

Prizes

# The Hungarian Quarterly

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*Special Section*  
*Transylvania: St. Stephen*  
*to Post-Ceaușescu*

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*The Native Right*  
*to Speak Hungarian*  
*in the*  
*Carpathian Basin*

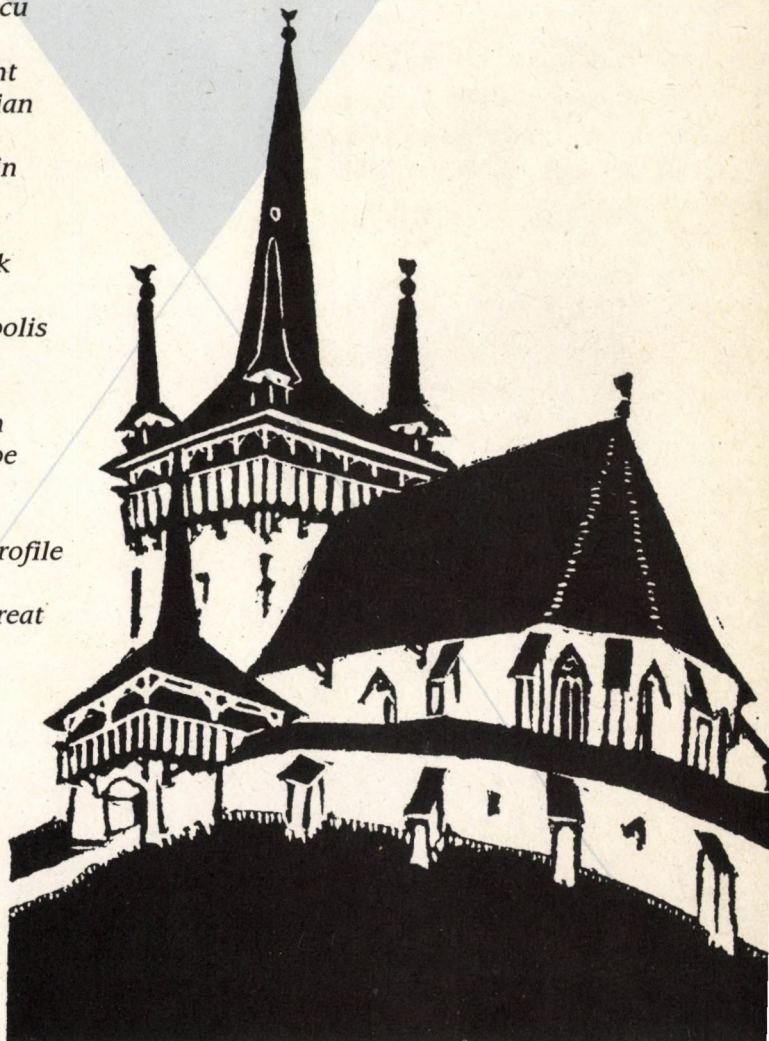
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*on the Move*

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*Transformation*  
*in Central Europe*  
*and the West*

•  
*Lajos Kossuth – A Profile*

•  
*The Theatre of Retreat*



# The Hungarian Quarterly

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*The author's woodcuts from Károly Kós: Erdély (Transylvania). 1934*



Béla Markó

## Poems

Translated by Clive Wilmer and George Gömöri

### *A Cannibal Time*

*Kannibál idő*

*This year our bodies will be bitter,  
alien flavours are seeping up through them,  
so they capitulate—  
is this possible?  
from water tainted by strontium, from murderous sunlight,  
from virulent alkalis and words  
we have hitherto selected (my dearest)  
our daily nourishment,  
our organs have been functioning,  
our hearts, lungs and brains  
have strained the filth off ceaselessly  
and, like tapwater forced  
through various purification-devices,  
crystalline poems have poured on to my paper,  
we were able to love one another,  
our lips had not been poisoned,  
and while our cells kept changing all the time  
the eye, the hand, the forehead and the groin  
remained the same,  
no child of ours would wear  
the features of a gesticulating puppet  
on television,  
it would wear the face we'd dreamt of,  
our parts resisted stubbornly,*

---

**Béla Markó**

*is a poet and member of the Romanian Senate in Bucharest,  
President of the Democratic Federation of Hungarians in Romania. He has published a  
dozen volumes of poems and a collection of essays.  
He held editorial and teaching positions before going into politics fulltime.*

*no matter that we'd gaped at calves and pigs,  
no matter that we'd seen monsters,  
God kept on stubbornly moulding  
his own image in us,  
no matter that we'd drunk vinegar,  
no matter that we'd swallowed emetics,  
in truth, it was all in vain,  
but the body slowly deteriorates,  
and the soul also deteriorates.*

## *A Vehicle Cut in Two*

*A kettévágott jármű*

*The strangers have arrived here too. They deal out  
sugar and salt in a way we don't understand.  
The bus splits in two—a blade strikes down between  
the rows of seats to sink sparking into the asphalt.*

*Congeaed tar on the sword. On the exhausted ground  
burning heaps of rubbish. The bus is falling apart,  
for the road forks here and you snatch and clutch at things  
in vain. As if it were the railing on a bridge*

*a steely blade flashes next to you. Again and again,  
forms come to life—you are being measured up  
by the tailor, the cobbler, the blacksmith and the stonemason.  
What sort of house would it be that you couldn't live in?*

*The idiot who begs in two languages now eats  
some cold conserve. He flings the empty tin away,  
crosses the square. If we meet, we won't  
understand each other, only wave our hands desperately.*

*In the mean time, what happened to you? Who hurt you?  
Who loved you? Who did you go to bed with,  
you whores? Who did you live with? And talk to?  
Between the rows of chairs there are wounds, gaols and clotting flecks  
of blood.*

# *"When it is Winter..."*

*"Ha tél van..."*

*When it is winter, I too appear dead,  
I am not alive, but do not die instead,  
the rubbish-dump now comes alive, it sparkles,  
rich gems among the rotten vegetables,*

*and like grey marble slabs with their smooth sheen  
the cadavers of dead rats there also gleam,  
and the stars, trees and people similarly  
keep their silence and shine equally,*

*there is no good or bad amid the waste  
but suffering matter that aches tho' it remains  
itself, being held together by the frost,*

*but when after long winter, the spring starts  
and a crack opens in the oppressive night,  
will we then blossom, will we fall apart?*

## *A Balkan Prayer*

*Balkáni fohász*

*In Balkan trains  
among their cells of luggage,  
bitter people sleep.  
So many stings crammed into a beehive!  
So many deaths huddled together!  
In my dreams, so many platforms decked with flowers!  
Blood and tears trickle down the window-pane,  
the wheels of the train make music  
and soon your murderous bees will take to their wings.  
I am like a knife dipped in honey  
on a white table,  
the morning sun is blazing overhead,  
your sweetened knives  
honeyed stings these too are aflame.*

*My God, what did you use me for?  
What did my friends use me for?  
What are my loved ones using me for?  
What are my children using me for?  
The world is St Veronica's veil:  
rivers, mountains, stars and bloodstains!  
Majestic beehives hum,  
Balkan trains steeped in filth,  
what am I for?  
I have lost all my fear.  
The day passes,  
the landscape passes, night falls  
and round me a hundred thousand deaths  
rest on each other sprawling.*



*Hungarian Calvinist church at Magyargyerőmonostor (Mănăstireni),  
Kalotaszeg, Kolozs county.*

*A late 15th century Gothic church on the foundations of an Árpád dynasty monastery.*

# The Native Right to Speak Hungarian in the Carpathian Basin

**N**o principle of natural law guarantees anybody the right to live their chosen course of life using their mother language. What I am discussing however is a situation that cannot be called normal in Europe, that all over the Carpathian Basin there are Hungarian villages, towns, and even entire regions and counties, outside the present borders of Hungary, where native Hungarians, even where they are in a majority, are nevertheless denied the right to regular use of their language in public life.<sup>1</sup>

I shall not approach this issue from a historical point of view. At any rate, defeat in two world wars offers only a partial explanation, since of the present successor states—Romania, the Ukraine, Slovakia, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia—only Serbia was among the victors of the Second World War. It is the socio-ecological survival of large—several hundred thousand or million strong—Hungarian-speaking communities in these countries that will be discussed, through a study of western examples and of international legal practice. I shall address clearly designated objectives, representative solutions, efficient means and ways.

## The sense of identity provided by the mother tongue

**T**he objective is that Hungarians in the successor states should have the right to use their mother language, Hungarian, at work, in public life and at leisure, in priority without being handicapped for it in any way, and that the same right be accorded to their descendants by the availability of education in their mother

tongue, from nursery to graduate school. Why is it necessary to concentrate on the use of the mother language?

1. Communication is the substratum of any kind of social life.

---

### **Géza Ankerl**

*is a sociologist born in Hungary and living in Geneva, where he is a special advisor to UN organizations. He teaches sociology at MIT, Cambridge, Mass., and at the Budapest University of Technology.*

*His books have been published in Hungarian, English, French, and German.*

1 ■ See the maps on pp. 17-18 in *Magyarok a határokön túl a Kárpát-medencében* (Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin Beyond Hungary's Borders) by Károly Kocsis and Eszter Hódosi Kocsis.

2. The primary medium of the sense of social identity is, as is all too well known by those in a diaspora, the mother tongue.

3. Language is not only the basis of culture in the strict sense but also of socio-ecological existence as a whole, of what may be called life experience.

4. Where a language cannot be used in everyday life, learning it becomes a luxury, a hobby, a relic.

5. The use of a language is something concretely felt, something observable. The measure of discrimination against those in a minority is not so much their employment ratio but whether they—like others—are able to use their own language at work or not, or to what extent.

God and a single believer suffice for faith—it does not necessarily require a Church—but “a nation,” as Count István Széchenyi said, “lives in its language”, and the “right to the public use” of one’s mother language is a collective right which, therefore, depends on the relative number of those speaking it,

- on their regional concentration, and
- on their native status to the region.

Especially in the Westminster-type democracies the right to self-government belongs to the numerical majority, which also has a role in enforcing the law.

### Western examples

Only a tenth of the around 175 countries of the international community have isoglossal borders, and in more than half, 88 in number, a quarter of the population speaks a mother tongue other than the “main” language of the state.

The latter countries include Switzerland and Canada. What then is the constitutional solution they have found for this problem, in what manner or historical process?

What could be learned from these cases by the Hungarian-speakers of the Carpathian basin, who, as evidenced by the map, live—with the exception of the Széklers—in zones adjoining Hungary’s present frontiers, in countries where their proportion relative to the total population has grown as a consequence of the decomposition of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia?

### Canton Transylvania?

Switzerland then is not to be discussed in itself as a curiosity, only in so far as it may have a lesson to teach to Central Europe, to use the jargon of sociology, with its constitution as an “ideal type” as well as with its “real type” practice.

In short, historically, Switzerland grew out of the gradual extension of an alliance of four German-speaking cantons into a confederation of twenty cantons and six half-cantons. It was by conquering French and Italian-speaking territories that the country became multi-lingual. The non-German languages were officially

recognized first in the constitutions of the individual cantons and concerned cantonal affairs. They appeared in the federal constitution only in 1848. This shows that the cantonal borders were not drawn deliberately along linguistic borders. They were established on a religious rather than a geopolitical basis (see half-cantons). According to the Federal Constitution, the cantons are equal and their borders inviolable (Art. 5.).

Politicians familiar with history may see something of a parallel between a multilingual and multi-religious Transylvania looking back to a sort of independence, and the cantons of Switzerland. (The Titoist Yugoslav Constitution of 1974 was clearly inspired by the Swiss system of cantons, and, at least on paper, recognized the autonomy of the Voivodina, the region detached from the territory of the former Hungarian Kingdom, as a sort of half-canton.)

In Switzerland, the only known example of separation for linguistic reasons was the establishment of the Jura canton by referendum in 1979. (The French-speaking Jura region had been attached to the canton of Bern by the Congress of Vienna in 1815.) Its very creation had involved a long and arduous political struggle, interspersed by bomb attacks, because in contrast to the constitutions of (mono-lingual) Germany (Art. 29 and 118) and the United States, the Swiss Constitution contains no provision or procedure for the foundation of a new canton. In that struggle, the French cantons gave no concerted assistance to their fellow French speakers of the Jura region. Even so, by arbitrarily drawing up electoral boundaries for the referendum, the Berne canton managed to hold to on 3 of the 6 Jura districts. However, the political process has not yet ended.

Several lessons may be drawn from the Jura case: the absolute right of self-determination as expressed in referenda is sociologically irrelevant if it does not contain general criteria concerning electoral boundaries. (For instance, the inhabitants of the Irish Isle as a whole would in their majority vote for the unification of the island of Ireland, but the majority of the inhabitants of Northern Ireland would not.) Furthermore, even in a country open to compromise, a change of territorial authority in the interest of linguistic rights will not fall, like manna from heaven, without a resolute political struggle waged by highly committed people.

What is the situation, then, in quadrilingual Switzerland today, *de jure* and *de facto*?

The Federal Constitution of 1874 (Art. 116) specified that the 3 official languages of Switzerland are German, French and Italian. In 1938—paradoxically, in the wake of Hitler's threat of dividing Switzerland between the three neighbouring "linguistic relatives"—an amended Article 116 stated that the country has four national languages, adding Rhaeto-Romanic. In federal matters, in principle, three official languages can be used in full equality. Rhaeto-Romanic, the language of a 50,000 strong minority of the canton of Graubünden, is also an official language of this canton, whereas on the federal level it is a minority language which requires special protection. That, however, has proved an ineffective, reservation-type policy, since

it is only in remote villages that one can use it in everyday life, otherwise only in Rhaeto-Romanic language institutes established in the German-speaking areas. Those moving to cities have no chance of using their language there.

What all this shows is that if a linguistic community is unable to obtain, as a basis, a self-governing region including a town where it outnumbers the others, then this community cannot survive, especially if it does not enjoy the support of a neighbouring state with the same language.

What is the situation of the two minority official languages?

There are about one million French and more than 200,000 Italian speakers to 4 million German speakers. The country consists of 17 German, 1 Italian, and 4 French cantons as well as bilingual ones, of which two are German-French and one German-Rhaeto-Romanic.

In the unilingual cantons there is only one official language, and of the bilingual cantons, only the constitution of Fribourg guarantees (since 1990) full linguistic equality.

This is the principle of the territoriality of language, which ensures in practice that, allowing for the natural fluctuations of life, the frequency of use of none of the country's official languages declines over the long term. The proportion of French speakers has actually grown.

In public life—instead of the use of language as a personal right, which is unrealizable—the principle of the territorial use of language, protecting the indigenous population, appears fully practicable. The Italian-speaking citizens of Switzerland, making up only 4 per cent of the country's total population, have a canton of their own where public and political life is conducted in Italian; in addition, since Italian is also an official language on the federal level, it can also be used in federal affairs. Contrary to what some may believe, such a recognition of linguistic rights does not lead to separatism. Even while fighting for a self-governing canton of their own, the people of the Jura never considered secession from Switzerland.

Linguistic region and, in general, regionalism, is a major organizing principle of the Swiss state. Legally, Swiss citizenship is based on indigenesness, in sociological terms the patriotism of the Swiss is a form of autochtonism, an awareness of being at home. Even though the ruling principle in Switzerland is not the Anglo-Saxon *jus soli* but the *jus sanguinis* (i.e. the child of Swiss parents is considered Swiss regardless of where he or she is born), nevertheless, the basis of somebody's Swiss citizenship is that his or her ancestors originated from a particular village or town, and (only) because that village or town is in a specific canton, is he or she a Swiss citizen (Article 43.) (Naturalization of new citizens concerns municipalities in the first place.)

One should take note that the Swiss do not associate their patriotism with love of the German majority but primarily with being indigenous (and at home) in a place from where it is impossible for them to be driven out or deported (Art. 43.) (Thus, regions may be realigned only by the consensus of their indigenous population, and not by being "cleansed" of them; see the Jura.)



Politicians in the successor states of the Carpathian Basin wish the West to believe that their Hungarians are not merely defending their language but are irredentists. It should suffice to read László Füzi's article in the Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu Mureş) periodical *Látó*, published in 1993, to refute that charge. Füzi speaks of feeling at home as the source of the sense of belonging, of being attached to the country, like the Swiss do. Since a community can only feel at home in a place where it can get by using its mother tongue, in the successor states it is the Hungarians struggling for the recognition of their linguistic rights for whom loyalty to the state of which they are citizens is a matter of importance.

For Switzerland, neutrality—especially in any eventual Italian-French-German conflict—also acts as a glue of national unity. The principle of non-interference in neighbouring conflicts is highly advisable for any small multilingual country, as involvement in such a conflict might needlessly test its unity and coherence. (Compare the position of minorities in the Voivodina and Croatia.)

The Swiss legislature is bicameral. Neither in the Senate of Cantons nor in the House of Representatives—which deliberates in three languages—do the French or Italian minorities, even combined, have a blocking veto, since decisions only require a simple majority.

The federal government also has three official (working) languages. There is no rule concerning linguistic composition, in practice it is never monolingual.

What really matters is not legal guarantees or the exploitation of gaps in the law, but a readiness to compromise and to seek reconciliation between various interests. No better proof is required than the utter futility of Tito's efforts to copy the basic institutions of Switzerland in the Yugoslav constitution. It is part of Swiss political wisdom that no matter how great the translation expenses required by the use of several languages are, or how "unreasonable" the political frontiers of "districts", respect for the country's multilingual character always weighs heavier than economic considerations; the Swiss know from experience that civil wars—and sometimes even demonstrations, if they are big enough—are far more costly and cause heavier losses. In this relation, we note the insensitivity at the attempts of regionalization in Romania and Slovakia, used as a means of breaking up the territorial concentration of Hungarian minorities—since the legitimacy of the public use of a language is closely related to the relative number of people speaking it.

Sociologically, it is a key issue to ensure the principle that the relative use of the Hungarian language should be proportionate to the number of its speakers. However, surveys have shown that even linguistic divisions within a group in themselves don't guarantee a proportionate use of each language. Thus, for Switzerland, too, the general observation is valid that it isn't job quotas themselves that provide the proportional equality of languages but the legal and practical possibility for everyone to actually use his or her first language "within the official structure". Only this kind of fairness can give reasonable ground for the protection of the mother tongue, making it truly useful, thus rationally motivating its acquisition.

Being spoken by small numbers is not the only reason why a language might fall into disuse. Its prestige at any given time also plays an important part. In Switzerland, the international standing of French enhanced its position. Today, with the predominance of English, the role of French as a unifying second language, is weakening. In order to promote federal understanding, the first foreign language to be studied at secondary schools must be a national language other than their own.

The institutions of the national mass media (radio, television)—a federal matter—are decentralized according to language areas. The French and Italian broadcasting stations are not only autonomous but also physically separate, situated in the heart of the language area concerned.

Education recognized by the state is provided in the official language (or languages, if there are two) of the canton.

As for higher education, it is also fully decentralized. The facts themselves are very telling: of the polytechnic institutes under the authority of the federal government, one is German, and the other exclusively French in language, the latter is located in Lausanne, in the heart of the French language area. Of the cantonal universities, three are French, five German and one bilingual, meaning that there is a university for every 240,000 French speakers.

If that were to be regarded as some sort of European standard, and applied to the Hungarian minorities of the successor states, then there ought to be

8 Hungarian universities in Transylvania,  
at least 2 in Slovakia, and

1 or 2 in the Voivodina, all providing teaching exclusively in Hungarian. This shows how minimalistic the demands of the Hungarians in the successor states are, asking for a single university in each.

It should be noted that the population of Hungary, precisely because of the truncation suffered in consequence of the Treaty of Trianon, is extremely homogeneous: only 1-3 per cent are non-Hungarians<sup>2</sup>, so by adhering strictly to the principles of mutuality as well as to that of proportionate equality, only secondary schools in their mother tongue are due to the various national minorities of Hungary.

### The struggle of French Canadians

**A**ccording to the 1867 North American Act, Canada had been founded by two races—nations in later terms—the English and the French. The constitution, however, reflects not only the victory of those two peoples over the Indians and the Inuits but also the fact that, in consequence of the victory of the British in 1759, in

**2** ■ Kocsis & Kocsis, op. cit. p. 9; Lajos Arday and György Hlavik: *Adatok, tények a magyarországi nemzetiségekről* (Figures and Facts about Hungary's National Minorities). Budapest, 1988, p. 17; László Kóvágó: *Nemzetiségek a mai Magyarországon* (National Minorities in Present-Day Hungary). Budapest, 1981, p. 20.

the Treaty of Paris (1763) France gave up the entire "New France", and only the Quebec Act (1774) secured, as a special status, the conditions for survival, in that province alone, of the French way of life, i.e. the use of the French language, French civil law—as opposed to British common law—and the free practice of the Catholic religion.

The British North America Act (1867) establishing the self-governing Dominion of Canada, combined (1) British parliamentarism with (2) United States-style federalism, and (3) also permitted its French speaking citizens, then making up 25 per cent of the population, or more precisely their majority who lived in Quebec, to use its mother tongue in the Provincial Assembly as well as vis à vis the federal government. The survival of the French language was ensured by granting the provinces (Quebec and the others) an exclusive (legislative) right in matters of education and other relevant areas (Arts 91, 92 and 93). Nevertheless, it was mainly the Catholic Church which kept the French spirit alive (one is reminded of what happened in Poland).

Since then, as a consequence of geographical mobility, decline in population, migration toward the cities and immigration (due to which today English is the first language of only 26 per cent of the population, while the third most frequent is Chinese), as well as in the wake of historical changes (the diminishing influence of the Church, new legal doctrines, etc.) the constitution had to be amended on average once every five years.

The French made efforts to retain their right to a separate society in the changing demographic situation, at the same time trying to obtain the same privileges for fellow French speakers in the other provinces as were enjoyed by the English minority in Quebec.

The Anglo-Saxons, on the other hand, with reference (in 1986) to the rights of the growing non-French minorities (German, Ukrainian, Italian, about a million each, and even more Chinese today), used them to put one over the French in their struggle for full legal equality. It has been a common tactic of the majority to promise privileges to every minority regardless of numbers in order to obscure the issue, so that in the end, on the pretext of the Tower of Babel that would ensue, it can avoid extending significant collective political rights even to the largest minority.

In a major, dogged multi-dimensional struggle, the French succeeded in winning full legal equality for their language on the federal level. Since, however, their fellow French speakers in the other provinces failed to gain rights equal to those English speakers enjoy in Quebec, they tried to do away with the equality of the two languages there. (See Bill 101 of 1977.) In this struggle, the French used the Damocles sword of separatism, as a threat, massive street demonstrations, as well as violence on the part of some secretive groups.

Due to the resistance of the English, who are numerically and socially stronger, the Meech Lake Accord of 1990, a constitutional amendment which granted a veto to Quebec, was rejected. The country was left without a federal constitution, and

since 1993, the biggest opposition party in the House of Commons has been the French separatist party. The French in Quebec have continued all the time to create the institutions of their French society despite the disadvantageous starting conditions created for them by the foundation of Canada. They have recognized that their language can survive only if, within a province, their language has priority and provincial spheres of authority are extended.<sup>3</sup>

Canada is a (sociological) laboratory for the study of bilingualism. Canadian studies, like other investigations,<sup>4</sup> all back the observation that bilingualism is not a symmetrical process, and its unrestricted promotion does not stabilize the survival of native languages. By means of bilingualism the majority, or official language, or the more prestigious one in general— i.e. English in Canada as “language of the Board of Directors”—expands, invading the other one as a language of universal use. In 1983, 2.2 million French speakers were learning English, while only 1 million English speakers learned French. The number of people speaking both official languages, 15 per cent of the population, was increased by the fact that 25 per cent of the French learned English, a favour returned only by 6 per cent of the English.<sup>5</sup> The lesson to be drawn from these investigations by the Hungarian population of the successor states living scattered, or in a minority—as, for instance, in Slovakia, in Nyitra (Nitra), Érsekújvár (Nové Zámky), Léva (Levice), Kassa (Kosice); Nagyszöllős (Vinogradov), in the Ukraine and in the Szatmár—Szilágyság (Satu Mare–Sălaj) area in Romania—is that learning the language of the other community is a panacea (and not a trap for painless assimilation) for the lasting coexistence of languages only if it is mutual, in other words if, by learning Hungarian, some of the majority becomes bilingual too.

To sum up: the Canadian example shows that the legal position of the minority is rooted in the international and other agreements on which the foundation of the state is based. When, in a region or province, the minority language is in a majority, the actual constitutional protection of that language may be accomplished by the extension of regional spheres of authority. Nevertheless, appropriate rights for the minority can only be secured through an active, stubborn, multi-dimensional political struggle, and maintained by being ever on the alert in changing conditions.

### The compromise of the people of South Tyrol

**T**he protection of the German-speaking population of South Tyrol was achieved through an agreement determined by a package deal and an *Operationskalender* for its enforcement, which granted the Bolzano District a special autonomy status.

3 ■ Daniel Eleazar: “International and Comparative Federalism” In: *Political Science & Politics*, VI. 1993, pp. 190-195.

4 ■ James Crawford: *Hold your Tongue: Bilingualism and the Politics of English Only*, Reading, MA, 1992.

5 ■ Marc V. Levine: *The Reconquest of Montreal: Language Policy and Social Change in a Bilingual City*, Philadelphia, 1990; N. C. Dorian: *Investigating Obsolescence: Studies in Language Contraction and Death*, Cambridge U.K., 1989; Richard Y. Bourhis, ed.: *Conflict and Language Planning in Quebec*. Avon, U.K., 1984.

The agreement had been concluded, following a multilateral Peace Treaty, in bilateral negotiations by Austria as a patron state. As an example it may be highly illuminating both with respect to its contents and the manner in which it was concluded.<sup>6</sup>

The 300,000 Austrians in South Tyrol were also cut off from Austria in 1918. They are the majority in the Bolzano District, in the Trentino they live in a diaspora, together with the Ladins. (Cf. Transylvania and the Székely Land.) Italy is a centralized state, like Romania. Within Italy, however, the Austrian minority accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total population, whereas in the Carpathian Basin, the ratio of Hungarian speakers is above 10 per cent in every successor state with the exception of Ukraine. Their absolute numbers, too, are higher than those of the South Tyroleans. Thus it would be fair to expect at least treatment and rights similar to those enjoyed by the South Tyroleans.

In their district the South Tyroleans have full legislative and executive authority over education; since 1988 they also have a budget and a right to use their language in political life. The 137 necessary measures are fully detailed in the South Tyrol Package—plus a 18-point *Operationskalender*. On this basis Kurt Waldheim and Aldo Moro were able to agree, on the 1st of December 1969 in Copenhagen, on the text of the Austrian declaration ending their dispute. That the deal is enduring is guaranteed by the fact that the special status in question cannot be changed without the consent of the population concerned; and that Austria is recognized by Italy as a patron state which has the possibility, if need be, to turn to the International Court at The Hague to ensure that the bilateral agreement is kept. This agreement was obtained by three factors: (1) the international efforts of Austria, (2) the persistence of the politicians of South Tyrol and (3) the commitment and resolution of activists.

Compared to that example, the Hungarian minority, despite its greater numbers, starts from a disadvantageous position. At the time of the Paris Peace Treaties, Prime Minister Ferenc Nagy and János Gyöngyösi, the Foreign Minister, were preoccupied with the border issue.<sup>7</sup> Only the peace treaty of Romania (10 February 1947) contains a vague reference to the individual and other rights of non-Romanians, which, in turn, served as a basis for a reference in the Romanian Constitution (Art. 22) to language use in the counties with a non-Romanian population (Minority Statute, Autonomous Hungarian Region). (Incidentally, the 1955 Austrian State Treaty and the 1959 Federal Constitution refer (Art. 7.3) to the right to use of the Croat and Slovenian languages but not of Hungarian in the Burgenland.) In contrast to that, by means of the modified Article 10 and Supplement IV, Chancellor Gruber of Austria was able to get a reference to the collective rights of German speakers included in the Italian peace treaty. The Austrian-Italian consensus was immediately confirmed in writing, still in Paris, by a bilateral agreement between Gruber and the Italian Prime Minister De Gasperi (5 September 1946).

6 ■ For the package deal and the specifics of the *Operationskalender*, see Offprint No. 7 and pp. 15-49 of *Österreichische Aussenpolitische Dokumentation of October 1992*.

7 ■ See *Magyarok a Kárpát-medencében* (Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin), Budapest 1989, pp. 307-315.

Since, after that, the Italian government made no move at all, the determined efforts of the Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky at the UN General Assembly resulted in two resolutions in 1960 and 1961, calling attention to the situation of the South Tyroleans (1497/XV and 1661/XVI). That was what provided the basis for the Waldheim-Moro agreement.

The settlement of the South Tyrol dispute, accepted by all parties, was effected by the Italian-Austrian exchange of letters in 1992. The reason it took several decades to finalize was that the solution of the issue was not only rhetorical or legal in a formal sense; the 137 specific measures required were described in great detail, and, on the other hand, the parties involved bid their time until the measures for the execution of the agreement had been implemented and the mechanisms ensuring continuous functioning had begun to operate.<sup>8</sup>

The minority policies of all the three countries mentioned have much to teach us. Various further examples could be cited: European Union, Spain, Puerto Rico, Andorra, Japan's home rule, etc., all as evidence that a federal constitutional system is more favourable to peaceful arrangements regarding separate language areas than a centralized state. However, they also show that there is no rigid dichotomy between federation or confederation on the one hand and a homogeneous nation state on the other. There are several transitional forms, stages and ways in which the internal sovereignty of a state may be shared out through self-government.<sup>9</sup> That may give some hope to those Hungarians in the successor states who, with the disintegration of the former federal states, have unexpectedly found themselves in "homogeneous" national states.

### About international legal protection without legal fetishism

**K**eeping the mother language of minorities alive is always a result of combined political efforts. Success ensures when, using the right strategy, the opportunity offering itself is seized with good timing (for example, the foundation of a new state, the disintegration of states, at the time of a break in legal continuity resulting from peace treaties following world upheavals, etc.). In addition to strictly political and social activism, I propose to examine the opportunities that the law offers.

These may be multilateral (universal, regional) or bilateral international agreements, the enactments of a constitution, legislation and government decrees, or a combination of these.

Universal international agreements are concluded under the aegis of the UN which, however, has thus far done less to define minority rights, or to ensure their implementation, than the League of Nations had done.

In 1966, Article 27 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (2200 A/XXI) was passed by the UN:

8 ■ Cf. *Verfassungsrecht und Völkerrecht*, Cologne 1989, pp. 451-66

9 ■ See D. J. Eleazar.

"In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language."

The formula expresses the influence of American individualism. Collective rights, in the spirit of the UN Charter, are referred to only in connection with the self-determination of peoples freed from colonial rule (545 A/VI, 637 A/VII), which concerns the foundation of states, and not self-rule, self-government or homelands.

Regardless of the many ways in which Art. 27 can be interpreted, the UN acts as an observer through the Geneva Commission on Human Rights. Enforcing the resolutions and recommendations is the duty of the General Assembly and the Security Council. The Assembly may condemn a government, or suspend its membership, but only the Security Council has means at its disposal which lend a genuinely legal character to international agreements, being able to enforce execution even by the use of force.

In our decade, through the Security Council, the UN has sent armed patrols to an increasing number of areas inhabited by minorities, but only in cases of a direct threat of war or civil war. (Peacekeepers have been sent on 20 occasions altogether, e.g. to Cyprus, missions to various parts of former Yugoslavia, Kurds.) No minority has ever been defended by armed forces of the UN.

As for regional agreements, some hopes were raised by the human rights section of the Helsinki Final Act of the 1975 Conference on European Security and Cooperation (CSCE)—which itself devoted only a footnote to national minorities and regional cultures—especially in the wake of the Copenhagen Meeting of 1990 and the 1991 Geneva High Commissioners' Conference. But a clear recognition of collective rights failed to materialize. Meanwhile, a secretariat was established in Prague in order to aid the implementation of CSCE resolutions. The Yugoslav crisis, however, has proved that this conference is hardly more than a forum for discussions. Not even its solemn resolutions can be enforced. At the same time, since an increasing number of the 33 European members of the CSCE are now members of the Council of Europe (CE), decision making is shifting to Strasbourg. (The CE gives opinions, recommendations, resolutions and orders.)

From the point of view of enforceable minority agreements, the only welcome new development in Europe is that, at long last, there is now, beside Germany, another big power in Europe, that is Russia, which, after the disintegration of its empire, has left 25 million Russians in a minority position in successor states. This means that it has an interest in the protection of minorities. In principle this may be favourable to Hungarians in the formulation of multilateral agreements but hardly in enforcing measures since, with the exception of Romania and Austria, all the successor states Hungary has to deal with are Slavs.

Art. 14 of *The European Convention on Human Rights* of 1950 protects the individual, among other things, against linguistic discrimination. (At the suggestion of Austria, the

CE intends to attach an "additional protocol on the rights of national minorities" because, it is said, the supervision protocol of that agreement is relatively effective.<sup>10</sup>

On the 5th of November 1992, however, the CE passed the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Referring to the above mentioned UN and CSCE declarations, it points out "that the right to use a regional or minority language in private and public life is an inalienable right".

1. The areas where those rights apply (Art. 8-13.: education, public life, media, cultural activities, economic and social life) are listed exhaustively but in a rather loose formulation, along with the practical conditions of their realization. An active role is assigned to the minority concerned and its organizations in demanding their observance and in the processes of supervision.

2. What made this advance possible was that the subject, for once, was clearly language, and not other kinds of minorities, be it racial, religious, or national treated all together, as so often, under the heading "ethnic group" which cannot be defined with legal objectivity.<sup>11</sup>

3. The Charter rightly distinguishes between the language protection of the indigenous population and the rights of new immigrants (Art. 1.a), a problem which falls under the European Residents' Charter. (For example, the position of the nearly two million Turks in Germany.)

4. It primarily protects languages which are common in a region (1.b) practically in a majority position there, though in a minority in the country as a whole. In the second place it protects "non-territorial" language groups in a diaspora, if that meets the wishes and needs of the scattered population concerned (1. and 7.5). It is obligatory to inform that population about this right (6.).

5. The critical weakness of the Charter—and its ambivalence—lies in the fact that while clearly protecting non-official languages in a minority position (1. a. ii.), in another place it also deals with official minority languages (3.2), and fails to establish the conditions under which a minority language has to be an official language.

6. For the sake of the constitutional *faits accomplis* produced by the state-creating nation(s) it is declared that the convention must not threaten the state's borders and its sovereignty (5), nor the privileges of the official language (8.1, 10.2.e.). That is a necessary requirement because otherwise the nation-states would be unwilling to sign the charter. At the same time, however, it diminishes its legislative potential.

7. Even if only indirectly, the regional language, as such, grants privileges over a language area since "existing and new administrative divisions do not constitute an obstacle to the promotion of the regional or minority language in question" (7.1.b.). This is an important stipulation, since one of the well-tried means of forcing assimilation is to prevent the use of a regional majority language on the county,

10 ■ See Recommendations 1177 (1992) and 1201 (1993).

11 ■ Johnathan Udell: *Toward Conceptual Codification in Race and Ethnic Relations*. Roslyn Heights NY, 1979, pp. 25-39.



district or even town level by arbitrarily (re)dividing existing administrative units into "more economical" or "rational" ones. Attempts with such transparent ulterior motives have been experienced by the Hungarian minorities of practically every successor state. (Unfortunately, though, the signatory state is entitled to reservations regarding this article, too.)

8. The public use of a language as a collective right is justified naturally by the number and concentration in the region of those speaking it as their first language (1.b); so much so that, in almost every respect, the rights enlisted in Section III (8.)—the level of education in the first language, its extension, institutional independence; (10.)—are gradual (i-iv), their degree depending on the above mentioned numbers, considering also the requests of the minority as expressed in "sufficient number" (7.5, 8.1.a.iii.). Unfortunately, the granting of none of the rights of the minority language is made clearly mandatory starting from a certain ratio of "fellow language speakers"—for example, if they represent a local majority. The "sufficient number" (8.1.a.i.) is left to be determined by the political balance between the fairness of the authorities implicit in the spirit of the agreement and the weight of the demands of the minority.

9. Regarding its execution and enforceability, the agreement is more reminiscent of a multi-choice wish list containing minimal rights than of a law.

(a) The Charter applies only to signatory members of the CE but it may be signed also by non-members (20.1), consequently its acceptance (signing)—and that of specific (!) articles—may be made a condition of admission to the CE. This, however, was not done when admitting either Slovakia or Romania, even though in the case of Slovakia, CE membership was a part of the recognition of its statehood. They were admitted to the CE on the basis of promises (cf. DOC 6901 and Recommendation 1201), the keeping of which will be controlled by semi-annual reports submitted to the CE Bureau (Order No. 488 (1993)). The extent of the concession made by the Hungarian delegate when, relying on the position of the West European states, he refrained from blocking the admissions until the promises were actually kept, becomes instantly clear in the light of p. 49 of the 6th edition of Henry Wheaton's 1929 *Elements of International Law*. In 1878 the statehood of Romania, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria was recognized only conditionally. In connection with that, Wheaton remarks: "the failure to observe the condition is not a ground for withdrawing recognition". Thus, the fulfilment of the promises in question will be the touchstone of the credibility of the CE.

(b) The signatory may choose among the articles of Section III but it must "swallow" at least 35 items of the "heavy food" on the menu, including at least three in education and culture, and one each in the others (2.2.).

(c) An important practical measure is that at the time of ratification it must be specified which right is extended to which minority (3.1.).

(d) In contrast to the protection of "human rights", in the case of non-observance the Charter does not stipulate any juridical institution or sanction in this case, and,

in principle, if the position of a state becomes "too hot", six months suffice for it to escape, that is to renounce the Charter (22.2).<sup>12</sup>

(e) Consequently, it is practically left to international public opinion to enforce the Charter. That is the reason why reports with recommendations are produced regularly (15, 16.3) for the CE's Council of Ministers by the committee of experts appointed by it, which the Council is entitled to publish, and the Secretary General of the CE is also obliged to report every two years to the Parliamentary Assembly on the execution of the Charter (16.5.). It also follows from this mechanism that the minorities which have a patron state have a possibility to exercise some pressure (cp. the Basques versus the Hungarians).

(f) A positive element of the Charter is that the minority may submit statements, and not only the states are entitled to report to the experts' committee but also the organizations of the minorities (16.3). The Charter encourages the establishing of such organizations, and even their contacts with the patron state (7.1.e., 14 and 15.2). The experts' committee must deal with their petitions and make them public.

The legal protection provided by this Charter may be extended by other resolutions of the CE. The CE had accepted several recommendations on minority rights previously (cf. 1134/1990). No. 1177 of 5.2.1992, mentioned above, suggests establishing a European council of national, ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities (10.) and the promotion of the CE's role "(i) to observe and record, (ii) advise and forestall, and (iii) discuss and mediate" in conflicts (16).

The *European Charter of Local Self-Government* (1985), if read along with the "Language Charter", may favourably improve the definition of the autonomy of linguistic regions. (According to Art 5. c., local authorities' boundaries must not be changed without the agreement of the local population, while Art. 10. guarantees the right of local governments to associate with others and to cooperate with those in other countries.)

All in all, it is obvious that a multilateral convention of this type—or even one formulated in a more binding manner—cannot be expected to deliver up rights as it were, on a plate, if for no other reason, then because most agreements may be denounced at short notice, and there is no armed police force, or even a court of justice, to act in case they are violated. Thus to achieve collective rights for the minority depends on two main factors: (1) the resolution and perseverance of the language community itself—the means, which in a democracy, must not include violence—used in demanding its rights, and (2) the ability of the protecting or patron power to make (an) agreement(s) with the state involved, based on a broad sphere of mutual interests, with both states profiting from their observance.

The CE Charter on language itself makes it quite clear that it concerns minimal rights only, and that, it should be complemented by other agreements and that no state should use this charter as a pretext for reducing the standard of minority rights already achieved to a minimum, thus making the situation of the minorities worse

12 ■ Cf. North Korean action related to the repudiation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

(4.2.). That is why it is poor strategy to make the "European norms" the standard of the demands: rather than helping the minority, in a given situation this might actually push it downward to a lower threshold. The attempts made by certain Romanian and Slovak government circles to use the basic European requirements formulated in the Charter as a pretext for further curtailing the (still existing) rights of the formerly state-creating Hungarian minority are an abuse and a perverse interpretation of the Charter, which it prohibits and condemns (4.2, 7.2.). At any rate, the fact that the patron power of the German-speaking South Tyroleans is not Germany but Austria, shows clearly that annexations or transfers of territory impose particular obligations on both the patron and the successor states.

Legislation is a major means of ensuring the rights of minorities, however, one must not fall into the trap of legal fetishism either.<sup>13</sup>

■ Agreements, constitutions, laws and other positive legal rules themselves are meant to preserve the order based on given social and political power relations—which, in turn, are based on a *fait accompli* and on being in actual possession—and are not the embodiments of some kind of natural law of eternal validity.

■ The legal order should not be confused with the moral order. The former can only exist on its own if it prescribes specific rights and obligations the observance or non-observance of which can be verified, and the implementation of which can be enforced by different means including sanctions.

■ In want of a world government and a world police force, compliance with international agreements is less enforceable than national laws whose implementation is also subject to limitations.

■ Thus the better international agreements are integrated in national legislation, the simpler and safer is their implementation (albeit international agreements enjoy precedence over national legislation). It is, therefore, useful to demand that international agreements become part of the constitution of the country concerned and to exact relevant legislation.

■ In principle, by the very process of their enactment, constitutions are more enduring than laws, although this is only true relatively. (In the past century the Swiss constitution was amended every 14 months, and, although humanity takes pride in her literature and codes of law, Britain does not have a written constitution.)

■ Finally, it must be noted that rights that are never claimed by people lose their validity.

