generation, respondents aged 25 to 35, did not regard the knowledge of the German language as essential in order to develop a Hungarian-German identity. The identity-forming function of language could, according to them, be replaced by elements of Hungarian-German culture. This is mirrored in other researches as well. According to Bindorffer it is the loss of language which the older generations see as the biggest problem in connection with the preservation of the minority. At the same time Sasné Grósz emphasizes the importance of cultural binding, which is, in contrast, growing especially among the younger generation of Hungarian-Germans. This bond, that comprises primarily traditional customs and folklore, ideally compensates for the lack of language skills. Also, it shall enable them to live out their Hungarian-German identity.²³ However, taking all this into account, it is no more surprise, that Hungarian-German literature is of no interest to the members of the minority: most of them simply can't read it and most of them don't consider it as a meaningful part of their culture – or so it seems.

In 1988, an article entitled "The Hungarian-German literature and its audience" was published in the literary supplement of the Hungarian-German weekly paper *Neue Zeitung*. The author presented the results of her research on the topic and mentioned the lack of interest within the Hungarian-German community – only 5 out of 4,500 questionnaires that she had distributed via the newspaper were returned. Through personal interviews and the mediation of various institutions she finally got the necessary data and concluded the following: While most of the elderly believed in the importance of Hungarian-German literature, the younger generations were not so convinced of its importance and the youngest respondents even said that it was not at all important to them.²⁴ Obviously, this meant bad news for the Hungarian-German literary life – both in terms of writers and recipients. Unfortunately, the situation has not changed much since then: a study conducted

among 130 pupils in Mecseknádasd, who attend schools offering Hungarian-German minority classes, showed that nobody read Hungarian-German literature on a regular basis.

15 high school students and 49 elementary school students were unable to name even one Hungarian-German writer. Only 8 out of 90 pupils were able to name more than one Hungarian-German writer.²⁵

But who are those writers whose names seem to be lost to the younger generations? Basically Hungarian-German writers are divided into three generations: First, there is the so-called “old generation” consisting of writers such as Georg Fath or Franz Zeltner, who considered their writing as “public service” to ensure the survival of the minority and pass on the rhythms of the folk songs, the dialect, the rural customs and traditions to the next generations. Again and again, they tell the stories of World War II, the loss of their home, the longing for the old ways of life and the impossibility of returning to those life conditions. Their texts constantly circle around the motives of home (tree, root), homelessness (stray animals) and change responded to with melancholy.

The second generation is called the “middle generation” and consists of writers such as Erika Áts, Ludwig Fischer, Josef Mikonya, Engelbert Rittinger, Franz Sziebert and Georg Wittmann. None of these writers, who all have a rural background, are full-time writers. Like the writers of the generation before, they try to pass on the Hungarian-German tradition and language within their works. However, they also address contemporary issues such as the problems and consequences of urbanization and industrialization, which permanently changed the lives of the Hungarian-Germans.

The next generation of writers, who have already benefited from a significantly longer education and consists largely of academics, includes, amongst others, Béla Bayer, Robert Becker, Nelu Bradean-Ebinger, Koloman Brenner, Robert Hecker, Claus Klotz, Valeria Koch and Joseph Michaelis. According to Eszter Propszt, the great achievement within the literature of this generation is that the writers have (partly) left behind the narrowness of the Hungarian-German literature before.²⁶ However, the importance of the shared history and the Hungarian-German tradition is still a main motive in the literature of this young generation of writers.²⁷

After the analysis of the works written by the members of these three literary generations and diving into the relatively little research literature about them, one is most likely to agree with Eszter Propszt, who considers contemporary Hungarian-German literature as the product of a small group of amateur writers. As such it shows considerable qualitative deficiencies on several levels. Also, it is greatly influenced by the Hungarian minority policy insofar as it has to be up to the the-

matic expectations of the leaders of the Hungarian-German literary scene, who are highly dependent on public funding. In short, Hungarian-German literature can be regarded as a politically motivated cultural construct that is kept alive artificially. The potential for development hardly exists in current Hungarian-German literature, unless it would completely redefine and reinvent itself.

However, there is a part of Hungarian-German literature that has the ability to withstand current national and international literary demands in terms of quality while at the same time fulfilling the task of strengthening the identity of the Hungarian-Germans without ignoring the change it has undergone throughout the years: A considerable number of texts in Hungarian language written by Hungarian-German authors and dealing with topics characteristic for the Hungarian-German minority have enjoyed great success within the last years. István Elmer's "Parasztbarokk" (1991) and Robert Balogh's "Schvab trilógia" consisting of the three novels "Schvab evangeliom. Nagymamák orvosságos könyve" (2001), "Schvab legendariom. Álmoskönyv" (2004) and "Schvab diariom. Utolsó Schvab" (2007) are remarkable examples of Hungarian-German literature written in Hungarian. Eszter Propszt, who has conducted a respectable amount of research on that literature, sums up her findings as follows:

In my experience, based on years of research and analytical work leading to my results that I've written down, texts in Hungarian language provide identity models that are more functional than the ones provided by the German language texts. They allow the reader a much more differentiated creation of identity by providing identity elements offered for internalization that are both semantically as well as psychologically differentiated and developed in a complex way. Also, the structural relationships between those identity elements reconstruct both the social reality as well as the mental reality of the individual and the community in an elaborate way. In contrast to that, it is my experience that the Hungarian-German texts in German language, often providing extremely simplified models of life and history and working with stiff schemata, do not motivate readers to further reflection or even self-reflection.²⁸

Márton Kalász is another Hungarian-German writer, who has so far been awarded 17 literary prices – among them the most important Hungarian literary awards such as the József Attila-díj (1971, 1987), Arany János-díj (2001), Prima Primissima díj (2006) and the Kossuth-díj (2013). He was born in southern Hungary in 1934 and has until now published about 30 volumes of poetry and prose – among them his novel *Téli bárány* (1986), which is partly autobiographical and deals with his childhood experiences during the Interwar period, World War II and the social situation as well as changes in Hungary during the first years of the socialist regime. By doing so, Kalász not only breaks a taboo by making the Hun-

garian-German's partly voluntary involvement in the SS the subject of discussion, but also leaves the whitewashing of the good old times, which is typical for the German language texts, way behind. Instead, he describes conflicts and rivalry between the members of the minority and, in addition to that, focuses on general problems and issues concerning the overall society. The reality of the Hungarian-German minority becomes a part of the whole – the one cannot be seen without the other without the risk of achieving a distorted picture.

Taking the above into account finally leads back to the initial question: where does Hungarian-German literature belong? Judging by its name and the language most texts are written in, one would assume that it belongs to the tasks of the German studies. However, even when considering the German language texts alone this view is not undisputed as a quick look into the ongoing discussion about the handling of minority literatures within the German studies shows. Although there is a long dispute about the terminology itself, by looking at the term "Hungarian-German literature" the need for an approach from more than one side becomes obvious: by shifting the focus away from the geographical localization, the sheer name, "Hungarian-German literature", emphasizes the special position of that specific (minority) literature that moves between the languages and literatures, which represents a major and influential challenge for it. Minority literature written in German is considered a valid part of what falls under the generally accepted definition of German literature in a supranational context.

At the same time it is the German part of each other national literature, because it is part of a different reality and as such subject to different linguistic, historico-cultural and socio-political terms. Also, the distribution and reception mainly takes place within the space of the other literature.²⁹

An adequate handling of Hungarian-German literature would require scientific consideration on the part of the German *and* the Hungarian studies, in order to take account of all its dimensions.

The literary studies that want to do the minority literature justice, have to examine the texts with regard to intercultural aspects, such as their participation in various cultural and literary traditions, their presentation of intercultural contacts and conflicts and their production of cultural differences. All that requires the investigation of the relationships between cultures and literatures beyond the limits of national philology [...], which goes well beyond the methodological requirements of the traditional German studies.³⁰

Herzog also emphasizes the importance of a trans-cultural approach to Hungarian-German literature – instead of searching for connections between the minority

literature and the “linguistic motherland”, much more attention should be given to its comparison with the literature of the other language originating from the immediate area. Thus, what is considered as an exclusive characteristic of the minority literature at first sight might not be as exclusive as it seems: it is very likely that one can find many similarities between, for example, the rural and the urban literary traditions of different language groups within one area.³¹ Werner Biechele, pointing into a similar direction, also emphasizes the need for a cross-cultural approach to minority literature: the German minority literatures have to be regarded as specific and in that respect regional phenomena in between the other linguistic and national units surrounding them. Their quality cannot be measured by the standards applied for the national literature of Germany or Austria written in the German language. Their quality, Biechele argues, is defined by the extent to which the writers and the texts of minority literature are able to gain recognition and importance *within* and *in relation to* another, namely, the surrounding cultural area.³² Therein lies the core significance of the Hungarian-German literature from the standpoint of the Hungarian studies: both the German and the Hungarian texts represent a valuable addition to the Hungarian national culture – as they are influenced by the same historico-cultural and socio-political factors as Hungarian national literature. It is necessary to search for similarities and influences between the minority and the national literature with regards to content, motives and style with respect to intertextual associations. While, for example, in German contemporary literature rural motives are not very widespread, there is a strong tradition of rural symbolism in Hungarian national literature as well as in Hungarian-German minority literature. Obviously, the primary cultural socialisation of contemporary Hungarian-German writers happens in Hungary, which resonates in their own literary works more strongly than any German literary tradition they acquired during their academic education. In this context, it would be interesting to establish whether a Hungarian audience in contrast to a German audience would react more positively to Hungarian-German literature whose motives appear closer to their own written tradition.

The most important aspect of the previously mentioned Hungarian-German literature written in Hungarian, probably is its significance in regard to the construction of identity as well as cultural and collective memory.

Apart from non-fictional texts such as philosophical or religious writings, rites and ancient monuments, literary texts represent an important medium of cultural memory and identity formation. Fictional texts can stage elements of the pre-existing memory culture on different levels within the text. These elements can also be placed into new contexts and become symbolically compressed, so the texts often provide alternative representations of collective memories. Outside the textual dimension, fictional texts can become meaningful as

the central form of expression of collective memory and thereby make an active contribution to social memory and identity formation.³³

This capacity of literature is all the more important for minorities disposing of a separate, particular cultural memory, as it can help to achieve changes within the main collective memory of the dominant social group they are incorporated into, for example, on a national level.

The collective-semantic and at the same time ‘official’ memory includes the evaluative version of memory of a dominant part of the population, which is produced and maintained by institutional, normative references to the past, such as in [...] the formation of state traditions and canons. [...] In order to become culturally effective, particularistic episodic memories of a group must be transferred via conventionalized references of public discourse into semantic knowledge content and made available for the whole of society beyond the socially limited horizon of the group itself.³⁴

A scientifically appropriate approach to and discussion about the Hungarian-German literature in a wider public arena may actually be able to lead to what the Hungarian-German minority is so eagerly seeking for: increased awareness for the minority and its culture, both outside and within the minority itself. The latter especially in regards to the improvement and development of a real sense of belonging and togetherness among the members of the minority that may encourage them to personal commitment within the manifold aspects of minority life such as literature, music, education, a.o.. After all, only a strong, authentic and vivid minority can withstand the danger of cultural homogenization and this continuity of cultural variety should ideally be of interest for both the German and the Hungarian studies.

Notes

¹ Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies. Theory and Practice* (SAGE, 2007), 159.

² *Ibid.*, 161.

³ Cf. Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*. 4. Aufl. (München: Beck, 2002), 134f.

⁴ Assmann, 2002, 134. (Translation by the author.)

⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation. Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts*. 2. Aufl. (Frankfurt/Main, New York: Campus-Verlag, 2005).

⁶ John C. Swanson, “Minority Building in the German Diaspora: The Hungarian-Germans.” In *Austrian History Yearbook* 36 (2005), 149.

⁷ Swanson, 2005, 150.

⁸ Cf. Assmann, 2002, 132.

- ⁹ Brigitte Neumann, “Literatur als Medium (der Inszenierung) kollektiver Erinnerungen und Identitäten,” in *Literatur, Erinnerung, Identität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien*, ed. Astrid Erll, Marion Gymnich et al. (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2003), 52f. (Translation by the author.)
- ¹⁰ Cf. Neumann, 2003, 57.
- ¹¹ Paola Bozzi, *Der fremde Blick. Zum Werk Herta Müllers* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), 30. (Translation by the author.)
- ¹² Cf. Árpád von Klimó, *Ungarn seit 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 172.
- ¹³ The data is cited from Györgyi Bindorffer, *Változatok a kettős identitásra. Kisebbségi léthelyzetek és identitásalakzatok a magyarországi horvátok, németek, szerbek, szlovákok, szlovének körében* [Changes in Dual Identity. Minority Circumstances and Identity Formations among the Hungarian Croats, Germans, Serbs, Slovaks and Slovens] (Budapest: Gondolat; MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2007), 10f.
- ¹⁴ Bindorffer, 2007, 8.
- ¹⁵ Zsuzsanna Gerner, “Zu Identitätskonzepten der Ungarndeutschen um die Jahrtausendwende: Abstammung – Sprache – Kultur,” in *Literatur, Literaturvermittlung, Identität*, ed. Johann Schuth (Budapest: VUDAK 2004), 57. (Translated by the author.)
- ¹⁶ Wolfgang Aschauer, *Zur Produktion und Reproduktion einer Nationalität. Die Ungarndeutschen* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1992), 236f.
- ¹⁷ <http://www.nek.gov.hu/data/files/156899042.pdf> [Accessed 07 August 2012].
- ¹⁸ Bindorffer, 2007, 8f.
- ¹⁹ Cf. Bindorffer, 2007, 9.
- ²⁰ Cf. Maria Erb, “Sprachgebrauch der Ungarndeutschen: Geschichte – Tendenzen – Perspektiven,” in *Deutsch als Fremd- und Minderheitensprache in Ungarn. Historische Entwicklung, aktuelle Tendenzen und Zukunftsperspektiven*, ed. Frank Kostrzewa and Roberta V. Rada (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider-Verl. Hohengehren, 2010), 137.
- ²¹ Norbert Spannenberger, “Die Lage der deutschen Minderheit in Ungarn im Spiegel des Minderheitengesetzes,” in *Deutsche in Ungarn. Ungarn und Deutsche. Interdisziplinäre Zugänge*, ed. Frank Almai and Ulrich Fröschle (Dresden, Thelem, 2004), 59.
- ²² Gerner, 2004, 64f.
- ²³ Cf. Annamária Sasné Grósz, “Egységesedés vagy elkülönülés? Német nemzetiségi fiatalok helykeresése napjainkban” [Unification or Separation? The Search for Place among German Minority Youth Today], in *Ifjúsági jövőképek és életstratégiai globalizálódott korunkban. Tanulmánykötet* [Visions of the Future and Life Strategies in the Era of Globalisation. Collection of Essays], ed. Béla Beszteri (Komárom: MTA Veszprémi Területi Bizottság, 2009), 194.
- ²⁴ Susanne Breier, “Die ungarndeutsche Literatur und ihr Publikum,” in *Ungarndeutsche Literatur der siebziger und achtziger Jahre. Eine Dokumentation*, ed. János Szabó and Johann Schuth (München u.a.: Verl. des Südostdt. Kulturwerkes, 1991), 180.
- ²⁵ Gerner, 2004, 63.
- ²⁶ Eszter Propszt, Die ungarndeutsche Gegenwartsliteratur unter literaturosoziologischem Aspekt. <http://www.inst.at/trans/3Nr/propszt.htm> [Accessed 27 May 2013].
- ²⁷ There is by now a fourth generation of even younger writers, but, apart from the author’s own research, they have hardly found any recognition within the literary or academic field until now. For more information see: Erika Regner, “Die ungarndeutsche Literatur im 21. Jahrhundert” (Diplomarbeit. Univ. Wien, 2012).
- ²⁸ Eszter Propszt, “Hol vagy, Balogh? Gyere ki, megöllek!” Avagy mi szükség a magyarországi német irodalomra?” [“Where are you, Balogh! Come out, I am going to kill you!” Or Why Do We Need Hungarian German Literature]. http://www.napkut.hu/naput_2008/2008_5/089.htm [Accessed 27 May 2013] (Translated by the author.)

- ²⁹ Alexander Ritter, “Germanistik ohne schlechtes Gewissen. Die deutschsprachige Literatur des Auslands und ihre wissenschaftliche Rezeption,” in *Deutschsprachige Literatur im Ausland*, ed. Alexander Ritter (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985), 29.
- ³⁰ *Die andere deutsche Literatur, Istanbuler Vorträge*, ed. Manfred Durzak and Nilüfer Kuruyazıcı et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004), 13.
- ³¹ Cf. Andreas Herzog, “Transkulturalität als Perspektive der Geschichtsschreibung deutschsprachiger Literatur,” in *Wer mag wohl die junge, schwarzäugige Dame seyn? Zuordnungsfragen, Darstellungsprinzipien, Bewertungskriterien der deutsch(sprachig)en Literatur in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, ed. Werner Biechele and András F. Balogh (Budapest: Argumentum Verlag, 2002), 33.
- ³² Cf. Werner Biechele, “Deutschsprachige Literaturen des Auslands im Kontext einer interkulturellen Literaturwissenschaft,” in Werner Biechele and András F. Balogh, *Wer mag wohl die junge, schwarzäugige Dame seyn? Zuordnungsfragen, Darstellungsprinzipien, Bewertungskriterien der deutsch(sprachig)en Literatur in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa* (Budapest: Argumentum Verlag, 2002), 22.
- ³³ Neumann, 2003, 50. (Translated by the author.)
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65. (Translated by the author.)

STATUS OF GULAG RESEARCH IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO THE HUNGARIANS

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The twentieth century was undoubtedly the bloodiest hundred years in the history of humanity. In this final century of the second millennium more humans suffered from various state-sponsored programs and institutions of mass murder than during the whole stretch of written century. In the twentieth century tens of millions of humans fell victim to these so-called “redeeming” religious and political ideologies. The bloodiest of these ideologies included: (1) an extreme form of nationalism that culminated in racism; (2) applied Marxism that hid under the mantle of Bolshevism and Stalinism; (3) national socialism that manifested itself in Fascism and Nazism; and finally (4) the recently emerging Fundamentalist Islam that attempted to tear down the structure and achievements of Western Christian Civilization. These “redeeming ideologies” competed against each other in their efforts to torture, torment, and annihilate tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions of human beings. The best known among these mass exterminations is undoubtedly the Holocaust, which resulted in the torturous death of six million Jews or alleged Jews, among them several hundred-thousand Hungarians. This centrally planned and meticulously executed extermination process is so well known that nowadays it is part of general human consciousness everywhere in the world. Sadly, this does not apply to the other 20th-century mass extermination known as the Gulag, which is not part of that consciousness. In point of fact, one still encounters scholars who don’t even believe that the Gulag had ever existed. While Holocaust-research is pursued in the United States at several dozen universities, museums, libraries and various other research centers, this does not apply to the Gulag, which is hardly known to the general public. This is also true for American university students, of whom – based on my own experiences – less than five percent is aware of this modern form of slavery and mass extermination. The goal of this paper is to summarize briefly the type of Gulag-research pursued in the United States, which – in absence of specialized research institutes – is pursued mostly by individual scholars. Toward the end of this study, reference is also made to the “Gulag-consciousness” and “Gulag-research” in Hungary – which also leaves much to be desired.