### What is to be done?

■ In a doctoral thesis on *La Frontière* submitted in 1990 at the University of Geneva, Stéphane Bodénes thoroughly documents the overzealous haste of the "boundary commissioners" who, in the name of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination, drew up new national frontiers cutting across the mixed population of the fringe

13 ■ Cf. Peter Fitzpatrick: *The Mythology of Modern Law*, London, 1992.

regions of the Carpathian Basin without holding referenda.<sup>14</sup> Half a century after the creation of new states by the Versailles Treaties, states are changing and disintegrating all around thousand-year-old Hungary, while even that part of the 3 million Hungarians living (or tolerated) in the successor states which is actually in a majority in its towns and villages, must fight a daily battle for the public use of its language, for the registration of its personal names and for displaying ancient toponyms on signboards, something that is specifically prescribed by the European Charter for Language (art. 10. 2. g.: "use or adoption, if necessary in conjunction with the name in the official language(s), of traditional and correct forms of place-names in regional or minority languages.")

While walking the streets of Geneva on their way to the sessions of the Human Rights Committee of the UN, delegates urging equal treatment should remember that the city, annexed to Switzerland only in the last century, a country with an overwhelming German majority, has not only been able to keep its French language but French is also the exclusive official language of the canton. Now Slovakia forces the Slovak language on the Hungarian population of Csallóköz (Zitny Ostrov) and Révkomárom (Komárno) as an official language, just as Serbia forces the Serbian language (using the Cyrillic script) on Hungarians in Zenta (Senta of Backa) and Szabadka (Subotica), the Romanians do in the Székely land and the Ukraine the (also Cyrillic) Ukrainian language in the Beregszász (Beregovo) region, to mention only some of the most conspicuous examples.

If one is to be realistic, one must note, in sum, that at present neither the "civilized world"<sup>15</sup> nor Europe knows of any multilateral agreement which would demand that multilingual countries of a certain, specific composition must have a constitutional system ensuring the survival of indigenous languages. The European norms are only threshold requirements which furnish good grounds and legitimacy for the political struggle of the minority and its representatives for collective rights.

For a multilingual state, a federal-type constitution appears to be the most desirable but if there was no opportunity to obtain that—or the opportunity was missed—other formulae (like an autonomous language region or one of a special status) may also prove suitable, especially if their provisions are made very specific and their execution is always guaranteed by a bilateral agreement with a (neighbouring) patron state. Because of the all too generous satisfaction of the territorial claims of the successor states, precisely on the basis of the principle of proportionate equality (viz. not univocal but analogous), mutuality cannot in any way mean that the huge numbers of Hungarians in the successor states should be confined to the same political and cultural role as that granted to the tiny minorities in Hungary.

The survival of an indigenous population who are a minority is not a cultural aim in the narrower sense of the term but a broader, socio-ecological one. The language

14 ■ Cf. Documents 47(1965) and 66(1966) of the US State Department dealing with the Romanian-Hungarian and the Slovak-Hungarian borders.

15 ■ G. W. Gong: *The Standard of 'Civilization' in International Society*. Oxford, 1984.

must carry all the functions of public and political life, and in the modern, increasingly urbanized world this can only be achieved if the minority is actually in a majority within a town or in a contiguous network of settlements (province, county, district) where it concentrates its system of institutions (mass media, institutions of higher education, etc.). Not only intellectuals should insist on the general, everyday use of the minority's language, but the indigenous people in general must demonstrate its sense of belonging by being able to realize a natural desire to move to a town within its own linguistic area.

Minorities not named in statutes nor having a majority linguistic region, have no real chance for preserving their language in the long run. That is why broad-based self-government must be guaranteed in the *lex specialis* for the most numerous minority where it is in a majority, an elected self-government which has full authority over language use in public life, culture and education, over right of domicile, the local police force and taxation. At this juncture it must be pointed out that recognition of the collective right of the use of the Hungarian language does not in the least threaten the successor states with utter linguistic confusion—as is frequently prophesized by Slovak and Romanian officials—because it is precisely the application of the principle of proportionate equality that does not oblige these governments to grant the same status to the other tiny, scattered minorities.

The preservation of a linguistic region is a geopolitical trial of strength which involves also law and culture, but there can be no success without clear vision, mobilization of forces and united organization on the part of those concerned. While seeking support, it would be a mistake on the part of a nation with a state-creating experience older than that of Switzerland, Austria and most European nations—just recovering from the trauma of the “wise” agreements of Yalta and Paris—to treat, out of some kind of inferiority complex, the cause of its fellow Hungarian speakers as if it were merely a typically East European problem. Has a quarter century been enough for Britain to find a solution for the Irish national problem within the framework of the European Union? The European Union itself has two scripts, nine official and forty-five spoken languages. Most of the big powers are states with hidden minorities, and are therefore inclined to take notice of minorities only when alarming news are heard.<sup>16</sup>

Let me close by citing the title of an article I wrote for *Európai idő*, a magazine published in Romania but in a Hungarian-speaking area: “Minority, help yourself and God will help you!”<sup>17</sup> ☛

16 ■ Cf. Guy Héraud: *Conflits ethniques en Europe*, Geneva 1991.

17 ■ July 1993.

# Transforming the East: Western Illusions and Strategies

**F**ollowing the short lived euphoria that spontaneous enthusiasm and underlying ignorance produced, anxiety about the economic, social and political stabilization of the transforming economies of Central and Eastern Europe began to grow after 1990.

This anxiety has led to the devising of a large number of comprehensive plans and specific projects, of which only some have been implemented, and, in most cases, only in a fragmentary form. The results have been disappointing. There are few signs of economic recovery, and even where there have been, the economic, social and political costs of the transformation are increasingly hard to bear. In most countries, the prospects range from the gloomy to the catastrophic, and instability and unpredictability are largely present.

Textbook measures have dramatically failed, often doing more harm than good. Instead of a fundamental rethinking of what has gone wrong and what should be done, it would appear that the regional and international actors are, in the spring of 1993, inclined to disappointment and pessimism. Short-term emergency measures, defensiveness, fear and mistrust dominate the scene.

## The nature of the crisis

Initially, most economists, East and West, thought that the overdue economic and political changes in Central and Eastern Europe would imply a quick process

of transformation from a planned to a market economy. For the first time in history, these economies became a laboratory for simple or simplified economic ideologies based on models that had previously existed only in university textbooks and which, fortunately, had never been applied in any full-fledged market economy. These efforts, carried out with messianic zeal, did not take into

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account the fact that the institution known as a "free market economy" is not in reality either free or constrained solely in relation to the economy. It is a historically developed and carefully balanced network of economic regulations that is probably more complicated and, sometimes, at least as opaque as the regulatory mechanism of a planned economy. Moreover, the free market mechanism has also integrated the social, legal and political life of each country.<sup>1</sup> There is thus good reason why the results of applying the Western patterns of transformation have become increasingly ambiguous. Although curing some ills, at least temporarily and superficially, they have caused or aggravated crises in several other areas.

In dealing with the challenge of transformation, the developed West could only start from its own historic experience over two centuries of genuine industrial progress. Thus the transition to a market economy in Central and Eastern Europe was interpreted as a belated, postponed or delayed repetition of the Western pattern of economic and social development. If this reasoning is correct, and Eastern and Western Europe are separated only in time, the catching-up process can be accelerated. It follows from this that the more rapid the transition to a market economy, the less time it takes to bridge the development gap. At least in part, this reasoning lies behind the shock therapy and the impatience exhibited in various key areas (privatization, bankruptcy, budgetary reform, convertibility, etc.). However, the most dangerous aspect of this approach is its assumption that the success of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe requires that the same policy instruments be employed as have been used (and often misused) in relations between the leading economic powers and the underdeveloped countries.

It is evident that the introduction of market economic mechanisms is necessary but not sufficient, since the systemic crisis faced in the Central and Eastern European countries is one of modernization, and dates back earlier than 1945. This modernization crisis must be overcome before the transformation; and only through this can the stability of Europe be achieved. This requires different policy instruments from those designed by "system-changing" economic philosophers. Extensive international experience suggests that at least three crucial international conditions must be met for successful modernization:

- a) Predictable medium-term development in the major trading partners;
- b) Substantial net inward transfers of resources;
- c) Free access to major markets, on which export-oriented growth can be based.

This is the context in which the character and scale of the international support provided or envisaged must be assessed.

The "modernization-cum-transformation" crisis has been aggravated by the collapse of the Comecon markets. Although the forced redirection of trade to the non-Comecon world, mainly the leading OECD countries, was more successful than the most optimistic forecasts predicted, it resulted in a substantial loss of domestic resources that could have been used for modernization. In contrast with the widely

1 ■ Dauderstaedt etc (1992), p. 42.

publicized loss of the Eastern market, the losses suffered by the erosion of previous economies of scale have received very modest, if any, attention.<sup>2</sup> The immediate market loss expressed in terms of total exports or GDP was equivalent to France losing her German and Italian markets overnight. Without making at least an attempt to imagine what kind of economic policy French and international economists would propose in such a case, nobody is in a position to formulate a viable approach to Central and Eastern Europe's economic problems.

After three years of transformation, Central and Eastern Europe is still not a net receiver of external resources.<sup>3</sup> Although Hungary and the Czech Republic have registered substantial influxes of foreign direct investment (FDI), their net balance has only been slightly positive, and the balance is far less than the sum required to finance their most urgent economic needs.

There are three additional special factors in the case of Central and Eastern Europe:

a) Most countries in the region started the transformation with a substantial if not paralysing burden of foreign debt.<sup>4</sup>

b) All the countries in the region have been chronically undercapitalized in the past. Since 1990, their situation has deteriorated further as a consequence of huge losses in capital (due to the collapse of Comecon), the growing liquidity problems of surviving firms, and the rocketing sums expended on unemployment benefits. This critical shortage of capital has to be faced as a major limiting factor in any kind of growth-oriented economic policy.

c) Any kind of modernization will obviously result in a substantial trade deficit. In the latter half of the 1980s, Spain ran up a trade deficit of almost \$100 bn, and Portugal of more than \$22 bn. Can at least the more advanced Central European economies go the same way? If they cannot finance this deficit out of surpluses from other items on their current and capital accounts—a strong likelihood—will the modernization process, which has hardly started, be blocked, or will they be allowed to increase their debt? Is the international financial system, and particularly Western Europe, prepared for such a challenge, or will it dampen all initiative by dramatically increasing the chances of failure of the transformation and the probability of instability throughout Europe?

**2** ■ Several firms, while basically Comecon-oriented, also produced for Western markets. It was, however, the purchasing capacity of the Comecon partners (mainly the former Soviet Union) that enabled producers to exploit economies of scale and so become competitive on Western markets as well. With the collapse of Comecon, demand fell drastically, increasing unit production costs and cancelling the previous benefits of economies of scale.

**3** ■ According to the latest Economic Survey of Europe (1992-1993), UN ECE, Geneva, "when debt servicing and other income payments are set in the balance against capital inflows, there was a net outflow of resources from most of the East European countries in 1992." Quoted by *The Financial Times*, April 14, 1993.

**4** ■ The net debt (gross debt less deposits in Western banks) of the transforming economies (including the ex-Soviet states) was estimated at \$172 bn in 1992, by comparison with \$161.5 bn in 1991 and \$147.4 bn in 1990. The Central European countries slightly improved their position, but Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union saw dramatic rises in their outstanding debts.



One major policy mistake was committed when the Central and Eastern European economies hastened to liberalize their imports. Nobody will question the positive impacts on growth, competition and efficiency of opening up previously closed or semi-closed domestic markets; the speed and sequence of import liberalization is open to discussion, but what is unprecedented is that this liberalization took place in economies with rapidly shrinking GDP and domestic demand, and which had lost their Eastern markets.<sup>5</sup> International comparison shows that other countries liberalized their trade more slowly, and in years of substantial economic growth, which promised an even or uneven distribution of the gains from the growing demand among domestic and foreign suppliers (competitors). This should be kept in mind when the EC introduces protectionist measures as the EC economy slides into a modest depression. The argument that a 1-2 per cent economic decline justifies protectionism is hardly valid in Central (and Eastern) Europe, where a double-digit shrinkage of GDP has been accompanied by (irrational) liberalization. On the contrary, such an attitude on the part of the EC will have a substantial counterproductive impact and undermine already declining confidence in Western assistance, without which stability is unimaginable in Europe.

A special factor is the way the extremely complicated heritage of "socialist welfare" is handled. Mainly for ideological reasons, all the countries of the region have maintained a high-cost welfare system inadequately supported by the development level and potential of their economies. In the transformation process, the size and pattern of their spending on social services and their incomes policy—rewarding efficiency, instead of ignoring efficiency differences in favour of welfare criteria—have to undergo essential changes. The main problem is not the necessity for changes, but the fact that much of society will have to give up already achieved (modest) welfare standards. Modernization in all countries has produced both winners and losers, but there is a fundamental difference concerning the modernization impacts on welfare in the ex-socialist countries. The losers in non-socialist countries have generally stayed at their previous poverty level, their loss was not joining the winners; in Central and Eastern Europe, however, the losers experience a substantial decline in living standards.

One of the most important special features of the transforming countries is that they possess a well-educated, highly skilled work force, in most areas of at least Western standards in basic education. This to some extent explains the enormous flexibility and noticeably high threshold of passive acceptance in these societies. Moreover, the Central European countries have gained substantial OECD and EC market shares in all labour-intensive products since 1990, particularly those that

**5 ■** As an immediate response, Central European firms turned to the West, and achieved a surprisingly good export performance between 1990 and 1992. This is true even bearing in mind that exports which now reach former Comecon countries through Western middlemen appear as Western exports in the statistics. Most recently, however, it has become increasingly obvious that this remarkable performance has largely been based on previously available resources, and the sustainability of this growth is at the least uncertain.

are skilled labour-intensive. More developed countries had rid themselves of domination by a less developed superpower for the first time in modern history. This will become an extremely important psychological factor in the next stage of the transformation process. The human-resource development of these countries cannot therefore be subjected to old-fashioned concepts, or what was earlier learnt by the industrialized countries in less developed economies.

Another unique feature is that transformation is not taking place in a chaotic, war-torn world, the kind of environment from which Western Europe reemerged almost half a century earlier. Although the changes are accompanied in some cases by economic losses comparable in scale to damage suffered in the Second World War, they occur in a context that is shaped by a rich, rapidly developing, technology-dominated international community.

Again for the first time in modern history, the dramatic transformation is not taking place in a geographically remote area, and for that reason an unfavourable spin-off ("economic and social contamination") cannot simply be dismissed as irrelevant. The specific modernization of the East Asian economies developed in a geographically distant region, with secondary (trade) impacts only on the developed world. Here the challenge of transformation occurs in a region that is geographically and in several other aspects inseparable from Western Europe.

Finally, and most importantly, the new situation is only partially caused by the internal problems of the ex-socialist countries and their community. If the transformation were explicable solely in these terms, these countries could be left to their own devices, with a greater or lesser degree of control exercised over the inherited artificial East-West border across Europe. This is what still seems to guide Western thinking. It is, however, a fatally erroneous conclusion.

The collapse of the Soviet-dominated system has put an end to the old European security system. Given that the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe is a special response to this new security situation, it would be tragically short-sighted for Western Europe to believe that the changes are confined to the Eastern part of the continent. The collapse of the security system also affects the Western European members of the system, along with all the institutions—including the EC—that were directly or indirectly products of the security pattern.

Economic and social adjustment to the new realities is thus neither a monologue nor a one-way street. Although the Central and Eastern European countries have to implement the more substantial changes, Western Europe also faces adjustment challenges that may come in a more gradual and subtle form. (Indeed, they are already present, even if some of the countries they affect would prefer not to take notice of them.) Moreover, the adjustment is mutual. Central and Eastern Europe must adjust itself not to the present pattern of Western Europe, simple and pleasant though that might be for some politicians and societies, perhaps on both sides, but to a changing Western Europe. In turn, Western Europe, like it or not, must come closer to the transforming economies. On one level, this means an understanding

of the nature of the modernization-cum-systemic-transformation process, on another it requires adequate policy responses.

### A new Marshall Plan?

In view of the deterioration of the economic and social situation in most Central and East European countries, including the successor states of the Soviet Union, a growing number of institutes and banks have tried to assess the cost of a successful transformation and have begun to urge a new Marshall Plan. They recall the success of the Marshall Plan after the Second World War in encouraging political stabilization and cooperation in Western Europe, and the unparalleled economic upsurge it triggered off. It is argued that a similarly comprehensive package of financial and technical support for the transforming economies would lead to peace, stability and economic prosperity, all in the interests of the international community as a whole.

The Marshall Plan covered four years (1948-51) and 17 European countries, and involved the transfer of \$13.3 bn, a substantial amount of money at that time—1.2 per cent of the GDP of the United States, or 15 per cent of its federal budget.<sup>6</sup>

Since the collapse of communism, the West no longer faces a direct military threat. Although there are dangers, these are either not perceived as imminent or are variously assessed by different countries. Political and economic instability in Central and Eastern Europe is not strong enough to mobilize the West to comprehensive joint action. The countries in transition have limited economic leverage, and this the West can easily cope with (debt management, raw materials, trade issues).

One of the main differences lies in the state of the world economy. There are major problems, but prevailing interests are not such as to produce a radical restructuring although the need for this is increasingly felt. The developed Western countries have their own problems: budget deficits, unemployment, recession and conflicts within the international trading system. Meanwhile, the economies of Central (and to some extent Eastern) Europe are seen as competitors, since they managed to increase substantially their (modest) share of OECD imports in the first three years of the transition. Last but not least, the prevailing, though slowly changing Western economic ideology of monetarism and neo-liberalism does not favour any renewed "managed cooperation" and longer-term economic-policy harmonization between developed and transforming countries.

A further key difference lies in the perception of the transformation in the developed countries. The present welfare economies, unlike the Post-War World, perceive a New Age as a threat rather than a promise. Instead of looking for new opportunities and additional sources of growth in the present situation, they aim to preserve the economic status quo. The more this status quo appears to be threatened (not just threatened from without but by internal tensions too) the more

6 ■ For a good description, see Cassen (1992).

protectionist they are likely to become. All this brings to mind a past that has been all but forgotten in the West. The reflexes of the 1929-1933 depression years reappear, those national responses to economic crisis whose consequences then ravaged Europe. The present schemes for assistance suffer from serious structural problems. The West's financial contribution to the transforming economies is in the form of credit, not grants, and even less of that is new money. Except in the cases of Hungary—and then to some extent—and of the Czech Republic, FDI is very cautious. The level of technology transfer is modest, and does not include any substantial quantity of high technology. Most of the reforming economies have achieved a more advanced level of convertibility than the Western European countries had in 1948. The real issue therefore is not so much convertibility as the generation of goods and services, without which no trade—regional or global—can be created.

Unfortunately neither of these conditions pertains. The absence of a clear Western plan necessarily leads to tactical thinking and emergency measures, producing a basically defensive attitude in the face of changes that become increasingly unpredictable and unmanageable. Attention and financial resources are regularly attached by (or diverted to) the immediate problem perceived to be the most acute, without bearing in mind longer-term gains and losses. The more instability threatens in a country, the softer the constraints applied. In this way, blackmailing is encouraged and losses grow, as does disappointment. At the same time, there is less cooperation with Central Europe, albeit it is much more promising, and what there is, is starved of resources, since this region is not considered a crisis area and has never made use of its—admittedly—modest capacity for blackmail.

Finally, the number of potential credit-granting countries and international organizations has multiplied. It is increasingly difficult to coordinate the various national and international efforts, since they all involve a fair share of self-interest, rivalry and competition. This external fragmentation is accompanied by an internal fragmentation, as different lobbies or pressure groups differ in their perception of their country's interests in relation to particular support schemes.

In recent years, estimates of the costs of transformation have differed widely. Some, taking their cue from the Marshall Plan, have been based either on an updated dollar amount of this plan (\$60-100 bn), or they include the equivalent share of the OECD countries' GDP (\$130-150 bn). Others have tried to quantify the real needs of the transforming economies if these are to catch up with Western per capita GDP. It must be stressed, however, that it is impossible, and probably also not without its dangers, to try and establish absolute figures, since the financial requirements for a successful transformation differ greatly from country to country. Nor should one leave out of account the possible multiplier effects which depend on the level of development of a particular country, and its readiness to respond to the help given. Furthermore, the general and dangerous misbelief that the Central

and Eastern European countries have already received at least the amount disbursed under the Marshall Plan must be dispelled.

A clear distinction needs to be made in three respects. First, although the figures are highly unreliable and incomplete, there is certainly a huge gap between commitments and actual disbursements. According to the UN ECE, total Western commitments between January 1990 and June 1992 amounted to \$145 bn, of which \$54bn were addressed to the small Central and Eastern European economies. However, only a small fraction of this money has actually been disbursed. By far the most effective support has been the PHARE programme, initiated by the EC. Two sets of figures suffice to provide a realistic assessment of Western support. On the one hand, the ECU 2bn commitment is equivalent to ten days' financing of the EC's Common Agricultural Policy; on the other, even within this, the relatively most efficient framework, slightly less than half the committed money, has been disbursed in Hungary (about ECU 200 mn).

In addition a substantial part of the disbursed money has not actually been utilized properly, it either did not support priority tasks, or was in conflict with economic-policy constraints.

Much of the support has actually been rechannelled to the donor countries, being used to cover the sometimes astronomically high costs of Western experts and advisers. In Hungary 90 per cent of the PHARE programme has been in the form of so-called technical assistance, covering the \$1,000-per-day consultancy fees of "foreigners temporarily stationed in Hungary".

The claim of massive (in fact virtually non-existent) Western aid to the transforming economies is pure public relations and as counter-productive as the comparison with West German support to former East Germany. The first misleads the Western public into thinking that the transforming economies are incapable of anything, that they cannot be helped, that they are bottomless pits, unable to make use of huge sums of Western money efficiently, that they do not deserve any meaningful support, and that therefore the best thing for the West to do is to lock its doors and think about its own problems.

The second is misleading because of the substantial sums that the transformation of East Germany requires. Starting from the totally erroneous assumption that the former East Germany was the most developed Comecon country, yet needs enormous sums of West German money, the Western public boggles at the amount it assumes will be needed by the less developed Central and Eastern European economies. We must emphasize that—notwithstanding some achievements—East Germany was not the most developed socialist economy, but the one with most distorted development and that East German society was among the least prepared for any kind of market-economy reforms. In addition, the politically motivated creation of a German monetary union has dramatically increased the costs of unification. With a small fraction of this money, say 5-10 per cent of the resources annually provided to the new *Länder*, Hungary, and probably the Czech

Republic and Poland as well, could have been stabilized and put on the road to rapid and sustainable economic growth. Here, attention can be called to the fundamental differences in the financial needs, and in the timing and scale of success, required by the ex-Soviet Union and the small national economies of Central and Eastern Europe.

Western support to the transformation process suffers from serious structural problems, which relate to conceptual flaws on both sides. In the West, the support is not related to any kind of strategic planning or rethinking in response to the collapse of the Soviet empire. Although some politicians have stressed that the 1990s would give birth to a new international order, their insights have not been followed up by everyday economic policy. Indeed, the economic policies pursued began with an insistence on old and increasingly outdated advantages derived from the status quo, and regarded the transforming economies as new market opportunities. Of course, this itself should not be criticized, since it is the essence of the present world economic system. What must be criticized is the confidence trick of presenting Western support as generous, unilateral help. It is, in fact, nothing other than the usual business deal.

The misconceptions entertained by the transforming economies are at least as grave in their consequences. Initially there was a genuine belief that unilateral Western assistance would be forthcoming, as a kind of reward for shedding foreign domination, destroying the Eastern military bloc and contributing to the reunification of the continent.

Since there is no strategic thinking, the financial support for transformation is badly designed. Only a small share of the money committed is in the form of non-refundable grants that do not increase foreign debt. In contrast with the 90 per cent share taken up by grants under the Marshall Plan, only 14 per cent of the G 24 countries' assistance to the three (now four) Central European countries falls into this category.<sup>7</sup>

Since the bulk of the commitment is debt-relevant, its use is limited, most of the transforming countries being already substantially indebted. There is little coordination between donor and recipient countries; donor countries set out to promote their own economic interests when providing assistance, which in most cases do not coincide with the economic priorities of the potential beneficiaries. Most support is tied either to a country or a specific project. Export credits are expensive, and finance the purchase of non-essential, or costly, or technologically insufficiently developed goods from the donor countries.

Technical assistance is a special case. Training is obviously necessary, but not all countries need the same packages. In Hungary, criticism of the usefulness of foreign experts and consultants is growing. The problem is not only high fees for not very useful advice, but also concerns the inverse learning process.<sup>8</sup>

**7** ■ Up to the end of 1991, Poland received 27 per cent of the aid money committed, Hungary 16 per cent and Czechoslovakia 4 per cent.

**8** ■ In many cases foreigners are learning from Hungarians, obtaining key business and financial information, and establishing contacts in order to set up their firms in Hungary.

More importantly, in the case of the Central European countries at least, the present need is for more fresh money and investment capital and not just training. Training without employment opportunities and economic recovery results in total failure. The modernization gap between the developed world and Central and Eastern Europe is characterized by the critical under-capitalization of the transforming economies, and not by their education systems, which are relatively developed.

Three additional problems deserve mention:

a) Assistance is restricted in time—most credits are repayable in the short or medium term. But the modernization of the economy requires more time and a higher level of predictability and reliability on which to base efficient restructuring.

b) The concentration of financial support in the hands of governments does not always ensure the best use of scarce resources.

c) Even in the case of PHARE, there is a substantial time lag between commitment and disbursement.<sup>9</sup> The transforming economies need funds as soon as possible, not in several years' time, when economic priorities and conditions may be very different.

An efficient coordination of Western assistance is hampered by the absence of comprehensive, medium-term economic policies. The collapse of the old system, and the higher than expected cost and longer than expected time for transformation is not a fully acceptable excuse. True, high inflation does not encourage investment, which strict monetary and fiscal policies positively discourage. Highly indebted countries have to remain extremely cautious about accepting debt-boosting loans. In some countries, the absorption capacity of the economy is a further barrier to efficient investment. All these good excuses do not absolve policy-makers of the obligation to devise comprehensive medium-term plans.

International cooperation is welcome. Its success, however, to a large extent depends on two factors:

a) A clear choice of priorities.

b) The acceptance of a strategic plan by the Western public.

It is still unclear whether both these criteria can be met. That would require a different strategic (not tactical) and offensive (not defensive) attitude on the part of the community of developed countries.

In line with the arguments advanced above, international financial cooperation aimed at transforming Central and Eastern Europe should be based on a modernization fund that is non-debt-creating for the beneficiaries and market-creating for the donor countries. It may contain elements of security and solidarity, but should not give priority to these. Although modernization generates security and solidarity, security and/or solidarity in themselves do not automatically lead to modernization.

**9** ■ The commitment-to-disbursement procedure in the PHARE programme includes no less than 16 stages, in 13 of which decisions are taken in Brussels. Average time from the application for assistance to disbursement is 18 months.

## The EC association agreements: an anchor for modernization?

All the economies of Central and Eastern Europe need a developed centre of gravity in which the growth and modernization impacts can be expected to originate. For geographical, political, economic and cultural reasons, this role should obviously be played by the EC. The Association Agreements (AAs) signed in December 1991 with the Visegrád countries and in the spring of 1993 with Romania and Bulgaria, together with the prospects of full membership, are considered adequate instruments. An overall assessment of the AAs and the actual results ascribed to them must rest on them fulfilling three criteria:

a) Is the EC a stable and predictable medium-term partner?

b) Does it guarantee the transfer of substantial financial resources to the economies undergoing modernization?

c) Does it offer free access to EC markets in order to sustain export-oriented development and growth in Central and Eastern Europe?

Although the agreements still require ratification by some EC members and as a result only the commercial chapter could come into force within the community as a whole 15 months ago (and that only in relations with the Visegrad countries), a preliminary evaluation is nevertheless possible.

a) The medium-term development of the Community or its attitude towards the economies undergoing change cannot really be predicted. It is not so much the debate over Maastricht which has cast a shadow on the future of the EC than its inability to recognize the fundamental shift in European priorities that has occurred since 1989—as well as the fact that the idea of Maastricht derives from an earlier, divided Europe. The likeliness of changes in the internal balance of power in the EC, the Community's further enlargement and the unpredictable pressures from the East are further factors making a medium-term forecast of Community development highly uncertain, if not impossible. In addition, the much delayed process of ratifying the AAs, repeated protectionist measures, the failure to state any clear criteria or programme for full membership, and most recently, treating the economies undergoing transformation as a single bloc have all diminished the confidence of Central Europe in the EC.

b) The AAs do not contain a clear commitment to give the transformation process the financial support on which a medium-term modernization programme could be based.

c) The AAs have created better conditions for access to Western markets, at least by comparison with the decades of discrimination against Central and Eastern European goods. The advantages, however, appear far more modest when they are compared with those under the GSP agreements operating between 1990 and 1992. Apart from that, the commercial concessions are not very encouraging in terms of the modernization needs of the region, as they exclude, or substantially limit, exports of goods in which Central and Eastern European countries are genuinely competitive (textiles, clothing, steel, and above all agricultural products). This not



only acts as a constraint on current exports, but also on the demand for machinery and technology which, to a large extent, would be directed at the EC countries.

Central European hopes of exporting more have materialized, but there has been an even faster growth in imports. As a result, the EC's trade surplus with these countries rose from \$1 bn in 1991 to \$2.5 bn in 1992. Trade in agricultural products is an issue of special concern. Although Hungary was able to increase its total agricultural exports by 14 per cent in that period, such exports to the EC rose by just 1 per cent. While Hungary's total agricultural imports stagnated, imports from the EC grew by more than 50 per cent. This is certainly asymmetrical, but hardly in line with the spirit of the AA or the expectations of the transforming economies.

The Visegrád countries have repeatedly asked the EC for a clear commitment on full membership, including a determination of the dates, for political, economic and psychological reasons. The EC, on the other hand, has always stressed that the AA is not an automatic stepping stone to membership.

Recently, however, growing international pressure has initiated a reappraisal, at the Community level, if not in all member countries. As a result, Brussels is now inclined to set quantitative indicators that would measure an economy's fitness for membership. This, in our view, is dangerous and ambiguous.

It is difficult indeed to compile a package of indices that includes the most important statistical data. As national economic policies (the magic rectangle) or the Maastricht criteria indicate, it is unlikely that all indicators will be met at the same time by any one country. It is even less probable that the period within which this must be done can be extended over years. Thus, future membership would be completely left to the assessment of Brussels: the EC could consider the indicators fulfilled and admit an applicant, or focus on those that have not been, and turn an applicant down. The EC would have a good excuse, while the Visegrád countries would lose even the limited bargaining power they now enjoy.

In the past, enlargement of the EC was determined by political, and not economic considerations. The Central European economies are as developed as Greece was in 1981, or Portugal when negotiations on her accession started.

Adjustment to the Community is a long process, a substantial part of which has always taken place after an applicant has become a full member. The real issue is therefore to determine the point where the Central European economies can continue their adjustment inside, rather than outside the EC. In this context, a clear medium-term adjustment programme setting out the policy steps to be taken by the applicants and a package of supporting measures to be drawn up by the EC (i.e. mutual conditionality) seems far more important than any set of quantitative performance indicators.

The recent reversion in the Community to a bloc mentality can be interpreted as a wish to delay Eastern attempts to join. One may well wonder whether this is the result of underlying ignorance of the situation in Central and Eastern Europe or of a well-defined new policy.

Brussels seems to be advocating the bloc principle, precisely at a time of growing differentiation among the economies concerned. Both surveys and superficial comparison of the main economic indicators of these economies display increasing differences in such key areas as growth, inflation, employment, foreign trade and debt management. More importantly, the widely different assessment by the international financial community and the rather clear signs provided by foreign investors also show that individual treatment of the countries of the region has been given priority.

The nature of relations with the EC has been significantly influenced by the countries undergoing transformation themselves. Initially most of them hoped for unilateral benefits, and saw the EC as the main benefactor which would reward Central and Eastern European economies that boldly undertook reforms and did well in the process of changing the system. Although this feeling of gratitude is a thing of the past, all these countries are still trying to avoid any confrontation with the Community. This may be politically unwise because Brussels may get the wrong signal (acquiescence) from the associated countries.<sup>10</sup> A different attitude can only be based on a clear medium-term economic strategy, not on political castles in Spain. Reliable and firmer cooperation with the EC urgently requires the formulation of strategic guidelines, perhaps in conjunction with Brussels.

### Regional cooperation: affordability and prospects

After a long period, marked by a number of setbacks, the Visegrád countries concluded the Central European Free Trade Agreement (Cefta) in December 1992. This was the fruit of regional considerations and of external, mainly informal EC, pressure. In keeping with the signed documents, trade barriers will be abolished in ten years' time, an inordinately long period bearing in mind the rather modest share intra-regional trade has in the total trade of the Visegrád countries. The expectations of Western European and of regional economists regarding the impact of Cefta on the modernization process in Central Europe differ substantially.

There are four main arguments for closer regional cooperation.

- a) Geographical proximity, and a cultural heritage shared to some extent.
- b) There are national economic reasons urging more cooperation, the most important being a prevention of further decline in regional trade and of a total collapse of the cooperation network that had been in place earlier. A good example of damage limitation is to give temporary support to uncompetitive firms with the help of increased (and certainly inefficient) regional trade. As against this even the most careful analyst would be hard put to find any short-term argument favouring an extension of such trade which would initiate growth and improve international performance or economic modernization.

**10 ■** This position of conflict avoidance is especially surprising in the case of Hungary, whose socialist (communist) government used to negotiate with the Soviet Union in a much tougher manner in a substantially more delicate situation, with far less elbow-room.

c) More importantly, there are external economic arguments. The fact that the AAs concluded with the EC would have reduced the importance of regional trade and diverted even the remainder of this trade towards the EC, played an essential role in the signing of Cefta.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the new regional trade framework is expected to become an instrument for re-regionalizing that trade which has been carried out through non-regional (in part EC) intermediaries since the collapse of Comecon. The most important element, however, is the potential for formulating a joint position and carrying out joint action to enhance the region's bargaining power vis-à-vis third countries or groups of countries.<sup>12</sup> Here the coordination of national interests in negotiations with Brussels and to some extent with the successor states of the Soviet Union can be envisaged.

d) There are political reasons for closer cooperation in the region. In every country, keeping nationalism and extremism in check is an important aim. In addition, improved political cooperation will send out a clear and positive signal about the region's political stability. Finally, the favourable psychological impact on Western public opinion has to be emphasized.

Alongside the positive factors, serious difficulties concerning enlarged cooperation can be identified within the same categories.

a) The historical development of the Cefta member countries shows large differences. The region was never able to unite itself, unity was always artificially imposed by an outside power. The 40 years of Comecon integration did not favour regional integration, as a radial political (and economic) pattern was developed, in keeping with the Soviet priority of maintaining bilateral contacts with the small Central and Eastern European countries. A further consideration is that all the countries have become estranged from the region since the transformation, with their newly won independence and the unprecedented challenge drawing them towards richer and more developed parts of the world.

b) Despite apparently similar problems, they have different domestic economic policies aimed at stabilization and the management of transition, as regards speed, sequencing and policy mix. All the countries are in deep recession, and international experience indicates that this is never a good basis for greater regional cooperation. The situation is worsened by three specific features of the Visegrád countries. First, all of them would like to modernize their economies, which obviously needs external partners and modernization poles, as the region does not have such a centre of gravity. Secondly, intra-regional trade is a very modest fraction of total trade—less than 5 per cent for Hungary and Poland, and less than 10 per cent for the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Although regional trade has also suffered from the

**11** ■ The most recent AAs, with Romania and Bulgaria, may prompt an expansion of Cefta to cover the non-Visegrád countries.

**12** ■ The example of Asean is particularly instructive. Its members never considered regional trade as an economic priority, as all of them were world-market-oriented. But in order to increase their leverage at international talks, they have made extensive use of collective bargaining.

collapse of Comecon, it was far less important than the trade of the Visegrád countries with the former Soviet Union. Unilateral specialization by all of them in relation to the Soviet market can be considered the third special feature of the Cefta countries.

c) The Visegrád countries compete with each other on the world market so that economic cooperation is overshadowed by rivalry, including a quest for special treatment by the international community, above all by the EC.

d) An inspection of the geographical position of the Visegrád countries shows that their shared security and political interests are intertwined with diverging interests, ranging from relations with Germany and Russia to the handling of ethnic issues. The recent splitting up of Czechoslovakia has certainly not strengthened the basis for regional political cooperation.

Under present conditions, the idea of any kind of Central (and/or Eastern) European payments union seems outdated. It should be remembered that the European Payments Union (EPU) set up after the Second World War rested on altogether different conditions. The participating countries had a strong interest in mutual trade, and had historically developed complementary trade patterns that had functioned long before the war, or even before 1914. Intra-regional trade amounted to 60-70 per cent of total trade, or ten times the current proportion of trade among the Visegrád countries.

The EPU aimed at ironing out bilateral trade surpluses and deficits, as a major barrier to rapid growth of the international flow of commodities. At this early stage, all Western European countries were short of convertible currency, and so the EPU was envisaged as a way of overcoming this difficulty. Finally, a non-European partner, the United States, financed the system.

Potential member countries of the Central European Payments Union (CEPU), or a version extended to Eastern Europe, face different realities today. Regional trade has practically collapsed, and there is little interest in reviving any Comecon-like cooperation. Nobody is interested in accepting soft goods or offering hard goods, and this in itself seriously limits the scope of trade in the region. No country is interested in the survival of uncompetitive sectors that might question the success of economic and political transformation.

The only viable use of the CEPU scheme would have been to finance the small ex-Comecon countries' deficits vis-à-vis the ex-Soviet Union after the reform of the Comecon price and payments mechanism. But this could not be done for two reasons. Unlike the EPU, the CEPU faced trade deficits that had accumulated in the small countries and a large surplus in the ex-Soviet Union, and so the settlement of these imbalances would have needed a different mechanism from that of the EPU. Secondly, and unfortunately, no Western country or group of countries was or is ready to finance the imbalances produced in ex-Comecon trade, although this would substantially ease the burdens of the transformation process.

Finally, a technical problem: the Central European countries, and probably those of Eastern Europe as well, have started to make their national currencies convert-

ible. As a result, the CEPU as an instrument to overcome the shortage of convertible currency has lost importance.

A realistic approach to the region by the West, based on the similarities and differences among the Visegrád countries and not on Western wishes and pre-conceptions, could evidently encourage regional cooperation, given the recognition of two facts:

a) The special, historically developed features of the Visegrád countries.

b) The impossibility of treating regional and global relations as mutually exclusive.

The Western approach of emphasizing the importance of regional cooperation as a condition for EC entry either completely misunderstands the situation or has a deliberate, though not articulated protectionist motive.

There is an abundant history of regional integrations of developing countries to provide clear notions regarding sequencing. Less developed countries have never managed to become more developed by concentrating on trade with similarly less developed economies. In recent decades there have been dramatic failures in all regional integration schemes, mostly in Latin America. In turn, Asean, with a policy of open regionalism, started to export to the developed world and turned more attention to regional trade only after export-oriented growth had generated rapidly increasing domestic demand and produced a more competitive industrial sector.

Are these lessons, so unanimously proclaimed by almost all leading Western economists, likely to have lost their validity in the case of Central (and Eastern) Europe? We strongly believe that they have not. Therefore the same path has to be followed by the Visegrád countries. Regional cooperation will certainly be expressed in higher intra-regional trade figures as soon as successful integration into the world economy (not least the EC) fuels growth and creates new regional complementarities. There is no chance of it happening the other way round. In sum, successful regional cooperation is the consequence of successful international integration.

As for the second interpretation, all efforts by the EC aimed at reorienting trade into the Visegrád group or further East, instead of further opening the Western European market, can be considered counterproductive and confidence-destroying. The idea of first joining an EFTA in dissolution is of the same kind. These efforts are generally interpreted as the EC's fear of the enhanced competition from Central Europe, and as a sign of growing protectionism.

The EC gave one sign in the AAs of supporting regional cooperation, when inputs from the Visegrád countries were included among exportable products under the preferential scheme (rules of origin). Unfortunately, in other and more important areas, there is a widening gap between the Brussels rhetoric in favour of regional cooperation and its actual contribution to it. The AAs do not contain any commitment to the development of a regional infrastructure, which is one of the most important economic policy tasks in the Visegrád countries. It would not only provide addi-

tional resources (fresh money) and enhance growth, but improve the infrastructural and political framework for regional cooperation.

Most importantly, regional cooperation could have been strengthened by the substantial participation of the Visegrád countries in EC aid to the CIS. Unfortunately, despite the EC's frequent declarations, Central European countries have largely been crowded out. EC suppliers have now obtained market shares in the traditional ex-Soviet market of the Visegrád countries (agricultural goods, medicines, etc). To indicate its interest in regional cooperation beyond Central Europe as well, Hungary has frequently offered to contribute to the economic transformation of the Ukraine, Kazakhstan and other ex-Soviet republics. Indeed, Hungarian support was explicitly requested by these countries, since Hungary has more appropriate experience in the basic aspects of transforming a planned economy into a market economy (privatization) than Western countries. Yet the EC has repeatedly turned down Hungarian participation in certain highly profitable fields of technical assistance.

### Conclusions: the choice of strategy

In the first three years of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe, the prevailing Western approach has been defensive. This defensiveness has been heightened recently by the growing uncertainties and costs in the region, and perhaps by the increasing concerns about the sustainability of the Western welfare system and the post-war socio-economic status quo.

This defensive mentality is clearly expressed in the predominance of Western security concerns.<sup>13</sup> This security basket contains the following:

- Military security concerning the not very likely, but highly unpredictable eventuality of nuclear strikes.

- Socio-political security concerning potential mass migration from the East to the West.

- Environmental security concerning various forms of pollution spreading from the East to the West, particularly nuclear fall-out from dangerous Soviet-made reactors.

- Economic security concerning competitive Central and Eastern European goods, services and manpower, in order to protect Western markets, Western employment and Western welfare systems.

This approach implicitly assumes that a functioning security umbrella for the developed countries can be erected, irrespective of the way the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe goes. It does give priority to cooperation in the modernization of Central and Eastern Europe. Various hypotheses to explain this can be posited. It may be rooted in the absence of Western interest in a

**13** ■ For a good example, see Hans-Georg Ehrhart (1993), p. 37. It is more than surprising, indeed shocking that even highly trained Eastern manpower such as Soviet nuclear physicists are simply considered in security terms, not as a unique chance for R and D cooperation.

comprehensive modernization policy. It may originate from a very practical consideration, namely a shortage of funds. It may be explained by fears of greater Eastern competition. Finally, a deficiency in strategic thinking cannot be ruled out.

This paper argues differently. Since our basic message is that without successful modernization no lasting security can be created in Europe, we opt for an offensive approach. We are convinced that efficient, clear-cut, predictable and reliable assistance to the modernization of Central and Eastern Europe is going to produce more benefit, for the developed countries as well, than just a narrowly conceived, *ad hoc* security framework.

In economic terms:

- It would provide huge markets at a time of Western recession.

- These new markets would generate growth and employment.<sup>14</sup>

- More intensive intra-industrial cooperation will stabilize Europe's place in global competition. While the US and Japan have made wide use of subcontracting in newly industrializing countries and have benefited from lower costs in international trade, Western Europe's high-cost intra-industrial division of labour has become one of the important factors behind diminishing global competitiveness.

- The joint use of the substantial R and D capacities in Central and Eastern Europe can be expected to improve European international technological competitiveness.

- Apparent stabilization without modernization would seriously damage the competitive position of Western Europe, not only because competitive Central and Eastern European partners for cooperation would not be available, but also as a result of resource diversion from economic growth to repeated emergency stabilization measures.

In financial terms:

- Support for the economic modernization of Central and Eastern Europe will cost substantially less than any kind of defensive approach, which will repeatedly require large amounts of money without producing lasting stabilization.

- International experience suggests that economic modernization is always less costly than the permanent financing of a minimum level of social peace. The latter, paradoxical though it may sound, systematically destroys the chances for an economy and society to be modernized by domestic actors, from the bottom up.<sup>15</sup>

In political terms:

- Western Europe must face a threefold challenge in the 1990s and beyond: political and economic competition with the US, and later maybe with the Far East as well; exacerbation of the North-South conflict, mainly expressed in a struggle over the distribution (redistribution) of resources and a greater threat of migration

**14** ■ In the first three years of the transformation, employment in Austria grew above average in regions near the Eastern border and exposed to the strongest competition. In the medium term, the opening to the East is expected to abolish 50,000 jobs a year while creating 60,000-65,000 new ones. See Aigner (1993), pp. 63-64.

**15** ■ This can clearly be seen in the former East Germany, where almost two-thirds of the transfers go to social welfare payments.

and religious conflicts; and the challenge of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. For political, economic and geographical reasons, the last is the most urgent. The first appears to make up a durable network of cooperation and competition, where Western Europe's position would be strengthened by having a modernizing Central and Eastern Europe as a backyard. The second can to some extent compete with modernization in the economies undergoing transformation (the struggle for resources and the means and proportions of redistribution), but arguments for giving priority to the third are provided by geographical proximity, development level, potential market size, and not least, cultural affinity.

■ Finally, only a modernization strategy can maintain the balance of power in Europe. A disappointed, destabilized Central and Eastern Europe would have a differing impact on individual Western European countries. Germany's geographical proximity and larger economic contacts and historical links mean that it cannot be shielded from the effects of a failure of its Eastern neighbours to modernize. Threats to stability are a more delicate question in Germany than in most other European countries, and may oblige Germany to give relatively more support to stabilize Central and Eastern Europe than other Western European countries will. This would divert German financial resources as well as economic and political interest and attention from the West to the East. Although Germany seems firmly integrated into the EC and other Western institutions, the unexpected may still occur.<sup>16</sup> Only a comprehensive modernization plan that includes the developed and the transforming economies can help to maintain the balance of power in Europe, which is a key component of continental stability.

Time has become the crucial factor for transformation in Europe. The later it is before a defensive, short-term, security-oriented approach is replaced by an offensive, modernization-oriented package, the higher will be the costs of stabilization and success in the attempt to modernize will be less probable.

Here two differences between Western and Eastern European policy-makers and specialists need mentioning. The first is a difference in the perception of time. Western Europeans always argue that things take time and can only be changed gradually, often with temporary setbacks, an approach that is rooted in the Western European experience of the last forty years, which was based on a clear status quo on the continent. The Eastern European perception is different, in that the Yalta status quo was never really accepted and there is a desire to make use of newly won opportunities as soon as possible. The chances are considered to be fleeting, as past experience has been that opportunities for modernization in the region open up and then suddenly close again. Secondly, Eastern Europeans seem to think more in a strategic way than Western Europeans. This observation needs confirmation, but the past experience of Central and Eastern European societies and their changing

**16** ■ After the spectacular collapse of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, no eventuality, even the most dramatic potential changes, can any longer be ruled out.



status quo are among the arguments for it, while the status quo mentality of Western Europe does not favour strategic thinking.

A new, modernization-centred economic programme clearly requires a community of thinking and strategic orientation. Unless such a platform is created, Europe will fail again. The foregone benefits and potential dangers are conveyed in an apposite remark by Nietzsche: "The times were ripe for Europe, but Europe was not ripe for the times." ❦

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Prince Sigismund Báthori's house in Torda (Turda-Thorenburg), end of 16th century.

Márta Mészáros

# Diary About Myself

## Images

I don't know about anyone else, but the fact is I have no general image of my childhood. When people recall their childhood, they generally see a city, a street, a house, a room. There is something magical about one's childhood, it is a world in itself. In this sense I had no proper childhood. There were many streets, many houses, many countries. All I have, all I can remember are images, moods, beautiful or dramatic moments, that are in some way related to my parents. When I think of my father and my mother I see them as very young, beautiful people, full of vitality. That is how I remember them, because they both died young. I am twice as old today as they were when they died. It is a strange feeling. My childhood is closely interlinked with the two of them.

My father was a powerfully built man of middle height with keen, searching eyes. Muscular, well-built, dynamic but sentimental at the same time. My mother was pleasantly plump but shapely, well-proportioned, with huge eyes and reddish hair. We don't look like her at all, she was a real beauty. Her image is coupled with sadness in my mind. My memories are vague, a lot of things are blurred, but in my mind's eye I see my parents clearly.

For instance, I don't know the exact date of my birth. Several people say I was born in '31, but some say '32. And when I went to Frunze three years ago, some of the papers turned up and they say I was born in '34. In other words,

there is no telling the exact time of my birth, other than that it falls somewhere between '31 and '34. But I did come upon a photo of my father and my mother's best friend, from that time. There is no date upon it, but it was supposedly taken while my mother was in labour, the day I was born. The photo is yellow with age, my

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### **Márta Mészáros**

*is an internationally acclaimed film director (Diary for My Children; Diary for My Loves; Diary for My Father and Mother, etc.).*

*The above is a chapter from her recent autobiography, Napló önmagamról (Diary about Myself) written with Éva Pataki, Pelikán, Budapest, 1993.*

father is very handsome, very smart, and a fashionable young woman is sitting beside him. There is an early morning atmosphere about the picture. How it came to be preserved I don't know. Perhaps my mother took it with her to Kirghizia, and my foster mother kept it for some reason. But how did all the documents, the birth certificates, the Hungarian certificates of citizenship, of baptism all come to be lost? Perhaps my mother destroyed them in '38, when my father was arrested, and she went in fear of any and everything. Or perhaps the KGB took them when they searched the house, before they took my father away. Anyway, all these documents have disappeared, like the countless other photographs, statues and paintings.

I have no distinct memories either of any street, village, house, or room. The clearest image I can recall is naturally of Frunze in the Soviet Union. There, at the foot of the massive Tien Shan, my father built a little house helped by some of his students. A very simple house that stands there to this day, the Kirghizes have preserved it. Everything around it has been pulled down, it is surrounded by ugly blocks and housing estates, but the little house is still there. It is in my father's name, and so held in respect. The house is sort of Hungarian: two rooms, a kitchen, a larger room called the studio, in which we and my parents lived. Maybe a hundred square metres, all told.

When my father was arrested, the house was taken from my mother; she was allowed to keep only the small back room and the tiny kitchen. Most of what I remember is connected with that kitchen and that room.

It was wartime and we went hungry. My mother was very ill. She didn't give in, fought for her life for our sakes. Took up teaching German. Sometimes she would disappear for days. A man in uniform would come for her and take her away. Looking back and piecing it all together, I think she was probably taken away for questioning. She wrote a lot of letters, petitions, trying to find out where my father was held. She must have loved him terribly to have left her country for his sake, following him wherever he went, even to far-away Asia. The train journey must have been frightful in itself; it must have taken a week or two to travel from Moscow to Frunze, to a place far from everything that is Europe and civilization. She followed her husband and suddenly found herself alone, with a child to care for and another on the way. She wanted at all costs to get back to Hungary, to her parents, her relatives. She could not tell them the truth in her letters. She wrote things like: "Laci is dangerously ill, it is not likely that he will survive." But she never managed—or perhaps did not dare—to send these letters, nor did she succeed in getting home. After the war broke out, returning home was out of the question, we Hungarians had become enemy.

Our little room was cheerless and gloomy. My mother spent much of her time in bed, ill with some disease, I'm not sure what. We caught typhus. When the ambulance came to take her away, she told me that she was very sick, that she was sure to die, and told me to look after myself and my twin baby sisters.

She had a short furcoat, it was all she had left. She told me to take good care of it, it would come in useful some time. There was a terrible sadness and despair in her eyes. I sensed that she had lost the will to live. I know now that she suffered from depression, she had no will left to fight. Hunger, misery, humiliation, that was her lot. She knew she would never be able to return to her country, would never see her husband again. Despair had possessed her whole being, her body, her eyes. She was afraid to go on living, but she urged me to be strong, to try to return home to Hungary. An ambulance took her away. I never saw her again, I never found her grave. But the image of the young, beautiful woman has stayed with me all my life. It accompanies me everywhere, as if she were there by my side. As if her strength and my father's strength had passed into me. They are always there, holding my hand.

The sad memories persist: standing with my mother in front of the prison, waiting to hand over a small package for my father. There were many women standing in line, Russian, Kirghiz, but also Poles, Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, and there were even some Italian and French women. The wives of fervent internationalists. They stared into the world with bewildered eyes, did not understand why their husbands had been taken away, what was going to happen to them. These women brought letters, small parcels for their husbands, onions, dried fruit, but they would never see their husbands again. Sometimes they would get a little note, my father, for instance, asked us to bring garlic. Then even the notes stopped coming. There were perhaps two altogether, "Thank you for the garlic, I am fine, my love to you both", that kind of note. My father was always strong, he was an optimist. I am quite sure in my mind today that he could not have died a natural death. He was either beaten to death or executed.

But I can recall beautiful moments too, not only tragic ones. Other images, different in atmosphere, from before the time the terrible arrests began. The sun is beating down, and there's the house, smelling strongly of paint. I am sitting in the window with a huge slice of bread and honey in my hand, bees are buzzing around me, and my father is laughing. And I remember being sent next door to fetch some eggs. I came back, bringing the eggs. An hour later pandemonium broke out because our neighbour found the money in place of the eggs under the hens. To me it seemed the natural thing to do, to give the money to the hens in return for their eggs. I didn't tell anyone about what I'd done because I'd done it as a matter of course. We had a beautiful Alsatian dog, my father sculpted a statue of him once. He was very gentle and would lie still for hours while my father drew him. He even taught him to go shopping for us. He would walk to the shop a couple of streets away, carrying the basket with the handle between his teeth. In the shop they would put the bread and the other things in the basket and he brought it home. One time he came back looking disconsolate. The basket had fallen out of his mouth and the bread had fallen

into the brook from the bridge. The bread was soaked through and the dog came home with a hangdog expression on his face.

There were wonderful, big parties. My father would invite a great many people, beautiful women, a mixture of Kirghizes, Russians, foreigners. They danced and they talked and there was music on those warm summer nights. I watched these wonderful people from my cot, and for me they stood for an extraordinary, a special way of life. I wanted to be like them. I remember one moment clearly: my mother, standing by the window in a beautiful black dress, looking tragic, with tears running down her face. My father goes over to her and says something. It is like a scene from a film. I did not understand what was happening but I could sense the terrible tension between them. My mother was jealous because my father had spent the whole evening dancing with a ravishing blonde. My mother must often have felt jealous of my father, because my father was a great success with women.

My father spent a lot of his time in the mountains, collecting rocks. He loved those mountains. He felt that this was where Hungarians had originally come from, these enormous mountains. He was always searching for our roots. He liked the Kirghiz, respected them for their love of freedom, their relationship with nature, with animals, with horses. He too was very fond of horses, he often went into the mountains on horseback. Looking for marble so he could sculpt.

### The arrest

I remember the arrest clearly. The dog howled dreadfully. I can still see the man in uniform pointing a gun at the dog and my father shouting: "Don't kill him! Don't kill him, please!" He goes over to the dog, restrains him. I can see the inside of the house, papers strewn everywhere, my father's materials, statues, everything in a mess. My mother is pregnant, her belly is huge. I can see her trembling. I was standing on my bed. But my father was in high spirits, this is my last memory of him. His gay smile. And I seem to recall his words: "I am leaving for a little while, but I'll be back soon." An optimist by nature, he could not imagine that it could happen to him. This injustice. He was a very just, fairminded man, who believed in the goodness and honesty of mankind. They took him away and my mother and I were left alone.

The situation became worse and worse, there was very little money. The twins, my sisters, were born. Strangers moved into the house who looked askance at us: we were Hungarians, and my father was an enemy of the people. We carried on the struggle for a while.

One Sunday afternoon we went to see some acquaintances. Hungarians, who had arrived with the first group of internationalists, after the Great War. We were sitting in the garden, I'll never forget the scene. The radio suddenly crackled to life: Molotov began to speak. He announced that Germany had attacked the

Soviet Union, war had broken out. Then came the Soviet national anthem. Everyone turned gloomy, several of the Hungarians began to cry. This meant they would be separated from their country for good. My mother lost her head and began to sob.

The situation went from bad to worse. My mother tried to put the twins, Vali and Lóri, into a crèche so she could take up teaching again, but it wasn't easy. She grew steadily weaker, became more and more anxious, distracted, pessimistic. She did not have any close friends.

Meanwhile, the first casualties of the war appeared in the city. They were housed in the school. Teaching was interrupted again and again. The stench of blood and rotting flesh filled the building. We children wrote letters for the blind and the crippled. It was all very grim and sad.

To her last moments my mother urged me to be strong and to do my best to return to Hungary after the war was over. As if she wanted to pour her diminishing energy into me. I was a little girl then but I remember her eyes, her gestures, her warmth. Then she died, my sisters were taken to an orphanage and I was left alone.

### Streets, cities

I had known another kind of life before these tragic events took place, during my early childhood. I was born in Budapest, somewhere in the Kispest district. My father was a successful sculptor. I talked about him later to Tibor Vilt and Amerigo Tot, who were his class-mates at the Academy of Arts. They told me that László Mészáros was the most talented of them all. His talent had gained him distinction early on in his youth, he won a great many prizes. He moved into the city, rented a studio flat in the vicinity of what is now Bartók Béla út—the area I live in today—courted my mother, who was really beautiful as a girl; in other words, he started out a success.

I have a vague recollection of going along a dark street, sitting on my father's shoulders, my head resting on his head.

This was probably their customary way of taking me from place to place when they went out. I went with them everywhere. I was talking at an early age, and soon became everybody's pet, because I talked a lot and most of what I said was funny. My father's young brother, Uncle Gyuszi, later told me that I was a lively, mischievous child. This image—my head resting on my father's head, my mother walking beside us, both of them young and handsome—this image has stayed with me always. It was the atmosphere in this image that gave me strength later. The biological relation, the physical connection between these three bodies, the love that bound us together. I soaked up this love and draw from it when I feel the need, as one draws water from a deep well.

My father won a scholarship and went to Rome, for of course Italy is the home of art, of sculpting. There he was able to immerse himself in the arts, visit

the museums, studied, absorbed everything he could. At least that is the way I see it today. Strictly speaking, Italian was my first language.

There are only snatches of memory remaining of this period: the sunshine, perhaps Rome, or Naples? I am walking in a park with my father, I am wearing a little white dress, he a light-coloured suit. Fantastic peacocks strut about in the park, walking before us, spreading their colourful tails. I start to shout, demanding that he should catch me a peacock because I want to pet it. My father starts to run after a peacock, falls, and his white suit gets muddied all over. I start to run, he catches up with me and slaps my face. This slap has been with me all my life, and the park, the peacocks, his white suit, the grey dust that coated it, his expression, my tears of despair...

I remember a boat-trip. The sun is shining brightly, then suddenly a storm blows up and the little ship is pitched and tossed by the sea. I later learned that we had gone on an outing to the island of Capri. Everyone was seasick, my father was the only one who enjoyed the fury of the elements. He stayed up on deck with the waves spraying over him.

I see another image before me, we are walking along a beautiful shore, with strange lights dancing around us. I remember walking among lagoons in the light of the setting sun, and the reflections cast by the water and the rocks. I don't remember the streets of Rome but I remember the lights, moments, moods.

**T**hen we probably returned to Hungary, but I have no memories of this, I don't even know where we lived after we came back. I remember Vienna, though. That was when my father began making preparations for going to the Soviet Union. It was Tibor Vilt who told me of how the thought of the possibility, the task, the Soviet Union, the huge new country, excited my father, a proletarian child. He found size exciting in itself—mountains, rocks; and Asia excited him as the place where we Hungarians originated from. He wanted to see the East. For his generation, the Soviet Union was a beautiful illusion. A great many left-wing European intellectual artists started out for Moscow to take part in the building of socialism. My father went ahead, we stayed in Vienna, waiting for the permit. Tibor Vilt, who was my godfather, told me that when he learned of László's trip to Moscow, he thought that the plan was sheer lunacy and told my father so. They came to blows over it in the studio, but my father proved the stronger. Vilt, filled with misgivings, wanted to prevent him from going at any price, but my father was very stubborn.

I don't know exactly when he set out for Asia, across that enormous country, down to the Chinese-Afghan border. It is probably from him that I inherited my love of travel. Travelling never tires me, I love variety, love to see other lands, other faces, like to taste strange food, speak other languages.

As wonderful, clean, sunny, bright are the images I have of Italy, as are my memories of Vienna gloomy. Endless staircases, grey houses, my mother's

despairing eyes. We were waiting for the permit to leave for the Soviet Union. I remember sitting in a pastry-shop with someone who had brought important news from my father. I was not a good eater and had a loathing for sweet things. I spread the cream filling from my cakes all over the chairs and tables. There was a great to-do about it, because well-dressed ladies had sat in the cream. My mother knew at once that I was responsible and dragged me out of the pastry-shop. I think we were very poor and very lonely in Vienna.

We often passed by a house where a woman sat in the window. She had a beautiful face and was always sewing dolls. Sewed the dolls and then sold them, that was how she made her living. I was always begging my mother to buy me one of those dolls, but we never had any money. Then we came by some money and went into the house. I remember it all clearly, the woman with the beautiful face was sitting by the window. She looked at us, she had a very gentle, kind smile. She did not get up from the chair, just showed us the dolls. Then I noticed that she didn't have any legs. She just sat there by the window, sewing these dolls, looking out into the world. This depressing image has stayed with me, the poor legless woman and the wonderful hand-sewn dolls.

At last our permit arrived and we could leave for the Soviet Union. I think my mother must have had many arguments with my father about this adventure. It must have been very difficult for her to leave Hungary, her family, to follow my father to Asia. But she followed him nonetheless because she loved him terribly. And her love overcame her fear of the distant, barbaric land. She begged my father to give up his plan. She may have had a foreboding of what was to come. But my father did not listen to her, he never listened to anyone.

It must have been winter when we arrived in Moscow; I remember everything was covered in deep snow, remember walking along snow-covered pavements with my mother, wearing felt boots. My mother can scarcely walk, there is a fierce wind blowing, everything around us is grim and sad. Looking back, I think we must have lived in a huge apartment shared by several tenants, there were a lot of people. I remember a long corridor, the one small light-bulb shedding a pale, dim light. The toilet and the kitchen were communal, we had a small room to ourselves, the three of us—my father was now with us, probably came to Moscow to fetch us. One strange episode has stayed with me: a shrill scream from out in the corridor, everyone rushing to see what had happened. A huge white rat sitting on top of the toilet. My father locked himself in with the rat, there was some shouting, then my father brought out the bloodied rat and disappeared with it down the stairway. The stairway was always dark, the lighting was poor, and there was always a bad smell. I can remember hardly a single cheerful moment of the time in Moscow, everything is gloomy, we share a strange feeling of expectancy.

Then the image clears; we arrive in Central Asia, at the capital of Kirghizia, Frunze. A splendid location, the city, at the foot of seven thousand metres high,



snow-capped mountains. The landscape is always veiled in a green haze, there are flowers, poplars everywhere, brooks babble in the streets of the city. The Kirghiz are a beautiful people, almond-eyed, black-haired, radiating healthy strength and freedom. Frunze is not particularly beautiful, because the majority of the Kirghiz still live in yourts, are still nomads, so the houses are simple, plain, of no special style. The mountains command respect, the sunsets are incredible, the huge, red sun sinks behind the mountains and paints the whole city crimson. In the early spring and summer one meter high tulips grow on the slopes, and from a distance it seems as though the mountains were on fire. In the winter the snow crunches under your feet, it is around twenty or thirty degrees below zero, everything is covered in ice.

I think the first one and a half or two years we spent in Frunze with my father must have been a very happy time. Rome and Naples and those first years in Frunze live on in my mind as a time of great happiness. My father's energy, optimism, ambition, and love for his work is a cheerful memory. He worked a great deal during this time. He was up at dawn carting bricks, building his house. He had also taken up teaching and founded the first Academy of Arts in Central Asia. He had all kinds of students, some of them totally illiterate, and he taught them to draw, carve, sculpt. In the meanwhile, he carried on with his own work, sculpting statues. Then, overnight, it all came to a stop. When they took him away he smiled and said he would soon be back. He never came back, all his work, all the things he had started, all his projects remained unfinished, most of his plans were never to come to fruition.

### The war

**T**he war brought misery, suffering and sorrow to everyone, not only to exiles but to the Russians and the Kirghiz as well. The men went off to war. In my childhood women did everything, absolutely everything. It was they who worked in the munitions factories, they who built houses, hauled bricks, carted food, built railways and roads, shovelled rubbish and snow. The men were at the front. Terrible letters came, notifications of "killed in action". Then the men reappeared, disabled and maimed. During this hopeless, dismal time I lost my mother. After my mother's death I too fell ill, I caught typhus. There was an epidemic, people were starving, there were scores of wounded and evacuees everywhere. People were arriving in masses from Moscow, from Leningrad, emaciated, wounded, starving.

One terrible image of this time has stayed with me. I am very ill, lying alone in a cold room under the eiderdown. This was after my mother had died, before my foster mother came. My sisters had been taken to a day orphanage and I was quite alone in the little room. I lay motionless in bed because it was terribly cold and I was covered with lice. There were lice crawling all over my head, my body.

I had no food except for a piece of mutton fat, I sucked on that. I have never been able to forget this feeling: the hunger, the smell, the lice, the taste of mutton fat, it has been with me all my life. That is why I never had a house, why I never wanted to move to the country, never wanted to be alone, because of this dreadful image. I like to surround myself with people, to have the feel of a family around me, something I've always longed for.

In school too, our first chore was to spread out a newspaper on the desk and comb out our hair with a fine-tooth comb. I can almost hear the patter of lice. Everyone was hungry, filthy, infested with lice. The strange thing is I don't remember ever crying, or feeling anguish. It was all very natural, everyone was mourning someone, there were many orphans, human life had no value at all. The hunger and the lice were terrible, but not in a psychological sense. We, the orphaned, went everywhere together, were sometimes given a piece of bread by a neighbour, sometimes gathered leaves. When you were close to the pain of others you didn't feel your own so much.

There was an old man next door. His house was at the bottom of the garden. He had eight or nine sons and they had all been killed in the war. As one notification of "killed in action" arrived after the other, the old man went out of his mind. He would stand at the bottom of the garden and yell. He stood, stared into the air in front of him, and yelled.

Then the Hungarians came, the evacuated. My foster mother, Anna Wagner, Imre Nagy and his family, the Rákosi family, László Rudas, the Révais, the Bebricses, in other words the later Hungarian Government. We slept on the floor all in a heap. We, Imre Nagy's daughter Zsóka and I, slept beside the window and always watched the trees, the shadows moving. There was no electricity, only a paraffin lamp, we had to go to bed quite early. I remember that the Hungarians argued a lot. Révai was a very irritable man, we children didn't like him. The diverse fates of all these people met and crossed in a dramatic way. A left-wing Hungarian sculptor builds a little house in Asia; he is arrested, and later, during the war, many of those who are to become central figures in Hungarian politics come to the place where he lived. Rákosi and his group, who will transpose Stalinism to Hungary, and Imre Nagy, who would be executed. Towards the end of the war the Hungarians left Frunze, and went to serve in the Red Army. My foster mother was a political officer. I called her friends Grandmother and Grandfather. They stayed with us in Frunze.

The end of the war brought great joy, though we knew a great many people had died and been wounded. But it was over at last, we had all survived the war, you could think of the future again. My foster mother, who had been in the Red Army for a year, decided to take us home to Hungary. We applied for passports. You had to wait months for the papers to come. In the Soviet Union at that time you needed passports, KGB permission, if you wanted to go anywhere. To begin with, we needed permission to go back to Moscow.

So we began wending our way back. We went to the station very early, at daybreak. It was in a state of siege: every foot of ground was packed with people, children, luggage. The train came in and apocalyptic scenes ensued. The crowd stormed the train, trying to get on board from the front, from the back, through the windows, to find a place. The boy from next door helped us. He crawled through the window and occupied the two upper racks: the journey to Moscow took eight to ten days, and my sisters and I slept on the racks. The train was full to overflowing, each compartment was packed with people. An Asian man who had a lot of food took pity on us. He gave us some dried fruit which was incredibly good.

I don't remember arriving in Moscow, just that we lived in a gymnasium-like place. I remember a great hall where there were a lot of people. There in Moscow, Grandmother and Grandfather took us to buy shoes. During the war I mostly went barefoot. Later it turned out that this was a good thing, it made you healthy. For the first time in my life I had a pair of black buttoned shoes, and this was a great event for me. Of course they hurt my feet terribly but I felt very grown-up and lady-like in them. We spent perhaps a few weeks in Moscow altogether. I mooched about a lot, lost myself in the streets, in the parks, for which Grandfather boxed my ears a couple of times. But I knew perfectly well how to find my way back to the gymn-hall. I watched the streets, the people, the strange, huge city. Moscow is very eclectic, virtually unfathomable to European eyes. Incredible squalor, overcrowding and stench in the backyards, practically no sign of civilization. At the same time, you can see magnificent old churches, graceful mansions, beautiful old houses. Everything is huge, infinite.

The day came when we set out for Hungary. We went by plane, a very small one. I remember the plane landing in Kiev. I remember the atmosphere of this journey very well, I felt strangely uneasy, anxious. I was going home to my country, where my parents were born, where they had been happy, a country I did not know. I wanted to meet my father's relatives, I knew his mother was still alive. I wanted to meet my mother's parents too, though I knew nothing about them, not even whether they were alive or dead.

My childhood ended during that journey home, the journey to Budapest. I had lived it and survived it. Nothing could kill me, neither sorrow, nor hunger, nor war, nor solitude. ♣

*Translated by Eszter Molnár*

# Surprise and Precision

## The Poetry of László Kálnoky

László Kálnoky lived for seventy-three years, more than most of his contemporaries who enjoyed better health. Tuberculosis had struck him at the time when he was writing the poems to be included in his first volume, *Árnyak kertje*. (The Garden of Shadows, 1939), and ended his days as a champion tennis player. The young man, born in 1912, who had travelled to England, France, Switzerland, and Italy as a boy scout, a passionate reader, and devourer of ghost stories, was completely changed by his illness. Treatment made him put on weight, he withdrew from the company of his friends for fear of infecting them, and the woman he loved left him. But his first volume earned him literary recognition. Some of the best poets of his generation, Miklós Radnóti, Gyula Takáts, Sándor Weöres, and István Vas, sent him a joint postcard to thank him for the volume he had sent them. "This was the only shade missing from the spectrum of our generation", were the words the poet remembered from the card, lost during the war. "A practically perfect little volume" István Vas was to say about this book later.

The poems in the volume, written between 1932 and 1938, already show signs of Kálnoky's strength: precision of statement, grotesque vision and the aesthetic of the ugly characterized his work right to the end of his life.

This first volume contained traditional, perfect formal poems, but later he broke with formal verse, making the switch to loosely iambic free verse or rhythmic, epic prose. The precision, verging on the meticulous, that characterizes this volume,

becomes the source of the black humour of his later poetry. Writing without any slackness or evasion, being mercilessly sincere is a moral dimension for Kálnoky. His personal honesty made him procure false documents to protect István Vas, his friend and fellow-poet, who was persecuted as a Jew. It also made him abandon a project of translating

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Baudelaire, whom he considered without peer, once he realized that the not very successful existing translations contained perfect lines that he obviously could not adopt into his own version. And what else can one call it but decency that he always answered the letters and even volumes sent to him by beginners and dilettantes?

Kálnoky is often called the poet of surprises. His precise statements make one expect nothing extraordinary, but then transfiguration follows and the mask drops. In his first book, the beloved girl dreamily wanders through fields, picking hands, legs and arms of men as if they were flowers; the straw dipped into the drink suddenly starts to bleed; the swing hangs in the yard like a man who has fainted at night, etc. He brings to life the secret self of objects as plastically as Magritte's marble head does a bleeding human temple or his unlaced boots evoke a foot finishing in human toes.

**D**uring the decades of socialism, it was a crime in Hungary for a writer to be a pessimist, and Kálnoky had good reasons for pessimism, even more than his contemporaries who had achieved their reputations as writers before him. The operations (the TB attacked other organs) made his figure shorter, the woman he loved had rejected him; he was born and studied far away from Budapest, in a small town; his second volume was not published for quite a long time because of the war—all this is probably enough to justify his pessimism. And perhaps this is the reason why his second book, *Lázás csillagon* (On a Feverish Star, 1957) brought him "temporary failure". "His suffering mingled with affectation," István Vas wrote about his "dolorism". "Clown and descender into hell," another critic wrote, but it was precisely these two qualities of his that had faded by the end of the second volume. Still, in a way, the collection, containing poems written between 1939 and 1956, is significant: it may for the most part be a sort of workbook and not an integral volume of poetry, but its importance is that the poet is exercising so that he would not forget how to speak. Two poems, "*Bordaműtét*" (Costectomy) and "*Szanatóriumi elégia*" (Elegy from a Sanatorium) stood out from the rest and were later to be frequently anthologized. Perhaps the physical deterioration his friends all thought would be very rapid was halted by the sense of responsibility manifest in the volume, by the psychosomatic effect of his vocation.

Kálnoky was also one of the most important translators of his time. Almost all the poets and writers who were banned from publishing their own work translated, but only Sándor Weöres was as prolific and of such brilliance as Kálnoky. He rendered nearly 80,000 lines of poetry into Hungarian, works by Ancient Greek, Latin, Spanish, and French poets (amongst the latter Hugo, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Apollinaire); Germans, including the second part of Goethe's *Faust*; Italians, among them the Hermetists; English and American poets, such as Shakespeare, Donne, Keats, Eliot, and e. e. cummings. "I stirred up the enthusiasm necessary for writing the original poem each time..." he writes. "For example, I studied all that was

available on the life of the poet whose work I was going to translate, and finally I managed to imagine for the time I was working on the poem that I am Goethe, Heine, Hugo, Rilke, etc.; like the actor whose performance is outstanding only if, in his imagination, he puts himself inside the skin of the person he is playing on stage." "I devoted twenty years of my life to translating, which had a paralysing effect on my own poetry... I wrote that I had grown sick of translating... I am sure that in the treadmill of translating poetry, volumes of my own got lost."

His third book, *Lángok árnyékában* (In the Shadow of Flames, 1970), however, brought total success and justified his artistic perseverance to himself. At the time, he had reached that happy state where every blow was a gain. His crippling disease, his being ignored as a poet, his unrequited, rejected love, the Russian invasion of 1956, the retaliation and the corruption the Kádár-regime called "consolidation," everything swept him towards freedom. "His homelessness is a profound being-at-home," Soloviev wrote about Dostoyevsky. This is how Kálnoky also finds a home, in being an outcast. The time had gone when he wrote an ode to "Hopelessness," by now each and every line of his is addressed to hopelessness.

In connection with Dostoyevsky, it is worth noting that the latter's ideas can be recognized in Kálnoky's two-stanza poem, "Munkamódszerül" (By Way of a Working Method): "Look at the phenomena / like the prisoner who is not blindfolded / sees the trees, the bushes / a moment before the volley." (Prose translation.) The spectacle in front of the eye that appears in its totality, with its right side and its seamy side, is typical of Kálnoky's images. Prisoner of his own individual destiny and of history, from the beginning to the end of his life he remained an incorruptible truth-teller. "Attach word to word cautiously / like someone whom only his own / absence encourages to speak," says the second stanza, and indeed, it seems as if his most personal confessions are speaking of the vicissitudes of a strange, perhaps estranged witness.

Three different tones are typical of this volume: one of ironic and painful remembrance evoking the past; another of contemplation, taking an account of the present with an objective pessimism; and, finally, that of a brilliant performance by the master of form.

Half a dozen poems here are visions in movement, coloured with images of floating, swimming and drifting. For Kálnoky, water often means the Styx and the ferryman, Charon; however, the interpretation of water as sexuality occurs alongside the images of death. He is clearly one of that long line of poets who make a double approach to the subject of love. He both exalts and tears the beloved to pieces, a method that yields wonderful poetical results. Of course, he also finds a certain gratification and consolation in the way he shows the ageing of the adored woman's face, this "disintegrating heaven", on his canvas. However, taste and humanity are never harmed, and he and his countless disappointments in love are made to appear with the same heroic clumsiness as this ageing face.

Kálnoky's poems, despite their horrifying locales and images of deprivation, can also be extremely funny. It is impossible not to notice his artistic satisfaction, his growing self-confidence in them. He as it were bequeathes to the reader the snakeskin that he has just thrown off. We can be certain that the topic will reappear in a new guise.

Under these conditions, a true and consistent pessimism would be to silence himself, but Kálnoky likes talking and finds an endless source of inspiration in dark colours. "The candles inhale their own flames," begins "Kétségbeesés" (Despair) with an animistic image. "Scrabbling / can be heard in the wall not long before an arm / bone, shin-bone shatters the paper." (Tr. Edwin Morgan.) Obviously, the grotesque tone does not weaken the tragic meaning of the poem, heightened even more by a meticulous choice of words. "Under a rain of blows, the heart / plunges blindly forward, / trying to break a path / through friable rock" he writes in a splendid *Bagatelle*, and closes the series of daring associations with "Thus the worm, boring into / the dark night of the toe." (Tr. Kenneth McRobbie)

This volume contains Kálnoky's most intimate long confession, the seven sonnets of "A megalázott" (The Humiliated One), along with two great dramatic monologues, "Hérosztrátosz" (Herostratus) and "Hamlet elkallódott monológja" (Hamlet's Lost Monologue), and one of the most important of his poems, *De Profundis*.

*De Profundis* was written in 1969, when Kálnoky was 57 years old. This was the point when he stopped translating, in full control of his material, and stood at midpoint as a poet. His poem starts soberly, as usual, a false hope flashes for a moment, then the romantic poetic self is mocked, and self-hatred is voiced, even though we should not allow ourselves to be taken in by it. The powerful series of images thrust a "lumpish-headed" diver (a water image again), stumbling in neon lights, to the surface: this diver is the subject of the poem. The stanza closes with a surrealist image: "fate has stopped waiting for me / neighing, stamping, bridled." (Tr. Edwin Morgan). The poem could end here, with this negation expressing a new deprivation, but something different happens. Kálnoky conjures up the moustached dictators of our century and, escaping from these monstrous faces, withdraws from a human into a vegetal existence.

**T**he sources of Kálnoky's inspiration are scattered all over Europe's cultural map. *De Profundis* goes back to Psalm 130, but Kálnoky's poem disregards the psalm's religious meaning. Half a dozen classical and contemporary Hungarian poets could be listed, Attila József, Weöres and Pilinszky among the latter, and first and foremost on the list would be Shakespeare. He was the poet Kálnoky had admired since his youth and his presence is felt behind the dramatic monologues of this volume, in "Herostratus" and "Hamlet's Lost Monologue", as Kálnoky himself pointed out.

"Hamlet's Lost Monologue" is a sweeping philosophical poem about death, written in the language of János Arany, the brilliant 19th century translator of *Hamlet*. It is Kálnoky's personal confession as well as a "dictated" text. "I was alone

at a health resort in the hills...”, Kálnoky wrote about the poem, “it was as if suddenly an unfamiliar voice had started to dictate. I grabbed a pen and a piece of paper immediately and started to write feverishly, but the dictation was too quick, so I could not note down the whole text. [...] The title of the poem could only be “Hamlet’s Lost Monologue”. This also determined the form of the poem [...] for someone who writes a lot, the world of pure harmonies becomes drained [...] and he needs disharmony by all means [...] I did not want to imitate János Arany, yet I adopted his poetic language as a model.”

Another piece based on Arany’s language in “Henry XIX,” a thirty-five line parody of Shakespeare, composed of mostly meaningless words that imitate the sound of 19th century Shakespeare translations. It is another *tour de force* by the poet of surprises, as it has become an irresistibly successful number of comedians.

The volume *In the Shadow of Flames*, earned Kálnoky full recognition as a poet. He did not have to continue translating. His private life also changed. His mother, with whom he had lived after his first marriage had broken up, died, he remarried and the marriage was a harmonious one. His health also became more stable. There came a proliferation of poems, but the setting was now mostly in the past, evoking his life and bidding farewell to those he had once loved. A new collection, *Farsang utóján* (Shrovetide, 1977) contains poems written between 1973 and 1975, and seems to reflect these external changes.

“*Változatok egy témára*” (Theme with Variations), a cycle in this volume is about the past and death. The unforgettable “*Az elsodortak*” (Swept Away), depicting the promenade of his native town in the evening, begins the cycle. “The virtuosity of this poem,” István Vas writes, “is that the meaning behind it, the meaning he does not openly state, not just out of tact and good taste, but because he does not have to state it, this hidden but implied meaning raises the content of the poem to the level of drama rather than catastrophe, and this is what gives a sort of gratification to the quiet serenity of the last line, silenced to calmness, a gratification similar to the redemption we experience in great dramas.”

The way Kálnoky evokes his dead is characteristically his own. “*Évfordulóra*” (To an Anniversary) is no longer about imaginary grief, (it is not mourning an invented person,) but describes his mother’s death, the memory of his dead lover and his own foreshadowed death in a highly original way.

The opening lines of “*Találkozás*” (Meeting) provide an excellent example for the richness of association in Kálnoky’s imagery. “In the yellowly reflecting ring around the moon, your face / withers light-sensitive plants.” The moon, now part of an established system of symbols, sets into motion the metaphor with which the poem opens. The moon represents death, and the dead person, subject to the laws of death, in glancing back at the living, kills those his gaze falls on. Kálnoky’s world after death is not so much the “life to come”, as simply another world. This is a realm devoid of the grace of religion, and of any kind of mercy in general.

“Yes! I say: He who gives a new birth to himself / Will not be lost,” declares the



last two lines of "*Letépett álarcok*" (Masks Torn Off). This optimistic advice can ultimately be considered, in spite of all the dark shades, as Kálnoky's life programme. His poetry, up to the final (1985) volume, was constant renewal.

"*Szvidrigajlov utolsó éjszakája*" (Svidrigailov's Last Night) provides a glimpse into Kálnoky's workshop. The character of Dostoyevsky's novel and of the poem looks around his bleak surroundings, the disreputable boardinghouse, on the last night of his life before his suicide. He is responsible for the suicide of a girl he had gotten with child, he has squandered all the money acquired dishonestly, and he has lost interest in everything. The succession of identical syntactic structures that sound like incantations, negation following affirmation, the emotionally contrasting adjectives summarize the setting of the Dostoyevsky novel. However, the last stanza takes a new turn. What is left out from the relevant scene of *Crime and Punishment* is the water in the dream that foreshadows the death of Svidrigailov: an underlying theme typical of other Kálnoky poems as well as the symbol of death. The poem's conclusion is similar to Sartre's "*l'enfer—c'est les autres*," for Kálnoky death is the unchanged continuation of our existence here in this world, not heaven, not hell, but a dusty hut, a dirty window, a wicker chair—in other words, where we live here and now.

His fifth book, *Egy magánzó emlékirataiból* (From the Memoirs of a Man of Private Means) came out in 1976. It is more of a memoir than a volume of poetry, a series of reminiscences narrating the events, significant and insignificant, of his childhood and youth. In his 1981 *Egy hiéna utóélete* (The Afterlife of a Hyena) he introduces his alter-ego, Szaniszló Homálynoki, so as to "win back readers alienated from poetry." Here he realizes his old plans to write his memoirs in prose. Anecdotal stories recount the disasters of the previous decades from the point of view of a common man, a librarian and proof-reader, who maintains an unshaken belief in reason and justice. An East-European Chaplin figure stumbles among the shabby settings and assorted horrors of the communist regime. The alter-ego stories of *Bálnák a parton* (Whales on the Shore) (1982) complete the historical tableau with their accounts of the fascist era in Hungary at the end of the war.