Keywords: Gulag, artificial famine, black book of communism, bolshevism, communism, fascism, Holocaust, Kolyma, Stalinist purges

The twentieth century was undoubtedly the bloodiest hundred years in the history of humanity. In this final century of the second millennium more humans suffered from various state-sponsored programs and institutions of mass murder than during the whole stretch of written century. In the twentieth century tens of millions of humans fell victim to these so-called “redeeming” religious and political ideologies. The bloodiest of these ideologies included: (1) an extreme form of nationalism that culminated in the triumph of racism; (2) applied Marxism or communism that hid under the mantle of Bolshevism and Stalinism; (3) national socialism that manifested itself in the form of Fascism and Nazism; and finally (4) the recently emerging Fundamentalist Islam – in President George W. Bush’s words “Islamic Fascism” – that attempted (and still attempts) to tear down the structure and achievements of Western Christian Civilization. These “redeeming ideologies” competed against each other in their efforts to torture, torment, and annihilate tens of millions, perhaps hundreds of millions of human beings.

The best known among these mass exterminations is undoubtedly the Holocaust, which resulted in the torturous death of six million Jews or alleged Jews, among them several hundred-thousand Hungarians. This centrally planned and meticulously executed extermination process is so well known that nowadays it is part of general human consciousness everywhere in the world.

Sadly, this does not apply to the other 20th-century mass extermination known as the GULAG, which is not part of that consciousness. As the well-known Gulag-researcher, Tamás Stark, wrote in one of his relevant studies, there are historians who don’t even acknowledge the existence of the Gulag. In one of the conferences he attended, entitled: “Gulag – Myth and Reality”, Stark encountered scholars who denied the very existence of this Stalinist institution of mass murder.¹ This denial was partially the result of the fact that during the 1930s and 1940s the majority of Western intellectuals were enamored with Stalin; and partially of the post-World War II rivalry between the two superpowers that took the form of the Cold War. As summarized by the other noted Gulag-researcher, Ágnes Gereben, following the Second World War “the competition among the members of the erstwhile anti-Fascist coalition was by far the most important question”.² Given this reality, none of the Western political leaders were really interested in dealing with the Stalinist terror and its impact upon the lives of tens of millions of victims.

As noted below, the Holocaust was a unique phenomenon. For this very reason it is not very fortunate to compare it with the Soviet Gulag. But similarly to the Holocaust, the Gulag also resulted in the torturous death of millions of human beings. Thus, their suffering should also be part of general human consciousness. To question its existence is like denying the existence of the Holocaust, which is a punishable deed in sixteen European countries.³ It was his denial of the Holocaust that landed the British historian, David Irving, in an Austrian prison.⁴ (To the best

of my knowledge, there are only two countries – France and Hungary – that have laws not only against the denial of the Holocaust, but also about the questioning of the existence of the Gulag.)

There were a good number of liberal Western intellectuals who spoke up against Irving's imprisonment in the name of the freedom of speech. In their view, Irving's incarceration could only help the extreme right, because it would make the forlorn British historian into a heroic martyr. The noted American publicist, Christopher Hitchens, gave vent to this view as follows: "Free speech Über Alles. Even for David Irving" [Freedom of Speech over everything. Even for David Irving].⁵

The lack of common Hungarian consciousness about the Gulag is best demonstrated by the lack of treatment of this Bolshevik-inspired mass extermination in most histories of 20th century Hungary. Even the word "Gulag" is missing from such prominent handbooks as *Magyar szókincstár* [Hungarian Dictionary] (1999), and eleventh edition *Magyar helyesírás szabályai* [Rules of Correct Hungarian Spelling] (2000) published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. As a result of these omissions not even educated Hungarians know very much about the Gulag. And this is even more true about the semi-educated masses, who know virtually nothing about this system of mass slavery and mass eradication of many millions. Thus, we should not be surprised when the average Hungarian, who was approached for financial support by the directors of the Gulag Foundation, refuse to contribute because they think that the donated money would support a "Kulák Association".⁶ In other words they routinely mix up the word "Gulag" with the word "Kulák" – the latter being the so-called "rich peasants", who became the primary victims during Stalin's collectivization drive in the early 1930s..

This lack of knowledge about the Gulag is equally evident in the United States. This can be demonstrated by my own experience at Duquesne University, where I have been teaching for over four decades. Ever since my wife and I began our Gulag research in the year 2003, I quizzed my students at the start of all of my classes about their knowledge of the Holocaust and the Gulag. In a class of forty students every single one of them knew the essence of the Holocaust, but only two or three knew something about the Gulag. And even they could barely identify it as an institution of oppression and mass slavery. All they knew that it was somehow connected with the Soviet Union.⁷

The Essence of Communism and Nazism

According to a number of disenchanted Western intellectuals who after 1956 left the fold of the Communist Party, there is a very close relationship between Communism and Nazism. This is evident from the life and career of Alain Besancon,

whose views are detailed in his work *Le malheur de siècle* [The Century of Horrors] (1998). His views are summarized by the translator and editor of the English version of his volume as follows:

While Nazism is recognized, justifiably, as the very embodiment of evil, communism somehow benefits from a kind of collective amnesia. It shocks or at least surprises no one today to hear it said that Soviet communism was a good idea that turned out badly, whereas, of course, it would be unthinkable to make similar observations about Hitler's regime.⁸

But as Besancon demonstrated in his brilliant analysis of the essence of these two allegedly rival ideologies, there is a great deal of similarities between them. In other words,

a sober and unblinking consideration of the two cases, side by side, reveals pervasive similarities. ... Even though the Nazis carried crime to the level of intensity perhaps unequaled by communism, one must nevertheless affirm that communism brought about a more widespread and deeper moral destruction.⁹

Therefore we have to accept the thesis that “Nazism and communism are criminal. But they are equally criminal”.¹⁰ Here we must remind the reader that today Alain Besancon (b. 1932) is one of France’s most recognized thinkers and intellectual historians, who, between 1951 and 1956, was a member of the French Communist Party. As such he not only studied, but also lived this destructive ideology.

The Situation in the United States

As pointed out above, even though the Gulag system impacted Hungary directly, there is still a general lack of knowledge about the nature of the forced labor system and how it affected the Hungarians. It shouldn’t be a surprise to anyone that a similar lack of knowledge also exists in the United States, which by virtue of its power-position remained unaffected by the Stalinist terror. Also important were the following considerations: (1) the geographical distance between the two superpowers, (2) their somewhat unnatural alliance against the Nazi Germany during World War II, (3) their confrontation during the Cold War, which suppressed all interests in the Gulag, and finally (4) Stalin’s death in 1953 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet slave labor camps. In consequence of these developments – while keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive via national and international research centers, archives, and libraries became a number one priority of

many Western intellectuals – the fate of the victims of the Gulag system and Stalinist terror in general were gradually forgotten.

True, the appearance of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago* in 1973 did shake up the consciousness of the world somewhat. Yet, not even this agonizing portrayal of the Soviet Gulag was able to lift the Stalinist terror system out of obscurity to a point where it would have rivaled the position of the Holocaust. There were some Stalin-worshiping Marxist intellectuals who went so far as to belittle and trivialize Solzhenitsyn's work. By far the most condemnable among these Stalin-worshipers was the Nobel-laureate Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda (1904–1973), who was among the first to be awarded a Stalin prize. Upon reading Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, Neruda declared that everything the Russian writer had described pales besides all the good which "this small man with a huge moustache" [Stalin] has done in the interest of humanity.¹¹

As noted by Hungarian-American political scientist, Paul Hollander,

Neruda's long-standing commitment to the support of the Soviet regime precluded sympathy with Solzhenitsyn's fate: it also prompted him to try to trivialize the persecution of Solzhenitsyn by calling it a 'big bore'.¹²

In those days the Western World was inundated with the Neruda-like intellectuals in whose eyes Stalin was a canonized genius. Because of their total dedication to Stalin as the leader of the communist world they were not interested in knowing anything about the nature of the Soviet Gulag, nor about the fate of the many millions who suffered there and fell victim to this instrument of political oppression. The worst among them was Neruda who retained his original dedication even after 1956, which saw Khrushchev's unmasking of Stalin, and the unexpected eruption of the anti-communist and anti-Soviet Hungarian Revolution.

To the best of my knowledge – in contrast to the Holocaust, which is represented in the United States by dozens of research centers and museums – there is not a single research institute or professorship in the United States that deals with the history of the Gulag. For this reason the development of the Gulag and its study in the United States can only be treated on the basis of the activities and publications of individual scholars.

From the point of view of American Gulag scholarship the most important practitioners of this research are two personalities who are separated from each other by nearly half century. They are Robert Conquest (b. 1917) and Anne Applebaum (b. 1964). In addition to them we can also mention a number of other scholars, a few of whom may not be Americans, but came to be known to the world primarily through their English language publications, mostly in the United States. In addition to the writings of a few native scholars, their works also became part of American Gulag research.

The pioneer American Gulag-researcher is the currently 95 year old Robert Conquest, who is still an active member of Stanford University's Hoover Institution – the largest Russian research center in the United States.¹³ Son of an American father and a Norwegian mother, and having been brought up in Britain, this Anglo-American historian has authored over two dozen books on the Soviet Union, and on the Soviet slave labor system established by Lenin and perfected by Stalin. Conquest's most influential work is *The Great Terror*, originally published in 1968. This work was the first truly scholarly description of the Stalinist purges in the period between 1934 and 1939, which resulted in political trials, mass executions, mass deportations, and the filling up of the Gulag slave labor camps. According to Conquest these Stalinist purges were responsible for the death of about 20 million, mostly innocent human beings. He based his work partially on Soviet historical sources following the relaxation under Khrushchev (1953–1964), and partially on the information derived from Soviet immigrants, who either fled or were permitted to leave the Soviet Union.

The Great Terror was republished in a revised edition in 2007.¹⁴ In this work, based on significantly more sources, Conquest lowered his estimate of the number of Stalin's victims during the period of the purges to about 13–15 million. What is the truth? Probably no one will ever know. This is best demonstrated by the widely divergent figures circulated about the victims of Lenin and Stalin. Just to mention a few: According to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the author of the *Gulag Archipelago* (1973) – those who passed through the Gulag camps numbered around 60 million. The noted British historian, Norman Davis, believes their numbers to have been 50 million. General Dimitri Volkogonov, the head of a Soviet historical research institute, swears by 45 million. The dissident historian, Roy Medvedev speaks of 40 million. Robert Conquest originally believed their number to have been between 20 and 30 million. The prestigious *Encyclopedia Britannica* speaks of 20 million, *The Black Book of Communism* of 20 million, Anne Applebaum of 17–18 million, and the British economic historian with Marxist sympathies of 10–11 million. This is the reality that a Gulag-researcher finds himself confronted with when trying to write something worthwhile about this institution of political oppression. Although on a smaller scale, the situation is similar to the Hungarian victims of the Gulag, whose numbers also diverge among serious Gulag-researchers.¹⁵

Naturally, historians who are dedicated Marxists are strong at work trying to lower the number of the victims, while also attempting to humanize the functioning of the Gulag system. Sadly, this is true even for Hungary that was one of the primary non-Soviet states of Stalinist oppression. Even in Hungary there are a number of historians who still promote Stalinism, and for this reason they try to minimize the viciousness of the Gulag system and thus lower the number of Hungarians who fell victim to this Stalinist terror.

The most noted Gulag-minimizer among Hungarian historians is Tamás Krausz, Professor of History at the University of Budapest [ELTE] and the Director of the Institute of Russian Studies at that institution. He is also the same historian who in 2005 accused Professor Robert Conquest of being a political propagandist in the pay of Ukrainian nationalists. Krausz did this partially because he believes that Conquest's "secret goal" is to "equate Nazi genocide with the Gulag". This, however, is a forcible reinterpretation of Conquest's scholarly views, activities, and publication, for he never made such a statement. At the same time such a statement was made by the best known Gulag-researcher, Anne Applebaum, in a documentary film [DVD] made in 2004, and entitled "Siberia". While being interviewed she stated that in her views "The Gulag and the Holocaust belong in the same category of historical events".¹⁶

I do not agree with Applebaum's above quoted statement, for I regard the Holocaust as a unique phenomenon. This mass extermination was the only event in human history, wherein the leaders of a political regime decided to kill everyone who in any way could be classified as a Jew. (This also applies to the Gypsies, homosexuals, and the physically impaired.) One can hardly doubt that the Gulag system was responsible for many more deaths than the Holocaust. But the creators of the Gulag never made a decision to exterminate every single member of a specific ethnic, national, or religious group. In the case of the Gulag one's nationality, ethnicity, or ideology made no difference. They exploited, tortured, and exterminated everyone who in any way stood in their way. And this applied even to the founding fathers of the Soviet Union, as well as to the executors of Stalin's murderous plans for mass extermination. The best examples of the former include Leon Trotsky (1879–1940), Grigory Y. Zinoviev (1883–1936), Lev B. Kamenev (1883–1936), and Nicholas I. Bukharin (1888–1938); while the best examples of the latter are the two consecutive Directors of the Soviet Secret Police [NKVD], Genrikh G. Yagoda (1891–1938; tenure in office 1934–1936) and Nikolai Yezhov (1895–1939; tenure in office 1936–1938), all of whom fell victim to the Stalinist purges.¹⁷

It is this phenomenon that distinguished the Holocaust from the Gulag, and which makes the former into a unique phenomenon. And this is recognized by most Gulag researchers, including Professor Robert Conquest – even if occasionally he draws a parallel between these two institutions of mass extermination.

It should also be mentioned here that Gulag-deniers also exist in the United States. The most notorious of these deniers is Grover Furr, who is a Professor of English at Montclair State University and a dedicated Stalinist. His most notorious work is his study entitled "Stalin and the Struggle for Democratic Reform".¹⁸ Furr's description of Stalin makes this greatest of mass murderers (along with Hitler and Mao Tse-tung) into a humanitarian democratic leader. And he does this

with a man who declared that: “The death of one man is a tragedy, the death of millions is statistics”.

Anne Applebaum, and Gulag-Consciousness in America

Anne Applebaum was born just four years before the appearance of Robert Conquest’s book *The Great Terror* (1968). Yet today she is the best known Gulag-researcher who produced a book that rivals in importance Conquest’s above mentioned volume.

In contrast to Robert Conquest, who had always been attached to a university or an institution of scholarly research, Applebaum became a Gulag researcher after being trained as a publicist or journalist. She learned French, Polish and Russian, and during the 1990s she moved to Warsaw, Poland, where in 1992 she married Radoslaw Sikorski, a member of the Polish intellectual and social elite, and since 2007 Poland’s Foreign Minister.¹⁹ Her book, *Gulag. A History* is a major synthesis of the history and functioning of the Soviet Gulag system. It appeared in 2003, and in 2004 it earned for her a Pulitzer-prize.

Applebaum’s book was received with great ovations, and was praised highly by such prominent public figures as President Nixon’s Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, President Carter’s National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, as well as her predecessor in Gulag research Professor Robert Conquest. Based on their comments it is evident that with her Gulag volume Anne Applebaum has produced a significant scholarly work. Her book was published in many tens of thousands of copies, and spread through the whole English-speaking world. And in translation it was disseminated to various non-English speaking countries. For the first time since Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* (1973) it aroused interest in the Stalinist system of mass extermination. Knowledge about the Gulag began to penetrate even into American consciousness, although still far from the level of the Holocaust.

A Few Other Gulag Researchers

In the period between Conquest’s *The Great Terror* (1968) and Anne Applebaum’s *Gulag. A History* (2003) there were a number of others who published scholarly works on the history of the Gulag. But these monographs never left the limits of the scholarly world, wherefore their impact was also limited.

Some of the important Gulag books that appeared in English from the pens of non-Americans included (1) Avraham Shifrin’s *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps in the Soviet Union* (1980), (2) Colin Thubron’s *In Si-*

beria (1999), (3) Nanci Adler's *The Gulag Survivor* (2002), (4) Oleg V. Khlevniuk's *The History of the Gulag* (2004), and (5) the multi-authored *The Black Book of Communism* (1999).

In his book *The First Guide to Prisons and Concentration Camps* the Russian emigré historian Avraham Shifrin identifies and describes over two-thousand Soviet penal institutions that existed in the Soviet Union even in 1980.²⁰ Some of them were specifically for the incarceration of common criminals. But the majority of the enumerated institutions were the homes of political prisoners. And this, almost three decades after the death of Joseph Stalin, which allegedly signaled the beginning of the dismantlement of Gulag slave labor camps. But as we know from other sources, the final elimination of the Gulag camps was completed only during the period of Mikhail Gorbachev (1985–1991).

The volume *In Siberia* was authored by the British author and traveler Colin Thubron, who visited the remnants of many former Gulag camps throughout the erstwhile Soviet Union.²¹ Among others, he surveyed scores of penal colonies in such remote regions as Tobolsk, Vorkuta, Norilsk, Kabarovsk, Yakutia, and even the very remote province of Kolyma. The latter was the most dreaded Soviet penal colony, which had been established specifically to extract gold from recently discovered gold deposits. In Kolyma Thubron first visited its capital city of Magadan, from where he took the “Road of Bones” up to the mines, where very few prisoners survived. During the 1930s and 1940s between two and three million innocent human beings perished there, and their bones can be found on both sides of the three-hundred miles long Road of Bones that connects Magadan with the gold mines in the north. In one of the penal camps in Vorkuta, Thubron found a large rock on which the following message was scrawled: “I was exiled [here] in 1949, and my father died here in 1942. Remember us.”²² Thubron’s writing is very moving and portrays vividly the misery of the millions of victims of Stalin’s terror regime. Fortunately Thubron visited the remnants of these camps when they were still visible – at least partially. Soon, however, even these remnants will disappear. Their absence will help eradicate the memory of Stalin’s crimes, including the mass extermination of many tens of millions of innocent victims.