*Egy mítosz születése* (The Birth of a Myth) (1985) presents "existential experiences and parables," bringing to mind the poems of Borges' old age, and providing an introduction to an unfamiliar world which his very first volume had begun to explore, and from which Kálnoky was within a hair's breadth in 1985. ■

László Kálnoky

## Poems

Translated by Kenneth and Zita McRobbie

### *Heart Escaping*

*Menekülő szív*

*Under a rain of blows, the heart  
plunges blindly forward,  
trying to break a path  
through friable rock  
which the futility of flight  
softens into compassion.  
Thus the worm, boring into  
the dark night of the toe.*

### *Hamlet's Lost Monologue*

*Hamlet elkallódott monológja*

*Denmark sleeps soundly.  
Its bays and meadows are sunk in night.  
I'm alone now, sleepless prince prowling  
that moonlit glimmering stairway  
where once I followed in the steps of the ghost.  
I summon it again; but it doesn't come.  
Shall I go back to the palace then?  
Listen to the murderer's drunken  
snoring behind iron-bound doors?  
Or wait outside under the open sky  
and stare at scenes devised in misty air  
and shapes set there by invisible hands,  
beyond mind's understanding?  
Or should I perhaps await those nightmares  
befalling mortals in the small hours  
when breathing comes in fits and starts,*

when the heart begins violently to beat,  
its palpitations shattering the thickly  
encrusted layers of disquietude?  
Shall I conjure faces of the guiltless,  
their dust now jealously enclosed  
within funerary urns of stone  
whom it was my mission to deliver up,  
casually playing some ball-game perhaps  
even as they trustingly cried out my name,  
their final accusing convulsions going to my head?  
No! For I dread seeing them again  
when the autumn rains, the claws of winter  
disintegrate the fence of too  
too perishable flesh about the bones.

As if I were sitting in a tossing barque  
on all sides the drowning crowd around,  
hands reaching up, clutching at the gunwales,  
and they couldn't know that I, the boatman,  
already count myself among them...  
You rulers of earth and sky,  
who for your amusement formed  
stars' brightness from lightless clay,  
what do you care if some mistaken principle's  
at work in your insignificant creation!  
Anyway, it's I who's doomed to perish,  
I who proclaim your shame to your face.

My witnesses are the fallen millions,  
imprints of primeval ferns in shales,  
bone fragments turning up in soils  
of gigantic reptiles, wingless birds,  
and mothers' wombs opening amid pain  
from which like bones from earth's belly  
emerges already destined for death  
puling livesome life.

My witnesses are those illusory  
miracles of nature, those blinding sparks'  
fiery freckles on the cheeks of dawn,  
my witnesses the denizens of evening gardens,  
and darkening flower-rage in scarlet calyxes  
when the sun plunges to its  
waist in the ocean.

*My witnesses are the shells in gravels  
of eroding rivers' estuaries  
and snails' empty houses. And my witnesses  
are the holiest concepts conceived  
by wisdom, which will burst in the air  
like seedpods, blown as far as they can go,  
without anything living reaching into them.*

*No, I'll not submit to punishment  
from such a quarter, though pecked fragments of liver  
fall warningly at my feet.*

*Peering out to sea, I know  
I'm no sinner; it's your ship  
that with its cargo of alluring bait  
has entered port, so that eager hands  
of the vulgar, of milady, of the haughty councillor  
may rummage through its goods.*

*And I despise this tawdry trash  
with which you lead astray.  
Not for me this business practice.  
I'll die free. And if, before,  
I couldn't be your adversary,  
I'll not be an accessory...*

## *Wanderings on a Heavenly Body*

*Kalandozás egy égitesten*

*Lifeless plains at the foot of  
ash-bluelly slumbering mountains.  
Arriving in cities, saddest  
are the piles of bones yellowly  
littering the back-street alleys,  
stumps of reddish brickwork  
in the last flare of evening light,  
and stone steps to the harbour  
from which caked blood was washed off  
one high-tide long long ago...*

*A rain of ash has fallen on corpses  
of the light-minded who'd yielded  
to misleading impulses.*

*In the centre  
raged an epidemic more terrible than plague,  
though the stars were shining in the same way.  
And they'll do so, even when  
run-wild vegetation overgrows  
the statues and topmost tower-roof mouldings.*

*It spelled failure; but its blackness was  
not without a certain gleam of heroism,  
because those who failed had reached for the heights.  
Ending pathetically, their shame  
could never wipe away the sorrow.  
Here now humility again abases itself  
and covers with kisses the soil's wounds,  
remembering's hook in its heart.*

## *Swept Away*

*Az elsodortak*

*Again and again that scene, enthralling in its ordinariness,  
its banality breathtaking, the overwhelming greyness  
of Eger's main street in the 'thirties,  
the bustling evening Corso that short stretch  
between Lyceum and cinema,  
the pool of yellow lamplight, washed-out faces,  
the stately gait of a middle-aged gentleman with corporation,  
heavy gold watch chains of office-managers or well-to-do merchants  
looped across buttoned up waistcoats,  
I see their buxom or scrawny spouses' mill-wheel hats  
and hear the gigglings of sailor-suited schoolgirls  
swarming out from the English Misses' chapel after the May litany,  
here a whiff of cologne, there of wine or cigar,  
the magistrate and his wife each taking an arm of their idiot  
daughter who otherwise would paw the boys,  
with silver-headed cane the frock-coated  
land-titles registrar takes his evening stroll,  
the church's grey-haired choir-master pursues chits of girls,*

*a lilac-sashed canon drives off in a glass-doored coach,  
and six or seven church towers all of a sudden  
together ring out vespers,  
and already the scene begins to waver,  
flood-water tollings making it tremble  
the narrow street tapers to a mountain torrent,  
swelling waves of sound carry passers-by on its current,  
flailing arms, carp mouths, catfish whiskers breaking surface,  
the splashing of the drowning, gasped agonies of fear,  
all carried on the tide towards the pitch-black mouth,  
I dead trout among them, but my silvery bruised scales  
are shining still, there in the twilight  
on housewalls or cliff-face shore.*

## Remembering

*Az emlékezo*

*And he sees them, sees their faces  
as they rise from the surface of a puddle  
to beat frenziedly at his window  
and dissolve into long dribblings.*

*And there's no preventing their coming,  
wandering up and down on the wind;  
he knows it's impossible not to hear  
murmuring voices in the walls,*

*and their rising rhythmic drumming  
goes right through his aching temples,  
like an abruptly slammed down  
piano lid, snuffing out  
skittish sparklers of roulades.*

# Meeting

Találkozás

*Sometimes you appear in the swampy twilight.  
In the yellowly reflecting ring around the moon, your face  
withers light-sensitive plants.  
Between us rises invisible barbed wire.  
The table's glass of red wine slowly bleeds away,  
and a signal cracks in the furniture.*

*I start off, sea-green waves of rain in my face.  
I'm trying out other-worldly navigation, awkward sailor  
always carried off course by some sardonic squall,  
battling malevolent currents to the end.  
Or like one who wakes in a pitch-black room  
and gropes his way blindly in one direction or another,  
knocking into chairs, his fumbling hand  
upsetting meaningless objects arranged on a table,  
looking for the door long since bricked up...*

## Svidrigailov's Last Night

Szvidrigajlov utolsó éjszakája

*I'm waiting for sleep, but it doesn't come.  
Why keep tossing on this rickety bed  
in an inn of dubious repute?  
What is it that settles on my soul, like dust  
sifting between pages of a book,  
blotting out the characters?  
Why so terrifying the high wind's sighing  
through the nearby trees?  
How remote now my country estate,  
my well-rubbed pipes, my furniture,  
comfort that was such an assumed necessity,  
priest-cursing brandy on an empty stomach,  
a well-basted roast pheasant and partridge,  
hearty-breakfast chubby little woodcocks,  
the pantry's sides of bacon, hams,  
pianoforte evenings in the salon,*

*hands of whist, seducings of girls  
their protestings stifled by embraces,  
so many secret wickedly sweet cuddlings,  
the sleigh jingling down the road's incline,  
little grey horse's shadow on the snow.*

*Why should this still interest me,  
upon whom the dead have come to call?  
Nothing remains here any more  
except dark patches where objects used to be,  
leather-smell, mouse-stink, soiled bedclothes  
and a meal tray's nauseous leftovers'  
feast for flies.  
I've been distributing my money.  
Do they deserve it? Better not ask.  
This way it's easier to leave,  
and I've a premonition of where the road will end.*

*Yes, yes... Eternity's neither  
heavenly bliss nor fiery hell.  
It's a dusty alcove, with nothing  
but a dirty window you can't see out of,  
a dilapidated cane-bottomed chair, walls sooty  
like those behind some hovel's stove,  
cobwebs thick across the corners.  
There one can yawn, then nod off  
for a thousand years, and then another.  
Occasionally waking with a start. Fancying there's  
a knock at the door, though it's only the cold heart's  
spasmodic flutter. An irritable wave of a hand,  
heavy head again falling forward onto chest.*



# From St. Stephen to Post-Ceaușescu

**T**ransylvania is the southeastern corner of the Carpathian Basin, covering a territory of around 100,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Its southern and eastern borders are formed by the Carpathian Mountains, rising above 2000 m in many places, between it and Wallachia and Moldavia respectively. The northern frontiers are low accessible hills, and Transylvania merges with the Great Hungarian Plain in the west.

The first state on the territory was established in the first century B.C. by the Dacians, an Indo-European people. In 106 A.D., the Roman Emperor Trajan conducted a successful campaign against Decebal, the Dacian King, incorporating Dacia into the Empire. In 271, Rome vacated Dacia, resettling its inhabitants in other provinces. For a long time after, Transylvania was to be the temporary home of successive waves of peoples migrating westward from Asia. One after another came the Goths, the Huns, Gepids, and Avars. When Transylvania was occupied by the Hungarians in the 890s, a small number of Slavs lived in the territory, which was nominally part of the Bulgarian Empire.

From the end of the ninth century, Hungarian tribes arriving in the Carpathian Basin gradually began to occupy Transylvania. Their first Christian king, St Stephen, was crowned in 1000 and from that point until 1920 Transylvania was part of the Hungarian Kingdom. The equestrian-peasant Hungarians dwelt mostly along the river-valleys and were occupied principally in animal husbandry and agriculture. The kings of the first Hungarian dynasty, the House of Árpád, left the defence of the eastern frontier to the Székely, a Hungarian tribe. In the thirteenth century, Hungarian kings invited Saxon-Germans from the Holy Roman Empire to settle along Transylvania's southern border. Most of the population of Transylvania lived as serfs on the estates of the nobility. The Székely, however, maintained a free status in return for their military obligations, and the Saxons also enjoyed a wide-ranging autonomy.

The ancestors of today's Romanians

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*The historian **Kálmán Benda**, who died suddenly, at the age of eighty-one as we were going to press, headed the Ráday Library of the Danube Riparian Calvinist Church District. He was the author or editor of a number of monographs and of 15th-18th century sources.*

appeared in the mountains of southern Transylvania toward the end of the twelfth century. They were mountain shepherds, who migrated from Wallachia as part of their transhumance. Their villages are first mentioned in thirteenth century documents. They were serfs, whose Eastern Orthodox creed distinguished them from the Catholic Hungarians and Saxons.

By the end of the fifteenth century, Transylvania had a population of roughly eight hundred thousand. Of these, two-thirds were Hungarians, the remainder dividing equally between Saxons and Romanians.

Transylvania was an organic part of the Hungarian Kingdom, but maintained a certain amount of administrative autonomy. A *voivode*, appointed by the king, was responsible for its governance. This position was almost always filled by a member of the Hungarian aristocracy from outside the territory. In 1437, in response to the peasant uprising that year, the three "nations" of Transylvania—i.e. the three privileged classes—formed an alliance, known as the Union. From that time on, the Union carried out the basic administration in the province. The three privileged "nations" were Hungarians (that is, the Hungarian nobility, which included Saxons as well as Romanians), Székely (ethnically Hungarian border guards with privileges accruing from their military service) and Saxons (privileged German settlers). Ninety per cent of the population—Hungarians, Romanians and Saxons alike—were serfs.

In 1526, at the Battle of Mohács, the Hungarian army was annihilated by the armies of Soliman, the Turkish Sultan. The King of Hungary was killed. The medieval Hungarian Kingdom collapsed and the country was divided into three parts. The southern and central territories, including the capital Buda, came under Turkish rule. The northern and western sections—all that remained of the old Kingdom—fell to the Habsburgs, who ruled it from Vienna. Transylvania, the southeastern area, became an independent country governed by a succession of Hungarian princes. The Principality of Transylvania existed in this form until the end of the seventeenth century. Taxes were paid to the Turkish sultan, but the Turks made no attempt to interfere with the country's internal affairs.

The Kingdom of Hungary thus became part of the Habsburg Empire, a regime which did not overly concern itself with Hungarian interests. Constant Turkish assaults (the Sultan's army reached Vienna three times in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) decimated the population of the Kingdom of Hungary, which regressed both economically and culturally. The medieval Kingdom of Hungary's national traditions were continued by the Principality of Transylvania, which had turned Protestant during the Reformation. Transylvania joined the allied anti-Habsburg coalition as the ally of North European Protestant powers and France, defending not only the religious freedom of the Hungarian Kingdom's Protestants against an aggressive Counter Reformation, but also the constitutional identity of the realm within the Habsburg Empire. Transylvania's princes—especially István Báthory, later King of Poland as well, and Gabriel Bethlen and George Rákóczi in the seventeenth century—ensured longish periods of peace to the small country. Their

court in Gyulafehérvár became the centre of Hungarian culture for a Kingdom divided in three. Close cultural ties were maintained with Protestant Europe. Noted teachers from the lower Rhine taught at the College there and students pursued their higher studies—postgraduate work in today's terms—in the Netherlands and the British Isles. They returned imbued with modern ideas and with new views of the world. Theirs was the lion's share in vernacular culture and the reception of advanced ideas progressing towards the Enlightenment.

In contrast with the Habsburgs' aggressive, proselytizing religious policy and the religious wars raging in Western Europe, Transylvania was a paradigm of denominational toleration. The Torda Diet of 1568 established complete freedom and equality for the four denominations, Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Unitarianism. In addition, the tolerated Greek-Orthodox church, though lacking political rights, enjoyed complete freedom of religion and had its own hierarchy and schools. Transylvania had no privileged established church, and all denominations were represented in the Principality's Council. Prince Gábor Bethlen prohibited the wearing of yellow stars by Jews, which was mandatory elsewhere. There was peace between the principality's various denominations as well as among its ethnic groups. The three major ones, Hungarian, Romanian and Saxon, were free to develop their own culture, run their own schools, use their vernacular. The internal strife in Transylvania pitted neither nations nor religions against one another, but the privileged against the have-nots.

Fifteen years of war at the end of the seventeenth century saw a European coalition push the Turks out of Hungary. In 1690 Transylvania rejoined the Kingdom of Hungary, but the Habsburgs did not permit its reunion with other parts of the kingdom. Instead, Transylvania, though one of the Hungarian Crown Lands, was governed from Vienna and considered part of the Empire. The Habsburgs treated Transylvania as a step-child, granting this, their easternmost, province Grand Duchy status in compensation for her loss of independence.

**B**y the eighteenth century, Transylvania's ethnic composition had changed significantly. The Turkish wars, which had lasted for a century and a half and included many Tartar raids, had destroyed Hungarian villages in the plains and in river valleys; Romanians in the mountains were more protected. When the fighting had subsided, the Romanians moved down into the deserted villages. In addition, large numbers of Romanians from Wallachia—which remained under the Turks—escaped to Transylvania, fleeing the tyranny of frequently changing *voivodes* appointed by Constantinople. Transylvania's population in mid-eighteenth century was nearly half Romanian, one-third Hungarian and the rest Saxon.

In the early 18th century Vienna's anti-Protestantism and the aggressive propagation of Uniates (Greek Catholics), which broke up the unity of Orthodoxy, put an end to the religious peace of earlier years. Then, with the national awakenings that began in mid-century, Transylvania's ethnic groups were turned against one

another for the first time. At first these movements were cultural, concentrating on the vernacular and on ethnocultural self-awareness, but they soon became political. It was at that point that the leading figures of the Romanian national movement—Uniate priests educated in Rome—formulated the theory of Daco-Roman continuity. The essence of the theory sees the Romanians as descendants of the Dacians and the Roman legionaries who had occupied Transylvania. As indigenous inhabitants of the region—the theory went—the Romanians were fully justified in demanding acceptance as the fourth recognized nation of Transylvania, indeed, they soon felt, justified in demanding political dominance. While Hungarians were struggling with Vienna over Transylvania's independence and over what they saw as their inherited positions of political leadership, Romanians and Saxons turned against them with support, both covert and open, of the administration there. The steadily worsening relations between Hungarians and Romanians were further aggravated by the fact that two divergent European cultural traditions stood behind conflicting political ambitions; one had grown out of western Christianity while the other, Romanian, was rooted in Byzantine Orthodoxy.

The Hungarian Revolution of 1848 abolished the old arrangement, bringing an end to feudal privileges, and Transylvania's union with Hungary was declared. The Hungarians of Transylvania were at one with the revolution and union; the Saxons and the Romanians, however, rejected it. When fighting erupted between the Hungarians and the Habsburgs, the latter two nations sided with the imperial forces. After crushing the Hungarian bid for freedom, Vienna repealed the legislation of the revolution. The feudal system was reimposed and the union of Transylvania with Hungary annulled. The Habsburgs were nevertheless cautious about accord- ing more liberties to any of the Grand Duchy's nationalities. As a politician of the time put it: under the neo-absolutism bearing down on post-1849 Hungary and Transylvania, non-Hungarians received as a reward what Hungarians were given as a punishment.

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 again reinstated union between Transylvania and Hungary. The following year, Transylvanian Romanians meeting in Balázsfalva (Blaj-Blasendorf) protested against the union. Likewise in 1868, the Hungarian Parliament legislated on the "equality of nationalities" (Law XLIV). This act held that one political nation existed in Hungary, the integrated and indivisible Hungarian nation, to which every citizen of the country belonged, whatever his ethnic origin. The official language was to be Hungarian, and the various minorities were free to use their own tongue in local administration and the lower courts. The state assumed responsibility for providing each of the country's ethnic groups with elementary and intermediate education in their native language. It guaranteed the rights of individuals, churches and, indeed, whole communities to establish national schools as well as cultural and economic organizations.

Despite the law, Hungarian politicians—covertly at first, but then in an increasingly open manner—aspired to the full assimilation of the minorities. In 1907, the *Lex*

*Apponyi* required that Hungarian be taught in all schools. This directive sparked off opposition and demonstrations among the Romanians of Transylvania.

**T**he historical turning point after the Great War—the 1920 Treaty of Trianon—proclaimed the principle of ethnic borders and awarded historical Transylvania and neighbouring northern and western areas to Romania. According to 1910 statistics, this area of 102,000 square km supported a total population of 5.2 million, of whom 1.6 million were Hungarians.

The new Greater Romania declared itself a Romanian national state. This was in spite of the fact that in the territory won from Hungary alone, Germans, Jews and Serbs lived in relatively large numbers together with the significant Hungarian minority. From this point on, Romania did everything it could to repress and assimilate the minorities—especially the Hungarians.

In 1940, Germany and Italy divided Transylvania (the Second Vienna Award). The northern segment and all the Székely-inhabited territory was returned to Hungary. In total, Hungary received 43,591 square km and 2.1 million inhabitants, of which 1.1 million (51.4 per cent) were Hungarian. After the war, the Paris Peace Settlement reestablished the 1920 borders.

The Hungarian minority has since grown to close to two million, and its condition—after some initially promising signs—has steadily deteriorated since the 1950's. Political repression and forced assimilation became unbearable during the Ceaușescu regime. The Hungarian university was merged with a Romanian one, and long-established secondary schools were either closed or compelled to offer instruction in Romanian only. Hungarian language-education also ceased in most elementary schools. Hungarian cultural life declined. Hungarian theatres were closed, books in Hungarian were rarely published and those which were, were predominantly Romanian national propaganda. Hungarians were not given higher positions, and colleges and universities restricted their entry. Passports were just about impossible to obtain, connections with Hungary cut and books published in Hungary confiscated at the border. Even speaking Hungarian in public was forbidden. Meanwhile, members of the Hungarian intelligentsia—doctors, engineers, teachers—were appointed to jobs in purely Romanian areas across the Carpathians, where they had to move with their families. Plans were drafted to systematically destroy a large percentage of Hungarian villages and resettle the population throughout the country. At the same time, Transylvanian Saxons were being "sold" to Germany. They were free to leave at a price of DM 20,000 per head—as long as their possessions remained behind. A German population of 600,000 in the 1940's has dwindled to one-sixth that size today. The same occurred with those Jews who survived the Holocaust. The number of Hungarian refugees crossing the border without passport topped 50,000.

This process, which was targeted at the elimination or assimilation of all non-Romanians—especially Hungarians—was arrested at the end of 1989 by the uprising, which began in Temesvár (Timișoara), and by Ceaușescu's execution.

## Education, Culture and the Arts

**B**earing in mind the numbers involved, the part played by Transylvania within Hungarian culture was huge. When Hungary was partially occupied and ravaged by the Turks in the 16th century, Transylvania became the hub of intellectual life and men and institutions there made up for what was lost in Hungary. For a brief period a relatively prosperous Transylvania, boasting enlightened social institutions based on religious tolerance, was something to be reckoned with in Europe, culturally, economically, and politically, in spite of its small size and dependence on the Porte.

Transylvania, or its marches which are now also part of Romania, has been the home of many who have made an outstanding contribution to Hungarian culture. Thus the great 19th century poet János Arany, the early 20th century poet Endre Ady and Béla Bartók were all born in market towns or villages that are now in Romania.

There were no characteristics that distinguish the culture of the Hungarians of Transylvania from those of Hungarians elsewhere in the first five and a half centuries of the Kingdom of Hungary after its foundation by Saint Stephen. Archeology, linguistics, art history, and historical ethnography know of nothing that suggests any special Transylvanian features in the continuous—albeit often troubled—process that created a symbiosis between ancient pre-migration traditions and the reception of western Christian culture all the way from the western frontier at the gates of Vienna to the Eastern Carpathians, although it is true that

much that was sooner forgotten in the West, enjoyed longer life on the eastern fringe. The first Latin document referring to Transylvania, presumably dated sometime between 1023 and 1038, issued in the name of Gizella, Saint Stephen's Queen-Consort, and surviving Hungarian language literary relics, bear out that there was no specifically Transylvanian variant either in written Hungarian or the Latin of the chancelleries. The vari-

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ous Hungarian dialects, including the Székely, do not form a linguistic group that can be geographically isolated.

Hungarians for many centuries coexisted in Transylvania with Romanians and Saxons. This produced a peculiar web of mutual influences but in no way implied that any of the three surrendered an individuality maintained in language and in the arts.

**S**pecific features of Hungarian culture there that can be conceptually studied and described began to appear in the 16th century when the expansion of the Ottoman Empire led to the tripartition of Hungary, and the shock waves of the Reformation reached the Carpathians, where the Latin West marched on the Greek East. When the Turks occupied Buda, the capital, in 1541, Isabella, the Dowager Queen, and her infant son, John II (John Sigismund), the elected king, moved to Gyulafehérvár (Alba Julia in the Latin of the chancelleries) and took up residence in the bishop's palace. A number of precious books were included in her treasure chest, signalling that the principality had to accept responsibility, in lieu of the whole realm, for the heritage of Matthias Corvinus, the great Renaissance king. The new country had a great need of learned men, especially of men learned in the law in administration, and of educated men of the world in diplomacy.

Many of those who achieved high office in a principality that owed its existence to the balance of great powers were educated at famous universities, particularly Padua. Padua was Venetian territory, and Venice was able to tell Transylvania that the Ottoman Empire was a power to be reckoned with not only because of its proximity but because powerful commercial interests had accepted it as such, profiting by this acceptance at first shamefully, later shamelessly.

It then became a lasting feature—interrupted only by forty years of communism—for successive generations to send their sons to study at universities abroad. The particular universities which Transylvanians attended by preference changed from time to time but contacts with centres of learning and the arts were maintained without interruption by the intellectual elite.

The evidence is still visible in the churches, castles and towns. Transylvania's borders were the south-eastern limits of Gothic and Renaissance architecture and the fortunes of the Turkish wars allowed more of it to survive there than in Hungary. Gothic architecture was introduced by Saxon settlers in the 12th and 13th centuries, Renaissance architecture—with the other arts in its train—came directly from Italy, chiefly from Venetian territory. By the time of the Baroque, Transylvania was part of the Habsburg Empire and the buildings of the time reflected this.

Reformation teachings were taken to Transylvania, to the lower clergy and the laity, by students returning from Wittenberg. In the course of time not only Luther but Zwingli and Calvin as well had Transylvanian followers, creating a peculiar national division. The Saxons, almost without exception, became and stayed Lutherans, establishing a national church in Transylvania on that basis. The

Hungarian Reformation, however, after an initial Lutheran phase, professed the *Confessio Helvetica* of Zwingli and Calvin.

Ferenc David's life and work were peculiarly Transylvanian. He returned from Wittenberg in the 1560s as an Erasmian Lutheran, becoming a Lutheran bishop in time. When he later accepted the *Confessio Helvetica*, the prince appointed him to be the Bishop of the Protestant Hungarians. Further studies in christology, however, turned him into a convinced anti-Trinitarian, and he became the founder of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania. His was a genuinely radical theology, and like so many religious innovators, he became a martyr to his faith, dying in gaol.

Not all Hungarians in Transylvania became followers of the Reformation. A powerful grass roots Roman Catholicism, led by militant Franciscans, survived amongst the Székely.

The nascent vernacular culture was based on the Bible, on the language of its translations, on its symbolism, prophetic idiom and the message of the Gospel. It explained the past, offered guidance midst the doubts of an uncertain present, and provided a serviceable eschatology. Such a reading of the Bible fed a faith that the fate of Hungarians was much like that of the people of the book, of the Jews of the Old Testament. In both cases, the tragedy was due to the severe but just punishment meted out by the Lord made angry by a sinful people, but an acceptance of the punishment not only led to an appeasement of the Divine wrath but also gave strength in the journey to the Promised Land. That, to simple folk, meant peace in the land, a new home, that is the building of the House of the Lord. The bloody events in Transylvania around the year 1700 boosted the persuasiveness of the Hebrew-Hungarian analogy and led to Sabbatarianism—a return to the religion of Old Testament Jewry. In some parts of Transylvania many converts were made, including men of education, holding high office. This last wave of the Reformation tide was, however, unable to institutionalize itself. A religious consensus had been established at the Diet of Torda (Turda) in 1568—the free practice of the four Transylvanian denominations was enacted, arguing that “faith was God's gift” but all further dogmatic innovation was opposed, and the recognition of new denominations was excluded.

Hungarian translations of the Bible go back to the 13th century, some passages appeared in print later. The first complete Hungarian Bible, translated by Gáspár Károlyi, was published in 1590. Classical scholarship could not compete in importance but the most learned scholars, both church and secular, nevertheless accepted Greek and Roman culture as setting the standards they aimed for.

The northern marches of Transylvania were the home of Miklós Kis of Tótfalu, a theologian educated and trained in Amsterdam, a printer and typefounder who printed what still is perhaps the most beautiful Hungarian Bible. He was of great renown as a typefounder, commissioned as he was to produce the first typefaces for the Georgian and Armenian scripts. His typefaces are of such beauty that they have recently been revived for bibliophile editions. Recent scholarship ascribes the Janson typeface to him.



Transylvanian humanists and Reformation theologians were very much under the influence of the Stoics. Midst the crises of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men meditating on their fate withdrew into their own selves, seeking what was right and moral, categories that were no longer found in social life. In the 16th century the Stoics may only have been available in Latin and Greek, but there was no need to import the books, the printing was done locally. Hungarian translations appeared in the seventeenth. Prince Gabriel Bethlen declared some of the propositions of Stoicism guiding principles of policy. What Stoics—combined with Christianity, particularly in its Calvinist mode—taught about passing glory, self-restraint, steadfastness, bearing the blows of ill-fortune, religious tolerance and even death, was to the liking of the Prince, and so was the fact that the latter-day Stoics were generally loud in their praises of enterprising princes who in their practical statesmanship sought to centralize power, and, mindful of the common good, did all they could to secure peace and security for their subjects. Right to our own days Stoicism as a practical moral philosophy, as a *diet*, as the ancients put it, has been present in the thinking of the Hungarian educated classes in Transylvania. The influence of “the sober-minded philosophers” can be demonstrated in the thought of János Csere of Apáczta, the 17th century encyclopaedist, of the 19th century mathematician János Bolyai, the novelist Zsigmond Kemény and the 20th century poet Lajos Áprily.

The first signs of deliberateness related to culture appeared in Transylvania when the need to establish institutions of higher learning was formulated.

Already the first prince, John Sigismund, in his 1567 will, left not only valuable books but large sums of money to cover the costs of building a school at Gyulafehérvár as well as the stipend of the rector. Stefan Bathori, elected prince of Transylvania in 1575 and King of Poland in 1579, founded and equipped a Jesuit College at Kolozsmonostor (now part of Kolozsvár-Cluj) in the buildings of an old Benedictine Abbey, as well as endowing twenty scholarship places there. Two years later he raised it to university status, with the right to award bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees in theology and philosophy. Starting teaching there in the spring of 1581, employing an aggressive and well-worked out educational methodology, the Jesuits attracted the sons of ancient noble families and of wealthy burghers in a Transylvania which by then had generally turned Protestant. After Stefan Bathori's death, the Jesuits actively supported the Habsburgs in the struggle for power and were, as a result, expelled by the Diet of 1588. They returned later, and continued to teach at Kolozsmonostor, maintaining a low profile. Their school could no longer compete with the Calvinist and Unitarian Colleges.

From the beginning of the 17th century to the postwar communist-nationalist upsurge, those Protestant schools were called colleges which consisted of lower, middle and upper schools—the last leading right up to ordination as members of the clergy.

Of the better known ones the Unitarian College in Kolozsvár was the successor, without a break, of the town school.

Prince Gabriel Bethlen founded a Calvinist College in Gyulafehérvár, his seat, in 1622. At his behest the Diet passed a *perpetuum statutum* transforming the town school into an *academicum collegium*, also granting it the necessary estates to ensure its upkeep, as well as leaving the College a fortune in his will. The statute stipulated that sons of serfs could not be removed by their feudal lord. Bethlen engaged scholars of international fame and rank to teach there. The Rákóczi family, who succeeded him as princes, continued his policy, but when the Turks invaded Transylvania in the time of George II Rákóczi, they ravaged the College, and Prince Michael Apafi had to refound it in 1662, relocating it in Nagyenyed (Aiud).

In mid-17th century János Csere of Apácza—who was appointed to teach at Gyulafehérvár after completing his studies in the Netherlands—further developed the educational ideas of the farsighted Prince Gabriel Bethlen. Csere defined as the principal aim the need to create an educated class equally able to cope with church and secular duties, and enjoying the same social status, regardless of whether the position they held was ecclesiastic or secular.

In his *Magyar Encyclopaedia*, written in Hungarian and printed in Utrecht in 1655, Csere shows himself a Cartusian in philosophy and physics, a follower of Ramus in mathematics and of Alstedt in epistemology. In his views on society, however, or on church government, his paradigms derived from Dutch and English Puritans. In church government, the Calvinists of Transylvania had not followed their theological mentor but, like the Anglicans, they had continued much of the Catholic hierarchical heritage, such as an episcopalian structure, or princely and seigneurial patronage. The Puritans, on the other hand, insisted on democracy and a Council of Elders. Puritan ideas, thanks to Dutch and English influence, won over a number of thinking minds. Then Isaac de Basire, formerly chaplain to the beheaded Charles I, was appointed to teach at Gyulafehérvár. It shocked him to discover that the Puritanism he had fled had been so well received in Transylvania and he hastened to Prince George II Rákóczi to oppose it. As a result, János Csere of Apácza was dismissed from the Gyulafehérvár College but later, it was thanks to his headmastership that the Kolozsvár Calvinist school, to which he was demoted, was raised to college status.

In the 18th century, under the Habsburgs, the activity of the Piarist Fathers, of a *universitas* standard, in Kolozsvár, left a lasting mark on Transylvanian intellectual life.

That same century Göttingen, in the Electorate of Hanover, became the preferred university of Transylvanians. Between 1734 and 1837, 192 young Transylvanians matriculated at Göttingen. Of them seventy-four published literary or scholarly works.

These included Sámuel Gyarmathy, a pioneer of comparative linguistics, Sándor Csoma of Kőrös, who laid the foundations of Tibetan studies with his grammar and dictionary, and Ferenc Benkő, who classified the minerals of Transylvania. A Göttingen student friendship between Carl Friedrich Gauss from Brunswick and Farkas Bolyai from Transylvania proved momentous for non-Euclidean geometry.

Gauss remembered in old age that "Bolyai was the only man who understood my metaphysical views on mathematics."

Farkas Bolyai's son János, who finally discovered non-Euclidean geometry at the same time as Lobachevsky, did not study in Göttingen, but in Vienna. But according to his own witness, however, the impulses with which the father returned from Göttingen did much to arouse the son's passionate devotion to research, directing his attention towards a field awaiting cultivation.

Starting with the second half of the 18th century, the educated classes were absorbed by institution-founding. In 1791 György Aranka, an Associate Judge of the Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu Mureş) Court of Appeals, one of the pioneers of the Shakespeare cult in Transylvania, drafted a proposal to set up a Transylvanian Hungarian Philological Society, submitted it to the Transylvanian Diet, and had it printed. It can be described as a carefully thought out educational programme which soberly takes account of the limits set by what is possible.

According to Aranka, progress in science and scholarship determines the refinement of language. His efforts, embodied in what would now be called committee work that lasted a number of years, were finally thwarted by higher authority in Vienna. Gábor Döbrentei revived the Transylvanian Hungarian Philological Society a quarter of a century later, but all he could show for his pains was *Erdélyi Múzeum*, the first Hungarian scholarly journal in Transylvania, first published in 1814, which appeared for four years. Such efforts prefigured future anxieties, and made it quite obvious that Hungarians had to rely on their own strength, joining all their available forces, if they wished to establish their own cultural institutions.

Noone did as much to this end in pre-1848 Hungary as Farkas Sándor Bölöni. Born a free Székely, he educated himself in a grand tour that took in Western Europe and North America, familiarizing himself with French, English and American institutions, private and public, that underpinned a democratic society. In a diary and in a travel book, *Utazás Észak-Amerikában* (Travels in North America) he reported on what he experienced, and drew conclusions relevant to his own country. A number of modern critics have argued that the book, published in Kolozsvár in 1834, in no way falls short of de Tocqueville, neither in observation or analysis, nor in the logic of his liberalism.

Bölöni was the moving spirit behind the foundation of a club and a sports club in Kolozsvár, and a mutual assistance savings bank for clerks, as well as of *Vasárnapi Újság*, a Sunday paper serving the improvement of the populace. The Hungarian theatre in Kolozsvár had no more enthusiastic fan. He saw the theatre as the instrument par excellence of the refinement of manners and tastes. He was fond of Shakespeare's plays, particularly of *Hamlet*.

At that time Kolozsvár was ahead of Pest not only in the theatre but also in the public performance of music. Combining the two, since the early 1800s, the town was noted as a centre of opera.

Farkas Bölöni noted with anxiety that Transylvania did not care for its artistic treasures. Incunabulae and other old books, goldsmiths' work, ancient embroideries were dispersed, sold for a song. In 1829 he suggested the creation of a Transylvanian National Museum, but the authorities in Vienna once again put paid to a local initiative.

**F**ollowing the suppression of the 1848 Revolution, the educated classes, kept out of political life, concentrated on culture all the more. Finally, in 1859, the Transylvanian Museum Society was founded. It had a threefold aim: 1) to found and maintain a museum; 2) to assure new acquisitions, and the proper classification of all holdings; 3) to establish sections making possible the cultivation of philosophy, classical studies, history, mathematics, the natural sciences, and medicine with Hungarian as the medium of communication and publication. The Society honourably carried out all these duties, right up to its arbitrary dissolution in 1950.

All the work done by and in connection with the Hungarian Museum Society contributed to Kolozsvár being chosen in 1872 as the location of the second university in the then Kingdom of Hungary.

All necessary institutions to ensure that the cultural standards of Hungarians in Transylvania would in no way fall short of what could be expected at the time anywhere in Europe, were established in the half century that preceded the Great War. The 1920 Peace Treaty, which gave Transylvania to Romania, created an essentially new situation for Hungarians, and for Hungarian culture as well. The change meant that what had been Hungarian state institutions now became Romanian state institutions, including the University of Kolozsvár and all state schools. Hungarian culture was now shored up merely by the churches and associations of a national character. Thirty years later Hungarians, in the name of proletarian principles, were deprived of these as well by the National Bolshevik regime.

Hungarians in Transylvania, who found themselves in the status of an ethnic minority forced to redefine their position now, reflected on their centuries old cultural heritage.

In the course of their long history, Hungarians had received and assimilated all the major European styles, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicist, and Romantic architecture. Early this century, when Art Nouveau was the fashion, architecture and design appeared to be those key areas on which a new, national art could be based. Károly Kós, a young Transylvanian, studying architecture in Budapest, soon realized that Ödön Lechner, the architect of the Arts & Crafts Museum, the Geological Institute and the Post Office Savings Bank in Budapest had been misguided in his belief that he could create a new Hungarian architecture and ornamentics out of Indian decorative elements, Baroque lines and the ornamentics of old Hungarian embroidery and goldsmith's work. Young Kós took his sketchbook to the villages of Transylvania, chiefly of Kalotaszeg near Kolozsvár, and of the

Székely country, paying close attention to the structural elements of folk architecture. His wanderings familiarized him with all the best that Transylvania has to offer: medieval churches, murals, castles, country houses, courtyards. He studied not only Hungarian but also Saxon and Romanian building, and then confronted his field work with the ideas of Ruskin and Morris and Saarinen's modern architecture. The conclusion he reached was that art only had a future if every truly creative person added the characteristics of his own nation to the common treasure of mankind. Kós argued that folk art was the basis of Hungarian national art, and folk art in turn was rooted in the art of the middle ages. Kós's architectural oeuvre grew out of medieval, primarily Romanesque art, and folk art. He was barely 35 when his career as an architect came to a close. After the Great War Hungarians, now an ethnic minority, were not in a position to commission architects, and Kós turned to the writing of fiction and plays.

The literary genres on which interest centred were peculiarly Transylvanian memoirs, travel writing, anecdotes, journals, autobiographies, and correspondence. In mid-19th century János Kriza had collected and then published a treasury of Székely folk ballads, Balázs Orbán published six illustrated volumes on the topography of the Székely country, all based on footwork and autopsy—the importance of both these is all the greater since a rich heritage, which did not receive its due earlier, was at last accepted as an integral part of Hungarian culture. Much scholarly work still has to be done, there are still sources awaiting textual criticism and/or publication. Only six volumes of the late Attila T. Szabó's extraordinarily important *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár* (Transylvanian Hungarian Etymological Thesaurus) have appeared so far. That great work cries out for completion.

The study of old handwritten Transylvanian hymn books fertilized modern poetry. Psalms and flower songs served as an historical compost for poems that gushed forth from the hurts suffered as an ethnic minority. Sándor Reményik and particularly Lajos Áprily and Jenő Dsida, however, rose above this, continuing along the road charted by the great innovator of poetry Endre Ady (1877-1919) who, born on the fringe of historical Transylvania, was always proud to identify with its heritage.

Being an ethnic minority helped in the discovery of the particular values inherent in Székely Catholicism. There is something to Székely folk Catholicism the like of which is perhaps found only in the autobiography of Saint Theresa of Aquila or in Lorca's Spain: it came to life in Bishop Áron Márton's wise churchmanship and in Áron Tamási's fiction.

A philosopher thus defined Transylvanian Hungarian culture: "The meaning of our fate is given by the art of starting afresh." This does not mean turning one's back on the past, on the contrary, it induces an awareness of continuity. It means tying knots in a thread which was drastically cut by forces over which one had no control. It is only possible to start something afresh that had preexistence. The complete palette of Hungarian culture had been present in Transylvania, both institutionally and in terms of disciplines and specialties. A new start meant that in education (from

the nursery school to the university), in science and scholarship, in the theatre, in music in all its aspects, in publishing and even in medicine, a new framework, new financial resources had to be created for professional work outside state institutions and state subsidies and financial support. This was only possible if Hungarians in Transylvania—in addition to paying their taxes—accepted the extra burden of financing the creation and operation of their own institutions by self-taxation—tithes, donations, membership dues of associations. Education in the mother tongue, with all its cares and anxieties, was the business of the churches. With unbelievable inventiveness and the cost of great self-sacrifice and hard work, they coped with the acute shortage of teachers.

Maintaining established institutions was the primary duty of a leadership recovering from torpor, having suffered the shock of a lost war. The Transylvanian Museum Society carried out what should have been the duties of an academy, a national museum, archives and library. The Transylvanian Hungarian Educational Society made the coordination and management of extra-curricular education—amateur theatricals, choirs, folk dancing, adult education—its business. The Transylvanian Hungarian Economic Society was the forum through which knowledge of modern agricultural practices was spread to peasant farmers.

These old institutions, established in the 19th century, soon adapted to the minority situation; other, new ones, were founded, publishing houses, journals, art associations. There was a new interest in art history, which allowed much that was half buried by oblivion to resurface. The study of many medieval buildings, murals, canvasses, painted ceilings and furnishing thus discovered, and of the work of the Kolozsvári brothers—sculptors of the famous Prague Saint George—permitted more detailed discrimination amongst the historical styles, and led to important results in Renaissance and Baroque research (the definition of the Flowery Renaissance style, determination of schools of Baroque craftsmen, etc.).

Numerous outstanding painters were active in Transylvania around the year 1900. The foundation of an artists' colony at Nagybánya (Baia Mare) in 1896 by Simon Hollósy proved crucial. Károly Thorma, István Réti and Károly Ferenczy, whose teaching manifested the *école libre* spirit, attracted many young painters and launched them in a new style based on plein air painting.

Transylvania is the country of tiny workshops.

Scholars, writers, painters, sculptors generally work in a small room that is part of a modest home. What matters is not the size of the workshop but the spirit which rules it. Scholarship, writing or art will not earn you a living, it can only be a *nobile officium* undertaken additional to bread and butter employment. Teaching in a denominational school, looking after a rural parish, a medical practice in a village or small town, a legal practice advising the common man—these were jobs that allowed you to put aside an hour or two a day devoting them to creative work. Foreign scholarships arranged by the churches allow a few, but only a few, to familiarize themselves with the existential universalities of the age. There was a

time when Transylvanians who had never studied abroad were called *domidoctus*. Their number has significantly grown this century.

In 1940, when Europe was already at war, and Northern Transylvania once again became part of Hungary for four years, the Prime Minister, Count Pál Teleki, scion of an ancient Transylvanian family, made the reorganization of the University of Kolozsvár a priority task. At the same time, he urged the establishment of a scientific institution with specifically Transylvanian duties.

An imposing list of publications presented what was done in the study of the popular idiom, the history of language and of literature, archeology, topography, ethnography, ethnomusicology, jurisprudence, history of art, economic history (particularly the history of the cooperative movement), biology, and public health. Research initiated by Teleki showed particular sensitivity towards two kinds of questions. What did Hungarians preserve of their ancient eastern heritage, and how did they reconcile this with the western culture they absorbed? Secondly, what was the interaction with Romanian and Saxon culture in the course of centuries of coexistence?

Many of those appointed to chairs at the University of Kolozsvár were not only outstanding specialists but paradigms of responsible behaviour. The neurologist Dezső Miskolczy, the physician Imre Haynal and the international lawyer László Barna, opposed an evacuation order issued by the Sztójay government, hirelings of the Nazis, in 1944, and would not allow the university to be moved from Kolozsvár, thus ensuring the continuity of Hungarian science and scholarship in Transylvania. The after-effects of this action can still be felt. Similarly, the scholars in charge of the Transylvanian Museum Society stayed on the job. Moving into their institutions they defended their collections so to speak with their own bodies.

Immediately after the Second World War, it seemed that having recovered from personal loss and material damage one could set to, and regenerate the Hungarian cultural institutions. Wise discussion promised that interests could be reconciled, that a tolerant Hungarian contribution would have a place in Transylvania in a multicultural context receptive to a modern universality.

Disappointments proved greater than the hopes had been. In the spring of 1947, the Romanian Communist Party launched a frontal attack against the "unprincipled Hungarian solidarity" and the methodical liquidation of the ancient institutions of Hungarian learning, the fruit of age-long efforts, was on the way. The major stations of this process were: in a nationwide press campaign those in charge of Hungarian institutions were described as right-wing and conservative, even as fascists, and removed from their posts; highly qualified teachers at the Bolyai University in Kolozsvár, who were citizens of Hungary, were asked to leave the country; in 1948-49 every kind of educational or cultural institution owned by a church or association, and its real estate and goods and chattels, were nationalized; at first Hungarian continued as their operational language but, being placed under Communist Party control, they were made instruments of Marxist-Leninist propaganda. Following

the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, a start was made—with implicit Soviet approval—on the systematic restriction of Hungarian language use. Underhand methods were employed. To give an example: public meetings were held at which Hungarian collaborators asked for the support of the Communist Party to help them in overcoming the isolation of their language. That was the first step leading to the amalgamation of the Romanian and the Hungarian universities. It proved so successful that Hungarian was soon completely eliminated from public life. To add insult to injury, Hungarian was only spoken in public occasions when there was need to sing the praises of Ceaușescu or communist propaganda otherwise demanded it. In the closing years of the dictatorship, Hungarian was only spoken aloud at the graveside of friends.

Life nevertheless did not come to a stop. Much of lasting value was produced in the way of science and scholarship, literature and the arts. Outstanding works were backed by the steadfastness and loyalty of many an anonymous intellectual. Backwoods solitude produced some of the most heartwarming examples. Country teachers left to themselves, using textbooks decorated by Ceaușescu's grinning features, textbooks filled with lying pseudo-history, taught our children to read, write and feel in Hungarian. Writers, artists, scholars, making it their maxim to do all that could be done, betrayed neither their people nor the universally human.

Now, after 1989 in Romania, the time has come for another fresh start. Let's hope we have the strength. ■



*A Székely noble's stonehouse, Imecsfalva (Imeny), Háromszék county, 18th century.*



# The Demography of a Minority

**T**ransylvania, home to the vast majority of the Hungarians living in Romania, has meant different things in different ages. In the narrow sense of the term, it means the territory of the Principality of Transylvania, while in current usage it covers all the territories formerly belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary awarded to Romania by the peace treaty which concluded the Great War. It includes, besides historic Transylvania, the Banat, the one-time Partium, and other regions. In the following, the term Transylvania refers to the region in the broader sense, unless specifically defined as the historic Transylvania.

For a thousand years, Transylvania has been the shared home of various nationalities—Hungarians, Romanians, Germans (i.e., Saxons and Swabians), and, others in smaller numbers, including Serbs, Croats, Jews, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Czechs. Its destiny was closely linked with the history

of both the Hungarian and Romanian nations. Due to this unique situation, the history books of the two countries differ markedly in their account of the settlement of the region.

According to the theory of Daco-Roman continuity that defines modern-day Romanian historiography, the Romanians first appeared in Transylvania with the "Romanization" of the Dacians; they subsequently took refuge in the mountains for centuries after the fall of the Roman empire, and made their presence felt once again only after the Age of Migrations. In any event, the Romanians are the natives, and all the others are tolerated newcomers. Hungarian historians, by contrast, contend that there is nothing to suggest the continuance of Romanized Dacians, that there is no trace of Romanians in this region prior to the early 13th century.

In conquering the Carpathian Basin, the Hungarians first settled north of the river Maros, and it was only by mid-10th century that they occupied southern Transylvania and the Banat. Meanwhile, the Székelys or Szeklers—whose ancestors may well have been Kabars, who had joined forces with the Hungarians—were at that time still to be found in what is today the county of Bihar. From there they expanded eastward to the valleys of the Olt and Küküllő rivers. The Saxons were invited to what they called the *Königsboden* (Royal Land) around 1160 and

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the Székelys were resettled in the territory that remains their home to this day. The Romanians first appear in Hungarian documents of the 13th century, but mass settlement by them occurred only in the wake of the population losses caused by the Mongol invasion of 1241-42. At this time there were probably only a few of them; in 1293 an attempt was made to settle all Romanians in one estate and then there were altogether ten permanent Romanian settlements. As a consequence of the actions of local landowners, the number of Romanian villages grew to 250 by the end of the 14th century. A lack of sources makes it impossible to determine the demographic ratio of the various nationalities; what is certain however is that the settling of Romanians became more rapid after the establishment of the Principality of Transylvania in 1556, as great numbers of people fled there from the misery of Moldavia and Wallachia.

Of the more than one million inhabitants of the Principality of Transylvania (similar in size to modern-day Transylvania) at the end of the 16th century, the majority were still Hungarians and Székelys, though by this time the proportion of Romanians had risen to above one-third. There were perhaps 100,000 Germans or Saxons. These ratios shifted notably only in the mid-18th century, with the occurrence of two major migrations: Transylvanian Hungarians settled on the Great Hungarian Plain, where many of the original dwellers had perished fighting the Turks; Romanians, meanwhile, were once again settled in Transylvania. It was at this time also that most Swabians in the Banát and Szatmár regions, as well as members of other nationalities, including Czechs, Slovaks, and Ruthenians, were settled in Transylvania. By the end of the 18th century, Romanians already accounted for more than half of the 1,500,000 strong population of historic Transylvania, while the proportion

of Hungarians dwindled to 30 per cent. The ratio of Romanians slowly grew further over the next century at the statistical expense of the Hungarians and the Germans, while, for a time, at the end of the 19th century—owing chiefly to assimilation—the Hungarian population once again grew relative to that of Romanians.

The Transylvania awarded to Romania by the Treaty of Trianon featured the following proportions of nationalities as defined by native tongue of its 5,257,000 inhabitants, (according to the 1910 census): 54 per cent Romanian, 32 per cent Hungarian, 11 per cent German, 3 per cent other. A large number of Hungarians also lived in the Regat (the Old Kingdom—i.e. Romania within the pre-Great War frontiers)—the Moldavian Csángós and Bucharest Hungarians amounting to around 100,000.

After Trianon it is quite difficult to keep track of the numbers, the geographical location, settlement pattern, and general demography of Hungarians in Romania. Political considerations took priority, and decisively so, over scientific methods in statistics. Some of the data on Transylvania can still be used, albeit with reservations, but not those for the Regat.

The statistics on nationalities submitted by the Romanian delegation at the Paris peace talks were considered so unacceptable that the responsible committee worked only on the basis of the Hungarian documents. The trend continued: the 1919, 1920, and 1927 documents were regarded as biased and unusable even by Romanian demographers. The 1930 census met European norms, but for the fact that it in effect veiled the existence of more than one hundred thousand Hungarians of Greek Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Jewish religion. This can, of course, be accounted for in part by a difference in point of view that saw mother tongue as the decisive factor in Hungarian

census-taking, while Romanian practice considered Jews as an independent nationality. After the change of regime, 197,000 Hungarians fled from Romania to Hungary between 1918-24—half of them city dwellers including state and public sector employees, as well as members of the professional class and their domestics. Taking into account this, along with church records, the number of Transylvanian native Hungarian speakers in 1930 can be put at a minimum of 1.6 million; and in 1940, at around 1.8 million.

**T**he Second Vienna Award of August 30, 1940, which returned Northern Transylvania to Hungary, was accompanied by a large exchange of population, amounting to about 200,000 people; this has had lasting consequences to this day. For one, the numbers and relative proportion of Hungarians in Southern Transylvania continued to decline; nor was there any essential growth in the North, since most of the new arrivals moved on at the end of the war. It is estimated that 100 to 125,000 Hungarians left Romania permanently between 1941 and 1948, but it remains unknown how many perished in the war. The data that emerged from the census of 1941—conducted by Hungarian authorities in Northern Transylvania and Romanian authorities in Southern Transylvania—are, due to the distortive effects of the political atmosphere and to a marked difference in approach (e.g., ethnic origin was the decisive factor in the Romanian census), unsuitable for scholarly use.

Since then, five censuses have been taken in Romania. Of these, the 1956 census deserves special mention as mirroring more or less precisely the contemporary ethnic situation—at least as far as Transylvania was concerned. Indeed, this even saw the reappearance of the better part of the Hungarians who had disappeared in the 1930 census—especially in the northwest region of Transylvania.

Extensive fraud and manipulation characterized the census of 1966 and that of 1977; there are several documented cases in which the ethnic composition of various areas was decided at the office desk. The manner of publication of the final data of the 1977 census was without precedent, being in terms of “nationality and native language.” During a re-evaluation of the census forms, all were registered as Romanian who identified themselves as such either with respect to native language or nationality, while a special category was created for those whose native language and nationality differed, neither of them being Romanian. The 1992 census was more in accord with demographic practice and there was no manipulation during evaluation, but there were—especially from the diaspora of the minorities—a great number of complaints related to the collection of the data. Detailed analyses show that the results were close to those expected in regions with considerable numbers of minorities and where minorities partook in large numbers in the census-taking itself, while elsewhere they came in well below anticipated figures. Particularly startling is the recurrent and conspicuously low number—20,000—of Hungarians in the Regat, including the Csángós.

At the same time, the sporadic demographic data do show that between 1956 and 1977, Transylvanian Hungarians saw an actual population growth considerably greater than that reflected by census figures. If the average natural birth rate of Transylvania (1956-66, 7.7 per cent; 1966-77, 10.6 per cent) is applied to all Transylvanian Hungarians, their number would have grown to 1.74 million by 1966, and 1,925,000 by 1977. We arrive at a similar conclusion by considering that between 1966 and 1977, some 336,000 births were recorded by Hungarians in Romania, this being 7.2 per cent of all births in the country during this pe-

riod. 7.2 per cent of the natural population growth of 2,551,000 for this period is 184,000—this testifying to a population growth among Romanian Hungarians similar to that calculated differently with regard to Transylvanian Hungarians. The estimated natural growth of several hundred with respect to Hungarians in the Regat does not essentially affect the above. As a consequence of the intensification of assimilation, however, we must assume lower values.

In estimating the demographic evolution of Transylvanian Hungarians, we may thus postulate that their natural population increase between 1977 and 1992 remained considerably below the Transylvanian average—moreover, that their numbers fell considerably due to mass emigration primarily in the direction of Hungary, or else owing to long-term resettlement.

The prime census data that apply to Transylvanian Hungarians are the following:

#### Hungarian inhabitants (thousands)

Year	Total	Native language		Nationality		My estimate	
1910	5,257	1,662	31.6 per cent				
1930	5,548	1,481	26.7 per cent	1,353	24.4 per cent	1600	28.8 per cent
1948	5,761	1,482	25.7 per cent				
1956	6,232	1,616	25.9 per cent	1,559	25.0 per cent		
1966	6,720	1,626	24.2 per cent	1,597	23.8 per cent	1700	25.3 per cent
1977	7,500	1,690	22.5 per cent	1870	25.0 per cent		
1992	7,750	1,603	20.7 per cent	1800	23.2 per cent		

(1977: according to native language and nationality: 1,651,000 i.e., 22.0 per cent)

Early this century, Transylvanian Hungarians made up the majority in three large areas: the Székely country in eastern Transylvania, a zone along the Hungarian-Romanian border, and a strip linking the two regions as an ethnic bridge of sorts in the Szilágyság, Kalotaszeg, the environs of Kolozsvár (Cluj/Napoca/Klausenburg) and in Aranyosvidék. A number also lived in the Banat, the Zsil-Jiu valley, and the Barcaság; considerable numbers lived in diaspora. The settlement pattern of Romanians was generally that of tiny villages scattered over a large territory, while Hungarians and Germans lived in relatively closely settled areas and in the towns; some of these urban areas were in Romanian populated areas. The powerful growth in the Romanian urban population was—excepting the change in administration that followed Trianon, when 100,000 Hungarians fled, and 50,000 Regat Romanians

settled in Transylvania—the consequence of a deliberate and directed process. Towns imbedded in a Romanian rural population were increasingly “Romanized”, assimilative effects manifested themselves more readily in such areas.

Assimilation had always taken place at a much slower rate in the villages of Transylvania; thus the politics behind the process was directed at individual territories and classes of people. Dozens of Romanian settlements were established in the border region between Hungary and Romania and in central Transylvania. The process was associated with the land reform but it had also the aim of isolating Hungarian-inhabited territories. The gradual cessation of Hungarian-language state education and the slashing of state subsidies for church schools resulted primarily in the assimilation of Hungarians living in diaspora. The prime tar-

get of "Romanization," however, were Hungarians of Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox religion, and with respect to them the process indeed saw success, as a good number of these people were actually of Romanian origin or could speak Romanian. It is worthy of note that in compiling census data, all Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox Hungarians were registered as Romanian—even the 50,000 who did not even speak Romanian.

The Romanian national minorities policy of the decade following the Second World War was ambiguous. Minority rights were guaranteed on paper and in areas particularly suitable for propaganda purposes. At the back of it all was, however, a desire to do away with them. With the establishment of the Hungarian Autonomous Region in 1952, autonomy was granted to those in the Székely Country who still lived in a relatively homogeneous mass and accounted for one third of the Hungarians in Transylvania. Hungarians outside this region, however, were gradually deprived of their basic rights as minorities. In the interest of diluting the ethnic hold of Magyars over Kolozsvár (Cluj), the quasi-capital of Romanian-Hungarians, a number of Hungarian cultural institutions were moved to Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu Mureş/

Neumarkt). Anti-Hungarian policies intensified beginning in the late 1950s. Romanian territories were hinged to the Autonomous Region, the logical conclusion of which was that, as a second step, on the grounds of its diversity of nationalities, it was dismantled. The county administration system established in 1968 in effect cut homogeneous Hungarian territories in two, while counties that had a balanced ratio of Hungarians and Romanians had their borders redrawn to favour the latter. A "homogenization" program to assimilate nationalities was announced in 1972, and in the years that followed, a series of measures on education and the lodging of visitors were introduced that were aimed at harrasing minorites.

The prime targets of "homogenization" were Transylvanian towns. Taken together, Hungarians had been in a minority in them since 1984, but Hungarian majorities continued in a number of towns in Romanian or ethnically mixed areas. In the Székely Country most towns were still 90 per cent Hungarian in 1956. Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad (Oradea-Grosswardein) and Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare) then still had a majority Hungarian population. Since then, however, the ethnic composition of Transylvanian towns has fundamentally changed, as shown below:

Nationality	Population (thousands)			Change (thousands)	
	1956	1977	1992	1956-77	1977-92
<b>Hungarian</b>	554	821	898	+267	+77
<b>Romanian</b>	986	2,515	3,351	+1,529	+836
<b>Other</b>	214	223	181	+9	- 42
<b>Total</b>	1,754	3,559	4,430	+1,805	+871

The ratio of Hungarians in Transylvanian towns dropped from 32 per cent to 20 per cent between 1956 and 1992, since Hungarians accounted for just 13 per cent of the urban population growth. In the decade prior to 1977 alone, 500,000 Romanians from the Regat region settled in Transylvania, most of them in so-called "closed" cities, into which

one could move only with special permission rarely granted to Hungarians. The trend continued, even accelerated in the 1980s; indeed, Romanians who moved to such communities were granted significant resettlement assistance in addition to housing. A quintessential example is Kolozsvár, where 10,000 Romanians were resettled in the year

1989 alone. Today, not one larger town in Transylvania with a Hungarian majority remains. At the same time, Hungarian graduates at the start of their careers were directed en masse to the Regat; the majority of them, however, have since returned.

The following changes have occurred in the past 70 years with respect to regional demography, including the settlement patterns of Hungarians in Transylvania:

■ Nearly 800,000 (officially 723,000, according to the 1992 census) Hungarians inhabit the Székely Country—Kovácszna, Hargita, and the southern part of Maros County. Although the ethnic homogeneity of Hungarian villages has remained unchanged in the Székely Country, the proportion of Hungarians in towns—Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintu Gheorghe), Csíkszereda (Miercurea-Ciuc)—has dropped to between 75 to 80 per cent, due to the mass settlement of Regat Romanians. In the 1980s alone, 8,000 Romanians were settled in Csíkszereda, which today has a population of 46,000. At present, just half (84,000) of the 164,000 residents of Marosvásárhely are Hungarians, because 20,000 Romanians were settled here in the 1980s; even so, it still ranks at present as the largest Hungarian town in Transylvania. Many of the 80,000 (officially 63,000) Hungarians of the vicinity of Brassó (Braşov/Kronstadt) and Hétfalu (Şăcele/Siebindörfér)—came from the Székelyföld.

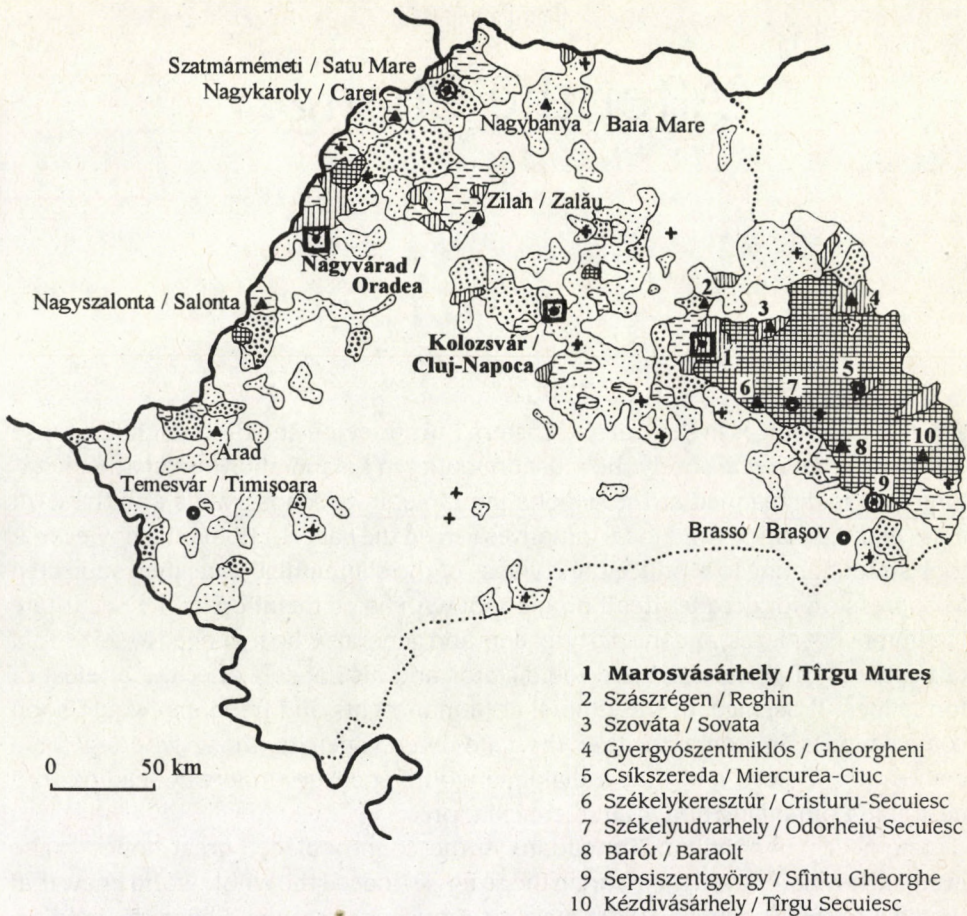
■ The one-time majority Hungarian zone along the Hungarian border has largely disappeared, especially to the south of Nagyvárad and north of Szatmárnémeti, but nearly half a million (officially, 447,000) Hungarians still live today in Szatmár, Szilágy, Bihar, and Arad counties. Many Hungarians still live in Nagyvárad and Szatmárnémeti—74,000 and 54,000, respectively—although overall, they now comprise less than 40 per cent of the population.

■ The assimilation of the Hungarians scattered throughout the northern and

southern regions of Transylvania—in Máramaros, Beszterce-Naszód counties, and, in the south, in Temes, Krassó-Szörény, Hunyad, Fehér and Szeben counties—has intensified to the point where, in some regions sparsely populated with Hungarians, the process has become either irreversible or else has already been completed. Nearly 100,000 Hungarians live in the north, and some 160,000 in the southern counties—officially, 76,000 and 148,000, respectively. Hungarians have retained a relatively firm demographic hold in the larger cities and their environs however, with 40,000 in the Temesvár (Timișoara) area, 30,000 in Nagybánya (Baia Mare), and around 20,000 in the Zsil valley mining communities.

■ The ethnic bridge-of-sorts linking the Hungarians of the Székely Country with those along the country's western border, has been weakened, with just 170,000 (officially 146,000) Hungarians living in Kolozs County today. The Hungarian population of Kolozsvár most probably amounts to nearly 100,000 even today, and thus Kolozsvár continues to be the largest Hungarian town in Transylvania, albeit officially it has fallen behind Marosvásárhely, where the latest census found 75,000 Hungarians. A relatively large number of Hungarians remain, in the northwest and southeast, both in Kalotaszeg and Aranyosvidék (about 20,000 each).

The demographic future of Transylvanian Hungarians is not rosy. Not only is their present birth rate below that of Transylvanian Romanians, but since most of those who leave the country tend to be young, this trend is bound to get stronger. An ominous example is the fate of Transylvanian Germans, of whom nearly 400,000 still remained at the end of the 1980s—despite the fact that more than 200,000 of them had earlier emigrated to Germany. As a consequence of the anti-Hungarian rally in Marosvásárhely on March 15, 1990, a political atmosphere ensued in Transylvania that



**The most important Hungarian towns**

- + 5,1 - 10,0 thousand (unnamed)
- ▲ 10,1 - 30,0 thousand
- 30,1 - 50,0 thousand
- ⊙ 50,1 - 70,0 thousand
- 70,1 - 100,0 thousand

**The ratio of Hungarians**

- 0 - 10,0 per cent
- ▨ 10,1 - 30,0 per cent
- ▩ 30,1 - 50,0 per cent
- ▧ 50,1 - 70,0 per cent
- ▦ 70,1 - 90,0 per cent
- ▤ 90,1 - 100,0 per cent

*The number and ratio of Hungarians (1992 census)*

prompted a further 200,000 Germans to leave over the next two years. The 1992 census still counted 120,000 ethnic Germans, albeit church officials estimate that their number today falls below 50,000.

The future of Transylvanian Hungarians, however, primarily depends on the methods used to implement the notion of Romania as a unitary nation state which is laid down in the Romanian Constitution.

## After the Change

**O**f all the changes in Central and Eastern Europe at the end of the eighties, those in Romania were surely the most dramatic. In Poland and Hungary the dictatorship was dismantled at the negotiating table, in Czechoslovakia and the GDR mass demonstrations and local initiatives forced the pace. In Romania, however, it took street fighting to produce the collapse of the communist state, men subjected to oppression for decades dealt on the spot with hated members of the Securitate in a number of places, and the party leaders and generals who managed to seize hold of positions of power executed the dictator and his consort after the briefest of formalities. It seemed, at the time, that human rights and freedoms would soon come to pass in Romania, that the gates were open to those working for a democratic society, and that a dialogue would soon be underway leading to a desirable Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation.

The nearly two million Hungarians in the country placed great hopes in the events. They had played their part in the struggle, indeed the whole world knew that the fuse of the Christmas 1989 Temesvár-Timișoara rising had been the bold resistance which László Tőkés, a Calvinist minister in Temesvár, had offered the Securitate. Unfortunately, it soon became obvious that there were no genuine changes. Political groupings came to power that had earlier been committed to the communist dictatorship and the members of the Securitate remained influential. Prospects of a Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation dwindled, particularly after it became clear that the Hungarian intelligentsia, getting back on its feet, wished to restore the Hungarian schools that had been just about completely liquidated in the seventies and eighties, and were also giving notice of their desire to reestablish the Bolyai University in Kolozsvár/Cluj which had been abolished—nominally “amalgamated”—in 1959.

The new administration in Bucharest opposed these plans, and Romanian nationalists, particularly Vatra Românească, a “cultural” organization, and their political stormtroopers, the Party of Romanian National Unity,

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used violent means to put paid to Hungarian endeavours. In March 1990, communal riots were sparked off by Romanian extremists in Marosvásárhely/Tîrgu Mureş, in the course of which András Sütő, the best-known Hungarian writer in Transylvania, lost the sight of one eye.

The result was that the educational and cultural efforts of Transylvanian Hungarians had to make do without official support. Romanian intellectuals, such as those around the journal *Dialog Social*, who put their faith in Romanian-Hungarian reconciliation, became isolated, and anti-Hungarian sentiment and anti-Semitism grew stronger. A number of Hungarians were charged with offences connected with the 1989 events and—obviously as a result of political pressure—given heavy prison sentences. Gheorghe Funar, the Romanian nationalist candidate, was elected mayor of Kolozsvár, the most important Hungarian centre in Transylvania, and abused his power, initiating various petty actions to destroy traditional communal contacts. Hungarians in Transylvania once again felt in jeopardy in their native land and as a result, several tens of thousands left for Hungary or destinations further west after 1989.

This meant that the social weight of Hungarians in Transylvania further diminished. The percentage of Hungarians in the territories ceded to Romania declined further, from thirty-two to twenty-three. The drop was particularly marked in towns: from sixty-three per cent to twenty. All this implies that Hungarian society in Transylvania changed considerably, and so did the structure of that society. Hungarians could rely on a number of powerful classes, the owners of large and middling estates, the traditional urban middle-classes and petty bourgeoisie, artisans, shopkeepers, skilled workers, not to mention well-to-do peasant proprietors. The land reform of the early 1920s had already shaken up the latifundia; after the Second World War the surviving large farms were confiscated as well and, as elsewhere in the Soviet empire, the peasantry were collectivized by force. The Hungarian middle-class, professional people, traders and artisans, also suffered severe blows. After the 1989 changes some of their land was returned to the peasant smallholders, but new Romanian settlers were also given small holdings, and this too reduced the total amount of property in Hungarian hands. The radical changes in property relations under communism implied the transfer of both rural and urban property to Romanians, and the overall loss was barely affected by the return of some confiscated property in recent years.

Between the fifties and the present, that is in roughly forty years, Hungarians have lost their secure majority in Transylvanian towns. In formerly flourishing Hungarian economic and cultural centres—just as in the German towns in Transylvania—increasingly the new Romanian settlers made up the majority and Kolozsvár, Arad, Szatmár (Satu Mare), Temesvár, Nagyvárad (Oradea), lately Marosvásárhely as well, began to lose their traditional Hungarian character. The primary instrument of Romanization were forced and completely irrational industrialization, and the collectivization of agriculture, carried out in conjunction with, and in

the service of, the former. Huge industrial estates were constructed in the immediate vicinity of towns, the labour being provided by peasants whom collectivization had deprived of their traditional way of life and source of income, Romanian villagers from Transylvania or immigrants from across the Carpathians. Rural masses at first they flooded the poor quality highrise housing estates constructed on the urban fringe, infiltrating inner city areas in time, from which they pushed out long settled Hungarians. These Transylvanian towns became hotbeds of Romanian nationalism: it was easy to incite the rootless, dispossessed new proletariat against the natives.

Taking stock in 1989, after the changes, of what had been lost by the Hungarian minority in the years of the dictatorship, and what could be preserved and defended, proved to be a sobering job. All the same, it was a genuine liberation: they were no longer compelled to sing hosannas to their oppressors, they could hold their heads high and set to creating the institutions they needed. These institutions, covering political action, the press, the churches, the schools and intellectual life, embraced the life of Hungarians in Transylvania as a whole and—inasmuch as this was possible—realized a strategy of autonomous action.

The Democratic Federation of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSz) was already founded at the time of the Bucharest Christmas 1989 uprising. Within days, local organisations on the country, town and village level followed suit. The first president was Géza Domokos, who had earlier done a successful job as managing director of *Kriterion*, the minority languages publishing house. Later Béla Markó took his place. He is a poet who edits a journal in Marosvásárhely. László Tőkés, meanwhile elected Calvinist bishop of Nagyvárad, and Géza Szócs, the poet forced into exile in the 1980s as the editor of the samizdat publication *Ellenpontok*, are also prominent in the leadership. RMDSz defined itself as a comprehensive organization representing the economic, social, political and cultural interests of Hungarians in Romania. Its programme declares: "The Democratic Federation of Hungarians in Romania (RMDSz) represents the interests of Hungarians in Romania, embracing a variety of forms of autonomous association. Its objectives include legislation which guarantees our national minority rights in terms of the best paradigms realized by democratic states in Europe, ensuring the free assertion of individual and collective minority rights and autonomy. Further aims are a restoration of the morale and dignity of Hungarians in Romania, the liberation of its vitality and creativity, and the nursing of a healthy sense of Hungarian identity."

The job the RMDSz has to do is no easy one as it means representing the interests of a geographically scattered and ideologically diverse Hungarian population in the various institutions of political life. The RMDSz membership includes liberals, Christian democrats, and national radicals, which naturally leads to argument, at times passionate argument. RMDSz nevertheless enjoys respect and influence, standing for the interests and the self-defence of a national minority as a whole. It has done well in both national and local elections held since 1989, being well-

represented in the Bucharest Parliament. As an opposition party, RMDSz is one of the democratic parties joined in the Democratic Convention.

The primary purpose of Hungarian self-defence movements in Transylvania is to obtain collective rights additional to individual human rights. Maintaining the national identity and culture of Hungarians in Romania implies that the majority nation abandon ethnocentric notions, that is, a definition of the state as a Romanian "national state". The minorities must be accorded collective legal status and recognition as constituent factors of the state. RMDSz is therefore to obtain partner nation status for the Hungarians and cultural autonomy; political (territorial) autonomy wherever population numbers warrant it.

The RMDSz Kolozsvár Statement of 25 October 1992 declared with reference to the Romanian National Assembly of the 1st of December 1918 at Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) which proclaimed the union of Transylvania and the Kingdom of Romania: "Hungarians in Romania, as a political entity are a constituent factor of the state and as such the equal partners of the Romanian nation. We bear the same responsibility for its future as any other citizen. Confronted with the despondency apparent amongst Hungarians, and the emigration it entails, it is our duty to take action. It is our duty to present that course of action which offers a way out from the crisis to us, and to the country. We maintain that this is the course of internal autonomy. The principle of internal autonomy is universally forward-looking, numerous existing or nascent communal autonomies show that this practice has proved successful in viable democracies in Europe. The embodiment, as a community, of the Hungarians of Romania in the polity of the country is a part of the country's integration in the European Community."

The free press which Hungarians in Transylvania have created is one of the most important achievements of the post-1989 situation. Earlier the Hungarian press was the compliant instrument of the Bucharest dictatorship and even of the denationalizing policy; the new Transylvanian Hungarian press boldly and with commitment defends minority interests. It is not easy, Hungarian organizations own relatively few printing facilities, there is a shortage of skilled technical staff, and paper and printing costs are soaring. In spite of all this, the independent Hungarian press is of a pretty high standard. Around eighty Hungarian papers have started since 1989, although the majority have ceased publication owing to the difficult economic situation. All the same, there are Hungarian papers in towns like Nagyszalonta (Salonta), Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu) or Nagykároly (Carei), which did without a local press for many years. The national Hungarian daily, *Romániai Magyar Szó*, is published in Bucharest. Other papers of importance are *Szabadság* (Kolozsvár), *Bihari Napló* (Nagyvárad) and *Brassói Lapok* (Brassó-Braşov-Kronstadt). A Christian weekly, *Keresztény Szó*, published in Kolozsvár, has a wide readership. Hungarian radio or television programmes are broadcast from Bucharest, Kolozsvár and Marosvásárhely.

Throughout the centuries, for Transylvanian Hungarians the primary vehicle of culture and national identity has been the school. The communist dictatorship

largely liquidated the ancient Hungarian schools, including the denominational colleges, and nothing much has happened since to mend things in this respect. There are many good Hungarian schools including those at Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad, Nagyenyed (Aiud-Strassburg) Marosvásárhely, Székelyudvarhely, Csíkszereda (Miercurea Ciuc), Sepsiszentgyörgy (Sfintu Gheorge), Temesvár, Arad and Szatmár. A number of Roman Catholic and Calvinist secondary schools have also begun teaching. The number of Hungarian schools, however, still falls far short of that needed, many Hungarian pupils have to attend Romanian schools and the authorities in Bucharest still stonewall any attempt to restart the Bolyai University at Kolozsvár.

Literary and cultural periodicals should also be mentioned. *Korunk*, *Helikon* and *Művelődés* in Kolozsvár, *Látó* in Marosvásárhely, *A Hét* in Bucharest, *Kelet-Nyugat* and *Erdélyi Napló* in Nagyvárad, *Európai Idő* in Sepsiszentgyörgy and other journals devotedly cultivate Transylvanian literature and culture. Kriterion of Bucharest used to be an important publisher of minorities literature; they now are in financial difficulties and the number of new titles issued by them has shrunk to a quarter or a third of what it used to be. New publishers were formed in Kolozsvár, Nagyvárad and Sepsiszentgyörgy. Erdélyi Szépmíves Céh (Transylvanian Arts Crafts Guild), the legendary publishers of the interwar years, have started up again. Of all the cultural societies, the Transylvanian Hungarian Educational Society (EMKE), the Transylvanian Museum Society, and the Transylvanian Federation of Guardians of the Native Language are the most important.

The churches have a special mission in the defence of minority rights and the maintenance of Hungarian culture. Religious and national identities largely coincide in Transylvania. Catholics are Hungarian in their majority, a few are leftover Germans in the Banat, Calvinists and Unitarians are all Hungarians, Uniates and the Orthodox, except for a few Hungarians, are all Romanians. In the past the churches maintained Hungarian schools, and the church was the hearth of the native language. The Transylvanian Hungarian churches still fight the good fight for their cultural identity and autonomy. Their schools and buildings, which the communist dictatorship confiscated, have not been returned to them.

The churches, like all other Hungarian associations, journals or schools nevertheless do their level best to enable the Hungarians of Transylvania to maintain their own cultures and traditions and to live in peace with the other peoples of Romania. Together they may make it to a future community of European nations, which could well provide a historical setting for the self-defence of Hungarians who live as minorities outside Hungary's borders. ■

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### **BARCSAY Jenő**

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### **BODNÁR György**

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*Pálkánk* (Short story)

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**SZÉKELY János**

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**SZILÁGYI István**

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The Sculptures of György Ugray

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**SZŐCS Géza**

*A sirálybőr cipő* (The Gull-Skin Shoe). (Reviewed by Balázs Lengyel: Talents Confirmed)

XXXI (1990) No. 117. pp. 114-115.

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*A vendégszerető avagy Szindbád Marienbadban* (The Hospitable, or Sindbad in Marienbad). (Reviewed by Gergely Hajdú: Memory Explored and Denied)

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**SZŐCS Géza**

*Áz unikornis látogatása* (Visit of the Unicorn).

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"Courage is a Question of Character". Last Will and Testament with a Commentary

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**SZŐCS Géza**

*Históriák a küszöb alól* (Stories from below the Threshold). (Reviewed by Gergely Hajdú: Captives and Fugitives of Tradition)

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**SZŐCS Géza**

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**VADAS József**

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Origin of the Rumanians and the Settlement of Transylvania

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Heirs and Heretics)

XXXIV (1993) No. 129. pp. 136-137.

**WILHEIM András**

Ligeti's Horn Trio

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**ZIRKULI Péter**

*A kép ketrecéből* (From the Cage of the Image).

(Reviewed by László Ferenczi: New Poetry)

XXXIII (1982) No. 85. pp. 158-159.

**ZÖLDI László**

Interview with Edgár Balogh in Kolozsvár

XVI (1975) No. 58. pp. 181-184.

Compiled by Zsolt Bánhegyi

György Enyedi

# Budapest and Metropolitan Integration in Europe

Over recent decades an integrated, transnational metropolitan system has taken shape in Europe. The backbone of this system has been formed by metropolitan areas in Western Europe, from London, Brussels, the Randstad region in the Netherlands, Cologne-Frankfurt, Zurich, as far as Milan. Their links are complex: besides business ties, they cover culture, research, higher education, the movement of people, capital, and information. This integration has been led by the following factors:

- a) the globalization of the economy, the dominance of multinational business organizations and financial institutions under the direction of local economies;
- b) the social and political integration process of the European Union, which has made it possible for the radius of attraction of the large cities to extend beyond national boundaries;
- c) changes in the system of production, which have concentrated strategic enterprise decisions, innovations and high level business services in the metropolitan areas.

These European metropolises have developed cooperation via competition among themselves. In a certain sense, they have left their regions; metropolitan development has depended on international cooperation of the metropolises rather than on their direct relations to their attraction zones or national territories. The functioning of metropolises has become transnational (although their gateway functions for their own regions are still very important).

A hierarchy has come into being within the European metropolitan system. There are global cities (such as London and Paris), centres of European importance (Amsterdam or Frankfurt), and regional or subregional centres (as Milan or Barcelona).

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The system is expanding. Southern European and Scandinavian metropolises are joining the core area. The political transition has opened up a road for integration for the East-Central European cities. This paper analyses the conditions of Budapest for joining.

## Post-socialist cities: are they prepared?

Obviously, for a city to become an international metropolis it has to be large enough to offer a broad range of services and to have a well-developed infrastructure. Its communications with the world have to be good. It has to be of vital importance within its country and it needs to possess transborder relations. It has to serve as a gateway for foreign influence on the society of its own country. It has to function as a centre of innovations. Finally, the urban population itself has to be prepared to accept the cosmopolitanism of an international metropolis.

Metropolitan functions could be developed while competing with other cities for foreign capital, for transnational companies or international institutions. Post-socialist cities are not really ready for competition, although most of the capital cities—with the exception of Bratislava and Ljubljana—are large enough to be classified as metropolises. For some time to come, Belgrade and Zagreb will presumably be seriously constrained because of the war in former Yugoslavia. Where Bucharest and Sofia are concerned, neither their infrastructure nor their economic and social status is adequate for immediate European urban competition. Their geographical distance from Western Europe—coupled with poor communication systems—is a serious handicap. (This could obviously change in the future).

At present, Prague, Budapest, and Warsaw may have an opportunity to enter successfully into the European urban competition. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, the transition towards political democracy and a market economy has gone furthest—and the changes are irreversible. The final outcome is much less certain in the other post-socialist countries. Thus, the competitiveness of Budapest has to be seen in relation to Prague and to Warsaw.

### The competitiveness of Budapest

Budapest has advantages over the two other cities. These derive from the fact that international functions had been prepared during the last twenty years of the “soft dictatorship” of the Kádár regime and from the fact that the conditions for metropolization are generally more favourable in Budapest than in other post-socialist cities. So far these advantages have been acknowledged by foreign direct investments and the locating of transnational companies.

1) The economic reform of 1968 brought more and more elements of European urbanization back to Budapest. These included

- the transition from an industrial to a tertiary city. In 1964, half of the Hungarian industrial workforce was concentrated in Budapest. This ratio had dropped to 19 per cent by 1991. Half of these were employed in white collar jobs in the headquarters of their firms;

- the growing share taken by high quality and diversified services within the tertiary sector;
- a private economy began to develop in Budapest from the end of the 1970's. Investment in private business rose sixfold between 1980 and 1989 (still in the socialist period!). In 1986, two thirds of the private enterprises of the country operated in Budapest;
- the opening to the West in various forms: thus Budapest's economy had more foreign trade with the West than with Comecon countries; large state-owned enterprises established direct links with Western enterprises; during the 1980's, the city had the largest number of Western visitors of all the East Central European capitals and some 2 million Hungarians travelled to the West every year.