I would also like to mention that in 2004 the Hungarian film director and producer, Zoltán Szálkai, also visited Kolyma. He walked on the Road of Bones from Magadan to the gold mines, and filmed some of the same Gulag camps that had been seen and recorded by Colin Thubron a few years earlier. His resulting documentary entitled “Walking on the Gulagland. Kolyma” is the result of his visit to this forbidden land of terror. Szálkai’s documentary is a brave effort to portray the misery of these death camps. Yet, not even his films can describe the suffering of the prisoners who knew that their only path lead to agony and ultimately to excruciating death in that land of hopelessness.²³

Simultaneously with Thubron's book *In Siberia* appeared the bulky volume *The Black Book of Communism* (1999), which had been authored by six French scholars.²⁴ The authors of this volume claim that the victims of communism during the period of the existence of the Soviet Union numbered close to one-hundred million, of whom at least twenty million can be attributed to Stalin. (As we have seen, some other scholars claim that the true number of Stalin's victims is closer to forty to sixty million.) If we stick with the figure of 20 million, then – according to the calculations of János Rózsás – one to two percent (i.e., 200,000 to 400,000) of the victims were Hungarians, who perished on the Gulag. While these numbers may not seem excessive in light of the overall number of the victims of the Gulag, but in the case of a small nation such as the Hungarians they are in fact huge numbers. One to two per cent in their case would be between 30 to 60 million in the case of Americans, who now number over 300 million. This may explain why in the 850 page *Black Book of Communism* Hungarians are given only about eight pages. But this is still much more than what they were given in several of the other Gulag volumes that appeared in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Forgetting to mention Hungarians from among the victims of the Soviet Gulag is true for all of the other books that were mentioned above. Thus, Nanci Adler of the of California State University at San Diego, and of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, concentrates on the post-World War II period,²⁵ specifically on those who suffered and managed to survive the Gulag camps. But she has nothing to say about Hungarians.

This also holds true for Oleg Khlevniuk's volume, *The History of the Gulag. From Collectivization to the Great Terror* (2004), which deals only with the 1930s, represented by Stalin's transformation of the Russian social and political scene and the extermination of all of his rivals.²⁶ According to Khlevniuk, the slave labor camps of the 1930s were basically different from the concentration camps of the 1920s. Stalin's camps were not only the depository of political rivals, but also the prisons of the many millions who had been arrested and condemned simply because Stalin needed unpaid labor for the social and economic transformation of Russia. Sadly, similarly to Adler's monograph, Khlevniuk's book received equally little attention.

Harrowing Books about the Gulag

In addition to the above volumes, there are a few others that deserve special attention. The two most significant include a book by the Hungarian-born political scientist Paul Hollander (b. 1932) and by the Greek-born British film director, Tim Tzouliadis (b. 1968).

Paul Hollander left Hungary after the anti-Soviet Hungarian Revolution of 1956. He studied at Princeton and Harvard Universities, and then joined the Department of Political Science at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His most important scholarly work is his *Political Pilgrims. Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba, 1928–1978* (1981), wherein he describes the adoration displayed by Western intellectuals toward Stalin. Hollander demonstrates with quotations from the writings of hundreds of Western intellectuals of how they were routinely misled by Stalin's propaganda machine. Instead of recognizing the fact that under Stalin's leadership the Soviet Union had become the huge penal colony where millions were being tortured to death, these "great intellectuals" viewed Stalin's Russia as the land of the future, as an experimentation in Utopia. Among these "great intellectuals" were such noted personalities as Thomas Mann and Gerhard Hauptmann of Germany, Anatole France and André Maurois of France, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, and Sidney and Beatrice Webb of Britain, Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair of the United States, and scores of others from Western Europe and North America.²⁷

Their dedication to Marxism, and their naive hope that under the aegis of this ideology a beautiful and happy Utopian society would emerge has blinded them completely. They were simply unable to recognize the hard reality of the oppressive Stalinist system. They were blind even to the artificial famine created by Stalin that resulted in the miserable death of over six million Ukrainian and Caucasian peasants,²⁸ creating a situation which ultimately lead even to the practice of cannibalism.²⁹ These Western intellectuals were unwilling to acknowledge the existence of thousands of slave labor camps, filled with millions of guiltless human beings. Nor were they willing to recognize the true nature of the political trials of the 1930s, which sent hundreds of Bolshevik founding fathers to the gallows. And all this simply because a Caucasian brigand originally named Dzhugashvili [Stalin] wanted to get rid of all his rivals, and thus become the uncontested and glorified leader of the Soviet Union and of the Communist World. Or as formulated by Paul Hollander, these glorified Western intellectuals were so "favorably disposed toward the [Soviet] regime ... that they could not easily entertain the possibility of being the victims of an elaborate scheme of deception". But this naiveté made them into the willing tools of the totalitarian Stalinist regime, which regime went far beyond the inhumanity of the former Czarist regime. Thus they became the tools of Soviet propaganda. Moreover, during and after World War II a number of them went so far as betrayed their countries by delivering atomic secrets to Stalin's Russia.

Paul Hollander's book was so well received that it has already appeared in four editions, which is unusual for a scholarly monograph. In 2007 he also published a bulky volume entitled *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields*, which covers the a wide spectrum of countries, and contains sections of the reminiscences of former

Gulag prisoners.³⁰ They include Albanians, Bulgarians, Cambodians, Cubans, Czechs, Ethiopians, Germans, Koreans, Nicaraguans, Poles, Romanians, Vietnamese, Yugoslavs, and also two Hungarians. But they are not the typical Hungarians who have been forcibly deported and exploited, but who managed to survive. The two Hungarians – Paul Ignotus and György Pálóczi-Horváth – were Marxist intellectuals who never suffered in the Gulag, but only in Rákosi's prisons in Budapest.³¹ They became disenchanted with the Rákosi regime, but not with the ideology of Marxism. They certainly do not fit the image of an average Gulag prisoner whose numbers were in the hundreds of thousands, and most of whom were members of the anti-communist working class. Among those who survived many scores have written their memoirs that reflect reality of the Gulag much better than anything these two disenchanted intellectual wrote.³²

Paul Hollander's writings are strictly scholarly works. This does not quite apply to Tim Tzouliadis's book, *The Forsaken* (2008), which is more like a movie script.³³ It describes life of American Gulag prisoners through the life stories of some of those who survived, returned home, and wrote their memoirs after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tzouliadis's book is unique because until its appearance no one thought that there were Americans in the death camps of the Gulag. Up to the appearance of Tzouliadis's book no one ever imagined that Americans have ended up, suffered and died in Stalin's Gulag. But now, in light of this book, this American tragedy is undeniable.

But how did American citizens end up in the Soviet Union, and then in one of Stalin's dreaded slave labor camps? The roots of this hair-raising development reach back to the start of the "Great Depression" of 1929. This economic crisis began in New York, but then it spread through much of the industrialized world. In consequence of this economic breakdown of Western societies, unemployment became universal in most industrialized countries. Even the formerly envied American society came to be characterized by poverty, destitution, and soup lines. This unexpected economic misery occurred simultaneously with Stalin's first Five-Year Plan, when the Soviet Union was in need of industrial goods, machinery, and trained industrial workers to operate this machinery.

In 1931 the Soviet trading corporation AMTORG – established with the help of the crypto-communists American industrialist, Armand Hammer – began to recruit trained American industrial workers for the Soviet Union. The unemployed workers who volunteered to go with their families were warmly received in the Soviet Union. AMTORG paid for their transit fees, and promised them high salaries, classy apartments, annual vacations, free education for their children, and free medical care. In line with the misled Western intellectuals who believed in Stalin, these American workers were also mislead. They thought that under Stalin's "wise leadership" they would be living in a Utopia, a land characterized by liberty, equality, and fraternity. They were in for great surprise.

None of the Soviet promises turned out to be true. Within a few years all of these gullible Americans ended up in the Gulag, and most of them remained there permanently. Among their ranks was Lovett Fort-Whiteman (1894–1939), a black American communist, who was one of the founders of the American Communist Party, but who in 1937 still disappeared.³⁴ As it turned out, he had been arrested by the NKVD for his “Trockyite deviation”. He was deported to a slave labor camp in Khazakstan, and then to Kolyma, where – after many beatings and hunger – he died in 1939. It is worth mentioning that a few years earlier, two white American workers beat up this black communist, for which they were expelled from the Soviet Union. This was their luck. Had they not been ejected from Stalin’s Empire, they too would have been taken to the Gulag, and they too would have ended up dead like the unfortunate Fort-Whiteman.

The American workers who have been enticed to migrate to the Soviet Union, soon realized their mistake. They were forced to come to the conclusion that instead of the promised Utopian society they became helpless victims of a totalitarian slave society. Following this realization they made desperate efforts to return to the United States. In doing so they sought the help of the American Embassy headed by Joseph E. Davis (1876–1958), one of F.D. Roosevelt’s close political friends.³⁵ But Davis was also overawed by Stalin’s “greatness” and refused to have anything to do for these unfortunate Americans. He did not want to damage his relationship with “Marshall Stalin” by attempting to help his unfortunate countrymen. Nor did they receive any help from the crypto-communist American intellectuals, who were likewise overawed by the Soviet dictator’s “greatness”. The latter included the Asian specialist Owen Lattimore (1900–1989) of Johns Hopkins University,³⁶ and the Pulitzer Prize winner journalist Walter Duranty (1884–1957) of the *New York Times*. They too refused help to their fellow Americans in Soviet captivity. And this also applies to the internationally known communist black singer, Paul Robeson (1898–1976), who openly rejected their plea for help. Robeson continued to support Stalin’s effort to transform Russian society into a land of Utopia through the utilization of slaves.³⁷ This was the fate of thousands of Americans who believed in Stalin and in his promise of creating a land of Utopia in the Soviet Empire.

The Misled Hungarian Victims of Soviet Marxism

There were a good number of Hungarians who – like their American colleagues – believed sufficiently in the salutary nature of Marxism to emigrate to the Soviet Union. In most instances disappointment followed almost immediately. The promised Utopian society turned out to be a land of terror and inhumanity.

A good example of this situation was the case of Ferenc Róth (1898–1950), who in 1931 emigrated to Stalin's empire with his family, and then fell victim to that empire of terror. Ferenc Róth realized his mistake as soon as his train crossed the Polish-Soviet border, where the Soviet border guards acted rudely, suspiciously, and impolitely. By the time they reached the Moscow train station they were full of fright:

The station was virtually unlit, the air was stale and stenchfilled....
Large crowds were lying all around, or walking aimlessly with their
large rucksacks and bundles. Virtually no one had a regular lug-
gage.³⁸

Ferenc Róth – whose name in the Soviet Union was changed to Rott – worked for seven years in the wood industry under constant fear, even though he repeatedly proclaimed his devotion to Marxism and to its “infallible great leader” Joseph Stalin. But being a Hungarian, he was viewed as untrustworthy. Then in July 1938 he was arrested and exiled to Kolyma, one of the Soviet empire’s most dreaded penal colonies. He lived and died there after twelve years. His occasional contacts with his family were through personal letters, first in Russian (which he hardly spoke), and later in his mother tongue, Hungarian. His younger son, Vladimir, was born in the Soviet Union in 1935, and grew up knowing virtually nothing about his father. His first contact with the “Western World” came at the age of twenty-five, when for the first time he was permitted to visit the land of his ancestors, Hungary. To Vladimir communist Hungary of those days appeared like a “never-never” land. His eyes were opened, and thereafter his primary goal was to leave the “Soviet Paradise,” along with his family. His dream was fulfilled in 1974, when he defected to Canada and established himself as a noted engineer and a Canadian citizen.

Following his retirement Vladimir Rott decided to write the history of his family, and more specifically the sad story of his father, whom he last saw in 1938, when he was only three years old. His multivolume memoirs appeared in three languages, Russian, Hungarian and English. Since the appearance of his books, he has been traveling around, giving lectures about Stalin’s Russia and the destructive communist ideology. In his introduction to his book, he has this to say about that land of mass terror:

My Canadian listeners ... found my conclusions about the future of communism very extreme, pessimist, and anti-Soviet. My Jewish listeners were very upset when I said that Stalin was much worse than Hitler. I was compelled to explain to them that Hitler destroyed the Jews, Gypsies and the physically handicapped simply because they were Jews, Gypsies and physically handicapped. The innocent victims of the Stalin period, however, were many more. On top of that,

everyone in the country knew, irrespective who he was – war hero, hero of labor, prominent scientist, able theater director, noted military officer, or simple worker – that he could be arrested any day on the basis of a denunciation, or for absolutely no reason whatever. After that a torturer could force him to confess anything or everything. And then he was destroyed. People lived for decades in an atmosphere of continuous terror. They did not sleep all night, waiting for the knock on the door. Arrests always took place during the night. A husband did not dare to be truthful to his wife, and old friends were unable to trust each other. Stalin was able to achieve all this, by reshaping the mind of his own people.³⁹

A Few Most Recent Gulag-Books

In the course of the past two years a number of books have appeared about aspects of the Soviet Gulag. These include Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands* (2010),⁴⁰ Norman Naimark's *Stalin's Genocide* (2011),⁴¹ Stephen Cohen's *The Victims Return* (2010),⁴² Paul Hollander's *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields* (2007),⁴³ and Anne Applebaum's *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe* (2012).⁴⁴ All of these volumes add to our knowledge of the Soviet Gulag.

In connection with the above, one must mention that some three decades ago the US Navy discovered the remnants of a Gulag camp on Wrangell Island in the Arctic Sea. This three-thousand square mile island was discovered in 1881 by Americans, and it has been in US possession ever since. Americans hardly ever visited this remote ice-covered island until the 1980s, when they discovered that during and after World War II it was the site of several Soviet Gulag camps. According to Avraham Shifrin these remote camps were populated primarily with non-Soviet prisoners. He believes that one of these camps was also the place of exile for Raoul Wallenberg (1912–1947/1960s), the Swedish diplomat who saved many thousands of Hungarian Jews during the last phase of the war. One of the ex-prisoners who survived and settled in Israel, Emil Moshinski, stated that in 1962 he personally met Wallenberg in one of these Gulag camps.⁴⁵

The Position of Hungarian Gulag Prisoners

American Gulag research concentrates almost exclusively on the study of the institution of the Gulag as it relates to the citizens of the Soviet Union. How they lived and survived in the Gulag, what happened to those who survived after Stalin's death, and how they reintegrate into Soviet society. At the same time these researchers hardly mention the many hundreds of thousand (perhaps millions) of non-Soviet citizens – among them Hungarians – who were taken to these labor

camps to perform slave labor in the reconstruction of the Soviet Union. This lack of attention to non-Soviet citizens applies to most of the major books on the Gulag. Based on this recognition we are certain that the fate of these unfortunate non-Soviet prisoners will only be treated by their fellow nationals, and in some instances not even by them. (This is so because there are still many Marxist historians who idolize Stalin and his cohorts.)

Anne Applebaum's work – although comprehensive – has only a few scattered references to Hungarians, primarily on the basis of the privately published memoirs of George Bien (1927–2005). In the early part of 1945 the sixteen-year old George Bien was arrested along with his fifty-three year old father, who was a noted cardiologist. The elder Bien died within a few months. George survived, but he had to spend ten years in the far eastern province of Kolyma, where he survived because of the intervention of a kind nurse. George Bien was repatriated to Hungary in 1955, and then – taking advantage of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 – he left his homeland and emigrated to the United States. Four decades after his emigration George decided to write his memoirs, largely on the basis of various personal papers and letters that survived his repatriation. His memoirs first appeared in Hungarian in 1997, and then in an English translation in 2003, under the title: *Lost Years. A Hungarian Student's Ten Years in the Siberian Gulag. Kolyma 1945–1955*. It was this work that caught the attention of Anne Applebaum, on the basis of which she incorporated a few sentences about the Hungarian Gulag prisoners.⁴⁶

Based on the above it is safe to conclude that unless Hungarian scholars decide to write the story of the Hungarians on the Gulag, it will never be written. In that case the suffering and horrendous existences of the captive Hungarians in the Gulag will be gradually forgotten. It will slowly evaporate and then disappear, along with the remnants of the Gulag camps themselves. This is precisely what we – my wife and I – would like to avoid. Through our scholarly activities we hope to preserve the memories of those Hungarians who lived, suffered, and many of whom died in one of Stalin's ghastly penal colonies.⁴⁷

Notes

¹ Delivered in Hungarian on April 17, 2011 as my inaugural lecture to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Delivered in English at the International Gulag Symposium, University of Miskolc, Hungary, April 11–13, 2012.

Tamás Stark, "A szovjet fogolyszedés néhány kérdése a magyar állampolgárok körében" [A Few Questions Concerning the Collection of Prisoners from among Hungarian Citizens], in *Magyar kényszermunkások és politikai rabok a Szovjetunióban a II. világháború után* [Hungarian Forced Laborers and Political Prisoners in the Soviet Union after World War II] (Budapest: Petit Real Könyvkiadó, 2000), 45–59; quotation from p. 45.