In consequence, Budapest citizens have a certain amount of experience of the urban life of Western cities. The rapid shift from state socialism to a market economy did not come as a deep cultural shock.

2) The geographical locations of Budapest, Prague and Warsaw are favourable for linkage to the European metropolitan network. Budapest is larger and has a stronger metropolitan image than its competitors. Its closeness to Vienna, and very strong traditions of cooperation with Vienna, are advantageous; the relatively small size of the country and the modest development of the national urban network is a disadvantage. The city has good opportunities to develop bridgehead functions towards Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In all of East Central Europe, Budapest has the most marked metropolitan image. Prague has the westernmost location, and may easily link up with the German urban network. The Czech capital enjoys a high reputation for its cultural traditions, and its architectural environment is truly remarkable. However, its national territory is relatively small, and its relations with Eastern Europe have been reduced. It will not be easy to develop macro-regional (bridgehead) economic functions for the city. Warsaw is advantageously located half-way between two large—German and post-Soviet—economic zones. Poland has a common border with six post-Soviet republics and good access to the Baltic region. The city itself has a poor infrastructure, and a less attractive urban environment than its competitors.

3) Budapest certainly has gateway functions. The city is the prime recipient of foreign capital, foreign company headquarters and all kinds of foreign visitors. Between 1989 and 1993, Budapest was the main target for Western investors. Budapest received 30 per cent of the total sum invested by the West in all European post-socialist countries. The value of foreign direct investments has been over \$3.5 billion over the last four years. Fifteen of the twenty largest<sup>1</sup> transnational companies (TNCs) have opened offices in the Hungarian capital (although only two—General Motors and General Electric—are among the largest investors). The great interest of TNCs cannot be explained by the Hungarian market: they are looking

1 ■ According to sales turnover

eastward. Budapest is able to challenge Vienna's gateway functions. Businessmen here have considerable experience in Balkan and post-Soviet markets, where conditions are quite different from those in Western Europe. At the same time, Budapest is the easternmost city where the level of infrastructure is acceptable and all the modern business services (banking, insurance) are in place. (In 1991, ten large international insurance companies had established themselves in Budapest, none in Prague, and four in Warsaw).

4) Budapest is also an outstanding intellectual centre. The capital city concentrates 70 per cent of R+D staff, 50 per cent of teachers in higher education, 47 per cent of the active population with tertiary qualifications, 69 per cent of architects, 79 per cent of the country's top business managers. It was the centre of social innovations during the state socialist system—not only for Hungary, but to some extent for other socialist countries too. These innovations made for a smooth transition to the post-socialist era.

The city is open enough to play the role of an international meeting place, that of a clearinghouse for East/West business information. (Some figures for this openness: in Budapest, 10 per cent of university students are foreigners—in Prague 1.5 per cent, in Warsaw 1 per cent; Budapest organized 31 international fairs and exhibitions in 1991—as against Prague with 12, or Warsaw with 13; one per cent of Budapest's population is foreign, as against 0,2 per cent in Prague, and 0,06 per cent in Warsaw.)

5) In analysing metropolitan competitiveness, too much attention is being paid to technical and economic aspects, while social aspects have frequently been ignored. I assume that in the case of post-socialist cities, their European competitiveness will depend to a large extent on the intellectual (cultural, behavioural) capacities of the population. In general, these cities have populations with a good educational level, but are they adequately trained to run a modern infrastructure and modern service institutions? Are the inhabitants of these cities willing to accept metropolitan values such as a cross-cultural (inter-ethnic) intellectual life, the presence of immigrants and foreign businessmen? Are they ready to run their city (public services, cultural life, etc.) similarly to other European metropolises? Can they create an urban social climate which would attract leading foreign businessmen (an important condition for TNCs' regional headquarters)? Prague has the strongest traditions in cosmopolitan urban life, but during the socialist period Budapest and Warsaw were more willing to accept Western influences.

Urban policy in Budapest has included the strengthening of the image and functions of an international metropolis among its strategic goals. City authorities subsidize important cultural events, (thus, the Budapest Spring Festival) which attract visitors from the neighbouring countries and have succeeded in locating here a number of training centres for students from other post-socialist countries. (These include the Central European University founded by George Soros, the International Management Centre, International Bankers' School.) In 1996, Budapest will host a World Exhibition.

## Future scenarios

There are different options for Budapest's integration into the European metropolitan network. These options delineate different geopolitical areas within which Budapest has to compete. Certainly, Budapest lacks the capability to become an all-continental centre. The Hungarian capital could develop into a subregional centre, having to compete with other metropolises within Eastern and Central Europe.

The first option is to link up with the Western European metropolitan network by using the shortest route. In this case, Budapest competes and cooperates with Vienna. (Budapest here is in a more advantageous position than Prague or Warsaw: for them the nearest competing Western metropolis is Berlin). Budapest can take over some of Vienna's gateway functions for Western capital towards South Eastern and Eastern Europe. At present, this first option is being implemented.

The second option is to develop a Central European metropolitan network, not necessarily linking with the Western European core area. Under this scenario, Berlin will become a global city (as London and Paris are today) and will develop a parallel urban system to the present West European core area. This option presupposes strong cohesion among Central European cities; at present, this cohesion is weak, and even communication is poorly developed.

The third and the fourth options involve failures in Western integration. The third option is that Budapest will remain on the Western edge of Eastern Europe and will develop transborder functions mostly to Eastern and South Eastern Europe. In this scenario, political instability and economic uncertainty would hamper the development of important international functions in Budapest. The fourth option is that Budapest will remain the large centre of a small country, its development will be nourished by national sources, and no important international functions will develop. These pessimistic scenarios may happen as a consequence of a possible political instability and disintegration process of the "wider" Europe.

As things stand now, the more optimistic first scenario is valid: Budapest is developing towards being a European metropolis. We can expect three functions of international significance to emerge. The first is cultural and scientific; the cultural/scientific strength of the Hungarian capital has already been noted. The second is the gateway function, provided business circles will pay enough attention to the Eastern market. Finally, there is the challenge of the city becoming an international banking and business service centre. Hungarian financial services are the most advanced in all the post-socialist countries (although not really up to Western standards), and already receive deposits from, and allocate capital to, post-socialist countries. It is therefore likely that Budapest will be able to fulfil the role of a subregional centre.

# Expo '96 Budapest

"Communication for a Better World"

**A**fter long years of debate, the number of people doubting the possibility of the Budapest Expo in 1996 has grown no smaller. Despite the fact that preparations for the Expo have been going on for over five years now, this relatively long period has not made life any easier for the team running the project. Instead of peaceful planning, this time has been marked by pitched battles and unexpected turns, charges and jealousies, brilliant projects and aborted ideas, high-running passions and political intrigue. Traces of all this lead far, even across the border, since Expo '96 was originally conceived as a 1995 joint celebration by Austria and Hungary, a symbolic event bringing together the then rival systems of East and West.

## Bridges to the future

**T**he starting pistol for a joint Austro-Hungarian Expo '95 was fired rather late, considering that by 1987, when the idea began to take shape, competition between applicants to organize the next two Expos had already been going on. In all fairness,

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however, it must be added that the idea of hosting a world exhibition had first occurred in both countries as early as the beginning of the 1980s; it was just the necessary determination that had been lacking. That Hungary had registered with BIE, the Bureau of International Expos, back in 1985 was kept secret for a long time.

The date was decided on the consideration that both countries planned to celebrate a number of anniversaries in 1995. In Hungary, the fiftieth anniversary of the country's liberation was due; the same year is the fiftieth anniversary of the restoration of the democratic republic of Austria and the fortieth anniversary of her regaining sovereignty. In the Autumn of 1987, after several preliminary talks, the two heads of government finally announced their intention to hold a joint Expo. However, the ambitious project turned into a sort of a ministerial farce at the first obstacle, the preliminary registering with the Paris office of BIE. Although the two partners had agreed to send a joint letter of application, as a result of certain misunderstandings concerning ministerial authority in Austria, no such letter was ever sent.

Despite the aborted start, preparations were on the way. Minor disagreements marked negotiations concerning the focus of attention. Hungary suggested nutrition as a theme. The Austrians proposed slightly

"less mundane" subjects, such as culture, innovation or tourism. Both sides were fully convinced that the project was likely to speed up the normalization of political and economic links between East and West, as well as encouraging developments in the infrastructure and, indirectly, in tourism. At that time, dissenters arguing against the exhibition were few and far between. Anxieties were mainly expressed by the Austrians arguing that Hungary was experiencing one of the greatest economic crises of her history and would need extremely generous Austrian credits for staging a joint exhibition. Once it was declared, however, that Austria would not be financing projects that were only strictly necessary for Budapest and would only be helping to allocate resources, the dissenters calmed down. The Austrian government approved the preliminary plans and commissioned Bechtel of the United States to carry out an opinion poll on possible themes for the Viennese part of the exhibition. A host of ideas emerged and enthusiasm was almost palpable. In addition, the idea of involving two capitals generated surprisingly great interest in the art world.

Then came an unexpected turn: Austria started having second thoughts. They could not make up their mind over either the location or the date. Even more importantly, the Austrian government was reluctant to take on concrete commitments. In the meantime, the growing interest shown by the United States and the Common Market in Budapest caused considerable concern to some observers who thought that Budapest was likely to attract more of the world's firms than Vienna because of its suitability as a foothold in the eastern markets. Naturally, there were political motives, too: the West wanted to demonstrate its sympathy both for the Hungarian experiment and for *perestroyka*. (Remember that the year was 1988.)

A rumour circulating at the time that the BIE wanted to limit the number of Expos to two for the whole period between 1992 and 2002 brought further complications. By that time, those who supported the Expo showed greater realism, warning that even the most optimistic estimates for visitors made a loss seem certain and that plans regarding the location in Vienna and the theme were still at a very undeveloped stage. On the other hand, Vienna had realized by then that without Budapest their application had no chance of success. The doubts were finally dispelled on May 18, 1988, when the Hungarian and Austrian Ambassadors handed over the two capitals' application to host the 1995 World Fair to Jacques Roland, then director of the BIE.

By then, the relationship between Hungary and Austria had become so friendly that it was being cited as an example of how two countries with different social systems could work together. All restrictions on travel and on the exchange of information between the two countries were lifted. Austrian firms were building hotels as well as an airport in Hungary, and Hungarian goods enjoyed preferential tariff status in Austria. The decision to lift travel restrictions led to a phenomenal rise in border traffic. Economic links grew stronger, with the result that Hungary, still a Comecon country at the time, became Austria's second most important trading partner. Such an example of permeability between East and West prompted Bechtel to suggest "Bridges to the Future" as the official slogan of the world exhibition.

### Pre-utilization—post-utilization

**F**or various reasons, industry and food production along with communication and environmental technologies were considered less attractive than themes related



to culture and lifestyles. With the year two thousand approaching, these were expected to lend an interesting and forward-looking character to the joint Austro-Hungarian enterprise. With regard to the location, the dilemma was whether to plan a world fair according to the "traditional recipe", that is to say, an event limited to a relatively short period (say six months) and confined in space (to an area between one hundred and twenty and two hundred and fifty acres), or whether to design it as geographically decentralized, using existing facilities, and extended in time. The latter would have avoided too much unnecessary spending on the infrastructure in both capitals. In Vienna areas that had been selected to play other, more important roles in the future life of the city could have been allocated to such a purpose. Opinion polls showed that the majority of Viennese opposed gigantomania and preferred environmental-minded projects. Much like in Budapest, in Vienna, too, three possible locations were eventually short-listed, each one of which would have been utilized after the Expo as a venue for future exhibitions.

It was around that time that the feasibility study by Bechtel concluded that post-utilization would be an important factor in profitability. Indeed, financial and business circles favouring the exhibition had from the start treated it, in both capitals, as a project in infrastructural and urban development, likely to offer great scope to entrepreneurs over many years, attracting enormous financial resources. For Budapest, a city with an inadequate infrastructure, the sudden interest shown by foreign capital could not have come at a better time. In both Vienna and in Budapest attention was focused on transport facilities, the extension of the underground and the reconstruction of the main roads and secondary roads converging on the capitals. Budapest aimed to exploit

the Expo to create the basis of an Eastern-European commercial and financial centre. Planned investments were meant to transcend the capitals and affect almost the entire territory of both countries: negotiations on a fast train service, with speeds of a hundred miles an hour, between Vienna and Budapest started around that time; and, the completion of the motorway between them was given high priority. The philosophy behind all these projects was raising Hungary to Western standards. The Expo provided a unique framework as well as a public relations basis.

Some feasibility studies doubted the post-utilization value of a number of new constructions and infrastructural investments. As regards the long-neglected Hungarian telecommunication system and the tourist industry and also some of the rail and road construction, the interest of foreign investors could be reckoned with.

Nevertheless, as time went by, post-utilization had become more and more the priority. In estimating this, however, one should not confine oneself to calculating the takings at the turnstiles, box-offices, hotels and restaurants. Long-term effects on foreign trade and tourism years after the Expo should also be taken into account. Further benefits derive from infrastructural investments and facilities converted to other uses afterwards. If calculations took all this into account, we would find that all earlier world fairs had shown a profit. To make the event more cost-effective, Hungary suggested a concurrent world conference of Hungarians or of Finno-Ugrian peoples, and an international wine festival.

Another cost-cutting idea was the suggestion that, in addition to creating more hotel beds, some student hostels, camping-grounds and workers' hostels could be made available. The two cities could have treated the Expo as a kind of pre-utilization,

since Vienna needed a second city centre in any event, and the Danube riparian area near the UN City, chosen to be the Expo site, would have been perfect for this purpose. Tenders calling for the district's urban development aimed at the creation of a new city centre, and Budapest had similar plans, envisaging an ultra-modern alternative city centre near the congested downtown area, at the northern end of Csepel Island.

### Who is to withdraw?

**O**n May 25, 1989 the BIE in Paris approved the report of a committee studying the suitability of Austria and Hungary. Miami, the only competitor, had withdrawn.

However, the debate did not end there: with the passing of time, Viennese anxieties that Austria was falling behind Hungary in the preparations, intensified. In addition, Austria gradually came round to the view that the benefits, public relations and financial alike, would primarily accrue to Hungary. In the meantime, in pre-transition Hungary, the economic crisis reached such a dramatic stage that the government decided to invite independent experts to carry out a cost-benefit analysis before making up its mind about going ahead with the joint exhibition. The opposition rejected the idea, as a further, unnecessary, burden, which must have been interpreted as a warning sign by the Austrians.

Precisely at that delicate point in time, when Hungary was nearly forced to withdraw, Bratislava/Pozsony/Pressburg presented itself as an additional venue. In the eyes of many it would have been an unforgivable error to leave out this once tri-lingual city of the Habsburg Empire and with it, Czechoslovakia. Economic rationale, too, argued for holding the event in three countries. In such a setup the costs could be split three ways, and potential revenues would be greatly increased. It was also suggested that

such a fair would generate even greater enthusiasm all over the world, considering that the original attraction had been the idea of finally bringing together the two sides of the Iron Curtain. This proposal was ultimately rejected on the grounds that BIE regulations would not permit such substantial modifications to the original application. It also turned out, however, that since the application was submitted by Vienna and Budapest jointly, Vienna would not automatically qualify without Budapest; if Budapest withdrew, Vienna would have to reconsider whether to submit a new application to organize Expo '95 alone. Vienna by itself was unlikely to attract the estimated twenty million visitors a joint Expo would draw. In all probability, however, Vienna would have, at the end of the day, decided to renew its application, but it would have also wanted to include other Central European cities, such as Prague, Bratislava, Brno, Cracow, Munich, and possibly, even Venice. However, the dissenters had other arguments, too. They argued that the Expo's moment had already passed. It would have been entirely different, had the Iron Curtain still been in place. In that circumstance, the joint venture would have come as a sensation, and the motto "Bridges to the Future" would have made sense.

In August 1990, the Austrian Freedom Party demanded a referendum on the Expo, claiming that fewer and fewer Austrians now supported a joint world fair. They maintained that the Austrian economy would benefit little and the Austrian tourist industry had no need of it. The Austrian provinces were also against, fearing that while the benefits would be reaped by Vienna alone, the costs would be shared by the whole country. Dissenters reckoned that at least half of a total of around twenty million visitors would be Austrians, whose spending would benefit Vienna alone and not the entire country. Of the remaining

ten million, six million would come from Eastern Europe, with little money to spend. Those were not alluring prospects in exchange for an invasion of visitors endangering the environment, and the development of the Expo territory would deprive the Viennese of a favourite recreational area. Despite these attacks, however, the Expo continued to enjoy the support of Austria's official circles.

Following the political changes in Hungary, the uncertainty surrounding the Expo increased. In the local elections Gábor Demszky, a staunch opponent of Expo '95, was elected Mayor of Budapest. At the same time, in Vienna as well as in Budapest, it seemed that the Hungarian economy was failing to attract effective foreign capital, not only for the world fair, but even for its most basic needs.

In December 1990, the Austrian Green Party, too, demanded a referendum. In that delicate situation the BIE's annual meeting passed a resolution recommending only temporary registration of the joint Budapest-Vienna application. The Austrian Expo commissioner, in agreement with the Mayor of Vienna, was of the opinion that Austria should not make another move until Hungary had finally decided. They believed that until Hungary had officially withdrawn, Austria was legally compelled to stand by its offer to host the Expo. This was also when the row between the Hungarian government and the municipal authorities of Budapest was gathering momentum. On December 13 1990, in Paris, in the face of strong reservations both by the Austrian and by the Hungarian opposition, the Hungarian Government Commissioner Etele Baráth and Wolfgang Schüssel, the Austrian Minister of Industry, submitted an application to BIE to host Expo '95 for conditional registration. The application was accepted by BIE.

A record number turned up to vote in the Vienna Expo referendum in May 1991. The

results were a shock: sixty-five per cent were against, thus putting stop to any more speculations about Vienna's participation.

The Hungarian commissioner of the Expo's first reaction was declaring any further effort to be pointless. The same conclusion was drawn all over the world: Budapest alone could not undertake the world fair.

### "Communication for a Better World"

Some Hungarian economists and politicians argued that, given the country's severe economic crisis, the Expo was a rare opportunity that only comes up once every century, which would offer a chance for a breakthrough, furthering a market economy and introducing state of the art technologies. It would also be an ideal opportunity to display Hungarian culture, all that Hungary has achieved in art and the sciences, and all the nation holds dear. The Expo ought to be financed predominantly by private resources rather than by the exchequer, attracting foreign as well as Hungarian private investors, and this would be an additional bonus.

A growing number came round to the view that for Budapest to organize the Expo was the real thing. Declarations by various institutions came in day after day, pledging continued support. Typically, "no" from Vienna generated whole-hearted enthusiasm in Hungary. Actually, the responsibility of both the Hungarian government and the local government of Budapest grew considerably, since Austria's rejection in a sense improved the chances of Hungary's making the Expo a success: most of those wishing to invest in the Viennese expo could almost certainly be attracted to Budapest. Nevertheless, it was quite clear that in the new situation the original plan had to be revised in every detail.

On June 5, 1991 when the BIE annual meeting voted on the matter, Budapest was

given the green light to stage Expo '96 all by itself. The annual meeting approved of the proposed site—an area of about 108 acres between the Petőfi and Lágymányos bridges (the latter still to be constructed) in south Budapest on the Buda bank of the Danube—with the slogan, "Communication for a Better World". Forty-five countries and between twelve and fifteen multinational firms are expected to take part with a budget of about one billion dollars.

Now, with all that controversy behind us, what are the latest developments? Studies conducted by the BIE and by Bechtel concluded that everything was going ahead as scheduled. The infrastructure development plans have been completed. One such project is the new bridge across the Danube, work on which has been going on for over a year now; another is the new section of the motorway ring encircling Budapest. Dramatic changes can be expected in the Budapest public transport system though the idea of a new underground line has been dropped. With the help of loans secured by the city, modern and environmentally safe buses will be bought soon, and the existing tram-service will also be extended. Another related project is the reconstruction of the Danube bank across the river from the Expo grounds. By the end of 1995 the southern section of Váci utca in the heart of the city will have turned into an elegant shopping mall. New parking facilities, office buildings and shopping centres are being built. The main thoroughfares are also being modernized: Hungária körút will be extended, the urban section of the M5 motorway will be completed, and by 1996, several hundreds of kilometres of Budapest streets will have been repaved.

As to the Expo site itself, the hundred and eight acres at Lágymányos have also undergone considerable changes. In November 1993 the Expo sites on the Buda bank and the area opposite them on the Pest bank,

then still being used as a freight yard by Hungarian Railways, were cleared. At the moment construction of roads and public utilities is under way. If all goes according to plan, the public utility system will be completed by July 1994; work on the final landscaping of the area, and some construction, began in January. Now, the more spectacular part of the construction begins; the first buildings are springing up. The buildings housing the administrative offices will be completed sometime in mid-1995. Preparatory work on the Hungarian pavilion should be finished by the end of this year. The tender for the construction of the national pavilions has already been called. The organizers feel confident that six months before opening day, the area and the buildings will be ready for exhibitors to start moving in. The final image and theme profile of Expo '96 Budapest will not really emerge before that, although there is still plenty to do until then. Come what may in politics or the economy, the organizers want to hold themselves to the deadlines.

Foreign capital has been invested in a number of projects indirectly linked to the Expo, such as the extension of Ferihegy Airport, the modernization of telecommunications (of all the East European telephone systems, Hungary's was the first to be privatized) and extension of the motorway system. The latter is especially important, since 88 per cent of foreign visitors are expected to arrive by road. The other areas likely to attract foreign investors are in construction, entertainment and catering. Furthermore there are infrastructural projects which can not be financed by private capital and for which some form of government resources are clearly needed. These are, however, limited and it seems unlikely that under the next government, due to take office in 1994, additional sums of money will be allocated. The one-billion-dollar Expo

budget, approved by Parliament, not only has to cover the costs of preparing the site, constructing and operating the pavilions and the service buildings, but should also cover infrastructural investment in Budapest. A long and acrimonious dispute marked negotiations between City Hall and the Expo commission over the actual break-down of the budget, which at times endangered the future of the Expo itself. Finally, in late 1993, an agreement was signed clearly detailing various projects and responsibilities, together with the money allocated to them. Most of the money will be spent on the infrastructure, which is vital for both Budapest and to the success of the Expo.

Resources are scarce, but need a world fair be costly to be successful? Both the government and the Expo commission anticipate breaking even. In the case of a major investment of this type, however, profits are not always measurable in money terms. With long-term effects taken into account, almost all world fairs held so far can be regarded as profitable, bearing in mind what they did for the image of the countries where they were held or in terms of infrastructural improvements. The benefits for a city organizing a world fair can be illustrated by the example of the Millennium Celebrations in Budapest in 1896: the buildings erected at the time are still those that define the image of the city.

Half of the 200 acres allocated to Expo '96 will become a new business district, and the other half, the site proper, will become a university campus. Thirty per cent of the total costs will be covered by the government; the rest of the money must come from revenues, the sale of assets and the issue of bonds. At the time of writing, in early 1994, it appears that there will be no financing problems, as the organizers have so far managed to stay within the planned budget.

Although the city of Budapest is the host, the entire country will take part. As part of

the tourism strategy, provincial areas are to be linked up with the central events via cultural programmes, special forums, folklore displays, medicinal tourism, and other attractions. There will be celebrations marking the 1100th anniversary of the Hungarian Conquest. Some of the fringe events will begin before the 147 days of the official Expo calendar and some programmes will continue even after it closes. A search for new ideas has so far resulted in 23 successful applications for the designation "Official fringe event", which, in addition to entitling the holders to the use of the Expo emblem and to the inclusion in the official programme, also involves financial support. These events, together with the accompanying development of the infrastructure, may well snowball into projects that could produce favourable market conditions for private initiative not only up to 1996, but for years afterwards. The neighbouring countries are welcome to join some fringe events. Bearing in mind that the distances from Budapest to the country's borders are within the 60 to 200 km range, business opportunities might well transcend them.

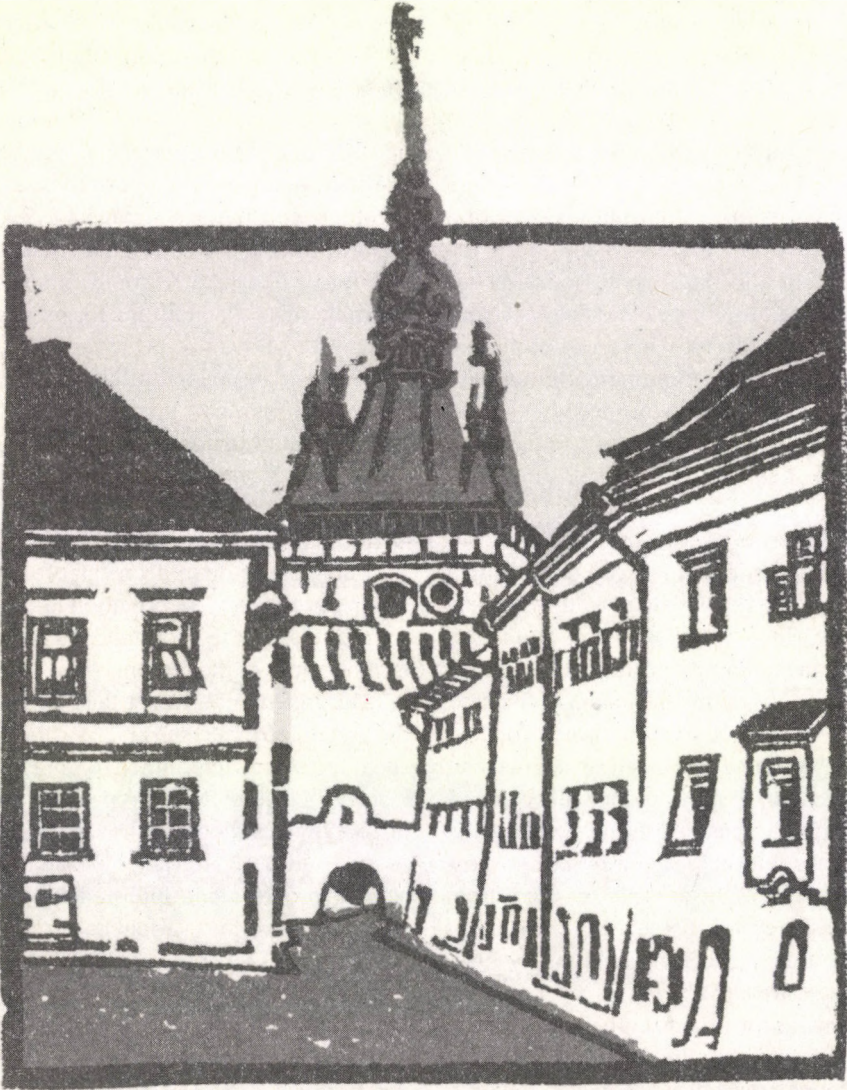
Budapest is offered an opportunity of staying at the focus of attention for around six months, as the economic, cultural and tourist centre of the region.

The ninety-nine world fairs held since the first in 1851 reflected and, in a manner of speaking, also determined progress. The history of world fairs is now part of the history of technology, of the arts, of culture as such. Every world fair has been a test, serving progress and international understanding. World fairs usually celebrate some anniversary; the 1876 Philadelphia World Fair coincided with the centenary of the Declaration of Independence, the 1889 Paris World Fair with that of the Fall of the Bastille, and the 1976 Montreal Expo with that of the North America Act. In 1996, the year of the

Budapest Expo, it will be 1100 years since Hungarians settled in the Carpathian Basin. The national exhibition on the occasion of the Millennium a hundred years ago was seen by close to six million visitors.

In 1996 Hungary will arrange a specialized world fair. A total of twelve million

visitors are expected on the 147 days it will be open between May 11th and October 4th. The challenge is the same as a hundred years ago. Hungary must once again improve its infrastructure, as well as prove that it is capable of making a contribution to a Europe that is about to unify. ■



*Clocktower in Segesvár (Schässburg/Sigișoara), 16th century.*

## Ends and Beginnings

**W**hat is Budapest like these days, asks the university professor from Madison, Wisconsin, back again after five years to spend a few months in Budapest. What has become of the Sleeping Beauty he had grown to love, awakened from her slumbers by the kiss of the modern world—only to turn over on her other side? She seems to have got up from her bed at last and is now going about dolled up and painted, wanting to try out everything at once. Like a girl with tuberculosis who has been let out of hospital for a few days before an operation.

Since my professor friend last visited here, Budapest burst into colourful bloom, then promptly shed its blossoms and became commercialized. Today it is, all at the same time, enthusiastic but disheartened, segregating but still amicable and user-friendly, increasingly genteel yet in parts increasingly slummy. The “civilization scissors” of Budapest are opening: the city is becoming more refined and at the same time more uncouth. The turn-of-the-century magnificence and splendour and the dreary hopelessness of the fifties is still in the city’s pores (in the oil-stained backstreets, in the doorways that reek of cat’s piss, in the locksmiths’ grimy basement workshops decorated with photos of nudes flaunting obsolete, outsize breasts). The inhabitants of Budapest find grounds for shock or consternation at every step: on every corner there is something to remind you that this isn’t how it used to be one-two-three-five years ago. Our amazement is beginning to diminish but still persists.

The following is one of Budapest’s wise jokes dating back to the time of the change of regime and one which always provoked immoderate, cathartic laughter.

*“How d’you make a cat happy?”*

*“???”*

*“By letting go of its tail...”*

The joke objectified the naive belief that all that remained to be done was to establish a normal political and economic structure again, and the market and

reviving human energies would solve the questions of the hour and take care of the rest. An appreciable if not rapid improvement would soon make itself felt.

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**András Török**

*is an editor of 2000, a literary monthly and author of Budapest: A Critical Guide.*

Five years have passed since that sweating hand let go of the cat's tail, and presently the iron grip around the hand loosened and let go its hold. But instead of prancing about happily and living easy in ever increasing plenty, the cat is running round in circles. It is clearly unhappy.

The city authorities are also complaining. "The Municipality Act is worthless as it is, devolving powers onto the administrative bodies far beyond reasonable limits...The Mayor's Office cannot be regarded as the government... In the last analysis it is the National Assembly that holds the position of government", I read in a brochure intended for internal use only, filched from the desk of an administrator friend who works for the municipality. The Municipality Act devolved several powers necessary for the assertion of the interests of the capital taken as a whole, not to the capital, but to its twenty-two districts. This is why no significant change has been achieved, neither by strict regulations, nor by repeated price increases, in the parking situation. Cars are parked, all four wheels on the sidewalk, along the whole length of Andrásy út, Budapest's most beautiful avenue and everywhere else. Seven year-old cars on an average, many of them bleeding oil at the nose and mouth. Every municipal initiative founders under the terrible onus of coordination. The city government seeks a consensus, the districts take turns in giving it the short end of the stick. According to the experts, the merging of the inner districts and placing them under integrated administration is beginning to seem an imperative necessity.

The inhabitants of Budapest, so the observers say, have got over the first great bankruptcies, the first big disappointments. The era of wildcat schemes is now over. Now, or so it seems, it is not the most audacious in dodging the law and the authorities, nor those who are the first to embark upon something who achieve success, but those who do something better than the others in their own sector of the market. Or that is the way it will be, maybe, in the long run.

These days, Budapest is a city full of tension—perhaps because everything is so uncertain, changing much too quickly. Whole classes of society are coming down or going up rapidly in the world. There is practically no one not on the move in some way. It is the situation of the educated that has changed most: from a position of settled, staid security, they are either on their way to join in the rat-race for money and success, or slipping into respectable poverty. And the situation of the various layers changes differently yet again in relation to the culture and the education of the next generation.

This tension is palpable in the streets of Budapest, where the objectified ambitions of the upward strivers on the rise, the emblems of "conspicuous consumption", the product of ranked priorities, the new, powerful cars are competing. Anyone interested in the social processes of Budapest should go and stand at the Pest head of the Chain Bridge and watch for just a quarter of an hour what is happening in the three lanes leading up to the historic two-lane bridge. See all the cunning, the slyness, the overt, undisguised, brutal violence. For anyone trying to



take the centre lane leading onto the bridge is doomed to stay stalled in one place, so many are the cars forcing their way ahead of him from both sides. Here nothing helps, not even the favourite reading of Budapest intellectuals of the seventies, *The Social Animal*, Aaronson's socio-psychological paradigms. The spirit of Aaronson would have us be polite and considerate as often as possible, behaviour that will sooner or later reap its rewards in kind. "Civilized behaviour will be recompensed." For then we would have to stay in one place. Only a different kind of logic can help here: to leave your car at home. Today, in Budapest's 5th district, in office hours, half of the cars out on the streets are looking for a parking space.

**T**he first edition of the Budapest Encyclopedia was published in 1973, the year the country, or rather the state, was celebrating the centenary of the union of Óbuda, Buda and Pest. However, people too were glad to be celebrating something that was not in direct connexion with the totalitarian system. They did not like their state, but they loved their city.

The two real highlights of the 1973 celebrations were the unveiling of the Union Memorial (at the southern tip of Margaret Island, near the roundabout), an insignificant monument resembling a phallus twisted at the tip, and the publication of the Encyclopedia. The latter was a typical camel, a committee idea. Instead of publishing an up-to-date local history encyclopedia, they tried to stuff everything there was to know, or rather everything they wanted known about the past and present of the city between the dust-covers of a single book. There were hundreds of entries dealing with the history of the labour movement and with the state enterprises headquartered in the capital.

These entries can of course no longer be found in the new, two-volume 1993 edition. And now that they have been left out it has become blatantly obvious that the original conception was doomed to failure. The mountains were in labour, but despite great expectations the product was again no mountain fairy but an unwieldy "party state" elephant, and the reason for this is still, more than anything else, the forcing together of past and present.

The preface describes at great length the acceleration of social changes, and what a "trial of strength" it was for the editors to keep abreast of them. "The motion picture had to be stopped at some point so that the stills should give the reader the most life-like image of the city possible."

One of the many poor-quality photographs in the encyclopedia presents an exhibition at the Textile Industry Museum. This museum had to be closed shortly after it was opened, firstly because the building was in a state of disrepair, secondly because of financing problems. The business empire that took up residence in its place went bankrupt and had to sell the buildings. The genre of encyclopedia does not lend itself to the use of photo-documentation. It is not worth while to carve snapshots into stone.

What would be necessary for the portrayal of the city in the form of photographs would be a CD-ROM encyclopedia renewed every quarter, or better still, on-line.

Yet, there is a daily paper that serves as a day-to-day imprint of the life of the changing city. It first appeared, running to no more than a couple of pages, when the "small business boom" first took wing. This is called *Expressz*, which publishes classified advertisements exclusively. Today it provides light reading on forty-four pages in small type. There are hundreds of sex advertisements, for instance, seeking ladies of all shapes and ages for "erotic work" in night-clubs, massage-parlours, work abroad. Budapest is no longer a chaste, strait-laced city. And it seems as though everyone were trying to rid themselves of the catering vans and stalls that provided fried dough or sausages and mustard to so many. Clearly, the junk food chains are a challenge to those who have already made their pile catering to tastes now out of fashion.

Reading *Expressz*, one feels that Budapest has become a big-talking city forever feeding its inhabitants with vainglorious hopes. The Situations Vacant section takes up a quarter of the paper: advertises in English and German from multinational firms, enticing offers from agencies in the process of establishing themselves, agents and brokers promising the sun, the moon and the stars. Qualified secretaries are in great demand: ten years ago it was a typical peculiarity of the times that the grocer on the corner earned more than the successful company director. Today it is the secretary of a dynamic firm who earns more than any university professor.

In the Budapest of the ancien regime, there was little mobility in the real estate market. There were hundreds of thousands of so-called "council" flats considered as the quasi-property of those who dwelled in them, and these did not change hands easily. A professor of philosophy once said that you had about as much chance of finding the flat that fitted you like a shoe as you had of finding an odd shoe lost in a city of two million.

Now that Budapest has rid itself of most of its state-owned flats (at prices constituting one-tenth or even one-twentieth of their real value) a hectic fever of selling and buying has erupted. New property-owners thought that now that it had become possible to turn everything into money, a buyer could be found for everything. They were disappointed in their hopes: there are too many 40-50 square metre, pre-fabricated, ten-storey housing estate flats on the market, all of minimum standard only; it seems as though everybody were putting these up for sale and wanting to move into the city. Like the thirty-year-old woman whose heart's desire was to move into a rundown 90 square metre flat in the central district with her husband and two children. She was the only casualty in a recent tragedy when a house collapsed in the street with the shortest name in Budapest, that is in Ó utca (an obsolete word for "ancient", as in Óbuda).

Another fact to be learned from *Expressz* is that suburbanization of the classical type has commenced, especially in the outer, hilly districts of Buda. There are many revealing advertisements, intimating constructions come to a standstill for lack of funds and companies gone bust, beginning: "For sale, structurally complete multi-storey, 200-300-400 square metre villa for exacting buyer", often with a swimming-

pool and/or a sauna. The exodus from the central district has begun, progressing slowly. In the central and Lipótváros districts, now being gentrified, where postmodern, generally ugly, office blocks and bank headquarters are shooting up one after the other, it is the big banks and German developers who act as catalysts. They are indefatigable when it comes to making the rounds of flats with intent to buy. But the inhabitants of the central district tend to hold onto their homes. In our building, only two of the fourteen flats were sold. In the inner districts of Budapest, it is still impossible to predict what manner of people live behind a single façade. Only a thorough inspection of the balconies can offer you something to go by. The balconies of Budapest serve as pantries, shrines, temporary storage places—a cultural litmus paper. You'll see antlers, stools, flower-stands made of bent steel and painted black, wardrobes, cabin-trunks. Binoculars are a must for the finer details. Don't forget to bring a pair if the main or ulterior purpose of your tour of Budapest is people-watching, the object of every serious traveller.

**T**he greatest changes in Budapest are happening on the surface and in the depths. On the surface, there is the profusion of colour attained during the last five years: the thousands of the hitherto unknown billboards, the tens of thousands of western cars. And the names. The names! Shops are no longer a part of huge chains like the East Pest Public Catering Company, or the Shoe Store Chain (oh, those revealing adverts of the sixties, "Shoes from the Shoe Store!" and the like), but have their own proprietors and proper names. It is in the choice of names that wit first reappeared in the business life of Budapest. Only a few of these puns are understandable or funny in English. The "Marquis de Salade" (a salad-bar, naturally) is one of these. A McZsolt's, a caravan selling hamburgers and cheekily parked right beside a McDonalds, is another.

The inauspicious changes are unfortunately greater. The first steps of the multinational firms were dainty and cautious: a case in point is the reconstruction of the rundown restaurant of the Nyugati railway station, which was turned into one of the swankiest McDonald's the whole world over, where the stipulations of the Ancient Monuments Act were fully complied with. (The station was designed by Eiffel, after all.) But by today all hell has broken loose, and it has become clear that not only the capital, but the state too is weak and incapable of enforcing its own laws. It is a matter of common knowledge that in Hungary the law categorically forbids the advertising of tobacco in any form. Cigarette ads on the billboards came first, then flood-lit gigantic Marlboro cowboys began to appear beside the signboards of the shops. Today there are thousands of them. In the last few months the visual pollution of the environment has acquired a new aspect with the appearance of Coca Cola signs. These are huge metal signboards with the name of the shop cowering modestly, barely legibly between two, white on red Coca Cola symbols. Then an even larger Pepsi board appears above the shop next door, and a neon Pepsi glass made for giants, complete with straw. I hope the good shopkeepers do not put up these monstrosities because they like them. I sincerely hope they get paid for putting

them up. Because then someone could start a fund sometime and pay the shopkeepers for removing them. Or else woe betide the visual inheritance of Budapest.

There is great change in the depths as well. Budapest is still a city that revels in the pleasures of the intellect, and has remained appealing and lively intellectually. The society of the old bohemian, free-thinking intellectual layabouts suffered great losses, having had to deliver up some of its best and brightest—temporarily or permanently—to politics, while other intellectuals have taken their place as heads of department in the universities or as directors of publishing houses. Responsibility, schedules, a lot of practical work has caught up with them. If you want to see them, you have to make an appointment weeks in advance.

Budapest has never had so much to offer in terms of high culture and art. Never before have there been so many socio-political classics intended for so few, never have we been able to pick and choose among so many alternative movie showings aimed at a select, appreciative audience. Periodicals are flourishing, the old as well as the new, private galleries housing contemporary art are opening one after the other, excelling in display rather than in sales for the moment. Theatres are complaining and flourishing, new ones founded, old ones revived. And new coffee-houses are opening: the suburban-Parisian post-modern Ipoly on Pozsonyi utca, the Paris, Texas in Lónyai utca that reminds one of a French bistro in San Francisco (who hasn't seen the 1983 Wim Wenders film?), the flashy Ring on Andrásy út, the North Italian, provincial Gusto in Frankel Leó utca, the Picasso Point recalling the Quartier Latin in Hajós utca, the Zöldség-Gyümölcs ("Vegetable-Fruit", the name of the only greengrocers' chain in the past) in Király utca. And now that the New York palace has finally been sold, perhaps the "party-state modern" chandeliers, out of date by the time they were put up in 1975, will be changed and the bar counter spewing Belgian beer will be removed from the sumptuous Parisian-style coffee-house that was hearth and home to Hungarian literature at the beginning of the century.

For if not—I'll say it straight out—I'll have to found a new coffee-house. But what name would best suit the most fashionable coffee-house in a city turned upside down, susceptible to so many different nostalgias, in which time is condensed?

It would have to be a revealing, typical name, like the "Economic Miracle" in Berlin, or the "Sacco and Vanzetti" in Frankfurt. Perhaps Philadelphia would be the best choice of a name to revive, "fraternal love" being topical at present. Though at the time it got its name from the American city—the owner's friend had emigrated to America, and Philadelphia was the last place he wrote from...

Budapest is not inundated with budding young American artists like Prague, it is not as rich and smart as Vienna, but intellectually it is effervescent and appealing, restless and self-ironic, cynical and coquettish, flirting with ancient ideas, propagating deconstructive shop interiors.

Since the change of regime, Budapest is giving off an optimistic end-of-the-world atmosphere. Tell me honestly, is there any other place in the world that can give you the same experience? ♣

George Szirtes

## The *Our Budapest* Series

Irma Kocsis: *Tour of Our Locals*. 1993, 61 pp. 963 7033 94 7 • Ferenc Bodor: *Coffee Houses*. 1992, 64 pp. 963 7033 69 6 • Péter Korniss: *Courtyards*. 1993, 54 pp. 963 8376 05 8 • Anna Zádor: *Neoclassical Pest*. 1993, 56 pp. 963 8376 09 0 • János Gerle: *The Turn of the Century*. 1992, 62 pp. 963 7033 8704 • Katalin Kiss: *Industrial Monuments*. 1993, 60 pp. 963 8376 17 1 • Péter Buza: *Bridges of the Danube*. 1992, 58 pp. 963 7033 73 4 • Mária Földes: *Ornamentation*. 1993, 54 pp. 963 8376 13 9 • János Nemes: *Healing Budapest*. 1993, 56 pp. 963 8376 02 3 • József Molnár Péter Szilas: *Night Lights*. 1993, 56 pp. 963 8376 21 X • Adamkó, Dénes, Leél-Össy: *The Caves of Buda*. 1992, 47 pp. 963 7033 65 3 • Dezső Radó: *Parks and Forests*. 1992, 47 pp. 963 7033 79 3.  
All from Városháza, Budapest. All at Ft 250.

**T**here must, you suppose, be an extraordinary pride in the city of Budapest. It is wholeheartedly a city, and one can't quite say the same of London. London is an enormous collage of monuments, suburbs, residential and industrial estates, waste grounds of dual carriageways; occupied or unoccupied office blocks, slums, deserted factories, shopping parades with chain stores, corner shops and pubs, genteel metrolands come down in the world, untenanted yuppie developments rising with postmodern irony into the untenanted sky, small jewel-like squares and parks, individual eighteenth or nineteenth century

houses appearing in unexpected places, all thrown indiscriminately and incoherently together in the spirit of speculate and scarper, each part becoming less and less coherent as time goes on. Instead of the London of Dickens or even of Betjeman we

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### George Szirtes's

*latest volume of poems, Bridge Passages, was published by Oxford University Press in 1991. See also his essays, book reviews and translations from Hungarian poetry in recent issues of this journal.*

have the Buddha of Suburbia, everywhere decentering, deconstructing itself. I couldn't point to any one area and say: this is London. Trafalgar Square? Oxford Street? Soho? Bloomsbury? Westminster? Mayfair? They're all different. Why not King's Cross?<sup>1</sup> New Cross?<sup>2</sup> or Brent Cross?<sup>3</sup>

With Budapest the issue is relatively simple. The Fifth District of Pest is small enough and everything is there in germ, or at least visible from there. There are also the poorer haunted areas of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Districts, but apart from the greater public buildings here is no drastic change of style, only of circumstance. If one looks across the river there is the picturesque coherence of Gellérthegy and the Castle District and beyond these, the villas old and new, the hotels and steps and twisting precarious bus routes of the Buda hills. The Buda of Suburbia. Wildly idiosyncratic separately, the houses of Buda combine to form representative and coherent views, everywhere centering themselves. One doesn't talk about Óbuda. Of course one could move out to the high rises of the outlying districts, to the industrial areas of Csepel or Angyalföld, but the centre, up to its first three layers, is all of a piece, a single contrast on two banks of the same river. It is a human place: people live there. It doesn't become a ghost town at night, it doesn't suffer from inner city decay, it hasn't been taken over entirely by offices. Enjoy it while you may.

The series published by the City Hall and entitled *Our Budapest* certainly intends its readers to. Similar in format to András Török's fine critical guide to Budapest, and probably inspired by it, it moves in various directions in various styles through various levels of production. Four books are given over to architectural themes, two to meeting places, one to engineering, two to nature, one to night lights, one to Budapest's speciality—healing places, and one to a series of rhapsodies on courtyards. As the approach varies so does the standard. Only *Night Lights*, *Parks and Forests*, *The Caves of Buda* (no title on the spine of this one), and *The Turn of Century* (one of the architectural studies in the form of suggested tours) employ colour photographs, the rest use black and white, and the prints in one of them, *Bridges of the Danube*, are of a slightly inferior quality. Individual volumes have individual sponsors and more, presumably, have been more generous than others.

The texts too are of different kinds. Anna Zádor's *Neoclassical Pest* points out buildings of appropriate interest but does not attempt any serious comment on them. It tells us that the Tanzer House was built by Joseph Hild in 1836, that it has a narrow balcony and seven giant columns and that it was executed with extreme care. One hopes so. János Gerle's *The Turn of the Century* is chattier ("The best way to say goodbye to Lipótváros is...", "Let us leave Deák tér via...") but is informative enough to make life interesting. One of the best and most

1 ■ A mainline railway station notorious for its prostitutes.

2 ■ South of the river, one of London's rougher areas.

3 ■ A famous and anonymous looking shopping mall of the 70s.

surprising is Katalin Kiss's *Industrial Monuments*, which offers a historical background and general guidelines without being either dry or ingratiating. It may be that the other architectural subjects are all too well known. The most awkward translation is of Péter Buza's *Bridges of the Danube* ("Later the Hungarian crown and crown jewels, the symbols of Hungarian statehood, also fled over the uncompleted [Chain] bridge"). This unconsciously delicate humour is maintained throughout. Putting that aside, the information, mostly of a historical and technical kind, is interesting enough. The study of *Ornamentation* by Mária Földes is the most fascinating of the architectural books not only for its subject matter but for its depth of knowledge and enthusiasm. It is a fine book to carry round with one especially as the material is organised in the form of a specific walk. *Healing Budapest* offers a more practical guide. János Nemes doesn't bother too much with fine prose or cicerone talk but gives us the opening times of the various medical institutions, and how to use them should the visitor need them. The authors of *The Caves of Buda* are also full of practical advice. Their prose is crisp, scientific and thorough, and they have the most ravishing photographs of the series. The text is among the shortest but is one of the most useful in introducing people to an unexpected aspect of the city. Dezső Radó's *Parks and Forests* is strong on Városliget and Népliget but rather sketchy on the rest. Perhaps there simply isn't that much to say about the topography of the Vérmező but a little history would have been welcome. The oddest of the books is probably *Night Lights*, which makes sound reading for electricians and stage designers but may seem a little arcane to others. For all their minor shortcomings, all the above add something to a visit and are easy to carry.

I have saved the three most literary booklets to last. Sadly, the most literary is the most disappointing. Péter Korniss's *Courtyards* (what a wonderful subject!) places a set of short poetic texts by Virág Erdős opposite full page photographs of the courtyards that inspired them. The inspiration is of rather too general a nature to throw much light on anything. The Gozsdu udvar will not burst into flowers of the imagination for the reader knowing that "The town stands in blocks. Leaning to its huge axis / the houses below are drenched to the hips. / The sky above rushes on canvases stretched upon / frames of eaves". This could be any courtyard, as could most of the poems. I would have loved to know who lived in each house or what happened there. Courtyards are certainly poetic places but it is lives (and architects) that have made them so. Ferenc Bodor's *Coffee-Houses*, is a brash collection of poetic-ironic texts which endows its cafés with a fantasy life. Here is the Mignon: "The whole place is like a bistro in an oasis in the Sahara with the feeling that a camel may pass behind the wall at any moment, or Jack Nicholson may drop in"; and the narrative which begins the Majakovszkij: "The participants in the action burst into the shabby interior together, swept the stale dry cheesecakes and the sausages in their plastic skins that could be interpreted as sexual symbols, whipped out their little red pass-

ports and cried: Does a poet cut no ice around here?" One has more a sense of the writer's lifestyle than of the cafés themselves. In other words the text is occasionally self-conscious: the poet is working a little too hard to make an impression and the translation by the usually excellent Eszter Molnár occasionally trips him up. However, it is lively, and, between the lines, specific places do begin to assert themselves.

**T**he best of the literary booklets, and my favourite of the whole series, is Irma Kocsis's *A Tour of the Locals*, also translated by Eszter Molnár. This is more memory than fantasy and is much better for it. It is the digest of a much larger book, labour of love researched over thirteen years, and is filled with incidents and voices: it animates the spaces it so clearly evokes without nostalgia, unselfconsciously. The writer's intermittent presence never gets in the way of the subject, the poetry is simply that of observation and time passing, and it is real poetry. Compare Bodor's imagined camels with Kocsis's in the Cairo Bistro: "I liked the street clock on the corner over the Cairo Bistro. I liked that it was on a corner, giving you a good view. You could see the playground opposite between the camel transfers on the window. Then powdered quicklime coated the corner like the white sands of the desert, camel transfers flapped from the windowpanes while behind them, in the dark, there were sacks and ladders in place of the old men". Or the vignette of the Koccintó Büfé: "In the market-hall block, on the side of the square, with beer on tap and its own regulars. Someone says: I am Lajos Tichy, d'you know who I was?" That is enough to sustain a reader's imagination. There are more thorough descriptions too, of the Lehel Vendéglő for instance: "This mostly deserted 'restaurant' on the ground floor of an underpinned building is also a pub. I drop in sometimes, there are one or two customers, the waitress is chatting at one of the tables, the tenants from the first floor are sitting with expressionless faces, eyes glued to the television screen. The whole pub is one highceilinged, spacious brown room. A very sad place. I like it even better than the Rámpa." The original six hundred page book should certainly be published. I can't think of a more attractive guide round these small haunted pockets of low-profile but genuine life. The only pity is that the photographs seem to be placed rather arbitrarily within the text.

It is fascinating to see a city turning itself into a living museum. None of these is as generally useful or as professionally presented as Török's Critical Guide. They are all—quite intentionally—lightweight. They all have a slight air of anxiety. Are we looking after our customers? Will they come back? But they are all valuable. *Ornamentation* is excellent, *The Caves of Buda* enlightening and Irma Kocsis is a great discovery. I would take most of the books with me on any medium term visit, but *A Tour of the Locals* would sit at the top and encourage me to dive into all the places it mentions, especially in the company of its author.



# Ambassador with a Rucksack

**"M**y emigration, or defection, if you like, to Poland, was determined by 1956, as was, indeed, my whole life. My generation grew up on the films of Andrzej Wajda, on Polish documentaries and short films. After 1956, I did not have the good fortune to make it to university but, with some difficulty, I managed to enrol in a printers' training school and became a compositor at the State Printing Office. I wanted to get onto a Polish language course but I was working three shifts, and my bosses wouldn't let me cut down to two so that I'd be able to take that course. In 1960 I took a trip to Poland—Budapest to Gdansk and back—a wonderful experience, since at the time the memory of 1956 was still very much alive for the Poles. In Poland you were allowed to be Polish, you could be a Catholic, could listen to jazz, hitchhike, there were student theatres, and there was a vibrant, exciting cultural life open to the West. I saw abstract paintings there for the first time in my life, exhibitions of works by Picasso or Klee. You could hear Bartók being played more often in Warsaw than in Budapest. It was a completely new world, and it seemed that even in the shadow of the Soviet Union, within "existing socialism", it was possible to live a normal life. That was what Poland meant to me, meant to us.

The following year I wanted to go there again and hitchhike around. I had twelve days of paid holiday, so I had the idea that once in Poland, I would write a letter to my employers, telling them I had gained admission to a one-year language course, and that I wanted a year off without pay. I was sure they

wouldn't grant it, so I told them that if they didn't, they should hand my "workbook" to my mother. I thought in that way I would still have the time to hitchhike all over Poland for a month or two. Well, my mother was given my workbook all right, but somebody reported me to the authorities, telling them I had defected.

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*Edited and abbreviated text of an interview with **Ákos Engelmayer**, the present Hungarian Ambassador to Poland, broadcast over national radio on 14 October 1993 as a radio monologue.*

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**T**he Kádár regime treated Poland with more distrust than it did the West. Because, you see, it was a socialist country, yet there were all sorts of suspicious things going on there, like private farming, the Church, the rehabilitation of the wartime Home Army, jazz, abstract painting, and so on, you know. So I was denounced, and my mother and my brother-in-laws were harassed by the police. My mother then wrote me a letter, literally begging me to defect: "Son, please, do defect, if you come home there will be big trouble." But I had not defected in 1956 either, even though I had taken some risks. At that time every Hungarian who wanted to was able to escape from Poland to the West across the sea, such was the mood then, but I decided not to, and spent nine months in Poland on a tourist visa valid for a month. There were a thousand tricks involved. You told all kinds of lies at the Hungarian Embassy, for instance. I was actually admitted to a one-year beginner's language course, but this was torpedoed by the Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic. At first I made hair clips working for a private entrepreneur, then I met my wife, who was a student of architecture then, and carried on for nine months as a lodger, which was wonderful. All during that time I attended lectures at the university without registering. I read art history, archaeology and literature, and when my Hungarian exit visa was close to expiring, I applied for a permanent Hungarian passport but it was refused. Instead, I was threatened with being called up. Then I got married, but had to return home to Hungary on the day after the wedding. My passport had expired. Let me skip the story of all my obligatory visits to the Ministry of the Interior. The threats, the hassle. At that time in this beautiful country of ours, you couldn't even file an application form for a passport without the recommendation of the works party secretary and the management of your place of employment. That's where the problem started. I had no legal employment. You could still get into serious trouble for "criminal idleness". My wife was in Poland, and I wanted to go to university there too, but I couldn't even get hold of a passport application form, let alone a passport. I managed to survive for five months at home loading freight wagons, interpreting, doing odd jobs, then I was given a document by the architecture department of the Warsaw University of Technology certifying that I was their employee on leave without pay, and this saved me from being put into prison. Half a year later I managed to get back to Poland, and I have to say that if there is such a thing as a successful marriage, then ours is one. But it was like love in wartime. Well, I arrived back in Warsaw, and I had to report to the Consul at the Embassy of the Hungarian People's Republic. I went there with my wife. The Consul, a Hungarian like me, welcomed me in Polish, so that my wife too would understand, with the words, "So you are the famous fellow who already has a wife in Budapest." The height of nastiness. But that was the way we were treated back then. If the relationship between my wife and me hadn't been as good as it was, and if she hadn't had a sense of humour, our marriage could have ended there and then.

Well, that was the way I got to Poland on the 23rd of December 1962 and, apart from a couple of summer holidays, I have been living there practically ever since. I finished my studies, as did my wife. I graduated in ethnography from Warsaw University. All the time we were studying she had a regular job, and I worked as an interpreter. Meanwhile we had a baby. Neither of us got any financial support from our families. There were times when I went to the university, and had to leave the baby in the cloakroom. It was a long time before we had a flat and a car. Then came Solidarity and all the consequences, unemployment, suspension, and then all at once I became the ambassador. The whole thing is incredibly absurd, almost like a play by Mrozek, me being ambassador. For one thing, I spent more than ten years working for the embassy as a freelancer, from 1969 to December 13, 1981, the introduction of the state of emergency. I was offered a full-time job there but I said never. My contract expired on the 13th of December after which, right up to May 1990, I was *persona non grata* at the Hungarian Embassy. My passport was withdrawn, so I became an ambassador, perhaps the only one in the world, without ever having been to the West. I spent three days in Austria, that was all, because first I had no money, then no passport, and finally, when I got my diplomatic passport, I was too busy to travel because by then I had to do my job as an ambassador. I know they had a file a foot thick on me at the Embassy, but when I got there to work there was nothing but my CV and my photograph in it. I also happen to know that almost right until the moment I made my appearance as ambassador they had been keeping the canvas, made from our family bedsheet, which we had hung from a window opposite the embassy on the thirtieth anniversary of the '56 revolution, on which we had painted in Polish "Hungary, 1956" and "We remember", and "Solidarity".

At university, I took part in the student revolution of March 1968, and one of my ugliest memories is seeing how anti-Semitism was adopted by the "internationalist" Polish United Workers' Party as the official party line. Students demonstrated in support of the freedom of the press, in solidarity with the Czech students, the events in Czechoslovakia, and the only way to neutralize that was to declare that the whole thing had been organized by the children of communists of Jewish origin. That was when Michnik, Kuron and the others started. On March 8, 1968 a rally was held at Warsaw University, with the Deputy Rector's permission, at which the students expressed their anxiety over the fate of the nation, demanded the release of those in prison, and declared their solidarity with the Czechs, that is, Czechoslovakia. Suddenly several coachloads of policemen burst in, breaking up the meeting, and beating the kids with meter-long wooden batons. It was sickening. Somehow we managed to get out into the street, where special police units were lying in wait, and the beating started all over again. Then the press, the media, simply branded the organizers of the demonstrations as children of Jewish communist leaders. In the meantime the movement spread all over Poland. There were strikes, demonstrations, beatings, arrests, bannings.

**F**or many years we always did something on the 23rd of October, the anniversary of the Hungarian revolution. In '86, for instance, we spread bilingual flyers all over the Warsaw Jazz Jamboree.

The workers' revolt of 1970 had been preceded by Poznan in '56, which was followed by '68, and only then came the events of '70. At that time I was already fully aware of things, of what we were doing when we collected money for the families of the victims. And then there was another workers' revolt in 1976. That was when the famous KOR—they called it infamous then—the Committee for the Protection of Workers, was founded, which kept an eye on the cases of workers sentenced on trumped-up charges. Unauthorized meetings followed and the Flying University, so by the time Solidarity came into being it was clear from the start that I would be a member. The Poles didn't believe it, but I was quite certain that the Russians would intervene. It did not happen that way because the Polish communists did it themselves. Thousands were in prison and interned, and people lacked elementary foodstuffs. Chocolate, hard liquor, cigarettes, let alone meat, sugar, all were rationed. Which meant that you not only had to fight against the system but you also had to create the basic conditions for a normal existence.

I was aware of all that but I was afraid. With my own '56 experience, I couldn't believe, couldn't imagine—that's right, "couldn't imagine" is more appropriate—that a movement of civil disobedience of this kind or, if you like, resistance, could ever succeed. But then it turned out that it was not useless, and it really was successful; all the same, it was a hard time to live through. Actually, we made up a schedule from week to week, that if they come for us, then this week it would be my turn to take it, and next week my wife's.

One of the printing presses of the Warsaw underground press operated in our apartment for a month. This could have meant prison, confiscation of the apartment, anything. I had been really scared right up to the day I got picked up by the police at a rally and taken to prison, and I must emphasize that I wasn't beaten up or anything; I don't know how I'd have reacted if they had. That happened on the 17th of May in 1982. They offered me a choice: cooperate with them or get deported. That was the test. Right, sir, deport me. And what will you do then? We'll see. Well, that was the limit, when you became certain that you have the courage to say no, thanks, gentlemen. From that moment on I was no longer afraid, and began to believe more and more in the possibility of overthrowing the regime. It is true that what happened under the Jaruzelski dictatorship was incomparably milder than the retributions in Hungary after 1956. There were deaths all right but no executions. The regime was losing its strength, and we became more cheeky every minute. The demonstrations, the underground press... It is enough to say that in the peak times, that is, between '83 and '85, seven or eight hundred newspapers were published every week, for instance *Solidarnost Mazowse*, the central newspaper, in twenty to forty

thousand copies, printed in five different places. You experienced such wonderful examples of human solidarity, a feeling of belonging, that I am sure that this was the finest period of my life, even though I was suspended from my job for nearly a year, meaning I wasn't allowed to set foot there, but I couldn't go on holiday either, because I had been put on call, and was receiving seventy-five per cent of my salary.

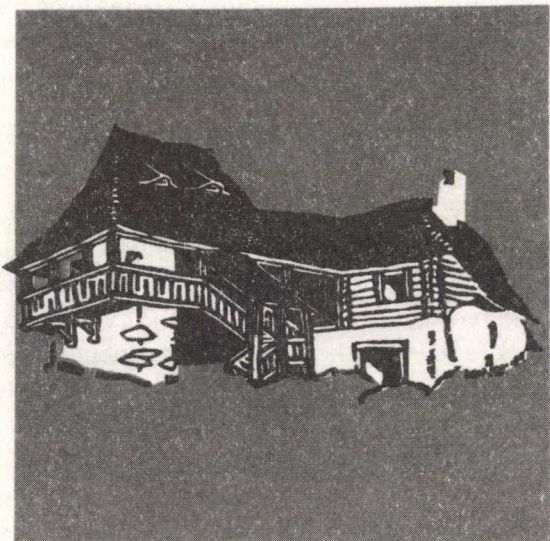
**W**ell, I am unambiguously Hungarian, having kept my citizenship all the time, which wasn't so easy. While at university, I got no scholarship from the Poles because I was Hungarian, and none from the Hungarians, because they said I was Polish. In Poland I could have got a passport and could have travelled, but citizenship, well, it isn't like a pair of socks, something you take off every night and put on a clean pair in the morning. When Solidarity won the elections, I'd rather say we did, even though I didn't vote at that time, only electioneered, they suggested I'd like to change citizenship, and I could have gone to Budapest with a job at the Polish Embassy. Of course I did not, which, means that I am Hungarian, there's no question about that, but I have very, very close ties with Poland, and Polish culture. It is an unwritten law in diplomacy that people are not usually made ambassadors to countries to which they have a special commitment, or which they love too much, because that might imply an inability to represent their country's interests there. Well, I am an exception to that rule, because I have become ambassador. I had hesitated for some time over accepting the assignment, and that was one of the problems I had to think over, but I must say that, with Polish-Hungarian relations being as they are, so far I've never had to do anything which I don't agree with, even in the depths of my heart. Which means that as an ambassador, who has lived for thirty years in the host country, whose wife is Polish and whose children are Polish citizens, as a man in that position, I've never had to do anything which would have offended the interests of the host country. And that is great. Should that ever come to pass—and it won't—then I'll just leave.

Despite the fact that the ten years after 1981 were a tremendous strain, and we had to make enormous efforts just to make ends meet, and it was a far cry from normal life, we were free inside. And when a man, or a society, finds out that he or it is no longer afraid, then they are free. It was funny enough that there was a curfew, there was a tank stationed at the corner and a ban on travel, telephones didn't work, and yet at the same time my friends from Budapest brought their children to me to Poland to learn about freedom. It is this extraordinary cohesive force, this moral integrity, that has since worn off in the petty struggles of daily politics. It's over, a period has ended.

**I** handed over my credentials on October 10, 1990. It meant moving out of our apartment and into the ambassador's residence; I must say it was hard to get used to the pomp, and not the affluence but the environment. If all goes well,

then I'll probably stay on as ambassador for another year, after which my assignment will either be extended or not. My son, his wife and my grandson now live in our old apartment. The car was run down by my daughter, she's got the fridge too, the TV set has become useless, and the question that crops up is, where will the ambassador go when his term expires? That's a big mystery. I have no home, no car, no washing machine, no TV set, in fact I'm back where I started thirty years ago, when I first came to Poland to my wife with a rucksack and a sackful of books. The only difference is that now the rucksack is a bit bigger, and there are a couple of suits in it too, and the books would fill many more rucksacks.

So it's a great mystery. I haven't a clue what I'm going to do. One ought to come home, since in diplomacy it is not customary for former ambassadors to stay in the host country. As for me, though, I'm bound to Poland by everything. I've lived there all my adult life, my wife is there, my children, grandchildren even. I could come back to Hungary, I suppose, if the Foreign Ministry needs me, but although I am an official now, to go somewhere every morning as a bureaucrat, well, that's just not me. It is something, isn't it, to be, a couple of years before retirement, where you were when in your twenties. At any rate my wife, as always, has a regular job. She wouldn't use the car, and it may sound as a joke or as if I'd made it up, but it's true all the same, that when Prime Minister Antall visited here, we were following the lead car in the car bearing the flag, speeding, horns blasting, through the closed streets of Warsaw, when I suddenly spotted my wife standing on the corner with a shopping bag, waiting for the bus, visibly furious because traffic had been halted. ☹️



*A Romanian goldminer's timber home. Bucsum (Bucium),  
Torda-Aranyos county, mid-19th century.*

## The Difficult Rebirth of Health Care

**T**he average life expectancy for Hungarian males is just under 65 years at the time of writing. (Women live 9 years longer.) According to the latest figures, the age of 65 is reached by 78 per cent of all women but only by 54 per cent of men. Among all the industrial nations, Hungary is the one where the average citizen has the shortest life span. Unlike elsewhere, the number of years one may expect to live is not increasing but diminishing, despite the fact, demographers say that there has never before been a period of three decades of peace when life expectancy at birth did not increase. According to the figures for last year, the mortality indices of middle-aged Hungarians have plunged to Third World levels. True, if someone manages to reach the age of 60, his prospects improve again; what is highly unfavourable is life expectancy at thirty.

The high mortality of the middle aged cannot be explained away simply by smoking, high cholesterol or blood pressure. Ever since the early 1960s, with the exception of one or two years in between, general health conditions for Hungarians have steadily deteriorated, and at a growing rate. (It is not only the life expectancy figures that are

alarming, those for suicide are also shockingly high, and so is, compared to developed countries, infant mortality: 12-14 per thousand). The same processes are to be seen, to varying degrees, in each and every one of Central and East Europe's former communist countries, and nowhere else; thus they must be related in some way to that political system and the region. The repressed anxieties, identity problems, aimlessness and frustrations certainly suffice as an explanation. Add the difficulties associated with the change of regime and the introduction of a market economy which confronted many with frightening dilemmas.

Not that it is easy to find a direct relationship between Stalinism and cholesterol levels. However, it seems likely that, along with many other factors, it is stress, and the way it is handled, that acts as the transmission belt between macro-social and individual problems, between politics and illness. For the first time, the World Bank devoted its annual report in 1993 to health care under the title *Investment in Health*; one of the things this report showed is that the band where health is closely related to economic development is that in which per capita GDP is between \$3,000 and \$8,000. Such a relationship cannot be identified either among the richer or, among the poorer countries. Thus it is where there are conflicts regarding

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the satisfaction of demands that the relationship is close. The gap between accepted social objectives and the possibility of meeting them is perhaps widest in Hungary. People would like moderate western living standards, but household budgets are roughly a third of western ones. The direct consequence is self-exploitation. The working population spends an average 11-12 hours a day at work—according to time-balance surveys—which is physically exhausting and also considerably cuts down the opportunity for recreation. Another consequence is a decline in human contacts, and in holidays taken. These personal strategies of course fail, for no matter how much an individual might work, there is usually little hope of achieving a western standard of living. Failure, dissatisfaction and frustration are sources of illness. This is much more typical of Hungary than of her neighbours, where there has never been so great an inflation of demand as in this country; therefore the resulting tensions are also smaller. (Relative availability of consumer goods was a feature of the Kádár years.) Figures for Hungary are worse than for Romania or Bulgaria; true, statistical information obtained here is more detailed and precise. Last year the EEC assigned a considerable sum to investigating east-west mortality differences. Hungary will be included in this survey which, when completed, may afford us greater insight into the causes. It is hoped that the general desire for western living standards will prompt people to create the financial resources needed by a health service that satisfies western standards.

One of the possible explanations should, according to Péter Makara, Scientific Director of the National Health Education Institute, be looked for in eating habits. The Mediterranean diet is healthier; so in Romania and Bulgaria the greater quantity of vegetables and the smaller quantity of pork fat con-

sumed may also play a part. Other explanations are connected with stress and its handling. A further major aspect, according to sociologists, is the number of unresolved conflicts at the workplace, daily drudgery, the wear and tear that goes with the job. Finally, macroeconomic and social characteristics, along with aspects of the political system, are also related to health conditions.

The working of the health service is, of course, not irrelevant. The number of hospital beds and doctors per capita is fairly favourable; there are more problems where treatment is concerned. This is hinted at by a study published last year, analysing the frequency of what is called avoidable death, namely patients dying from illnesses that, at least at a certain age, are not usually fatal, say, appendicitis, hernia, diabetes or other complaints usually amenable to treatment between the ages of 5 and 64 years. According to this study, which discussed the figures for the 80s, the number of avoidable deaths—and thus closely related to the standards and accessibility of health care—had risen until 1985, and then began to decline. Compared to developed countries, but also to Portugal or the former Czechoslovakia, that decline started later and has also been slower than in other countries. Appendicitis, for instance, results in death in Hungary three or four times more often than, say, in Italy.

It is a matter for debate how reliably the role of the health service in the high mortality rate can be expressed in figures. Some have tried to do so. According to their findings, the state of the health service influences the health of the population in 12-14 per cent of cases; other findings have 15-20 percent. That may lead health service managers to complacently assume that they have no control over what is happening. But, and this is the other side of the coin, who in that case is responsible? Some argue that the fact that the health service system in Hungary



was—and still is—marginalized for such a long time, and that prevention is on the margin of the margin, out of date and underfinanced, is undoubtedly an independent factor which has contributed to the pitiful health situation.

The reform measures introduced since the early 1990s have so far been organizational and have not increased available funds, and have not entailed genuine changes of approach. It would appear that their purpose has been to cut back costs, rather than to raise standards or to set new priorities. Health care ceased to be a citizen's right in 1992, and was placed on an insurance basis. (Thus some people in the most disadvantageous position can actually be left out of the system altogether.) A "blue card", showing that one is covered by insurance, was introduced, and local GPs responsible for basic care were now styled "family doctors". Their income—at first 60, later 82 per cent of it—was made dependent of the number of patients on their list. All those socially insured signed up by using their blue cards with a "chosen" doctor—in reality the local GP closest to them, the one whom they had always seen in the past. Doctors are to receive a salary based on the number of cards collected. 27 per cent of family doctors are now self-employed, and the number of family doctor practices has grown by a thousand in the last two years. (Doctors, however, complain that the main purpose of the entire "family doctor" system—thorough initial checkups for all those handing over their cards and close attention to the state of their health in general—was largely not met, and the further training promised to enable doctors to carry out their new duties has barely begun.)

The majority of these doctors have remained municipal employees. Although it is now possible for them to go into private practice, economic conditions, the taxation system and fear of having to cope with prac-

ticalities do not make this option attractive. The extent to which a doctor is capable of looking after his patients, referring them, when necessary, to the appropriate specialist, continues to depend on his decision, and in that decision the financial interests of the doctor may clash with the patient's interests. In any event, patients have very little insight into the treatment given them; the Hungarian practice does not oblige a doctor to provide clear information on alternative options and their risks.

In mid-1993, a new form of "performance-dependent" financing was introduced in hospitals and polyclinics employing specialists. It is true, however, that so far it has not proved possible to make this fully effective. In the Kádár system how much money a hospital got depended on the connections of the Medical Superintendent, thus creating great inequalities. A sort of positive discrimination is therefore needed at first, to do away with them. In the treatment of outpatients the old and new type of financing are expected to coexist for five more years. At present, the polyclinics continue to receive 70 per cent of their earlier funds from the national health insurance system, regardless of their efficiency or performance, and the earlier 30 per cent and an extra 15 per cent, intended to compensate for inflation, are allotted according to performance. This latter is measured by the points system taken over from Germany. Since the total amount of money to be spent on specialist outpatient care is given, the points only determine how the money is divided between the polyclinics. Thus the points have no set value in money: how much one is worth only appears subsequently. It is true that no perfect method has yet been found anywhere to measure performance in the health service, and the system now introduced in Hungary does have its drawbacks, as it motivates doctors to diagnose the more serious alternative.

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## Hungary's Drink Problem

It is rightly said that every continent, indeed every region even, has problems in public health specific to itself: In Europe this is the consumption of alcohol and alcoholism. After the Second World War, the situation even deteriorated. Two-thirds of the countries however, (most notably the developed ones) already showed a decline in alcohol consumption in the 1980s. This did not happen in fifteen countries, primarily in the former socialist bloc. As a consequence, drink-related health hazards continued to grow.

In Hungary the most dramatic growth occurred between 1960 and 1980, at the time of political stabilization, when government policy was centred on the standard of living, a policy also reflected in the growth of food consumption. This is confirmed by the following figures:

**Alcohol consumption measured in litres of pure alcohol per head of population:**

<b>1950</b>	<b>1955</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1975</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1981</b>	<b>1982</b>	<b>1983</b>
4,9	4,5	6,1	9,1	10,1	11,7	11,5	11,6	11,4
<b>1984</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	
11,7	11,6	11,5	10,8	10,5	11,3	11,1	10,7	

At first sight it might seem that an alcoholism of poverty gave way to an alcoholism of prosperity. (In the three decades after 1960 people spent between 9.4 and 11.5 per cent of their personal income on alcoholic beverages.) However, during these same years the other troubles multiplied and became much more serious. Year after year, the incidence of drink-related diseases went up, alongside with the number of suicides; demographic trends, among them figures related to health and mortality, deteriorated. To a sociologist, alcoholism and similar deviances signify escapism and anomie as well as other psychological disorders. Even more alarmingly, high levels of consumption (exceeding eight litres of pure alcohol per year and per head), have been coupled with a pronounced shift in the structure of alcohol consumption.

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The main fault of financing determined on the basis of services provided is that in such a system the doctor, who treats a complaint by offering more services, that is, works more extensively, appears to perform better.

Funding according to performance has not so far been extended to dental and school

health care. Since the summer of 1993, the income of hospitals, on the other hand, depends entirely on performance. In this case the model was the Diagnosis Related Groups method elaborated in America (where it is used only in the health insurance of the aged). The process called Homogeneous

**The consumption of spirits, measured in litres per head  
in terms of pure alcohol:**

1920	1925	1930	1935	1960	1965	1970	1975
2.0	1.52	0.53	0.83	1.4	1.5	2.7	3.6

**Wine consumption per head and per year (In litres)**

1900	1905	1910	1925	1930	1935	1940	1950	1960	1965
11.0	15.1	20.7	32.5	47.2	32.8	10.1	33.0	29.9	32.6
1970	1975	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
37.7	34.2	34.8	24.8	23.2	20.5	21.8	22.8	27.7	28.9

*By the early 1980s the decades-long deterioration of demographic and mortality figures within them reached dimensions indicating an epidemiological crisis, the National Bureau of Statistics claimed. The two most important risk factors are alcoholism and smoking. (Deaths due to cirrhosis of the liver grew nine-fold between 1947 and 1991; between 1980 and 1991 the mortality of the male population between the ages of 50 and 54 grew by 22 per cent, with cirrhosis of the liver accounting for 37.2 per cent of this growth.)*

*Generally speaking, the mortality figures of alcoholism are based on death caused by cirrhosis of the liver. As the ultrasonic diagnosis becomes more readily available, increasing attention is being given to cardiac illnesses caused by alcoholism and death related to the subsequent heart condition. The same goes for vascular diseases and for the stomach and intestinal, and nervous system disorders with related complications, as well as for metabolic disturbances (such as diabetes). All these alcohol-related illnesses predominantly affect middle-aged males. The untimely death of 17 to 20 per cent of middle-aged males is due to excessive consumption of alcohol.*

Disease Group method, based on the American model, works with weighted numbers: it attaches a certain value in forints to the cost of treatment of a certain group of complaints. It encourages the spending of as little money as possible on the treatment of each patient, and on providing treatment to as many pa-

tients as possible. The Hungarian system does not as yet operate with a uniform value given in forints, but individual forint values, derived from each hospital's 1992 budget, are attached to the weighted numbers characterizing the illness groups. The medical profession criticizes this method as favour-

ing hospitals which provided services to fewer patients in 1992 (under the same conditions). The system appends three kinds of "care day numbers"—upper, lower, and normative—to illness categories. A hospital does best if it discharges patients as cured within the normative care days. The advantage of the new system is that, in contrast to the previous form of financing, where the efficiency and performance of the hospital were irrelevant, it rewards a hospital for the treatment of more patients with a higher income. Moreover, because of fixed costs, the treatment of even more patients above a certain level may actually bring in extra profits. On the other hand, the above economic logic works only on the hospital level, and not—or not necessarily—where the doctors are concerned, who actually make the decisions about the patient, unless, perhaps, when mediated by the disciplinary action of superiors.

At this juncture it has to be said that health service personnel are badly underpaid even by Hungarian standards. The pre-tax salary, for instance, of a specialist paediatrician with five years experience, working at a provincial hospital, is 17,000 forints (about 13,000 net) a month which is 65.5 per cent of average gross income in manufacturing industry. Gratitude money—one of the euphemisms for tips given to doctors—is semi-officially regarded as an integral part of the income of physicians. There are many, though, to whom, because of their speciality (X-ray specialists or anaesthesiologists, for instance) no such extra income is available. However, if gratitude money is the main source of income, then the doctor has a greater interest in carrying out the wishes of the patient and his relatives than those of the hospital. Gratitude money is characteristic not only of hospitals but of the entire Hungarian health service, playing a major part in determining the relationship between medical personnel and patients.

The reform in financing does not mean more funding for the national health service. Per capita health care spending is about \$190, which is very low (a tenth of the West European average)—and especially considering the state of health of Hungarians—but appears reasonably proportionate to the country's economic performance, that is to GDP (5.4—6.5 per cent in recent years). Because of inflation, the real value of health care spending has been declining since 1991. Material costs have increased especially rapidly, since the earlier cheap socialist sources of supply ceased (the official consumer price index rose by 23 per cent in a single year, with 31 per cent for the commodity group of medicines and the subsidy for medicines granted by the national health insurance system going up by 27 per cent in the first half of 1993 compared to the same period a year earlier). Thus, even maintaining current health service standards would cost more and more at a time when rises in incomes have slowed to a trickle, since the health insurance funds coming from the national welfare system are derived from contributions levied as a percentage of the incomes of those in full-time employment. Those incomes, and thus the income of health insurance, are being reduced by the recession and by unemployment. (Bankrupt firms are unable to make their payments to national health insurance, and the state pays only a minimum for the unemployed). The situation is made worse by the fact that, with privatization, employment conditions have become more difficult to control; in small companies working "off the books" is on the increase, robbing both the health service and the municipalities. At the same time, sickness benefits, too, are being paid in part by national health insurance (benefits for short sick leave have to be paid by the employer). This amounts to about 50 billion forints a year on top of the cost of health care and subsidies

for medicines. It is small wonder, then, that in recent years hospitals have barely been able to afford to replace worn-out equipment. (This is also due to the miserable and chaotic financial situation of local governments.) More and more frequently, hospitals are asking in-patients not only to bring along their own cups, but even certain medicines when they check in, and those patients who have to rely solely on meals provided by hospitals stay hungry. Among the burdens imposed by the declining performance of the Hungarian economy insufficient spending on health also afflicts the community. At a time when the rate of unemployment is 12 per cent (with more than 30 per cent among the young), increasing social tensions and growing poverty, the likelihood of a deterioration in health is greater, yet financing of the health service is becoming ever more difficult. There are no funds available at all for the establishing of institutions generally regarded as important, such as nursing homes and organizations caring for the sick in their own homes.

Given the limited possibilities and the growing needs of the health service, it can be taken for granted that the area of free services (more precisely, services paid for by the national health insurance system) will have to be limited further, which is true for all publicly financed services. That, of course, will happen at the expense of the tax-payer. Others criticized the Hungarian health service for lacking conflict resolving machinery. Decisions are made exclusively in the Ministry, and in practice neither doctors' organizations nor municipal administrations (whose duty it is to maintain, and in part to extend, health services) or patients' organizations have any say in what happens. Centralized decision-making could, in principle, mean coordination and more rapid action, but that is not the case. Quite the contrary, the talk of those not

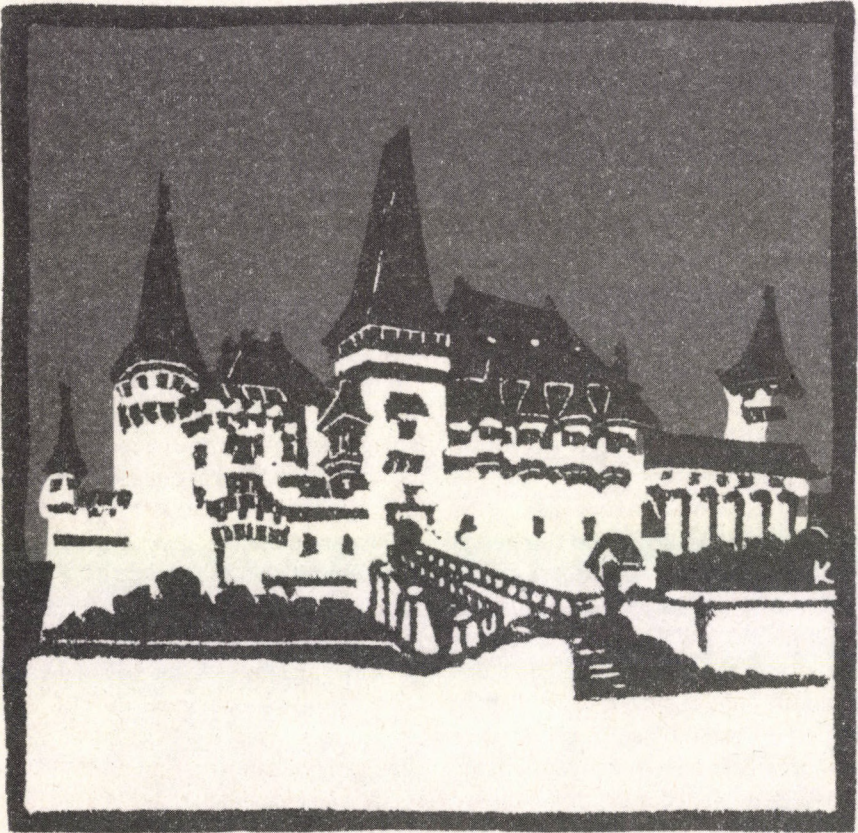
obliged to silence because of their position is of confusion, improvised decisions and lack of vision.