- ² Ágnes Gereben, “A Gulag megítélezéséről” [Assessing the Gulag], manuscript, 1.
- ³ Denial of the Holocaust is punishable in the following sixteen countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Lichtenstein, Latvia, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Slovakia. Switzerland. Two of these countries – France and Hungary – also punish Gulag-denial. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_denial#Harry_Elmel_Barnes
- ⁴ On David Irving, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Irving
- ⁵ Christopher Hitchens, “Free speech über Alles. Even for David Irving,” in *Wall Street Journal*, 2006. February 23, A16.
- ⁶ The authors’ interview with Magdolna Rohr, later Mrs. Károly Pintér, Budapest, October 30 2003.
- ⁷ I have followed this procedure in all of my classes, “Shaping of the Modern World”, at Duquesne University ever since the fall of 2003.
- ⁸ Alan Besancon, *Le malheur de siècle. Sur le communisme, le nazisme, et l’unicité de la Shoah* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1998). In writing this article I used the English version of this work: *A Century of Horrors. Communism, Nazism, and the Uniqueness of the Shoah*, translated and introduced by Ralph C. Hancock and Nathaniel H. Hancock (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007), ix.
- ⁹ Besancon, 6.
- ¹⁰ Besancon, 96.
- ¹¹ Paraphrased by Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims. Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China, and Cuba* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 173.
- ¹² Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 2.
- ¹³ On Robert Conquest see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Conquest
- ¹⁴ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment: 40th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ¹⁵ “Source List and Detailed Death Tolls for the Twentieth Century Hemoclysm.” See <http://necrometrics.com/20c5m.htm>
- ¹⁶ Anne Applebaum’s relevant comments were as follows: “The Gulag and the Holocaust belong in the same category of historical events.” See the DVD *Siberia. How the East Was Won* (A&E Television Network, 2004).
- ¹⁷ The biographies of these victims of Stalin can be found on the Internet.
- ¹⁸ The text of this study can be found on the Internet: <http://clogic.eserver.org/2005/furr.html>
- ¹⁹ On Anne Applebaum see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Applebaum
- ²⁰ On Shifrin see: http://www.conservapedia.com/Essay:_Avraham_Shifrin:_KAL_007_Researcher
- ²¹ On Thubron see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colin_Thubron
- ²² Colin Thubron, *In Siberia* (New York: Harper Colins, 1999), 41.
- ²³ On Szálkai see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoltan_Szalkai/, and <http://www.gulag.hu/szalkai.htm>
- ²⁴ The book originally appeared in French: *Le livre noir du communisme*. I have used the English translation: *Black Book of Communism. Crime, Terror, Repression*. By Stéphane Courtois, Nicolas Werth, Jena-Louis Panné, Andrzej Paczkowski, Karel Bartosek, Jean-Louis Margolin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4.
- ²⁵ On Nanci Adler and her book, see: [http://www.eurospanbookstore.com/index.asp?](http://www.eurospanbookstore.com/index.asp)
- ²⁶ On Oleg Khlevniuk see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleg_Khlevniuk
- ²⁷ The most significant work on this topic is Paul Hollander’s above cited work *Political Pilgrims*. See also Steven Béla Várdy, “A nyugati értelmiség árulása: Sztálin-imádatuk a Gulag haláltáborok árnyékában” [The Treachery of the Western Intellectuals. Stalin’s Adoration by

- Western Intellectuals under the Shadow of the Gulag Death Camps], in *Valóság* (Budapest), vol. 50, no. 10 (October 2007), 16–25.
- ²⁸ On this Ukrainian “Holocaust” known as “Holodomor” [death by hunger] see: Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror. A Reassessment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Miron Dolot, *Execution by Hunger. The Hidden Holocaust* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1985); and the article “Holodomor” in the *Wikipedia* which summarizes the recent debate over the number of victims of this artificial famine created by Joseph Stalin. Scholarly estimates run from 2.4 to 7.5 million deaths. Other claims stretch from 4.5 to 10 million.
- ²⁹ In addition to the above-cited works, see also: Steven Béla Várdy and Agnes Huszár Várdy, “Cannibalism in Stalin’s Russia and Mao’s China”, in *East European Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 2 (June 2007), 223–38; S. B. Várdy and A. H. Várdy, “Kannibalizmus a szovjet Gulag rabszolgatáborában” [Cannibalism in Soviet Gulag Slave Labor Camps], in *Valóság*, vol. 49, no. 5 (May 2006), 14–34.
- ³⁰ Paul Hollander, ed., *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007).
- ³¹ Hollander, *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields*, 255–77.
- ³² Some of these memoirs and interviews are listed in the following works: Steven Béla Várdy and Agnes Huszár Várdy, *Stalin’s Gulag: The Hungarian Experience* (Napoli, Italy: Universita degli Studi Napoli L’Orientale, 2007), 143–75; and S. B. Várdy and Agnes Huszár Várdy, *Magyarok a Gulag rabszolgatáborában* [Hungarians in the Slave Labor Camps of the Gulag] (Budapest: Kairosz Kiadó, 2007), 287–306.
- ³³ Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken. An American Tragedy in Stalin’s Russia* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008).
- ³⁴ On Fort-Whiteman see: Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Forgotten Revolutionaries. The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919–1950* (New York: Norton Publishers, 2008); and also the anonymous article “The Revolutionary Life and Death of Comrade Lovett Fort-Whiteman” to be found on the Internet: <http://www.google.com/search?q=Lovett+Fort-Whiteman&hl=en&source=hp&ie=ISO-8859-1&btnG=Search>
- ³⁵ On Ambassador Joseph E. Davies see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_E._Davies
- ³⁶ About Lattimore’s pro-communist activities see: John T. Flynn, *The Lattimore Story* (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1953).
- ³⁷ On the other deceived Westerners see: Paul Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, and Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken*.
- ³⁸ Vladimir Rott, *A sors ellenében. I. Szenvedésből vigasz* [In Defiance of Fate. I. Joy from Sadness] (Budapest: Széphalom Könyvműhely, 2008), 29.
- ³⁹ Vladimir Rott, *A sors ellenében*, 8–9.
- ⁴⁰ Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).
- ⁴¹ Norman M. Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- ⁴² Stephen F. Cohen, *The Victims Return: Survivors of the Gulag after Stalin* (New York: Publishing Works, 2010).
- ⁴³ Paul Hollander, ed., *From the Gulag to the Killing Fields. Personal Accounts of Political Violence* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2007).
- ⁴⁴ Ann Aplebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*, (2012).
- ⁴⁵ Concerning Wrangell [Wrangel] Island and the fate of Raoul Wallenberg see: Avraham Shifrin, *The First Guidebook to Prisons and Concentration Camps of the Soviet Union* (Uhldingen/Seewis: Stephanus Edition, 1980), 248 and 346.
- ⁴⁶ György Zoltán Bien, *Elveszett évek. Egy magyar diákok raboskodása a GULÁG kelet-szibériai lágereiben. Kolima 1945–1955*, 2nd ed. (Budapest: Püski Kiadó, 2000); and its English ver-

sion: George Z. Bien, *Lost Years. A Hungarian Student's Imprisonment in the Gulag in Kolyma, Eastern-Siberia 1945–1955* (Fairfax, VA: Self-Published, 2003). There is also an earlier edition of the Hungarian version, published by the author in 1997.

- ⁴⁷ The visible results of our efforts include the already cited two books: *Stalin's Gulag: The Hungarian Experience* (2007), and *Hungarians in the Slave Labor Camps in the Gulag* (2007, 2nd ed., 2010, in Hungarian), as well as about a dozen scholarly and popular articles.

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES: FERENC BÉKÁSSY, JOHN MAYNARD KEYNES, AND VIRGINIA WOOLF

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The extremely successful Cambridge Apostle Ferenc Békássy stunned his British friends and colleagues when he returned to Hungary at the beginning of World War I to fight on the side of the Central Powers. This article is an attempt to reconsider Békássy's reasons in light of historical and political events as well as in light of his poetic works. In particular, his long, dramatic poem "Adriatica", which is also the title of a volume published in 1925 by Hogarth Press, reveals the importance Békássy placed upon the Adriatic region not simply for its geographic beauty but, more importantly, for its cultural and historical significance as a bridge between modernity and classical times, between East and West, North and South.

Keywords: poetry, drama, translation, bilingualism, neoclassicism, modernism

[...]

He fell without a murmur in the noise of battle;
 found rest
'Midst the roar of hooves on the grass, a bullet
 struck through his breast.
Perhaps he drowsily lay; for him alone it was
 still,
And the blood ran out of his body, it had taken so
 little to kill.

So many thousand lay round him, it would need
 a poet, maybe,
Or a woman, or one of his kindred, to remember
 that none were as he;
It would need the mother he followed, or the girl
 he went beside
When he walked the paths of summer in the flush
 of his gladness and pride,
To know that he was not a unit, a pawn whose
 place can be filled;

Not blood, but the beautiful years of his coming
 life have been spilled,
 The days that should have followed, a house and
 a home, maybe,
 For a thousand may love and marry and nest, but
 so shall not he. [...]

These lines form the second, third, and fourth stanzas of a poem entitled “1914”, written by the Hungarian poet Ferenc Békássy (7 April 1893 – 25 June 1915). The poem is included in the *Cambridge Poets of the Great War*, an anthology edited by Michael Copp and published in 2001. Although the editor explains in his introduction that it was an anthology of Cambridge poets published in 1921 (Edward Davidson, ed., *Cambridge Poets 1914–1920. An Anthology*. Cambridge: Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1921) that inspired him to compile his own volume, the poem cited above was not included in the 1921 anthology but comes, rather, from a 1925 volume, *Adriatica and Other Poems*, published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf’s Hogarth Press. Furthermore, in the 2001 anthology, Békássy’s poem is included in a section entitled “The Enemy”, which is described by the editor as containing poems that “reveal a generally sympathetic attitude towards Germany and towards German soldiers in particular. Among the trench poets a feeling of shared mutual suffering was commoner than one of hatred and revenge” (41). Békássy’s poem, however, does not refer to Germany or to any country or nation in particular. The lack of reference is precisely what makes the poem effective because it allows for multiple readings/interpretations from readers with very different sets of expectations. Although the editor interprets the landscape described as referring “of course, not to an English one but somewhere on the Austro-Hungarian plains: ‘When the cow-herds answer each other and their horns sound loud and clear’” (42), the poem intentionally refers to a general pastoral scene rather than a specific geographical location. Placing this poem, then, in a section entitled “The Enemy” is not a reference to the poet’s enemy – as with the other poems included in this section, whose authors are British – but to the fact that, at the beginning of World War I, Békássy left England for Austria-Hungary, enlisted as a Hussar and died in battle fighting against the Russians on the Eastern front, in Bukovina, near Csernovic/Cernauti (the birth place of Paul Celan). Sadly, the reference is clear: the “enemy” here is considered to be the poet himself.

While not unique,¹ such an interpretation is highly misleading. Historical events show the circumstances of Békássy’s departure to be much more difficult and complex. First of all, Békássy was not the only Apostle to enlist in the Austro-Hungarian army and fight against the Allies: Ludwig Wittgenstein volunteered, and, unlike the Hungarian poet, he not only survived the war but was decorated several times for his heroism in fighting against the British troops, on the Russian front, and on the Italian front. Furthermore, Paul Levy explains that:

The Apostles were badly divided over the war, with some of the older men like Jackson, Ward, McTaggart and Whitehead being ferociously in favour of killing Germans, and the youngest, Bliss and Lucas, enlisting as their immediate predecessors, Békássy and Wittgenstein did on the other side. The intermediate generations of Apostles, the Strachey brothers, Keynes, Sydney-Turner, Woolf, Norton and Shove, were, with the exception of Rupert Brooke, vehemently opposed to the war. Dickinson, Sanger and Russell too were anti-war. Pro-Germanism, especially when it took the mild form of admiration for German Culture, was widespread among the war's opponents (277).

Békássy's choice is therefore worth reconsidering in this context. The Hungarian poet was thoroughly educated and deeply rooted in British linguistic, literary and cultural tradition and must have been torn between returning home and fighting for his country, and remaining in England. He is, thus, one of the forgotten – or perhaps intentionally left out – war poets.

Békássy's parents – a family of old Hungarian nobility – espoused liberal views, chose to first school their six children at home, and then send them all to be educated in England at the progressive Bedales School. It is here that Ferenc, their eldest, met for the first time and fell in love with Noel Olivier. In 1911 he began to read history at King's College, Cambridge, and the following year he joined the Cambridge Conversazione Society, also known as The Apostles, introduced by James Strachey and John Maynard Keynes – a secretive organization, a spiritual and intellectual elite with a membership limited to twelve, in its beginnings "Tory in politics, Evangelical in religion" (Allen i), which was also "a training-ground for a long succession of gifted and unusual men. It is also known to have played an important part in several literary and intellectual movements, the most famous of which is the Bloomsbury Group" (Allen vii).

In 1912 Békássy received a prize at King's College for his essay on Robert Browning. Friendships began to deepen: John Maynard Keynes invited him to visit Everleigh, Wiltshire. There were discussions and exchanges about literature, art, and politics with Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Duncan Grant, Noel Olivier and Rupert Brooke, among others. A letter from Rupert Brooke to Lytton Strachey also mentions Békássy as one of the guests at "a reading-party in dear old Lulworth" at the beginning of January 1912. The guest list included Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, and later, Harry Norton, Ka Cox, and Virginia Woolf (Hale 202–3).² In return, Békássy invited Keynes to visit the Békássy family seat in Zsennye, Western Hungary. It is immediately after this visit in September 1912 that Keynes began to work seriously on his book, *Indian Currency and Finance*, which he published in 1913 (Moggridge 223).

Békássy was also partly responsible for the difficulties Ludwig Wittgenstein encountered when he tried to become one of the Cambridge Apostles. Brian

McGuinness, Wittgenstein's biographer, writes that, although promoted to the Apostles, Wittgenstein was himself reluctant to attend meetings because of

Békássy, an Hungarian grandee who lived in splendour near Budapest, had been educated at a progressive school in England. (He was killed in Bukovina in 1915 and Keynes saw to the posthumous publications of his poems.) Inherited prejudice may have stood between him and Wittgenstein [...]. He later told Hungarian friends that he had voted against, and even had excluded, Wittgenstein. So on 8 December Moore wrote to Strachey to say that Wittgenstein had resigned (McGuinness 151).

McGuinness further explains that Strachey intervened and a compromise was reached: Wittgenstein's resignation was not recorded and he was not expected to attend meetings or read papers, "but he continued to take an interest in their affairs – discussing them with Moore (Moore's diary of 19.3.13) and asking in a letter from Norway whether a candidate of Hardy's had been elected. As a final token of his continued membership, he underwent the formality of 'taking wings' when he returned to Cambridge in January 1929" (152). Matters, however, were more complex. John Maynard Keynes' biographer, Robert Skidelsky, explains that Keynes, who was introduced to Wittgenstein by Bertrand Russell, engineered his Apostle membership even though Russell had warned him "that Wittgenstein would not thank him for it" (266). According to Skidelsky, Wittgenstein resented having to join a society that had Békássy as a member, being "appalled at the thought of having to spend his evenings in the company of Békássy – whom he detested as a Hungarian aristocrat – and a King's freshman called Francis Bliss, who did not number philosophical acumen among his accomplishments" (Skidelsky 266). Paul Levy, in turn, points out that Bertrand Russell himself was opposed to Wittgenstein's joining the Apostles (Wittgenstein joined on November 16th, 1912). The philosopher believed that the Society would be a waste of time for the young Austrian mathematician. His attitude "was widely interpreted as jealousy, and a desire to keep Wittgenstein to himself" (Levy 266). Whatever the reasons, it is clear that Békássy had come to be regarded very early in his studies as one of the brightest and most promising young minds at Cambridge. His membership in the secret Conversazione Society, which was for life, had its specific language and rituals, and took place by election only (interestingly, Thoby Stephen, Virginia Woolf's brother, and Clive Bell, Vanessa Stephen's future husband, were never elected), was a clear sign of this.

Békássy continued to write poetry in English and Hungarian and critical studies on British authors like Samuel Butler and Jane Austen as well as on the most important Hungarian poets of his own time – Dezső Kosztolányi, Mihály Babits, and Endre Ady – whose poems he also translated into English. In April 1914 he

was one of the guests invited by Keynes to Virginia Woolf's Asheham House, Sussex³ (*Woolf Letters* II 47). It is here that he presented his "Sonnet", which was also later included in *Adriatica and Other Poems*.⁴ Why, then, did he choose to return to Hungary and join the war effort on the side opposing his British friends, all the while with a sense of impending death clearly expressed in poems such as "1914"? This must have been an impossible conflict for the poet. He wrote, in one of his aphorisms, "Deep is delight; deep is feeling; but deepest of all is the eternal contradiction, the eternal paradox. There is insufferable contradiction in all things; and man's work and advancement have been devices to evade it. They have always ended by demonstrating it" (52). It is difficult to determine precisely the causes of the "insufferable contradiction" Békássy had to face: historical and political as well as literary and cultural factors must be taken into consideration.

After the 1848–49 Revolutionary War of Independence, Hungary's reputation was high in Great Britain, buttressed by the presence of the revolutionary leaders who took temporary or permanent refuge in England. An article published in *The Times*, November 1895, characterized Hungary as a "model constitutional State", "led by a group of exceptionally able statesmen, all of them of the moderate liberal type" (Jeszczyszky 147). British politicians perceived Hungary as "the most stable element where all is instability" (*The Edinburgh Review*, vol. 188, no. 385 (July 1898), 31 as cited by Jeszczyszky 147) – in a Central Europe where the balance of power could be easily disturbed by Germany, Russia, and the ethnic groups contained, for the time being, within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. However, by 1910 – when "human character changed" (Virginia Woolf, "Character in Fiction", 1924, *Essays III*, 421) – the traditional British perception of Hungary, of its role within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and within Central Europe, also began to change. There were several reasons. British journalists and historians like R. W. Seton-Watson and Wickham Steed began publishing critical reports about the conditions of the national minorities within the Monarchy. The international political situation had also changed: Russia came to be perceived as an ally that would help set the balance against the growing German hegemony in Europe and in the world. British politicians found it useful to encourage Pan-Slav aspirations in Central Europe and began to question Hungary's important role within the Dual Monarchy. There was yet a third factor for Hungary's loss of prestige in Britain and the changes in British foreign policy toward it: early 20th-century Western European democratic developments "were not followed in Central and Eastern Europe, and that made Hungary appear more backward and more conservative than she really was" (Jeszczyszky 155).

The question remains, then, why such a liberal-minded, multilingual, Western-educated anti-war poet chose to return to Hungary at the beginning of World War I, enlist in the Austro-Hungarian army, and give his life fighting on the Eastern front. It is difficult to understand Békássy's choice especially since archives

that contain many of his unpublished letters and poems remain unavailable to the public. Even so, the answer may not be entirely impossible to discern. Békássy must have been acutely aware of the criticism brought by Seton-Watson against his country, criticism brought even closer to Cambridge and the Apostles through the work of Harold Nicholson, Leonard Woolf, and even John Maynard Keynes. He must have had arguments with his friends and must have sensed a complete lack of understanding as far as his situation was concerned. To give just one example, David Garnett relates a conversation with Keynes about the poet's departure:

Maynard told me that he had succeeded in raising enough money for Ferenc Bekassy to leave England the night before [August 10th, 1914]. The banks were shut owing to the moratorium and Bekassy was anxious to return to Hungary to fight against Russia. War had not been declared between Britain and Austria-Hungary until the morning after Bekassy left.

I said I thought that Maynard should have refused to find the money on the double grounds that he was sending a friend to his death and strengthening the enemy forces.

Maynard disagreed violently. He said he had used every argument to persuade Bekassy not to go – but having failed to persuade him, it was not the part of a friend to impose his views by force, or by refusing to help. He respected Bekassy's freedom to choose, though he regretted his choice. My second argument was ridiculous: what was one man in a score of millions? I agreed that friendship was more than patriotism, but asked him if he would restrain the friend who contemplated suicide, or would he lend him money to buy poison? Maynard replied that in certain circumstances he would lend him the money – if it was a free choice, made by a sane man after due reflection, for compelling causes (Moggridge 240).

D. E. Moggridge, one of Maynard Keynes' biographers, questions the way in which David Garnet recounted these events, pointing out that Britain declared war on Austria on 10 August, and, since Békássy left England the previous Sunday, August 9, "there should have been no problem in getting cash" for him (240). Furthermore, Keynes kept detailed records of his expenses that included notes of loans and small gifts, yet he did not record any loan to Békássy for what must have been a very expensive journey at the end of that summer (240).

Robert Skidelsky, on the other hand, picks up on David Garnett's letter and puts in a different light in an earlier biography on Maynard Keynes, arguing that Békássy was "far from being standard Apostolic Man, preferring Nietzsche to Moore, and action to contemplation, though he too had poetic leanings" (Skidelsky I 265). In volume two of the same biography he takes these arguments even further. Using Clive Bell's study, *Civilisation* (1928), despite the fact that

Bell's arguments are of a very different nature and do not take the same direction as Skidelsky's – the biographer maintains that

Bloomsbury could not be heroic in the way in which Rupert Brooke or Békássy or later Julian Bell were heroic, that is happiest under fire. But it could happily *contemplate* the spectacle of heroism in Michelangelo, Coriolanus or in the character of Perceval which Virginia Woolf created in her novel *The Waves* – perhaps an evocation of her brother Thoby, the 'Goth' who had died of typhoid in 1906 (Sidelsky II 16).

To judge Békássy's choice as the deed of a heroic character "happiest under fire" is a complete misunderstanding of the Hungarian poet's personality, intellectual activity, and actions. Not only some of the war poems written just before his death in 1915, but also his earlier, longer dramatic poem, *Adriatica*, show that, on the contrary, Békássy shared and expressed in his writings the philosophic and aesthetic views G. E. Moore had discussed in his *Principia Ethica* (1903): while good is indefinable, the greatest goods are personal affection and aesthetic enjoyment.

Keynes' own letter to his lover and best friend, Duncan Grant, reflects a similar lack of understanding:

I have heard from Noel [Olivier] that she has just got a letter from him [Békássy] written five days before starting for the front. It seems now an extraordinarily short time ago that he came rushing back for his sister, and how walking through Leicester Square after going to the Picture Palace near there on the night when war was certain, I very depressed but he excited and not very depressed, he said, – 'It will be a very wonderful experience for those of us who live through it.' He was certain to be killed. When one thinks of him, it is his *goodness*, I think, one seems to remember. But it is no use talking about him I think it's better to forget these things as quickly as one possibly can (Moggridge 241).

A reader familiar with Békássy's anti-war sentiments expressed so strongly in both his Hungarian and English poetry might doubt the recollection that he referred to war as a wonderful experience. Furthermore, with respect to Keynes' last sentence, the act of *remembrance* Virginia and Leonard Woolf made by publishing Békássy's poems in 1925 becomes even more significant. It shows the Woolfs' willingness to enter and explore those spaces between cultures and languages, even as Virginia understood and affirmed in several of her essays that complete and accurate understanding is impossible. The novelist was aware of the historical, political, and cultural dimensions of this problem, and discussed them in her fiction and criticism. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, for example, Clarissa's complacent ignorance of the differences between Armenia and Albania surfaces in her

thoughts as she drifts into her afternoon nap: “no, she could feel nothing for the Albanians, or was it the Armenians? But she loved her roses (didn’t that help the Armenians?) – the only flowers she could bear to see cut” (157). Trudi Tate aptly explains this confusion as Woolf’s merciless satire of the British upper class “who managed the social and economic aspects of [World War I] and treated the survivors so badly afterwards” (Tate 153).

Furthermore, because of her work of translation from Russian and Greek, Woolf understood both the possibility and impossibility of exploring cultural and linguistic spaces that are not one’s own. Along these lines, Maria DiBattista has pointed out that what we might call

the Woolfian paradox of commonality asserts its obtrusive presence at the very moment when, having shed our traditions, we are ready to hear the Greek tragic chorus voice the common values and shared feelings of their community. Yet instead of discovering what we have in common across cultures, we find ourselves stranded on the brink of utter incomprehension. [...] We must ‘be able to pass easily’; but that of course is exactly what we cannot do (24).

I would like to argue that, despite these differences, it is language itself, particularly poetic language, that opens a window toward an “other” cultural and linguistic world. Drawing a parallel between Ferenc Békássy and Virginia Woolf as writers in the spirit of an elective affinity may help elucidate this point. While Woolf did not write anti-war poetry, novels such as *Jacob’s Room*, *Mrs Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, and *Between The Acts* may be considered large-scale, anti-war, elegiac prose poems. The first two reflect on the destruction of an individual life, while the latter (particularly Woolf’s last novel) are meditations on the destruction threatening an entire community as it reenacts its history (through the custom of a pageant in *Between the Acts*) even in the face of war. The bonds that tie the members of this English community closely together are those of a language that, as Lucy Swithin observes, is not created but creates and defines its speakers:

‘The nursery,’ said Mrs. Swithin. Words raised *themselves* and became symbolical. ‘The cradle of our race,’ she seemed to say (*Between the Acts*, 71, my italics).

Although Békássy was, unlike Woolf, a bilingual author entirely at home in English – as his poetry and critical studies attest – he felt the same kind of closeness to his native language and culture as Woolf felt to hers. By comparing poems he wrote in English and Hungarian, it is possible to notice that Békássy drew on very different traditions in the two languages – in English, on British literary traditions, in Hungarian, respectively, on Hungarian. Yet it is also possible to notice that the language of his Hungarian poems is of a very different nature, if not more com-

plex and suggestive. A comparison of two of Békássy's poems exemplifies this. Their subject is similar enough that they seem almost translations of each other – although, clearly, they are not.

Written in English, "The Last Fragment"⁵ can be dated with approximation to 1913 or 1914. It describes a desert-like country in which men wander forsaken:

On such a night it seems
As though the country were a desert; men,
If any walk here, spirit-like; and dreams
Grow few, and spoken words uncanny then.
Forsaken roads there lie across the sand,
Pools curl beneath some over-knotty tree,
And curly clouds pass far above the land.
[...]
I suffered there; so that I used to brood
Seeing with incomprehension something strange,
Till time and good remembrance worked a change. [...]

"A sivatagban" (In the Desert), a poem Békássy wrote in Hungarian, January 1915, also describes a desert, but in very different style and language than "The Last Fragment". Even in a very literal translation of "A sivatagban", in which I have abandoned the rhythm and alternating end rhyme of the Hungarian original, it is possible to see how much more richly ambiguous language is than in its English counterpart. Language does not send to a world outside of itself but seems to be a self-enclosed and self-reflexive world or system. Consider, for instance, the lines:

Already nowhere is the city's colorful dream
In which every lamplight: fiend;
Sound disappears here in the wild,
There so much proud ore rings in the street
There the spirit startles, and the jumbled noise
Not stunned, flies through the sky;
Here: you must fear; on the desert's borderlands
Devastating death walks about at will.⁶

The difference between the two poems should not surprise: "What is sometimes called Modernism was associated more than many earlier movements with multilingual aspirations. [...] The poems composed in French by Rilke, T. S. Eliot, and Ashbery are inferior to their verse in German and English [...]" (Szegedy-Maszák 155). Perhaps, then, the difference is the relationship a poet – the native speaker – has with his or her own language, a relationship that may be virtually impossible to duplicate in a second language or through translation. Words are not something

to be commanded, Irma Rantavaara remarked in her analysis of *The Waves*, but “something fragile, light, elusive, likened to butterflies, balloons, bubbles”:

the art of writing means having at one’s beck and call every word in the language, of knowing their weights, colours, sounds, associations, and thus making them, as is so necessary in English, suggest more than they can state (Rantavaara 39).

It is in light of this that we may be able to understand the question Virginia Woolf raised in “The Russian Point of View” – an essay published the same year as Békássy’s volume of poetry: can individuals belonging to different cultural and linguistic communities understand each other’s “sense of common values which make for intimacy, and sanity, and the quick give and take of familiar intercourse” (182)? It is in light of this that Békássy’s need to return to his country – to which he seems to hint even in “The Last Fragment”, in the lines cited above – at the outbreak of World War I must be considered and understood.

1925 was also the year The Hogarth Press published John Maynard Keynes’ *A Short view of Russia*. Its publication the same year as Békássy’s volume of poems may not have been coincidental. Were the conversations Keynes recalled having with Békássy before his departure for the front more meaningful than the letters and diaries record? Were Békássy’s reasons for returning to Hungary and fighting on the side of the Central Powers so complicated that even great minds such as Keynes’ could not understand them at the time? Keynes, the author of *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (1919), felt he had to reconsider them at the end of the war. In August 1925, Keynes married Lydia Lopokova, the famous Ballets Russes dancer, and the couple travelled to Russia to meet the bride’s parents. The thoughts Keynes expressed in the short book promptly published by Hogarth Press, if vitriolic at times,⁷ were influenced by freshly acquired impressions. Although sympathizing “with those who seek for something good in Soviet Russia”, Keynes explained his belief that the system he had just seen with his own eye was deeply destructive at all levels:

Comfort and habits let us be ready to forgo, but I am not ready for a creed which does not care how much it destroys the liberty and security of daily life, which uses deliberately the weapons of persecution, destruction, and international strife. How can I admire a policy which finds a characteristic expression in spending millions to suborn spies in every family and group at home, and to stir up trouble abroad? [...] How can I accept a doctrine which sets up as its bible, above and beyond criticism an obsolete economic textbook which I know to be not only scientifically erroneous but without interest or application for the modern world? [...] It is hard for an educated, decent, intelligent son of Western Europe to find his ideals here, unless he has first suf-

fered some strange and horrid process on conversion which has changed all his values (13–14).

As a highly educated and westernized man but, at the same time, an “intelligent son” of East-Central Europe, Békássy may have been aware of the turn events would take well before his British friends. Aware of the historical past of the region (the 1848 War of Independence, to give just one example), he must have understood the severity of the Russian threat in 1914, before it became the threat of Soviet Russia, which so troubled Keynes in 1925. Russia’s aspirations “to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of Turkey from the Lower Danube area” (Romsics 2) were no secret at the time. Historians have pointed out that:

The aspirations of the Romanov Monarchy in the Balkans reached back to the time of Catherine the Great. These plans had undergone a metamorphosis by the beginning of the 20th century, but their main thrust remained the same: to control the Dardanelles and their hinterlands. A part of the evolving project affected the Austro-Hungarian Empire both directly and indirectly. [...] the dismemberment of Hungary and of the whole Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was among the war aims of Russia from the start of the war (Romsics 2).

It must have been disturbing for the young Apostle to realize that none of his highly-educated Cambridge colleagues understood this perspective, and threatening to realize that the public opinion of the adopted culture he loved and admired had turned against his own.

How Békássy thought of the region he came from and wanted to fight for is expressed nowhere more clearly than in the poem that lends its title to the volume published by Virginia and Leonard Woolf in 1925. “Adriatica” was clearly a topic of discussion among the Cambridge friends who had survived the war:

Lucas was wounded and served out the war in an intelligence unit. Békássy and Bliss were killed in action, and Brooke died of an infection on Skyros. Then the Apostles began to count the cost. Norton told Moore of Békássy’s death at High Table at Trinity. Gordon Hannington Luce, who had carried on an extensive correspondence with him and had collected various versions of his *Adriatica*, wanted to know all the details of Békássy’s death. Luce wrote and then destroyed, a series of poems raging at his and the Apostles’ loss (Lubenow 195).

The critic and poet Frank Laurence (Peter) Lucas, (who had several of his own works published by the Hogarth Press, and who wrote the Introduction to Békássy’s book), and Gordon Hannington Luce (an Apostle friend of Keynes, who also published of edition of *Poems* with Hogarth Press, with decorations by

Duncan Grant (Woolf Letters II n1 596)) both very likely supported the publication of Békássy's poems.

In "Adriatica" Békássy explores some of the aesthetic tenets of Neoclassicism several years before T. S. Eliot discussed them in essays such as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1917), "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), or "Four Elizabethan Dramatists" (1924). It describes a voyage at sea in the epic tradition of the *Odyssey*, yet refuses to invoke the "glamour" of "goddesses or heroes": "But though no glamour there / Of goddesses or heroes well could be, / Yet most distinguished our ship's company" (15). The poem is infused with the elements of the pastoral and the romance, yet its quest is not the same as that of courtly love, while giving the impression that it may be. For instance, Chapter I of "Adriatica" begins with the view of a pastoral scene as the travelers sail through the gulf of Quarnero, passing by Fiume, Trieste, and Lussin:

Most pastoral! Doubt not, the stars were white,
And even shepherd boys we heard on shore,
But, gazing silent, none could listen more,
So sweet to lie on deck, be here – and be (19).

With its Introduction, eight chapters, and epilogue, the poem is dedicated to a reader who knows or desires to know the world it depicts:

You know the world of skies and hills and trees;
And, like a surge of waters, I send these
Lines to invade upon you: they are meant
A gift – a pleasure – an encouragement.
Take, if you will, whatever is best;
Remember me: let others have the rest.

It may also be interpreted as a meditation on the nature of love, religion, and the nature of being in the tradition practiced by the metaphysical poets. Indeed, one of the travelers aboard the ship that is the poem itself, is Herbert, a possible reference to either George Herbert (1593–1633), the Welsh-born English poet who attended Trinity College, Cambridge, and excelled, among other things, in languages and music; or, perhaps, to his elder brother, Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583–1648), a graduate of Oxford, an equally talented metaphysical poet and a diplomat, whose philosophical concerns bring him close to the seventeenth-century Cambridge Platonists: Herbert of Cherbury is the author of *De Veritate* (1624), the first English metaphysical treaty, and of *De religione gentilium* (1663) from which, in large part, derived his reputation as the father of deism.

The neoclassical nature of Békássy's poem – which brings together such different styles with no claim to "making it new", yet is highly original precisely because of the infusion of Modernism with a wealth of allusions to past literary

movements and genres – is made clear at the very beginning of the Introduction: “It is no stately ship, sere-sailed, serene, / But one that’s been where many else have been; / Graced with no compliment of classic sea – Pago, Permuda, Zurt, its Cyclades” (15).

Five characters begin a sea voyage from San Pietro to Venice, and along the Dalmatian coast (from Zara,⁸ to Comisa (Komiza), Lissa,⁹ Curzola,¹⁰ Ragusa, the Acroceraunians) to Corfu. The travelers, who are also *dramatis personae*, “Persons of the Play” (24) in a verse drama are: Amrita – “who had brought us here, awhile / With pleasant conversation to beguile / The uneventful days” (19), and who, we are told at the end of the poem, had planned not only the journey itself but also, along the journey “to weed / Out everything too vehement, / Not for the Adriatic meant” (49). – Antony, Herbert, Philemon, with the Narrator at the helm. Their purpose, to engage in “discourse, made fleet and slight with wit”:

Jocund, awake, we laughed to our content,
Nor heeded much the night, until there went
A shiver through the cordage; soft, a word
Fell, loitering: deep waters suddenly stirred
In our discourse, made fleet and slight with wit,
Of this our journey and the end of it (20).

Restless, Antony – who differs from the other characters in that he seeks action¹¹ – begs for a kind of song a gondolier might provide in Venice. Instead, the travelers are engulfed in silence and feel they have left their former lives behind:

For suddenly our former life was sundered
Quite from us by the quiet sky and sea.
There seemed no man upon the earth but we.
Once let the coffin-boards of cabins hoard
The treasure that is man, a new accord
Strikes out all life unharmonised (22).

In the second chapter, the Narrator is witness to Philemon and Antony’s coming together and drifting apart. Aware of Philemon’s pain, the Narrator concludes:

– What could I know of any hopes and fears
And pain of him? Yet now I know, since then,
That every word was pain. The loves of *men*,
I know not by what logic, have not had
Their due happiness [...] (25).

Chapter three follows the same pattern, with Herbert and Amrita this time. Before the lovers’ fated separation, the travelers disembark on Lissa – a scene that might remind readers of the famous Watteau painting, “L’Embarquement pour Cythere”

(1717, Louvre) or of “Pilgrimage to Cythera” (1718–21, Charlottenburg Palace, Berlin), were it not that Békássy’s description is not of a landscape in Rococo style, but of an arid, desert-like island surrounded by a sea of marvels:

Comisa! Lissa! Goats and figs – and sun!
 The tired day ended ere we had begun
 To hope for sight of ship we’d left at morn
 On frisky mules: now stately outward borne
 By slow, snail-paced, slack creatures. Then the
 night
 Fell suddenly, and here and there a light
 Bust out, or at a puff of evening air
 Winked, flickered like a candle badly trimmed.
 After incredible hours, we were there:
 Giants rose from the sea, all misty limbed;
 Mean fishers’ huts lay cuddling by the cliff;
 Cactuses pointed fleshy fingers stiff,
 And winked, and glimmered; the unwieldy moon
 Stared back unmoved, unsmiling (26).

Even so, Békássy’s poem, like Watteau’s painting(s), depicts several couples adopting roles and postures that are ambiguous – difficult to interpret or define. Back on deck, at night, crew asleep, the poet-narrator overhears a conversation between the two lovers, Herbert and Amrita, of which he reproduces snippets, not in the iambic pentameter of his previous “verse drama” but by using, in contrast, catalectic trochaic tetrameter, which Shakespeare was so fond of using for the speech of his fairies:

... I hardly heard
 At first, so low they spoke, but here and there a
 word. ...

[...] . . .
 How could lovers live more wisely
 Than the way that lovers use?
 Sport she early, late arise he,
 Peace and ardour neither lose.

But though Romeo is happy
 In his mistress’ sheets and arms,
 Wind’s his wisdom if mayhap he
 Find she doth refuse her charms.

Solitary love! Ah! Senseless
 Lovers grow, denied their lust,
 Foolish in their pained intenseness
 When they sigh because they must [...] (27).

Another connection with Watteau may be drawn via Paul Verlaine's "Clair de lune" (*Fêtes galantes*, 1869), in which personal sentiments are masked by pastoral evocations of 18th-century paintings and by scenes from the Italian Commedia dell'Arte:

Tout en chantant sur le mode mineur
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune, [...]

In "Adriatica", as in Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes*, conversations and scenes appear to be elegant, even frivolous. Yet one senses, behind the mask of characters who bear names alluding to Classical and Renaissance literature, the depth of longing and despair, passions that are "guised in craft with due constraint" (29):

So nigh
Lay thought to desperation in the mind
Of Herbert, as of one who cannot find
A sheltered place; whose endless road must wind
On endless desert. Of his love he spoke:
His mind, in misery beneath the yoke
Unbreakable by thought, which thought must bear;
His body, that for respite turned to her,
Where none he found; so driving, clay to clay,
Mind to decay and body to decay,
He had crossed every limitation, seen
All things, and all made foul; dried up and lean
The flesh of knowledge and the fat of love (36).

Most importantly, perhaps, the quest of Békássy's poem is not that of the courtly Romance. Romantic love is constantly frustrated. Herbert, for instance, rejected and deserted by Amrita, responds with a sonnet:

[...] O do not seek to hoard for other years
What uncontrolled appears and disappears.
Refusing to remember, in that mood,
How happy lovers are, how love is good
That moulds to destinies the formless clay. [...] (30)

Herbert and the Narrator seem, paradoxically, to find value in the transience of love and, later in their voyage, they recognize the possibility of another kind of path toward a different kind of love:

There is a bloodless way of Calvary
Where love itself is pain to feel and see.
But pleasanter than pleasure's self was this

And how could any shame at all be his
 Who to the fountain when dumb life began
 Came with the proud intelligence of man? (37)

Refusing Herbert's love, Amrita, on her part, prefers, in chapters four and five of the poem, to descend with Antony onto Curzola. From their conversation we learn that the voyage has been planned by Amrita ("Yet I contrived to float this company!" (33)), who now asks Antony to return and comfort Herbert. In an unexpected turn at the end of the poem – after having stopped on Ragusa and Lacroma where Theodora, Amrita's guest, joins the travelling party – the Narrator and Amrita are left alone together on Corfu. On their way back home, the Narrator confesses his secret:

I, left alone
 After Cattaro, wrote this; pondered much
 On love's chief virtues, men, and other such
 Themes poet-worthy; telling all I can
 Of them, and how Amrita deals with them.
 Amrita and myself, one couple more.
 I have not done her justice; will not; nor
 Has telling you of *us* been my intent:
 She is my secret, I my own, my Friend!

Combining various poetic and narrative strategies, "Adriatica" is a verse drama that may also remind of the dramatic experiments, pageants undertaken by authors like E. M. Forster and Virginia Woolf in 1930s, the difference being that the 'pagina', the movable stage, has become a ship's deck. Most importantly, the setting for this drama is not the English countryside. Békássy takes his characters and readers outside of England into a region, a world he knows well, which is his own, if we may equate, in this instance, the author with the poet-helmsman:

– If I could talk to my own heart's content,
 I would tell over these, the things that meant
 Most to me on the journey: I would say
 Much of the winds and waters, day by day,
 Much of the islands, for I know them well;
 Of how I sailed, what I saw; but I must tell
 A story of much love and little gain,
 Much happiness, and wit, before again
 I turn to my affairs (39).

One can only speculate whether or not the poet speaks autobiographically of a journey that took place in reality with characters depicting Békássy's friends, a kind of poem *à clé*, or whether this is an imaginary journey – one on which Virginia Woolf's Orlando would also embark, on his way to Turkey, only three years

after the publication of *Adriatica and Other Poems* – in which characters are aspects, or facets, or masques of the poet-narrator-helmsman. In either case, the Dalmatian coast – “No doubt with topics and discussions high / They paced the philosophic hills” (35) – and Adriatic Sea to which Békássy wanted to transport his friends and readers formed a bridge between modernity and classical times, as well as between East and West, North and South. The shepherds the poet depicts are Dalmatians whose song may be associated with the “singer of tales”. Even though written in a language other than the poet’s native language, “Adriatica” is a highly original masterpiece, a self-reflexive poem grown out of several British and European poetic styles and traditions, which refers, at the same time, to a world that was very much part of Békássy’s own – the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This is a crucial aspect that must not be ignored when considering the poet’s reasons for returning to Hungary and enlisting to fight in the war on the side of the Central Powers.

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Notes

¹ In *Kingsmen of a Century 1873–1972*, L. P. Wilkinson explains that Békássy “has a strange memorial in the College. After the War some Fellows could not bear the idea that the name of an enemy should be included in the list of the British dead inscribed in the wall of the War Memorial. The majority accepted a compromise, and his name may be found in isolation on the inner left wall of the entrance arch” (279). See also George Gömöri’s article, “Ferenc Békássy, Rupert Brooke, and Noel Olivier.”

² “RB, December [‘Dec 19.1911’ written in pencil at top, probably by Lytton] 24 Bilbon Road, Rugby to Lytton Strachey
“Dear Lytton.

There’s going to be a reading-party in dear old Lulworth. In January: 3rd or 4th – Norton, I think, is going to be there. And Ka and I. And perhaps his Lordship. And possibly Virginia. Will you come? It will cost you 30/- a week, perhaps. Everybody will be writing plays. I suppose it will be dreadfully Apostolic .. If you came earlier, you’d find a different lot – S[ignor]. [Ferenc] Békássy amongst them. But I recommend the later.
Could you come – a week – or if not, less, even?

Rupert”

[Editor’s note]: Brooke had also invited Maynard Keynes for the earlier week and asked him to Bring Duncan Grant. This is why he suggested the later week to Strachey, for Strachey had not forgiven Keynes for taking Grant from him. (Hale 202–3)

³ In her letter to Molly MacCarthy Woolf wrote that she and Leonard Woolf would be away in Cornwall the week when the Apostles met at Asheham: “We’ve let it [the house] to Keynes for a reading party next week, and we go off to Cornwall, while they’re here. Perhaps you will see them. I gather they are to be mostly Apostles” (Woolf *Letters II* 47).

4 SONNET

I am that bondsman whom an earthly grace
 Has to your whims unquestionably knit;
 Love clamoured in my earliest embrace
 That I should perfect and accomplish it.
 Do not despise me: for the task is great;
 I am not humbled in a lowly cause:
 Love is no child, in ignorance elate,
 Nor laughs and claps its hands without a cause.
 Come therefore; if my love be like the sea
 And cannot its own ecstasy contain,
 Be you my gentle wind and let me be
 Your origin and virtue once again;
 And tears and kisses be the fountain whence
 Shall flow a new world's perfect innocence.

Ashham House, April 24, 1914.

5 The poem below is reproduced as it appears in *Adriatica and Other Poems* (1925):

THE LAST FRAGMENT

Now deep midnight must cling to hills and spurs
 In that far country where my friend and I
 Once walked on earth together, and the firs
 Will shake a little as the wind will die.
 Each grain of sand must shift uneasily,
 And hazy mists will come when no wind stirs
 Over the heath. On such a night it seems
 As though the country were a desert; men,
 If any walk here, spirit-like; and dreams
 Grow few, and spoken words uncanny then.
 Forsaken roads there lie across the sand,
 Pools curl beneath some over-knotty tree,
 And curly clouds pass far above the land.
 But that dim country woke no fantasy,
 Conjured no judgment out of every mood.
 I suffered there; so that I used to brood
 Seeing with incomprehension something strange,
 Till time and good remembrance worked a change.
 The elements of Wonder lie beneath
 The least or greatest object viewed but so.
 Tall grasses socketed with haulm and sheath,
 And bodies growing as the grasses grow;
 Love that was love a thousand years ago. . . .

6

A sivatagban

Rég elhagyott házak között az út
 Túl a nagyváros rengeteg kövén
 Széljárta homoksivatagba fut
 Pár csenevész fa közt, melynek tövén

Gaz gazzal küzdve mégis megterem
Ott a homokban – és utat jelez,
De nincsen út a puszta földeken –
Korhardt kidőlt határfa görnyedez.

Nem *élők* birodalma! Fű se nől,
Eltévedt éhes eb se kóborol:
S pár lépést jóssz a házsorok felől,
Se ház, se város nincsen már sehol.

Nincs már sehol a város színes álma
Amelyben minden lámpafény: lidérc;
Belevész itt a hang a pusztaságba,
Ott cseng az utcán mennyi büszke érc.
Ott kedv riad, s az összevissza láarma
Meg nem döbbenvé ott az égbe száll;
Itt: félni kell; a sivatag határba’
Kedvére jár a romboló halál.

Jaj annak aki erre tévedett!
Tűrhetetlen itten, átkozott a lét,
S aki a sivatag bolondja lett,
Kín s izonyat elfogja életét.

Azt mondják itt egy ember jár, ki holt
S a messze földeken nyomot keres
S amerre régen vándorútja volt
Vár új halottat, s új halálra les.
...Kedvem, szerelmem, munkám, szenvédésem
Virágos kertjét el hogyan hagynám?
Hogy most keressem már halott reményem’
A CÉLTALANSÁG vad sivatagnán!
(Békássy Ferenc *egybegyűjtött írásai* 51)

In The Desert

The road runs between long-abandoned houses
Beyond the city’s many stones
To the wind-swept sands
Between a few sickly trees at whose base

Weed struggling with weed grows nevertheless
There in the sand – and points the road,
But on the wasteland there’s no road –
Border trees stoop rotting.

It is not the empire of the living! Even the grass doesn’t grow
Nor does the hungry lost dog stray

And in a few steps you come from the rows of houses,
No house and no city anywhere anymore.

Already nowhere is the city's colorful dream
In which every lamplight: fiend;
Sound disappears here in the wild,
There so much proud ore rings in the street
There the spirit startles, and the jumbled noise
Not stunned, flies through the sky;
Here: you must fear; on the desert's borderlands
Devastating death walks about at will.

Oh, those who stray here!
Unbearable, here life is cursed
Agony and terror imprison the life
Of one who has become the desert's madman.

They say a dead man walks here
Seeking footprints in faraway lands
And where he had wondered long ago
He awaits new dead and seeks new death.
...How can I abandon the flower garden of
My spirits, my love, my work, my anguish?
To seek now with my already dead hope
In the wild desert of aimlessness.

⁷ "If we want to frighten ourselves in our capitalist easy-chairs, we can picture the Communists of Russia as though the early Christians led by Attila were using the equipment of the Holy Inquisition and the Jesuit missions to enforce the literal economics of the New Testament; but when we want to comfort ourselves in the same chairs, can we hopefully repeat that these economics are fortunately so contrary to human nature that they cannot finance either missionaries or armies and will surely end in defeat?" (12).

⁸ Zadar, called Zara when under the authority of the Republic of Venice in the 15th century. This is also the name used when Zara was part of the Habsburg empire in the 19th century.

⁹ The old Venetian name for the Adriatic island of Vis, where a battle took place in July, 1866, between the Habsburg Empire and Italy as part of the Third Italian Independence War. The Italian defeat at Vis was overshadowed by the Prussian victory over Austria at Königgrätz, which, in turn, led to the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1867.

¹⁰ Korcula, southern Dalmatia, an island that changed hands several times throughout history between Venice, the Kingdom of Hungary, the Austrian Empire, Austria-Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Croatia.

¹¹ He could not rest in miserable ease,
But with impatient fingers longed to do
Some – any – thing he might be driven to.
Action clung round about him: pleasures brought
New Ferment for the nectar of his thought. (21)

DESTOUCHES SEMMELWEIS, CÉLINE

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Céline, sous son nom de naissance, Louis Destouches, a défendu en 1924 une thèse de médecine consacrée à la vie et l'œuvre de Semmelweis. En 1936, peu après la sortie de *Mort à crédit*, Céline publia de nouveau le texte de la thèse, sous son nom d'écrivain, réuni dans un volume avec le pamphlet antisoviétique, *Mea culpa*. Toutes les éditions successives de Semmelweis (en 1977, 1999, puis, en hongrois, en 2012) ont donné lieu à de nouvelles postures pour le lecteur. La référentialité du texte a constamment évolué. L'interprétation actuelle est celle d'une œuvre de fiction, en tant que prolégomènes du futur cycle romanesque de l'auteur.

Mots-clefs : Céline, Semmelweis, référentialité, idéologie hygiéniste et antisémitisme

C'est en mai 1924 que Louis Destouches a soutenu sa thèse pour le doctorat de médecine, à la Faculté de Paris, sous le titre *Vie et œuvre de Philippe-Ignace Semmelweis (1818–1965)*. Il avait alors trente-et-un ans. Stagiaire en 1922 et 1923 au sein de différents hôpitaux parisiens, dont celui de Cochin, il avait passé ses derniers examens en juin 1923. Dès l'obtention de son diplôme, le jeune médecin s'engagea dans la *Section d'hygiène* de la Société des Nations à Genève. Il allait y travailler jusqu'en 1927. Pendant cette période il conduisit des missions pour le compte de la SDN à Cuba, aux États-Unis, au Canada, puis sur la côte africaine occidentale, du Sénégal au Nigéria. En décembre 1927, il quitta Genève et s'installa comme médecin de ville à Clichy.

Devenu célèbre avec le *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, publié en 1932, Louis-Ferdinand Céline multiplia les publications au cours des années 30. En 1936, juste après la sortie de *Mort à crédit*, il fit rééditer, dans le même volume que *Mea culpa*, son manuscrit sur la *Vie et l'œuvre de Semmelweis*. Ce texte de moins de cent pages fut de nouveau réédité en 1977, dans le troisième volume des *Cahiers Céline*. Enfin, en 1999, Gallimard s'est décidé à publier la thèse de doctorat en volume séparé. Pour donner plus d'éclat à cette publication, on a même demandé à Philippe Sollers de la préfacer.

Semmelweis était Hongrois, il est considéré dans son pays comme l'une des plus grandes figures de l'histoire médicale. Notons que Destouches-Céline n'a rien à voir avec la Hongrie, s'il a choisi Semmelweis comme sujet de sa thèse de doctorat, c'est certainement pour d'autres raisons. Du reste, les romans de Céline – sauf *Voyage au bout de la nuit* – sont parvenus jusqu'en Hongrie avec beaucoup de retard. Ce n'est qu'en 2006 que les éditions Kalligram ont commencé la publication régulière des textes de Céline en traduction hongroise. *Semmelweis*, paru en 2012, est le cinquième de la série.¹

La situation de ce texte est curieuse et contradictoire. On peut même dire que chaque publication de *Semmelweis* crée autour d'elle une nouvelle constellation. Pour commencer, la thèse imprimée eut pour lecteurs une poignée d'universitaires français : un certain Brindepau, président de la commission, un maître de conférence du nom de Roger, le professeur Follet, le professeur Gunn, Henri Maréchal, directeur de clinique, enfin Monsieur Appel, recteur de l'Académie de Paris. Leur avis fut positif et Louis Destouches fut admis docteur en médecine.

La première édition, publiée en 1936 chez Denoël, réunissait la thèse avec un pamphlet, *Mea culpa*. Son signataire n'est plus Destouches, mais Louis-Ferdinand Céline. Quant à *Mea culpa*, c'est un texte qui fait suite au séjour de l'écrivain en Union soviétique, un texte violemment anticomuniste, mais très célinien en même temps. Donc, si la première version de *Semmelweis* a pu être considérée comme un travail académique, intégrée à la littérature médicale, la deuxième est censée être lue comme une espèce de pamphlet, ou alors une sorte d'essai.

La première était un travail scientifique dédié à la problématique de l'hygiène, la deuxième, envisagée comme faire-valoir à *Mea culpa*, est un témoignage, à travers la triste histoire d'un grand médecin du 19^e siècle, de la misère de l'homme, du mal qui possède ce dernier et tue dans l'œuf toute initiative créatrice.

La troisième édition, celle des *Cahiers*, s'efforce de situer le texte dans un contexte, celle de l'œuvre de Céline, grand romancier du 20^e siècle. La position du lecteur change de nouveau : désormais, il va devoir lire et interpréter *Semmelweis* comme un début, un texte précurseur de tout ce qui suivra dans les années 30. Enfin, le pacte entre le texte et son lecteur est encore modifié par l'édition de 1999, *Semmelweis* est alors, en quelque sorte, canonisé, il appartient à l'œuvre d'un auteur dont l'importance est désormais universellement reconnue. Ce qui suppose de l'interpréter autrement. L'édition hongroise, quant à elle, présente un cas de figure encore différent, car le lecteur hongrois est tenté, dès le premier abord, de comparer l'image qu'il a de Semmelweis avec celle que donne le texte de Céline. En fin de compte, tout comme dans la célèbre nouvelle de Jorge Luis Borges, *Pierre Ménard l'auteur de Don Quichotte*, les textes de 1924, 1936, 1977 et 1999, et encore la version hongroise de 2012, sont pratiquement identiques, mais leur réception est chaque fois différente.

Voyons donc tout d'abord le problème de la référentialité. Dès 1924, un spécialiste hongrois, Tibor Győry, a épingle les erreurs biographiques dans le texte du docteur Destouches. Mais comme Destouches-Céline n'a jamais réagi, le texte est resté pratiquement inchangé au cours des décennies. De fait, l'auteur de *Vie et œuvre de Semmelweis* a introduit deux passages historiques dans son texte : le premier, dès les deux premières pages du livre, évoque dans une vision grandiose l'époque des guerres napoléoniennes, le deuxième est un tableau de la guerre d'indépendance hongroise, en 1848–1849, événement auquel le docteur Semmelweiss a participé à sa façon. Or il est évident pour le lecteur hongrois que la description donné par Destouches est truffée de grossières erreurs, que l'auteur n'a fait aucun effort pour rendre correctement ce moment d'une grande importance dans l'histoire hongroise.

Nous savons par les travaux des chercheurs céliniens, dont la Hongroise Judit Karafiath,² que lors de la rédaction de sa thèse, Destouches a surtout consulté des livres allemands (la bibliographie originale figure d'ailleurs dans toutes les éditions), mais qu'il n'est pas certain qu'il les ait tout lus. L'essentiel du cas Semmelweis est certes rendu : il s'agit d'un médecin passionné qui a fait une découverte essentielle, mais n'est pas en mesure de le prouver ; aussi le monde médical ne le prend-il pas au sérieux et réagit-il même de manière hostile à son endroit, Semmelweis perd la raison et meurt à l'âge de quarante-cinq ans. Dans sa narration, il semble que Louis Destouches ne se soucie guère de respecter l'exactitude des faits, de suivre la logique propre aux travaux de ce genre, ce qu'il veut, c'est donner une vision. La référentialité n'est point nécessaire à la création de cette vision.

Vu d'aujourd'hui, ce qui semble le plus étonnant, c'est que la thèse de Destouches ait été reçue sans problème. Certes, l'hygiène, la lutte contre la propagation des infections est avant tout un problème médical, mais l'auteur de la thèse en parle sans employer le vocabulaire et les raisonnements propres à la science. De surcroît, si l'écriture n'est pas académique, n'est pas celle des thésards, elle n'est pas non plus celle d'un historien ou celle d'un essayiste. Elle est, par contre, bien celle de l'écrivain qui va créer avec ses romans un nouveau langage et provoquer un tournant dans la littérature romanesque du 20^e siècle. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de lire les deux premières phrases de *Vie et œuvre*.

La grande découverte du docteur Semmelweis fut, comme on le sait, la découverte de la nécessité absolue de la désinfection, découverte dont il fut incapable de prouver ou d'expliquer le mécanisme. C'est Louis Pasteur qui allait le faire à sa place,³ presque cinquante ans plus tard, en découvrant le rôle des bactéries. Or, dans sa thèse, Destouches ne fait qu'une courte allusion à Pasteur. Il est vrai qu'elle s'insère dans un passage stratégique du texte. On pourrait dire que Pasteur représente le succès, tandis que Semmelweis représente l'échec humain.

Dans un article intitulé *Une doctrine biologique*, André Lioret soutient que Céline est resté toute sa vie prisonnier de la doctrine pastoriennne. C'est une doctrine purement matérialiste, précise-t-il, car elle est basée sur l'idée selon laquelle l'élimination de la totalité des microbes pourrait être une solution absolue. D'où, poursuit-il, l'absurdité de l'idéologie antisémite de Céline, qui adopte la même logique, dite pastoriennne, dans l'ordre sociologique. Il est certain que vu sous cet angle, *Semmelweis* peut être associé aux pamphlets qui suivirent *Mea culpa*. Mais il semble beaucoup plus intéressant de rapprocher la thèse des romans céliniens.

Plusieurs traits de *Semmelweis* annoncent en effet le monde romanesque de *Voyage au bout de la nuit*. Le ton est donné dans les deux cas par la guerre. Dans une vision typiquement célinienne, la guerre qui est l'horreur même et en même temps l'état naturel de l'humanité, est déjà présente dans le texte de la thèse. L'envolé lyrique de ses premières pages débouche sur la naissance de Semmelweis, qui préfigure ainsi Bardamu, médecin des pauvres. Le thème de la pauvreté y tient également une place importante : l'hôpital viennois où le médecin exerce est celui des démunis, les femmes enceintes que Semmelweis voudrait sauver sont, sans exception, des pauvresses. Mais tous ses efforts seront vains ; la dureté pessimiste des romans est déjà présente dans *Semmelweis*.

Des différentes lectures possibles de *Semmelweis*, je choisirais volontiers celle que favorisent la majorité des chercheurs : lire *Vie et œuvre* comme un texte fictionnel.⁴ Le mécanisme décrit par Paul Ricoeur dans *Temps et récit* – plus exactement dans le chapitre intitulé *L'entrecroisement de l'histoire et de la fiction*⁵ – qui consiste en la fictionalisation de l'histoire et l'historicisation de la fiction, est parfaitement valable dans le cas de Céline. Le non-respect (relatif) de la référentialité doit être jugé à cette aune.

Mais *Semmelweis* reste, bien sûr, un texte mineur. S'il nous intéresse, c'est uniquement en tant que texte précurseur ouvrant le chemin vers les grandes réussites de Louis-Ferdinand Céline, *Voyage, Mort à crédit* ou alors *D'un château l'autre*. Et qui rappelle aux nombreux lecteurs du romancier un personnage pittoresque, un Hongrois qui reste l'un des grands noms de l'histoire de la médecine moderne.

Notes

- ¹ Céline Louis-Ferdinand, *Semmelweis*, traduit par Katalin Szabolcs, Kalligram, Pozsony, 2012.
- ² Judit Karafiáth, « Semmelweis comme réécriture », in *Magazine littéraire Céline* – hors série no 4 (2002), 49–51 et « Semmelweis egy írói életmű nyitánya », *Kalligram*, 2010/4.
- ³ André Lioret, « Une doctrine biologique », in *Cahiers de l'Herne Céline*, Livre de Poche Biblio, Paris, 1972, 174–177.
- ⁴ Ex. Jérôme Meizoz, « Thèse médiocre ou roman prometteur ? », *Le petit célinien*, 4 septembre 2012.
- ⁵ Paul Ricœur, *Temps et récit III*, Seuil-Point, Paris, 1985, 329–349.

Destouches Semmelweis, Céline*Summary*

In 1924 Céline, or Louis Destouches by his given name, defended his doctoral dissertation (written to obtain his medical credentials in France) on the life and work of Semmelweis. In 1936, very soon after the publication of his novel *Mort à crédit*, Céline published the text of his dissertation again under his penname together in a single volume alongside his anti-Soviet text *Mea culpa*. The subsequent editions of the text (1977, 1999, then in Hungary in 2012) have given readers a chance to reassess the author and work. The referential nature of the text has continuously evolved. The present interpretation approaches it as a work of fiction, and as a sort of prolegomena of Céline's later Romanesque cycle.

Keywords: Céline, Semmelweis, referentiality, hygienic ideology and anti-Semitism

DIE BEWUSSTE ENTSCHEIDUNG: PARALLELE KARRIEREN

DER ARZT, ZIONIST, JOURNALIST UND KULTURKRITIKER
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Max Nordau, geboren als Simon Gabriel Südfeld (1849, Pest – 1923, Paris), tätig als Arzt, Journalist und kulturkritischer Essayist, zum zweitbedeutendsten Zionisten neben Theodor Herzl aufgestiegen, mit 34 Jahren über Nacht durch sein kulturkritisches Buch *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* berühmt geworden, prägte dann ein Jahrzehnt später mit seinem Hauptwerk *Entartung* endgültig die Geistes- und Begriffsgeschichte des Fin de Siècle. Seine Werke sind in 17 Sprachen zugänglich, sein Bestseller *Entartung* erlebte beispielsweise innerhalb von vier Monaten in England sieben Auflagen. Seine Verdienste sind von literaturhistorischer Bedeutung, denn er gilt als Wegbereiter der modernen Kulturkritik par excellence, so ist seine Wirkung auf seine Nachwelt, wie etwa auf György Lukács, offensichtlich. Angesichts des Nordau'schen Œuvres wird deutlich, dass es sich bei ihm um einen Kulturkritiker von Friedrich Nietzsches Format und einen führenden Intellektuellen im Europa der Jahrhundertwende handelt. Aus dieser Vielfalt sollen nun die weniger bekannten Anfänge dieser vielfältigen Laufbahn nachgezeichnet werden.

Schlagwörter: Max Nordau, Zionismus, Medizin, Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie, Feuilleton, 19. Jahrhundert, Psychopathologie, Entartung, Theodor Herzl

Max Nordau (*1849 in Pest als Simon Gabriel Südfeld, † 1923 in Paris), tätig als Arzt, Journalist und kulturkritischer Essayist, zum zweitbedeutendsten Zionisten neben Theodor Herzl aufgestiegen, mit 34 Jahren über Nacht durch sein kulturkritisches Buch *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit* berühmt geworden, prägte ein Jahrzehnt später mit seinem Hauptwerk *Entartung* endgültig die Geistes- und Begriffsgeschichte des Fin de Siècle. Bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg schrieb er für zahlreiche europäische und nordamerikanische Zeitungen Feuilletons, war unter anderem 35 Jahre lang für die *Vossische Zeitung* tätig. Seine Werke sind in 17 Sprachen zugänglich, sein Bestseller *Entartung* erlebte beispielsweise innerhalb von vier Monaten in England sieben Auflagen.

Nordaus Errungenschaft war die Verbindung seiner beiden Betätigungsfelder, denn als Mediziner unternahm er den Versuch, die zeitgenössische Kultur mit den gängigen Mitteln der Psychopathologie zu analysieren. Jedoch erwies sich seine Diagnose als ein kompletter Fehlschlag: Maßgebenden bildenden Künstlern, Literaten (Baudelaire, Zola, Verlaine, Tolstoi etc.), Komponisten (Richard Wagner) und Philosophen (Nietzsche) der Epoche wurde das Schaffensvermögen abgesprochen, sie wurden schlichtweg als Geisteskranke und Entartete abgestempelt. Wahrscheinlich mag dies der Grund dafür sein, warum Nordau trotz seiner ausgedehnten literarischen Produktion der Vergessenheit anheimgefallen ist. Seine Verdienste sind jedoch von literaturhistorischer Bedeutung, denn er gilt als Wegbereiter der modernen Kulturkritik par excellence, so ist seine Wirkung auf seine Nachwelt, wie etwa auf György Lukács, offensichtlich. Angesichts des Nordau'schen Œuvres, in dem neben Prosawerken, Dramen, Briefen, medizinischen und zionistischen Schriften doch die kulturkritischen Werke überwiegen, wird ersichtlich, dass es sich bei ihm um einen Kulturkritiker von Friedrich Nietzsches Format und einen führenden Intellektuellen im Europa der Jahrhundertwende handelt. Aus dieser Vielfalt sollen nun die weniger bekannten Anfänge dieser vielfältigen Laufbahn nachgezeichnet werden.

Nordau, als Sohn einer orthodoxen jüdischen Familie in Pest¹ geboren, gehörte zu denjenigen, die sich erst nachdem sie diese Stadt verlassen hatten, in der deutschen Literatur und Wissenschaft einen Namen machten. Im aufgeklärten jüdischen Milieu von Pest galt Deutsch in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts als die dominierende und vorbildhafte Kultur- und Wissenschaftssprache, nach 1861 jedoch setzte die ungarische Nationalbewegung Ungarisch als Schul- und Behördensprache durch. Nordau erfuhr diesen Wechsel des sprachlichen und kulturellen Paradigmas am eigenen Leib: Durch die stetige Magyarisierung des öffentlichen Lebens geriet er, wie alle von der Goethe-Kultur überzeugten deutschsprachigen Schüler und Bildungsbürger, soziokulturell und später auch beruflich in die Defensive und Isolation. Nordau ging ins Ausland und wurde in Paris als deutschsprachiger Zeitungskorrespondent und Essayist berühmt. Angelegt war dieser Erfolg im Exil allerdings bereits in der frühen Entscheidung für den Besuch deutschsprachiger Schulen in Pest und in seinem entschiedenen Widerwillen gegen die Magyarisierung.

Schmelztiegel Pest: Magyaren, Deutsche und Juden

Nordaus Vater, der aus Krotoschin (Posen) zugewanderte Gabriel Südfeld, war ein streng religiöser Jude, ein Rabbiner;² seine Mutter stammte aus Riga. Nordau und seine zwei Jahre jüngere Schwester Charlotte („Lotti“) hatten väterlicherseits

vier Halbgeschwister, die Familie lebte in ärmlichen Verhältnissen. Der kleine Südfeld – Nordau kam als Simon Gabriel Südfeld zur Welt – soll schon recht früh in der jüdischen Schule die Grundlagen des Lesens und Schreibens erlernt haben.³ Im August 1859 kam Nordau auf das katholische Gymnasium von Pest.

Doch im Frühjahr 1862 kam eine starke magyarisch-nationale Bewegung in Fluß und es gelang ihr, mittels eines neuen Schulgesetzes den bisherigen Unterricht vollkommen über den Haufen zu werfen. Die deutsche Sprache war plötzlich aus dem Gymnasium verbannt und das Ungarische kam für fast alle Fächer an seine Stelle. Wenig Professoren kannten die ungarische Sprache so, um sie fließend zu sprechen, noch viel weniger, um in ihr zu unterrichten. (...) Für den jungen Max war das eine schreckliche Katastrophe. Sein Vater hatte ihn gelehrt, die Sprache Goethes und Schillers zu lieben, doch gleichzeitig ihm auch ein Vorurteil gegen das Ungarische eingeimpft, welches ja damals hauptsächlich nur vom niederen Volke gesprochen wurde. Später lernte Max Nordau umso herzlicher und aufrichtiger die Schönheit dieser nationalen Bewegung würdigen und nicht minder auch die herrliche Literatur des ungarischen Volkes; in dem Augenblick jedoch erschien seiner kindlichen Seele eine solche Änderung wie ein Verrat. Wohl blieb er noch ein Jahr in dem selben Gymnasium, doch gab es fortwährend Reibungen zwischen ihm und seinen neuen Professoren – zumeist getaufte Juden, die einen extremen Magyarismus vortäuschten. Den jungen Burschen empörte das und er verließ nach Ende des Schuljahres die Anstalt, um Schüler des kalvinistischen Gymnasiums zu werden, wo er auch seine Studien beendete.⁴

Die Schulnachrichten des Jahres 1861/62 liegen nicht vor, doch im Bericht des darauffolgenden Jahres stehen die detaillierten Ergebnisse des Simon Südfeld.⁵ In der IV. Klasse erbrachte er folgende Leistungen: Sittliches Betragen: lobenswert (2), Aufmerksamkeit: gespannt (1), Fleiß: genügend (2), Religion: ausgezeichnet (1), Latein: vorzüglich (2), Ungarische Sprache: vorzüglich (2), Deutsche Sprache: vorzüglich (2), Geschichte: vorzüglich (2), Mathematik: vorzüglich (2), Naturkunde: ausgezeichnet (1), Naturlehre: vorzüglich (2). Innerhalb der außerordentlichen Fächer belegte Nordau das Fach Schönschreiben mit dem Ergebnis gut (3).⁶

Die V. Klasse (1863/64) hatte Nordau noch im katholischen Gymnasium begonnen, jedoch nicht mehr in dieser Schule beendet.⁷ Er wechselte noch während des Schuljahres in das kalvinistische Gymnasium hinüber. In dieser Anstalt belegte er die Oberstufe des Gymnasiums und erlangte vermutlich 1867 das Abitur.

Der Namenswechsel und überbotene Assimilationsbestrebungen

In einer Kopie der Geburtsurkunde⁸ Nordaus ist aus der Rubrik „Bemerkung“ zu entnehmen, dass er seinen Namen mit Genehmigung des ungarischen Innenministers seit 1873 gesetzlich führte. Ursprünglich kam er als Simon Maximilian Südfeld zur Welt, doch soll er bereits als Schüler den Namen „Nordau“ als Mitgestalter der Monatsschrift *Poesie, Kunst und Wissenschaft* verwendet haben.⁹ Im Mai 1863 sei das erste Mal etwas von ihm im Druck erschienen: „Ein lokales Wochenblatt veröffentlichte einen gereimten Rebus von ihm, der lediglich mit M. N. gezeichnet war.“ Ab August 1863 habe seine „regelmäßige Mitarbeit“ an der Halbmonatsschrift *Salon der Literatur, Kunst und Mode* begonnen und bis Oktober 1865 habe er dort und in zwei anderen Wochenschriften (u. a. im *Entre-Acte*) um die fünfzig Beiträge, Märchen, Gedichte, Abhandlungen und literarische Kritiken sowie Theaterkritiken veröffentlicht.

Bezüglich des Namenswechsels stellt sich natürlich die relevante Frage, welche Gründe ihn dazu bewogen haben, aus dem deutsch-jüdischen Namen Süd/Feld, anstatt einen ungarischen Namen anzunehmen, den deutschen Namen Nord/Au zu bilden. Jens Malte Fischer bestreitet die These der künstlichen Arisierung, denn Nordaus Entwicklung widerlege dies.¹⁰ Nach Christoph Schulte war diese spätere Entwicklung Nordaus zum selbstbewussten Juden und Zionisten in keiner Weise vorprogrammiert, denn aus dem in seiner Pariser Wahlheimat als deutscher Schriftsteller bekannten Nordau machten erst der Antisemitismus und Theodor Herzl einen Zionisten.¹¹ Die Namensänderung in Pest sollte die jüdische Herkunft verbergen, und bis zu seiner Hinwendung zum Zionismus war Nordau Jahrzehntelang damit beschäftigt, „jede Spur des Jüdischen in seinem öffentlichen Auftreten“ zu tilgen.¹² Die Umwandlung vom jüdischen Südfeld ins deutsche Nordau bedeutete für ihn „Umwertung und Aufwertung (...). Denn Deutsch ist die Schriftsteller- und Schriftsprache des Max Nordau, nicht das Jiddisch der Eltern, nicht das Ungarisch seiner Pester Umwelt“.¹³ Die Wahl dieses Namens bezeichnet Schulte als einen politischen und weltanschaulichen Akt sowohl gegen das Jüdische als auch gegen das Ungarische.¹⁴

Nordau wurde bereits als Schüler damit konfrontiert, dass infolge des Oktoberpatents ab 1861 Ungarisch zur offiziellen Behörden- und Unterrichtssprache erklärt wurde. In den Mittelpunkt rückte das Unterrichtswesen im Geiste des ungarischen Nationalismus. Sein Vater, Gabriel Südfeld, der bislang als deutschsprachiger Hauslehrer sein Brot erworben hatte und die ungarische Kultur tief verachtete, verlor seine Anstellung, und die Familie Südfeld damit ihren finanziellen Unterhalt. Die Magyarisierung erlebten sie sowohl in kultureller als auch in finanzieller Hinsicht als eine Niedergangserscheinung. Diese bittere Erfahrung

der Jugendjahre prägte auch Nordaus Bestseller *Entartung* (1892/93), in dem er jegliche Abweichung von der Kultur Goethes und Schillers als einen Schritt in Richtung kultureller Entartung und Dekadenz betrachtete. Der junge Nordau spürte nur die negativen Seiten des freien ungarischen Vielvölkerstaates, denn als Angehöriger der deutschen und zugleich jüdischen Minderheit empfand er ausschließlich die Unterdrückung seitens der Mehrheit, der Magyaren. Die Assimilierung an das Magyarentum ekelte ihn an, er wollte deutscher Schriftsteller sein. Das Jüdische glaubte er mit der Namensänderung abgestreift zu haben; um vom Ungarischen loszukommen, sah er sich genötigt, die gewohnte Umgebung zu verlassen.

Nordau als Journalist und Medizinstudent

1867 bestand Nordau die Matura und begann in Pest sein Medizinstudium. Hinsichtlich der Entscheidung für ein Medizinstudium gibt es nur Vermutungen, konkrete Äußerungen von ihm selbst liegen nicht vor. Erwähnt werden kann jene Tatsache, dass bei den Juden infolge ihrer Mehrsprachigkeit die traditionelle Bildung stets im Vordergrund stand, doch wurde auch der weltlichen Bildung große Bedeutung beigemessen, die vor allem eine Orientierung nach den geistig höher gestellten Berufen mit sich brachte. Zu diesen gehörte in erster Linie der Beruf des Arztes, der vielerorts als jüdischer Beruf par excellence angesehen wurde. Für das akademische Jahr 1872/73 (Wintersemester) wurden diesbezüglich folgende Zahlen festgehalten: 252 jüdische Studenten immatrikulierten sich für Jura, 141 für Medizin und lediglich 15 für Geisteswissenschaften. Bei den Studenten römisch-katholischer Konfession liegen diese Zahlen bei 791, 248 und 151.¹⁵

In Budapest liegt Nordaus Immatrikulation für das akademische Jahr 1871/72 vor. In die Rubriken Name, Religion, Alter und Wohnsitz wurde in ungarischer Sprache eingetragen: „Südfeld Simon Miksa“; 22; „héber“ [hebräisch]; „N. Diófa utca 4. sz“ [Große Nussbaumstraße Nr. 4]. Geburtsort: Pest; Name der Eltern oder des Vormunds: Gábor [Gabriel].

Parallel zum Studium war Nordau bereits seit 1867 für das renommierteste deutschsprachige Tageblatt Ungarns, für den *Pester Lloyd*, tätig. Welche Aufgabengebiete auf Nordau zukamen und wie viel er tatsächlich arbeitete, kann möglicherweise nicht allein aufgrund der veröffentlichten Artikel festgestellt werden. Der Anzahl seiner Feuilletons nach scheint seine Tätigkeit beim Organ eher belanglos; vermutlich wurde er auch mit redaktionsinternen Aufgaben betraut. Sein Debüt beim Blatt erfolgte Ende 1867 und erst ab September 1872 entfaltete er eine rege journalistische Tätigkeit.

Ab Frühjahr 1873 verweilte Nordau im Dienste des *Pester Lloyd*, und zwar als dessen Korrespondent für die Weltausstellung, in Wien. Er verfasste in diesem Jahr etwa hundert Feuilletons. Ende des Jahres bereiste er Deutschland und den europäischen Norden. Ab April 1874 befand er sich auf der ersehnten Bildungsreise. Die Route lässt sich auch an den Titeln seiner Feuilletons ablesen: Petersburg, Moskau, Berlin, England, Island, Frankreich. Für das Blatt schrieb er nur im Februar und März 1874 während des Kaiserbesuches in Petersburg regelmäßig; einige Monate später schickte er dem Organ aus Island zahlreiche Beiträge zu, jedoch pausierte die Korrespondenz einmal für zwei Monate. Weiterhin stellen die Briefe aus der französischen Provinz aus dem Jahre 1875 eine ansehnliche Menge dar. Die Eindrücke dieser bewegten Jahre finden ihren Niederschlag in Nordaus Buch *Vom Kreml zur Alhambra*.

Ende 1875 kehrte Nordau nach Pest zurück und legte am 21. Dezember 1875 sein erstes Rigorosum an der „Budapesti Magyar Királyi Tudomány Egyetem“ [Budapester Ungarische Königliche Universität] ab. Im Rigorosumsprotokoll wurde er als „Südfeld (Nordau) Simon“ eingetragen.¹⁶ Am 17. Januar 1876 reichte Nordau den schriftlichen Antrag ein, das zweite Rigorosum vorzeitig ablegen zu dürfen¹⁷ und brachte dasselbe am 24. Januar 1876 erfolgreich hinter sich. In der Rubrik „Vor- und Nachname“ ist der Name „Nordau (Südfeld) Miksa“ zu lesen. Seine Gesamtleistung: „genügend“ (2/2).¹⁸ Die knapp ausreichenden Leistungen sprechen für sich: Nordaus journalistische Tätigkeit und die Reisen nahmen seine Zeit dermaßen in Anspruch, dass von einem seriösen, intensiven und vor allem kontinuierlichen Studium kaum die Rede sein konnte.

Einige Tage später, am 31. Januar, kam es zum Bruch mit dem *Pester Lloyd*. Zwei Tage darauf war Nordau beim *Neuen Pester Journal* engagiert. Jedoch schien ihm Pest keine Heimat auf Dauer zu sein, am 1. Mai 1876 brach er samt Mutter und Schwester nach Paris auf. Dort war er teils als praktischer Arzt tätig, teils schrieb er für mehrere Blätter; seinem neuen Blatt in Ungarn schickte er zahlreiche Pariser Sittengemälde. Viele davon kamen in seinem Werk *Paris. Studien und Bilder aus dem wahren Milliardenlande* erneut zum Abdruck.

Ende 1878 kehrte er als anerkannter Journalist nach Pest zurück, betätigte sich als Arzt, hielt literarische Vorträge auch außerhalb der Landesgrenzen und verhandelte mit Verlegern. Nordau hatte sich als Pariser Korrespondent der *Vossischen Zeitung* etabliert. Pest besuchte er, soweit bekannt, als aktiver Zionist und Redner erst im 20. Jahrhundert wieder.

Wahlheimat Paris

Nordau war 1873 als Wiener Korrespondent des *Pester Lloyd* erstmals länger von seiner Familie weg. In dieser Zeit entfaltete sich ein reger Briefwechsel

zwischen ihm und seiner Schwester Lotti. Nordau bezeichnetet in diesen Briefen das Pester Blatt als „Provinzblatt“, das im mondänen Wien nie Furore machen werde, und die ungarische Hauptstadt wird als „Provinzstadt“ abgetan, die für ihn keine Heimat mehr sichere. Einige Monate später nahm er nicht einmal das Angebot der von ihm so sehr respektierten *Neuen Freien Presse* an, als deren Pester Korrespondent zu fungieren.

Nordau ließ sich zuerst 1876, dann endgültig 1880 in Paris nieder. Vorher veröffentlichte er einen längeren Artikel in der Leipziger *Gartenlaube*, in dem er sich heftig gegen die Magyarisierungstendenzen aussprach. (Dass das Blatt als das führende antisemitische Organ in Deutschland galt, ließ Nordau außer Acht.¹⁹) Die erste Version des Artikels, betitelt mit *Deutschenhetze in Ungarn*, war dermaßen zugespitzt, dass diese redaktionsintern – nicht zuletzt wegen finanzieller Befürchtungen – abgelehnt wurde, da mit einer Einstellung des Blattes in Ungarn zu rechnen war.²⁰ Nordau entschärzte daraufhin seinen Beitrag, und so kam er mit dem Titel *Die Deutschen in Ungarn* zum Abdruck, signiert mit „Ein Deutsch-Ungar“. Der Artikel behandelt ausführlich die Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn und kommt zu dem Schluss, dass die deutsche Sprache und Kultur in Ungarn aus historischer und rechtlicher Perspektive so legitim sei, dass die nach 1861 eingeführten Magyarisierungsmaßnahmen als skandalös zu bewerten seien. Betroffen war in erster Linie das Unterrichtswesen, da anstelle des Deutschen das Ungarische zur offiziellen Unterrichts- und Behördensprache erklärt wurde. Auch das Alltagsleben der Deutschen wurde dadurch erschwert, da bei den Behörden häufig sprachliche Barrieren zu überwinden waren. Dazu kam noch der soziale Terror: Die deutschsprachige Beschriftung von Geschäften oder Firmenschildern wurde nicht geduldet und dasselbe galt für Vereine und Familien, in denen die Konversation auf Deutsch verlief. Nach Nordaus Bewertung hatte durch die Sprachdebatte das ungarische geistige Leben einen Verlust einzubüßen. Gleichzeitig fügte er auch seine Mahnung hinzu: Falls Ungarn nicht zweisprachig bleibe, sondern sich für das Ausland schwer verständliche Ungarisch entscheide, gerate es in eine Isoliertheit, infolge derer die Kontakte zur europäischen Kulturgemeinschaft verloren gingen und in Ungarn mit asiatischen Zuständen zu rechnen sei. Nordau war der Ansicht, dass die deutsche Sprache den Weg für das Ungartum in Richtung Europa eröffne und das Volk an der Einsprachigkeit zu grunde gehen werde. Für sich selbst sah er keine Zukunft mehr in einem solchen Land, so ergab sich für ihn als Ausweg lediglich die Emigration.²¹

Am 1. Mai 1876 brach er als freischaffender Journalist nach Paris auf, begleitet von seiner Mutter und Schwester. Dieser erste Pariser Aufenthalt währte bis 1878. Da Nordau seine medizinische Ausbildung als noch nicht abgeschlossen betrachtete, trug er sich mit dem Gedanken, in Paris eine medizinische Dissertation abzufassen, und hatte zudem vor, sich in der medizinischen Anthropologie zu vertiefen. Dieses Gebiet galt damals in Ungarn noch nicht als eigenständige

Disziplin.²² Für seinen Pariser Aufenthalt bekam er von Professor Lenhossék ein Empfehlungsschreiben, doch mehr konnte auch dieser nicht für seinen Studenten tun, weil seine nationalistisch gesinnten Kollegen Nordaus Stipendienantrag wegen einer ungarnfeindlichen Äußerung in Paris ablehnten.²³ Dieses abweisende Verhalten bedeutete gleichzeitig, dass sie Nordaus medizinische Laufbahn in Budapest nicht unterstützten. Auch seitens der Wiener *Neuen Freien Presse* stieß er mit seinem Wunsch, als deren Pariser Korrespondent zu fungieren, auf Ablehnung. Obwohl Nordau dadurch mit keinem festen Einkommen rechnen konnte, ließ er sich nicht aufhalten und begab sich samt Familie nach Paris. Als Unterhalt dienten die Honorare für seine Feuilletons im *Neuen Pester Journal* sowie einem Frankfurter und Göteborger Organ.

In Paris nahm Nordaus medizinische Laufbahn einen erfreulichen Anfang: Er hospitierte bei Professor Jean Martin Charcot (1825–1893), dessen psychiatrische Behandlungen – er heilte hysterische Erkrankungen in Hypnose – weltweit für Furore sorgten. Daneben arbeitete Nordau auch im Hospice de la Salpétrière sowie in der pathologischen Abteilung des Hôtel-Dieu. Fachlich hatte er am meisten seinem Pariser Professor Germain Sée (1818–1896) zu verdanken; durch dessen Vermittlung kam er in die Frauenabteilung der Privatklinik von Dr. Martineau. Hier bot sich die Möglichkeit, die nötige Berufserfahrung zu sammeln. Für eine kurze Zeit zog Nordau sogar in Erwägung, seine journalistische Tätigkeit ganz aufzugeben und nur als Arzt und Schriftsteller tätig zu sein. Als Frauenarzt und Geburtshelfer eröffnete er 1878 tatsächlich für kurze Zeit eine Praxis in Pest, nachdem seine Mutter und Schwester ihn zu einer Rückkehr überredet hatten.²⁴ 1880 erfolgte aber die endgültige Übersiedlung nach Paris. Zwei Jahre später verteidigte Nordau seine Doktorarbeit (sein Betreuer war Charcot) über die Kastrierung der Frau.²⁵ Im September 1882 eröffnete er eine eigene Praxis als Frauenarzt und Geburtshelfer. Anfang der 1890er Jahre wurde Nordau u. a. zum Hausarzt der Familie Theodor Herzls.

In Budapest fiel Nordau aber nicht der Vergessenheit anheim. Der *Pester Lloyd* verfolgte weiterhin Nordaus literarische Tätigkeit und ärztliche Laufbahn. 1876 veröffentlichte Adolf Dux eine Rezension mit dem Titel *Aus dem wahren Milliardenlande*, die Nordaus erste Pariser Erlebnisse zum Inhalt hatte. Im November 1878 machte das Blatt seine Leserschaft darauf aufmerksam, dass Nordau aus Paris zurückgekehrt sich in Budapest als Arzt niederlassen werde und zur Vorbereitung bereits Fachartikel in der *Medizinisch-Chirurgischen Presse* veröffentlichte. Eine Woche später gab das Blatt die Ordinationszeiten des Frauenarztes und Geburtshelfers Dr. Max Nordau bekannt. Im Juni 1879 berichtete Julius Frei im Artikel *Der literarische Kongreß* über eine Londoner literarische Veranstaltung, an der auch Nordau partizipierte. Im Dezember 1879 erschienen im *Pester Lloyd* sowie im *Neuen Pester Journal* Rezensionen über

Max Nordaus Europareise, die er im Band *Vom Kreml zur Alhambra* veröffentlichte.

Nach der endgültigen Übersiedlung nach Paris erschien im *Pester Lloyd* erneut eine Buchbesprechung über die zweite Auflage der *Milliardenlande*. Im August 1885 würdigte Adolf Silberstein Nordaus Band *Paradoxe*. Auch im 20. Jahrhundert tauchte Nordaus Name regelmäßig im Blatt auf.

Aber nicht nur das Blatt, sondern Nordau selbst verfolgte mit regem Interesse, sogar nach drei Jahrzehnten, das ungarische literarische Leben. Um nur ein Beispiel zu nennen: 1910 erschien in Ignaz Schnitzlers Übertragung ein neuer Band mit Sándor Petőfis (1823–1849) Gedichten, der von Nordau sofort für die *Neue Freie Presse* rezensiert wurde.²⁶ (Als Redakteur der *Ungarischen Illustrierten Zeitung* veröffentlichte Nordau bereits 1872 Petőfi-Übertragungen von Schnitzer.)

Ein Bonmot aus den Erinnerungen von Jenő Heltai (1871–1957), Cousin Theodor Herzls, beweist die ununterbrochene Aufmerksamkeit Nordaus hinsichtlich der ungarischen Literatur:

– Ich war Mitarbeiter des (Journals) *Magyar Hírlap* zur Zeit der Pariser Weltausstellung 1900. (...) Das *Magyar Hírlap* entsandte mich als ‚Spezialberichterstatter‘ unseres Blattes. (...) Eines Tages, so nach elf Uhr vormittags, kam ich aus dem indischen Ausstellungspavillon, als ich zwei Männer mit langem Bart begegnete. Mit großer Freude erkannte ich meinen Cousin, Theodor Herzl, und in dem anderen Mann Max Nordau, den ich persönlich nicht kannte, lediglich von Photos. (...) Wir prallten fast aufeinander, als mich Theodor erkannte. Mit offensichtlicher Freude, lauter Begrüßung umarmte und stellte er mich Max Nordau vor: – Mein Cousin, Jenő Heltai. – Nordau unterbrach ihn: – Hör auf – sagte er, – das weiß ich. Ich kenne doch die neue ungarische Literatur...²⁷

In Richtung Zionismus und 20. Jahrhundert

1891 verlor Nordau sein durch schriftstellerische Arbeit erworbenes Vermögen durch Börsenspekulation. Schicksalsträchtig erwies sich vor allem das Jahr 1892: Nordau lernte den Paris-Korrespondenten der *Neuen Freien Presse*, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), der ebenfalls ungarischer Herkunft war, kennen. Infolge des zunehmenden Antisemitismus, angeheizt vor allem durch die Dreyfus-Affäre, überzeugte Herzl Nordau von der Idee und Notwendigkeit eines Judenstaates. 1897 waren sie bereits Mitstreiter dieser Ideen auf dem ersten Zionistenkongress in Basel. Diesen Gedanken widersprechend ließ Nordau seine voreheliche Tochter Maxa protestantisch taufen und heiratete im darauffolgenden Jahr die Mutter, die verwitwete Christin Anna Elisabeth Dons. Im

Sommer wurde Nordau zum Präsidenten des II. Zionistenkongresses gewählt und hatte diese Würde bis 1911 inne. Provisorisch wollte er sich von der Leitung der zionistischen Bewegung in Folge einer schweren Erkrankung (krebsverdächtige Symptome in der Speiseröhre) 1905 trennen. Den Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges erlebte Nordau in Paris, konnte aber samt Familie nach Spanien fliehen. Sein Vermögen in Frankreich wurde gänzlich konfisziert. Auch die Arbeit für die *Vossische Zeitung* musste nach 35 Jahren eingestellt werden, da das Organ in den Besitz des Ullstein Verlags übergegangen war. Während der Kriegsjahre verdiente Nordau seinen Lebensunterhalt durch Artikel für diverse Zeitungen in Italien, Nordamerika und Argentinien. In Paris konnte er sich wieder erst 1920 dank der Vermittlung des griechischen Ministerpräsidenten Venizelos niederlassen. Sein Herzleiden verstärkte sich aber zunehmend, bis er ihm schließlich im Januar 1923 erlag. Sein Sarg wurde 1926 nach Tel Aviv überführt.²⁸

Anmerkungen

- ¹ Budapest entstand erst 1873, als die drei Stadtteile Pest, Buda (Ofen) und Óbuda (Altofen) vereinigt wurden.
- ² Nach mündlicher Auskunft des Oberrabbiners Tamás Raj († 2010) war er Kantor.
- ³ Nordau, Anna und Max: *Erinnerungen*. Erzählt von ihm selbst und von der Gefährtin seines Lebens. Autorisierte Übersetzung aus dem Französischen v. S. O. Fangor. Leipzig/Wien: Renaissance-Verlag 1928.
- ⁴ Nordau: *Erinnerungen*, S. 19 f.
- ⁵ Értesítő [Schulnachrichten] 319/1862-3/2.
- ⁶ Ebd., siehe Anhang. Die Schüler der Klasse lag bei 41.
- ⁷ Értesítő 319/1863-64/2. Die fünfte Klasse hat Nordau noch hier begonnen, aber nicht mehr hier beendet, denn sein Name wurde zwar noch angeführt, doch konnte er nicht mehr benotet werden („kimaradt“ [ausgeblieben]).
- ⁸ Gefunden im Jüdischen Museum Budapest. Im Innenministerium unter der Nummer 13138/1873 registriert. Vgl. auch Schulte, Christoph: *Psychopathologie des Fin de siècle. Der Kulturkritiker, Arzt und Zionist Max Nordau*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer 1997, S. 30 ff.; Nordau: *Erinnerungen*, S. 21. Merkwürdig ist nur, dass Nordau in seiner Autobiografie dies auf den 11. April 1874 datiert.
- ⁹ Vgl. Nordau: *Erinnerungen*, S. 21; Schulte: *Psychopathologie*, S. 32.
- ¹⁰ Fischer, Jens Malte: Dekadenz und Entartung. Max Nordau als Kritiker des Fin de siècle. In: *Fin de siècle*. Hg. v. Roger Bauer. Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann 1997 (= Studien zur Philosophie und Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts; Bd. 35), S. 93–111, hier S. 94.
- ¹¹ Schulte: *Psychopathologie*, S. 27.
- ¹² Ebd., S. 25.
- ¹³ Ebd., S. 30. All seine im Druck erschienenen Dokumente kennt man unter der Signatur „Max Nordau“. Der Name Südfeld ist nur durch Nordau selbst bekannt.
- ¹⁴ Ebd., S. 37. Die Assimilationsbestrebungen der Juden waren auf die Erlangung eines ungarischen Familiennamens ausgerichtet.
- ¹⁵ *A budapesti magyar királyi tudomány-egyetem almanachja* [Almanach der Budapester Ungarischen Königlichen Universität] 1872/3. Buda 1873, S. 89.

- ¹⁶ Siehe „Szigorlati Jegyző Könyv“ [Rigorosumsprotokoll], Signatur 1.c.15. Gefunden im Archiv der Budapestener Medizinischen Universität SOTE.
- ¹⁷ Gefunden: Iktató 1875/76 (Ügyviteli könyv) [Buch für praktische Angelegenheiten]. Signatur: I.b.23.
- ¹⁸ Siehe Rigorosumsprotokoll. János (Johannes) Wagner lehrte zwischen 1861 und 1888 an der Universität, Vilmos (Wilhelm) Schulek zwischen 1874 und 1905. Allerdings ließ sich beim Namen János Rupp (Nepomuk) nur das Fach Gerichtsmedizin vorfinden. Die Fächer Chemie, Tierkunde und Mineralogie wurden seit 1850 von Professoren der Geisteswissenschaftlichen Fakultät gelehrt.
- ¹⁹ Das Familienblatt *Gartenlaube* erschien seit 1853 in Leipzig. 1875 fand das Organ etwa in 375 Exemplaren verkauft, vor allem in Deutschland sowie auf dem Gebiet der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie.
- ²⁰ Auf das Blatt wurde u. a. auch im *Pester Lloyd* regelmäßig aufmerksam gemacht.
- ²¹ Vgl. Schulte: *Psychopathologie*, S. 93–96.
- ²² Schulte: *Psychopathologie*, S. 80.
- ²³ *Ebd.*
- ²⁴ Schulte, S. 88.
- ²⁵ Schulte, S. 110 ff.
- ²⁶ Hedvig Ujvári: Petőfi-versék Schnitzer Ignác fordításában (Petőfi-Gedichte in Ignaz Schnitzers Übertragung). *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 2006, Heft 3–4, S. 416–420.
- ²⁷ Zsoldos, Andor: *Theodor Herzl. Emlékezések* (Theodor Herzl. Recollections). New York 1981. S. 26.
- ²⁸ Schulte, S. 389–399.

The Conscious Decision – Parallel Careers – The Doctor, Zionist, Journalist and Culture Critic Max Nordau

Summary

Max Nordau, born Simon Gabriel Südfeld (1849, Pest – 1923, Paris), active as a doctor, journalist, and essayist and also as the second most influential Zionist (after Theodor Herzl), became famous overnight at 34 years of age with his book *Die conventionellen Lügen der Kulturmenschheit*. One decade later he left an indelible impression on the fin de siècle mentality with his most influential work *Entartung*. His works have been translated into 17 languages, and *Entartung* (for example) went through seven editions in the brief space of four months in England. His oeuvre is significant from the perspective of literary history, since he represents one of the pioneers of modern *Kulturkritik*. He exerted a palpable influence on later writers, such as György Lukács. He was one of the leading intellectuals in Europe in the late nineteenth century, a thinker along the lines of Nietzsche. In this essay I offer a discussion of the less widely known origins and initial phases of the careers of this multifaceted thinker.

Keywords: Max Nordau, Zionism, Medicine, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, pamphlet, 19th century, psychopathology, degeneration, Theodor Herzl