Little has thus far been gained by the public from the reforms. Access to specialist treatment has become somewhat more complicated than before; doctors and hospital nurses continue to expect gratitude money; patients still have to spend long waits in polyclinics (if they have the time to do so)—and fewer and fewer people can afford the medicines prescribed for them, despite the fact that subsidies for medicines paid by the health insurance system have grown by 150 per cent in two years. With the rapid and steep rise of the price of medicines continuing (new and drastic price hikes took place early in 1994) there is a growing number of items (e.g. vitamins, analgesics, etc.) to which the national health service no longer contributes. In health care, other forms of insurance complementing the national welfare system (individual or workplace policies made with commercial insurance companies or in the form of mutual insurance funds) have failed to gain ground. (This is presumably because up to now "all" services were, in principle, available to patients "free". Only after the cost of treatment and the range of services offered by the National Insurance System have been stabilized—but most of all following legislation regulating the settlement of accounts between private clinics and the national welfare system, which is promised for 1994—can it be expected that those who can afford to will be ready to pay for such services. Until then, however, those who can avail themselves of the services of the growing number of private surgeries and clinics, in fact pay twice, since they, too, pay their welfare contributions, but receive no reimbursement for their treatment at private clinics.

The very fact that there are some who can afford this continues to increase the in-

equality of opportunities in health, a process which started in the years of socialism. The state of health of people in backward, less industrialized, rural regions is, as shown by a number of surveys, a great deal worse than that of the urban population. But huge differences can also be observed in the mortality figures of various districts of Budapest, showing the affluent suburbs to be much-much better off. People living in villages are less healthy; their access to specialist and hospital treatment is worse, too; this, at a time of growing travel costs and the decline in agricultural production, means an extra and growing disadvantage.

A new phenomenon is that the health service problems of regions left out of industrialization seem to be spreading to the heavy industry regions too, where large plants have been shutting down in recent years, plants which used to employ their own medical staff. Finally, massive unemployment itself is rapidly becoming a serious health hazard, generating illness. An increasing, though yet unknown, number of those who leave these areas find themselves not only without a job but also without a home or health insurance, which means that they cannot count on any support whatever. ■



*John Hunyadi's castle at Vajdahunyad (Hunedoara-Eisenmarkt), 1452, completed by Prince Gabriel Bethlen in 1618.*

# “Liberty and Democracy for My Country”—Lajos Kossuth

**E**ven the death of the “great exile” on March 20th, 1894, at the age of ninety-two, caused a political stir. A champion of equality of all citizens, Kossuth was, to his dismay, no longer a citizen of Hungary. Under the terms of an 1879 law, he, having lived in exile from August 1849, would have had to report to one of the consulates of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to renew his citizenship no later than 1889, something which Kossuth, who had never conceded to being a subject of Francis Joseph I, refused to do. Though the cult centred on Kossuth had reached huge proportions by this time, the majority of the Hungarian government (for reasons concerning other domestic policy) was, in 1890, not willing to risk confrontation with the ruling monarch. Prime Minister Kálmán Tisza, who had already taken steps to amend the law, was forced to resign. Tisza no longer enjoyed the confidence of the Crown and his days as Prime Minister were numbered, a fact he was aware of. He could not have found a better opportunity to make his exit as effectively, gaining back much of the popularity he had lost.

Four years later Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle also did all in his power to respect Hungarian national sentiment. The opposition, in spite of innumerable compromises on their part, considered themselves the followers of Kossuth’s policy and demanded national mourning, a state funeral, and the legislative enactment of the commemoration of Kossuth. The government in power sixteen years earlier had paid its final respects in just such a manner to Ferenc Deák, the man behind the *Ausgleich*, (Compromise) of 1867 with Austria; the present government, formed by the same party, now intended that the funeral of Kossuth, the opponent of the *Ausgleich*, be arranged by the Lower House of Parliament. However, Francis Joseph was not willing to forgive his opponent of fifty years standing even in death,

and furthermore, exercised his powers through the government to bar civil servants, military officers, and students from attending the funeral. In the midst of the general mourning, however, the government was not keen on enforcing

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the restrictions, and the funeral was arranged, through the mediation of the prime minister, by the capital itself, of which Kossuth had been an honorary citizen.

Tens of thousands, landed proprietors and day labourers, burghers and workers, paid their respects to Kossuth lying in state. At the actual funeral on April 1st in Budapest, they formed the greatest crowd ever seen until then. Kossuth was mourned by all Hungarians, with the exception perhaps of the aristocracy, the Roman Catholic hierarchy and his fiercest political enemies. Mourning, of course, sprang from many sources, feelings that were often diametrically opposed, but able to coexist and the same was true of the cult which had embraced Kossuth in his lifetime and continued to flourish after his death. Kossuth had become an ikon of the 1848 Revolution and the longing for independence. To all concerned his name also stood for the freeing of serfs and the social changes that 1848 brought. He was one with that great enterprise which laid the foundations of a modern Hungary.

**K**ossuth's generation had boasted many outstanding talents. In contrast to the others, who appeared to be more all-round in their interests, Kossuth concentrated exclusively on politics. In his twenties and later, when a prisoner, he tried his hand at translating literature, and in old age he keenly followed new developments in the sciences, even writing articles on the subject. All the same, politics dominated his life, and especially in his middle period, between the 1830s to the end of the '60s, politics were his sole concern. He was a master of politics, second to none in Hungary; Ferenc Deák alone could be reckoned his equal.

Kossuth was a member of the nobility, (as was everyone else in the pre-1848 political élite). He traced back his family to the 13th century. Until his late twenties he lived like other small-town nobles and in general stood for the same values. His family, however, was not amongst the well-to-do and not one whose members were customarily elected to Parliament. Kossuth became a member at forty-five, comparatively late in life considering his talents and the customs of the time. To him his noble birth mattered only in as much as it opened doors for him to participate in public life, in a country where, before 1848, the suffrage was almost exclusively limited to men of noble birth. As a politician he addressed initially the members of his own class, the lower nobility. But by the mid-1840s he had become convinced that, in his words, "the nobility alone is unable to regenerate our country", and increasingly he addressed himself to the middle class and the opinion-makers of his time. Even prior to 1848 he embraced the idea of universal suffrage and, unlike most Hungarian liberals, he became a democrat and republican after 1849.

His interpretation of history, a guideline for his political orientation, was determined by positivism, the great intellectual current of the time. He believed in the inevitability of progress and that humanity was growing ever more perfect. "History has its own logic, he wrote, which at times may be idle for a while, at times take a leap crossing centuries, so that shortsighted people will speak of chance. Great opportunities are created by time, though man may seize them by the forelock





*Kossuth as Minister of Finance in the 1848 Hungarian government.  
Lithograph by August Prinzhofer, 1848.*

once they are there and not let them disappear without trace." Thus since history, "in the mirror of yesterday shows the reason from which tomorrow must perform follow", we may become masters of our own fate. To him a historic personality was not a romantic hero, his greatness lay in understanding the call of his time, that and no more, what the age demanded. For this reason Kossuth called his great rival, Count István Széchenyi, "The Greatest Hungarian," who "kept his finger on the pulse of his time, and felt its throbbing." His creed as a politician expressed that "only those who are men of their age are able to be formidably effective, those who are ahead of their time live only after their death, and those who are behind their time are dead even when alive." Both the history of Europe and the whole course of contemporary economic and technical developments convinced him in the 1850s that development was going irresistibly in the direction of liberty and democracy: "the history of Europe is ... irresistibly advancing towards liberty and therefore democracy, because democracy is liberty in as much as democracy ... is nothing else but 'self-

government by the people." This is furthered by the steam engine, the railway, the telegraph, which are "restless propagandists of democracy". Hence Europe, of which he considered Hungary to be an organic part, "will advance to democracy". He termed himself a man of freedom, "not aspiring for my country to the vanity of conquering glory, but for real liberty and the happiness of complete democracy".

The scandal in which he was involved at the age of 29, having used public funds to pay off his gambling debts, probably contributed to his becoming a model of the incorruptible, ascetic politician, who tied his career to the implementation of the political programme he stood for and whose private life was totally subject to his public life. Because the ancestral estate had long been gone from the family, he made his living throughout his life by his pen. Before 1848 he wrote for newspapers, was a publicist and secretary of associations, as an exile in England between 1852 and 1857, he earned money by lecturing and toward the end of his life, when he was again in debt and almost blind, he continued to write his memoirs. His life from the age of thirty until his death was that of a man of the middle class. He met everyone as an equal, no matter what social class they belonged to, and practised the values he propagated as a politician.

His success as a politician has been identified as being due first of all to his singular skills as an orator. One of the first descriptions of him, from 1831, otherwise malicious, stresses his "rare performance". It is true that he was an impressive speaker, his contemporaries attributed "the power of magic" to his voice, which "moves hearts but also captures minds."

His most effective speeches came between 1847 and 1849, made before Parliament and (in the autumn of 1848) in the agrarian towns on the Great Hungarian Plain, where he recruited volunteers for the Hungarian army and whose inhabitants, newly liberated serfs, enthroned him in their hearts and lives. Although he only learned English as an adult, while in prison—primarily by reading Shakespeare—he was considered a great orator in that language, overwhelming audiences in England and America.

He gained recognition on a national scale by his pen. First he distributed his handwritten *Dietal Reports* and *Municipal Reports*, which were straightforward accounts. But it was through his leaders and editorial notes for *Pesti Hírlap*, the paper which he edited, that the public became familiar with his expertise, his views and inimitable political writings. It was Kossuth who established modern journalism in Hungary. His paper had a readership of some tens of thousands, as many as all the other papers combined. His position as editor, especially since his was the single liberal paper, increased his political weight. Kossuth edited other newspapers as well, in 1848 he had his own *Kossuth Hírlapja*, in 1855 he contributed analytical essays on foreign policy to two English weeklies, *The Sunday Times* and *The Atlas*. But the influence on the public that *Pesti Hírlap* enjoyed was never matched.

As a writer and publicist he came to have a wide knowledge of contemporary life. (This was true for the liberal leadership as a whole.) What made him unique was his untiring diligence and his inexhaustible energy. Such qualities explain in part his

success as an orator and publicist. He had an unusual gift for organizing his daily routine, without ever losing sight of the larger political context. Without ever having been a county or royal official, Kossuth was nevertheless a highly efficient Minister of Finance from 1848 to 1849, and head of the Hungarian revolutionary government. He laid the foundation for his administrative skills as head of several public societies, primarily as director of a society for the promotion of Hungarian industry, where he had to maintain ties with over 140 local organizations and meet bankers and industrialists, and to draft plans for economic development.

He began his political career in 1830, in Zemplén county, in the North-East of Hungary, where he was born. He was a member of a group of liberal sympathizers of a type formed all over the country, many inspired by Count István Széchenyi's book *Hitel* (Credit). He became committed to the politics of liberal reform while he was attending the Diet in Pozsony (Bratislava/Pressburg) from 1832 on. Here he published a handwritten account entitled *Országgyűlési Tudósítások* (Dietal Reports) which, since censorship would not allow newspapers to report the proceedings of the Diet, was the public's first access to information about events there. After the Diet adjourned, he continued by writing about meetings of county assemblies (*Törvényhatósági Tudósítások*). Long considered subversive, Kossuth was watched by the authorities. His *Reports* were prohibited, and when he went on publishing, he was arrested and charged in May 1837. Kossuth energetically defended himself. He answered the charges with what amounted to scholarly treatises that testified to his enormous knowledge of the law, history and politics, and his far from parochial approach. Kossuth's trial was not the only one of a political nature harrasing liberals in those years, and it was among those that led to most vehement protests. In 1840, the liberals succeeded in making the authorities abandon what its opponents termed the politics of terror. Kossuth was freed and, to the amazement of the public became the editor of *Pesti Hírlap* in 1841.

Metternich either believed that—with the help of the censors—he would be able to curb this martyr to the freedom of the press, or else he counted on Kossuth's radicalism alienating the more moderate liberals. In either event, he was proved wrong. Three years later Metternich forced the proprietor of the paper to give notice to his editor. By then Kossuth had made *Pesti Hírlap* the country's, and probably the whole Habsburg Empire's, most outspoken political journal, albeit for a long time he had been striking a balance between his own and more moderate views. Many, including Széchenyi, accused him of being a radical among liberals from the start, but it was really only after 1843 that he turned radical.

The liberals wanted to convince their own class, the nobility and the landowners, that changes were inevitable and that, to maintain their political dominance, it was in their own interest to liberate their peasants—after due compensation—and to renounce their exemption from taxations, a privilege unique in Europe. It was imperative that the peasants be “placed within the bastions of the constitution”,

especially because the majority of them were not ethnic Hungarians. In any event, any attempt by the Court in Vienna to turn the peasants against the liberals had to be preempted, as the latter demanded greater economic and political independence for Hungary as well as constitutional reforms. In the 1840s the liberals estimated that the necessary reforms could be implemented within three or four legislative periods of the Diet, that is within ten to fifteen years. Kossuth was soon convinced that his generation would not be granted that much time. His political writings took on a more strident tone and, unlike in the early 1840s, when he had sugar-coated his propositions, he now spoke straight from the shoulder. He was among those whose adamant demands were among the factors that led the liberals, who had been without a strong political organization or programme, into forming their own political party in January 1847 and issuing a programme the following June. Kossuth himself entered—and won—the fierce contest for the Pest county seat in the Lower House, as the prospective leader of the liberal opposition in the Lower House.

The liberal opposition, with only a slight majority in the Lower House, could boast a degree of success, but its real victory came in March 1848. On news of the outbreak of the revolution in Paris it acted at once, with Kossuth in the lead. This caused a chain reaction within the Habsburg Empire. Kossuth demanded a constitution for the Austrian hereditary provinces. This contributed to the outbreak of the revolution in Vienna, followed two days later by Pest. In Pozsony the liberals demanded that Vienna immediately recognize their full programme for bourgeois reform, including a government based on a parliamentary majority, in other words a liberal government. In the ensuing three weeks, Kossuth and Count Lajos Batthyány, who was appointed Prime Minister, behaved with considerable political skill and acumen. Taking advantage of the impotence of the Court and the Hungarian conservatives' fear of a peasant uprising, they created a *fait accompli* within days. They did count on the support of the Pest revolution but acted against all demands they considered excessively radical. The April Laws laid the foundations for modern Hungary. The serfs were liberated and became freeholders of over half the arable land, the state accepting responsibility for compensating landlords. The suffrage was based on property, granting the vote to one adult male in four, a high proportion in the Europe of the day. The government was responsible to Parliament and assumed responsibility over all the country's resources, including those that had previously been under the control of the Court. Finally, the unity of the lands of the Holy Crown of Saint Stephen was reestablished, Transylvania, which—albeit from the 16th century governed separately—Hungarians termed a brother country, being reunited with Hungary.

Although the government, in which Kossuth was Minister of Finance, had the support of a clear majority in Parliament, it faced serious problems. Contrary to the hopes of the liberals, the élites of the ethnic minorities were not satisfied by the April emancipation legislation applying to everybody, without consideration to nationality; they made their own national demands. To recognize ethnic minorities as independent

nations would have been contrary to the general liberal doctrine of the day denying collective rights to minorities, and was also contrary to the creed of almost the entire Hungarian political class, which called for a unified political nation and a unified state. Federalization of any kind, with the single exception of Croatia, was rejected.

Subsequently, however, the Hungarian Parliament passed a nationality law in July 1849, the second nation to do so, the first being Switzerland. It called for "the free national development of all ethnic groups" and secured for the minorities broad rights of language use. Still it is unlikely that an armed conflict between Hungarians and Serbs, Croats and the Romanians in Transylvania, could have been avoided. All the same, this was unlikely to have degenerated into open war if it had not become part of the open hostilities between Vienna and Budapest.

The smouldering conflict burst into flames in September 1848. Until that time the Court was preoccupied with strengthening its hold over Lombardy. In addition, after a brief period of indecision, the Court had formulated its position on the German question. The unity of the Habsburg Empire was not to be sacrificed on the altar of German unity. This brought to a close that short period when the Hungarian liberals (Kossuth joyfully, others, like Ferenc Deák, more apprehensively) could realistically hope for Hungary to become an independent state, linked to the other Habsburg lands only through the person of the ruler. The form of unity within the Habsburg Empire, which was taken for granted in Vienna at the time, was truly threatened by the April legislation, since the army and most financial resources were removed from the control of the Court, and the Hungarian government had not shown great enthusiasm for the interests of the Empire. For this reason the Austrian government demanded that the Batthyány government amend the April laws. At the same time, Vienna called on Baron Jelačić, the Banus of Croatia (and really the man of the Viennese military clique) to march on Hungary. Finally, brushing aside the April legislation, the Court dissolved Parliament and appointed military commissioners to administer Hungary.

Those weeks mark the beginning of a period which was the zenith of Kossuth's career. His carefully considered policy ensured that it was the Court and not the Hungarian Parliament that was forced to break the rules in the tug-of-war between them. Consequently, the larger part of the Hungarian political leadership, especially sensitive to notions of legality, closed ranks behind Kossuth. Abiding strictly by the legalities, it chose not to elect a new government but instead to delegate its duties to what was formally a parliamentary committee, the National Defense Committee. Kossuth became chairman of this in early October. In the ensuing ten months he became known worldwide for his political leadership in the Hungarian War of Independence. The world also learned of the "Hungarian cause", which, at least for liberals and democrats, became synonymous with the fight for freedom. Kossuth recruited a home guard, and took part in the organization of an army, even interfering in matters of strategy—sometimes unfortunately—and controlled foreign affairs, his attention covered everything, or almost everything. His power and

influence were enormous, mainly because of his popularity, and because he was careful to act only under the supervision of Parliament. He declined his radical followers' advice to establish a revolutionary dictatorship, and after his election as "Governor-President" in April 1849, he agreed to the limitation of his powers. He looked on the April 1848 laws as a landmark, but would not accept that with it the work of reform was finished. In order to ensure support for the war, a series of measures were taken which had been put off for political reasons the year before. Kossuth issued a presidential decree which favoured specific categories of serfs against the landowners; equality before the law was introduced, and Parliament accepted the full emancipation of Jews.

What Kossuth called "treachery, perjury and levying of war against the Hungarian nation" by the "House of Hapsburg-Lorraine" determined the ensuing course of his political strategy. Before 1848, he had thought of achieving the greatest possible autonomy for Hungary within the Habsburg Empire as a primary aim; we have no record of his indicating that he was considering independence for the country. But, after 1849, that is exactly what he identified as the foremost goal, expressing his conviction that rule by the House of Austria was incompatible with Hungary's autonomy and independence. As a politician he would have accepted a peace based on the April 1848 legislation, but he knew that Vienna would not agree to that. On the contrary: in the Constitution of Olmütz of March 1849, the Emperor Francis Joseph I did something unheard of in the three hundred year long relationship between Hungary and the Habsburg dynasty. He declared the breaking up of Hungary into provinces and the integration of the latter in the Empire. This arrangement was, with certain modifications, in force until the *Ausgleich* (Compromise) of 1867. In response, and as the fortunes of war changed, Parliament, in April 1849, on Kossuth's advice, deposed the Habsburgs and declared the country's independence. The Declaration of Independence is to be explained by considerations of domestic, but primarily of foreign policy. Expectations, however, were not fulfilled. Although the public in Western Europe, especially England and the United States, showed great sympathy for the Hungarians, that was not enough to stave off intervention by the Tsar Nicholas I. This decided the outcome of the war, in which the forces initially involved had been roughly equal. Kossuth handed over his powers to General Arthur Görgey—who surrendered—and went into exile. He was never to return to his country.

Kossuth spent roughly half his life in exile. First he was interned in Turkey, and following a journey to America, he settled in London in 1852. After staying in Genoa for a few years, he finally moved to Turin in 1865. Before 1849 he had not set foot outside his country with the exception of a few trips to Vienna. This does not mean that he did not closely follow events in Europe, understanding their import, adjusting to them as a politician and statesman. Before 1848 his name was hardly known west of Vienna, and Hungary too was considered simply as an integral part of the Habsburg Empire, lacking special interests other than those of the Empire

and, indeed, the ability to articulate any. The situation had changed. After 1851, when he again appeared in public, Kossuth was preceded by his fame wherever he went, a fame that only intensified with the unrivalled success of his speaking tours. He became a figure in European politics, who met not just his fellow exiles but, as the head of the Hungarian National Directorate (the government in exile, formed in 1859), monarchs and prime ministers opposed to the Habsburgs. Other countries had come to look on Hungary with a different eye, first because of the 1848 Revolution and its consequences, and then because of Kossuth's speeches and political writings after 1849. His primary aim after that year, namely the independence of Hungary, Prime Minister Cavour of Piedmont and, at least for a time, Napoleon III considered realistic, desirable and, in an agreement with Kossuth, a military objective.

Initially, Kossuth shared the illusion that a national uprising could be organized. But with the failure of various attempts, he was quick to understand that only an international conflict or a war involving the Habsburg Empire could help his aims, a war in which the Habsburgs could not count on strong allies. For this reason, he did everything to win reliable and steadfast allies for the Hungarian cause and to isolate Austria. In his speeches and writings, he tried to make the American and British public understand that the Hungarian cause was one with liberty, that the British policy of proclaiming the survival of the Habsburg empire a necessity for Europe was wrong, and that it was also in the interest of the United States to stop Russia from involving herself once again in a Hungarian war of independence.

In addition to securing international support, he went to much effort to gain a broad backing for a possible war within Hungary as well. His draft of a constitution, first conceived in 1851 in Kiutahya, Turkey, and modified several times over the next ten years, was democratic in spirit, calling for universal suffrage and self-government. He wrote it also to serve as a basis for an agreement with the leaders of the national minorities in Hungary and of the principalities to the South-East, hoping to enlist their support in a war of independence. He did not support collective national minority rights but that always, from the local village level right up to the legislature, the official language should be the majority language of the given time, that the Upper House, much like the United States Senate, should reflect in its composition the ethnic make-up of the country (that is with the Hungarians in a minority). He rejected a federal solution for Hungary, although he believed that his proposal came "as near as possible to the idea of a federation," and he would have accepted a separate status for Transylvania. Closely connected to his draft constitution was the plan for a Danubian Confederation which he began to work on in 1850 but drafted in its final form in 1862. The plan called for an alliance between the states of Hungary, Croatia, Transylvania, the Romanian Principalities, and Serbia, countries which "separately would be second-rate states at most," while an alliance would enable them to fill a void following the dissolution of the region's empires, including the Habsburg Empire.

An alternative to this strategy was a compromise with Austria, specifically with the Emperor Francis Joseph I, the price of which was the recognition of the existence of the Empire as a primary objective, the upholding of rights of the sovereign (which had their origin in absolutism) and giving up some of the sovereignty Hungary had won in 1848, (i.e. the revision of the April Laws). This strategy made it possible to avoid concessions to the ethnic minorities, which the majority of Hungarian politicians considered excessive. This was the strategy favoured by Ferenc Deák and Baron József Eötvös, though they did aim at an acceptable agreement with the minorities. These two mutually exclusive strategies divided the Hungarian liberals and at the time of the crisis of the Empire in 1860/61 were given almost equal support. Foreign and domestic political conditions gradually changed in favour of a compromise, and after 1862 Kossuth was increasingly isolated.

In rallying support for the Compromise, which the Hungarian Parliament enacted in May 1867, Deák and his supporters argued that no more could be attained, and that "something good could develop from it in time." Kossuth criticized the Compromise, because in keeping with his view of history, he believed it was opposed to the line of European progress pointing in the direction of liberty and independent statehood. Instead of identifying the Compromise as an intermediate step leading to independence, he thought it extremely dangerous for Hungary since it prevented an accord with the ethnic minorities and the neighbouring small states, and threatened to drive Hungary into a war on the side of a dying Empire.

Kossuth may well have overestimated the favourable effect national independence might have had on the country's progress. Apart from the reservations of the Hungarian leadership about such a move, the ethnic minorities in Hungary would hardly have been satisfied with a proposal that, according to Kossuth, "would have fulfilled their demands, beyond the requirements of justice," and Romania or Serbia would hardly have agreed that Hungary's existence guaranteed their "national independence" while they made "demands predating the Great Migration." The Empire, too, survived longer than Kossuth thought possible. He clearly saw, however, that the political system that took shape in the wake of the Compromise would school the political players, including the opposition, into conforming to it. This conviction was one of the reasons why he refused to return to Hungary, even after repeated pleas for him to do so, or even after being elected to Parliament.

In the last quarter century of his life, he adamantly continued to believe in Hungary's independence as the most fundamental issue. He tried to convince the leaders of the Independence Party to honour their name and act accordingly. He was inclined to underestimate the progress that Hungary witnessed, seeing rather its negative aspects; in general he felt that everything bad had its root in the Compromise. Still he was no doctrinaire when it came to advising his supporters in Hungary, and he never disavowed his principles of many decades for momentary political advantage. He encouraged the Independence Party to make universal suffrage part of their platform; the appearance of anti-Semitism in politics in August 1883 drew



his unequivocal disapproval; in May 1893 he put the church reforms initiated by the government above overthrowing the government.

The expropriation of Kossuth's ideas, which extends to the present, began right at his graveside. The great writer Mór Jókai, one of Kossuth's 1848/49 admirers, who had subsequently made a compromise of his own, called Dualism the realization of Kossuth's ideas. Kossuth's legacy was used more or less faithfully by those political movements and groupings in the 20th century which evoked his name in their own programmes calling for independence or a republic; or those who made a democracy based on peasant smallholders and the common man and wealth their aim. Kossuth's afterlife, which followed the twists and turns of 20th century Hungarian history, is almost as exciting and variable as his life was.

Kossuth's ideas have validity even today though the main subjects of his writings and speeches, feudalism or the Habsburg Empire, disappeared long ago. As with other politicians, those ideas of Kossuth's have proved effective which were most closely linked to the conditions in which they were born and to which they applied. But those ideas of his are still viable which were too daring to be widely persuasive in his own time. The Kossuth who thought of nation and democracy as closely interlinked, and who recognized that Hungarians must come to an agreement with their neighbours, is still timely. ■

### Bibliographical Notes

The volume of Kossuth's output is immense. The surviving texts of his speeches, his articles, essays and letters run to tens of thousands of pages. Only small portions of his work have been published. The first four volumes of *Kossuth Lajos iratai* (The Writings of Lajos Kossuth, 13 Vols, Budapest, 1880-1911) were edited by Kossuth himself. The editing, particularly the latter volumes, for which his son, Ferenc Kossuth was responsible, is not of an acceptable scholarly standard. *Kossuth Lajos összes munkái* (The Complete Works of Lajos Kossuth), of which twelve volumes have been published, containing the pre-1841 writings and those from between 1847 and 1849, are reliable. The three remaining volumes of that period should be completed in the near future, making all the documents from the first half of his life accessible. Much more was written in exile; only a small portion of this has been published.

Much has been written about Kossuth, though in many cases mostly to serve his cult. There is no standard biography as yet. To date György Szabad's *Kossuth politikai pályája ismert és ismeretlen megnyilatkozásai tükrében* (Kossuth's

Political Career in the Light of his Known and Unknown Statements, Kossuth—Magyar Helikon, Budapest, 1977) provides the best survey of his life and work; István Deák's: *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848-1849* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1979) was published in English. Both Szabad's and Deák's books contain bibliographies. In addition to these two works and some of those listed in their bibliographies, I have used András Gergely's "Kossuth és százada" (Kossuth and his Century) In: András Gergely: *Egy nemzetet az emberiségnek* (A Nation for Mankind), Magvető, Budapest, 1987; György Spira's article (also published in English) "Kossuth and Posterity" In: *Études Historiques Hongroises* (1980, Vol. I.); "Kossuth és alkotmányterve" (Kossuth and his Draft Constitution, Csokonai, Debrecen, 1989); György Szabad's "Kossuth nemzetiségpolitikai irányadása a kiegyezés után" (Kossuth's Guidance in Ethnic Minorities Policy after the Compromise), *Levéltári Közlemények* /58/1987/ Nrs. 1-2, pp. 251-259) and "Kossuth Európa egységéről" (Kossuth on the Unity of Europe), *História*, 1989 Nr. 6, pp. 8-11.

Miklós Györfly

# From Documentary to New Dada

Sándor Tar: *A te országod* (Your Country). Századvég 1993. 362 pp. • Miklós Vámos: *A New York-Budapest metró* (The New York-Budapest Metro). Ab Ovo, 1993. 350 pp. • László Krasznahorkai: *A Théseus-általános* (Theseus Universal). Széphalom Könyvműhely, 1993. 105 pp. • András Porogi: *Vénusz és Mars* (Venus and Mars). 2000/Századvég, 1993. 109 pp.

"**T**hy kingdom come," we ask in the Lord's Prayer. "It's your country, you are building it for yourself," was one of the early communist slogans. The Stalinist system presented itself as the manifestation on earth of this Biblical desire and promise.

*Your Country* is the title of Sándor Tar's latest volume of short stories, all about labourers, skilled and unskilled workers, in a country proclaiming itself as the country of the working class. The title story is set in the last days of the Kádár regime, in a state owned construction company on the verge of collapse and laying off huge numbers of its workforce. Some have been there for years, decades even, hardly ever seeing their families in faraway villages. Some are naive believers, be it in the system, or in religion. The workers' militiaman, a party member, unable to understand what is happening to him and around him, takes refuge in drink. Another is destroyed by the inhuman living and working conditions; while he lives prayer is his refuge. He fills several copybooks with prayers and psalms, including the Lord's Prayer. Was the Hungary of "existing socialism" really their country, or is it the democracy of our days, in which they have become

unemployed? In the sense of both the prayer and the slogan the answer is emphatically no, but in another sense it is still true. What Tar's stories are about is that *this* country is his characters' lot in the one and only life they have, it is in this deplorable country that they have to live their life, brief and miserable as it is.

Not that Tar is a partisan or ideological writer, or even an explicit social critic. Tar is a documentarist in the manner of Hungary's documentary film-making tradition. He lets facts, fates, "faces" speak for themselves, never taking any stand, never accusing or criticizing. The recurring final note of the stories—*this* is your country—is not so much a criticism as a bitter statement of fact.

Hungary boasts some good descriptive sociologists, investigative journalists and essayists, but few real documentarists, apart from Sándor Tar. Although he always starts out from documented reality, he is not content to simply present the raw material. He shapes it into a kind of fiction, only interfering with reality to the degree he considers absolutely necessary. His skill is in the way he shapes the text with an unerring hand to preserve the authentic features of its origin while creating absorbing and disturbing stories.

Tar draws upon his own life and experience. For thirty-five of his fifty-three years,

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**Miklós Györfly**

*is our regular reviewer of new fiction.*

he himself has earned his living as a factory worker (he is now a foreman) in Debrecen. His stories describe the characters and settings of his own immediate surroundings. The stories are set in factories, workshops, warehouses, construction sites, workers' hostels, and cheap drinking places—and on the trains which dog-tired and dead-drunk workers commute on. He usually follows the day, sometimes the decades of his characters, workers who have moved from their villages to wear themselves out in a city with alarming speed; he surrounds them with a tableau of typical variants of fellow sufferers. The overall picture is truly shocking. We more or less knew that this is what our country was really like, we knew about the uprooted millions knocked about between home and job, between drudgery and drink, between youthful bravado and early collapse. Yet it is still a staggering experience to have "the insulted and the injured", the unfolding of the hell, instead of the heaven, of the "socialist" working class, placed before us.

The Tar story preserves and documents the daily world of socialist Hungary more powerfully than most documents could. If there has been a real worker-writer in Hungary's recent past, a category once so eagerly hoped for by socialist politicians, it is Tar, for he has set down in his "reports on morale" (the title of one of his stories) that the workers are just as exploited, just as outcast under socialism, as they were under capitalism. Now that the lot of the Hungarian workers has taken another turn, one whose direction no-one yet knows, there are again important things waiting for Tar to write about.

**T**he actor protagonist in Miklós Vámos's new novel, *The New York—Budapest Metro*, does not feel at ease in Hungary either. His most fervent desire is to get to

America and make it as a star. Not that this is unusual, particularly for an actor, even a small-town actor in Hungary. But Gyula Marton has will-power and ingenuity coupled with ambition, and he busies himself, writing letters, pulling strings, until he obtains an American scholarship. Gyula Marton, apart from being an actor (whose name turns up in a whole range of variations, according to how it is pronounced in America), is a playwright too, whose one-act plays in English translation receive a favourable critical reception. Indeed, he is given the opportunity to try to conquer America twice: first as the author of two plays, which through various connections and deals, get onto the stage in a second-rate Washington theatre, and secondly, as a scholarship-holder of the Yale Drama School.

This scholarship and his attendance at Yale are only a stepping-stone for Marton, since what he is bent on is the big time. Whether he achieves this as a playwright or an actor, makes no difference to him. What counts is fame and money. Money if only to be able to go on waiting for the real money, for the big break. The scholarship runs out, but he would not dream of going home, even though Hungary is going through the great political turn of 1989-1990. He knows precious little of this and cares less. All that he cares for is the big time. He seems to realize that what is going on in Eastern Europe furthers his own cause: an East European in America is now an interesting figure. Indeed, it is due to this that he is able to manage a living somehow or other as a visiting professor. In the meantime, he keeps on laying siege: writing letters, fabricating autobiographies, talking to agents, attending auditions and making connections.

Vámos has based all this on his own two-year stay in America. He, too, was a scholarship holder at Yale and a visiting professor; he, too, wrote plays, some of which were

staged by second- or third-rate companies. Obviously, Vámos also cherished the desire to establish himself in America, but since he is not an actor, but an East-European writer blessed with irony and humour, he must have felt his chances to be smaller than those of his protagonist. For Marton is uninhibited and for quite some time invincible in his endurance and method, despite all the blunders his naivety leads him into. Several times he seems to have arrived at the brink of success—only to come a cropper every time. America cannot be taken by storm, it seems.

Vámos has written a witty and entertaining novel on the somewhat ridiculous undertaking of his alter ego. Even though one does not have to take him too seriously, everything that happens to him is quite credible. The loose structure of the novel gives the impression of a cycle of short stories: Vámos presents events centred around some character who plays a major part in one of the cycles. The stories, partly overlapping in time, proceed theme by theme, the last being the homecoming, arranged around a young Hungarian actress. To this actress, some twenty years Marton's junior, America does not mean what it did to the protagonist. Even when in Hungary, she lives as if she were in America, and American life and its prosperity are her natural element. She does desire an international career, but for her this means the expansion of her present range, a question first of all of expert career management. She does not want to "conquer", does not aspire to uncertain chances, she prefers to "pave the way" to success. Does she succeed? We do not find out, and knowing would not really fit into the story.

Over the last ten years László Krasznahorkai (b. 1945) has grown into a figure of stature among Hungarian writers of fiction. A novel, *Sátántangó* (Satan's Tango), pub-

lished in 1985, and recently made into a film, drew an image of an eerie apocalypse out of the elements of the provincial reality of Eastern Europe, socialist dreariness and decay. His more recent stories are also marked by a blend of melancholy and irony, and a quixoticism of expression which aims at over-precise formulation. His originality has already been recognized by German publishers and some of his work has appeared in German translation.

Krasznahorkai's new book, *Theseus Universal*, consists of three lectures. The subtitle is "Secret Academic Lectures". The lecturer is the same for each, but almost nothing is given on his identity, albeit the lectures are largely in the first person singular, replete with the lecturer's subjective comments. Even less is known about the audience, as the lecturer himself knows nothing about them. ("I don't know who you are", he starts the first with.) He does not even know why he has been invited to lecture and what kind of lecture he is expected to give. So he starts speaking on a subject of his own liking—the first lecture being about "sorrow"—and while he talks, he seems to digress from his subject, or rather, he approaches it from a distance, expanding on the story-like elements. The "subject" itself is not that of the usual academic lecture, it is much rather a subjective approach to an abstract and vague idea: "sorrow" should be taken almost in a lyrical sense, in grotesque juxtaposition with occasional "academic" intricacy and dryness.

The lecturer is invited for a second time, but now something sinister has taken place, discernible only in the text of the talk: during the lecture they lock the doors of the lecture-hall. In vain does the lecturer protest against this in ad lib digressions from his text, the doors stay locked and—as it turns out from the third lecture—the lecturer has been taken prisoner. Later one also learns—again from

ironical, garrulous digressions—that the lecture hall itself is in some kind of a fortress. The lecturer is kept by paramilitary police in a relatively comfortable cell, equipped even with a telephone and television set in the casements. The outside world in all probability is undergoing a contemporary or, perhaps, future civil war: what is on TV is irrelevant, since it is easily possible that only censored programmes are shown.

The talks in this frame story in fact bear witness to the world which is in preparation outside the lecture hall, and which then really occurs. The lecture on "sorrow" recalls a childhood memory: the minute description of the exhibition in a provincial town of a huge whale carcass, dragged all over the Balkans and Eastern Europe, is about the beginning, the moment when the boy, looking forward to a circus act, catches sight of the smelly whale, and realizes for the first time that the road to important things leads through sorrow.

The second talk is on rebellion, on what makes for the unbearable. Here the starting point is a banal row at a railway station between two policemen and a tramp in contemporary Berlin. An over-pedantic and minute analysis of this scene leads the lecturer to expand his more recent realization that evil does exist, which the good unfortunately can never touch.

The third lecture is on property or, rather, it is the description of a state when we no longer have anything. "Staggering dizziness between the deadly sweetness of sorrow and the immediate necessity of rebellion," he draws the final bitter lesson from another insignificant event. "As you well know, there was a world once in which, whatever the nature of its contents may have been, it was possible to clearly define the meaning of property, and this meaning could be defined by pointing out that the meaning of this property exists only and alone given that

peace prevails in human and natural relations." Meanwhile, however, a crucial event has taken place, which might not even be noticed by many: a state of war has come into being. The spirit of war implies the enjoyment of being able to destroy anything that exists. In this state of affairs man resembles a bird found in Okinawa, up to recently unknown to ornithologists, because in the course of adaptation, it has lost its ability to fly. He remains man, but without his basic human feature.

Krasznahorkai's work has its interest not so much in its doomsday vision, which is somewhat abstract, more in its specific admixture of melancholy and a grotesque humour, and this recalls Kafka's monkey reporting to the Academy. I cannot work out what the title of "Theseus Universal" is supposed to mean; the first page in any case includes the following mathematical relationship in large figures: 1:150.

In an essay, Umberto Eco writes that there are books which are easier to review, explain or comment on than to read, while on the other hand, there are books which offer extremely pleasant reading, but which are impossible to write on. They resist any attempt to translate them into "This book is about...". A volume of stories by the young András Porogi, "Venus and Mars" is in this latter category, which includes very short absurd stories that mean no more than what is set down in them. Yet, they still mean something beyond themselves as well: the pleasure in reading them. They are funny and bizarre, but only inasmuch as an object or a real event is that.

Alternating images of the London of the 1950s, the narrator of the story *Venus and Mars* approaches a Gothic Revival house in Windsor, where Venus is slumbering. An allusion makes it clear that the current embodiment of Venus is Marilyn Monroe, who

is supposed to be working on a film with the archduke (Laurence Olivier presumably), but her neurotic whims upset the filming. Or is it perhaps rather a question of Venus having hearkened to the alluring call of Mars? The figure of Mars is recognizable as the Soviet Marshal Zhukov. Where else could the meeting of two mythological beings take place if not under the Babylonian Ishtar gate in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin? With Zhukov gallantly paying court to Marilyn, then making love to her in the four-poster nuptial bed, an armed Soviet guard on the roof of the museum feels the call of nature. "While shitting, he wonders what would happen if the Third World War were to break out just now? And then he realizes he has no paper on him."

The "Wretched Story of Hungarian New Dada" has the narrator inviting two friends to his flat in a high-rise housing estate, one sporting a beard, the other a literary historian. They carry on a jumbled intellectual discourse on artistic questions, while getting thoroughly drunk. When the bearded friend uses the lavatory, eerie sounds emanate from the toilet bowl, which soon turn into the rumbles of a cosmic drama. "... as if some secret gate had opened on the opposite wall of the lavatory. We felt that the door by which we were standing was being pressed by a fresh blast of wind from the inside, and suddenly there came a terrible rumble. Do you feel it? This could have been the moment

when my literary historian friend—according to his later admission—felt the smell of the sea. The smell of a northern sea."

This is followed by silence, and the space that is opening up seems to have snuffed out everything from the toilet through the "gate". Finally the bearded one steps out as if nothing had happened: he is at most paler than usual and there is dried vomit on his beard. "'This was the Hungarian new-dada,' he said."

There are other stories in a more realistic vein but these, too, open on the kind of void which might have opened up in the lavatory. "The Egghead" is about Uncle Dezső, an incompetent academic philosopher, slowly going to seed, who once falls out with one of his colleagues and butts him with the crest of his egg-shaped head. The blow to the heart proves fatal. In "Holiday" the celebrations on Teachers' Day do not end with giving presents to the teacher and exchanging kisses, but accidentally, as it were, continue in copulation on the teacher's desk, watched all the while by the rest of the class. In "Medusa", a woman is the victim of a traffic accident, driving a policeman on duty over the edge. He makes a self-reproaching speech to a bemused crowd, finally and triumphantly lifting out of her dress the woman's head, the head of Medusa. Perhaps it is here that a clue to Porogi's derisively absurd stories is found: he tries to cut holes in our daily life to let mythical and cosmic perspectives stream in through them. ■

George Gömöri

## Without Pain-killers

Dervla Murphy: *Transylvania and beyond*. John Murray, London, 1992, and Arrow Books, London, 1993. (Paperback). Both 239 pp.

**D**ervla Murphy is an Irishwoman who writes unusual travelogues. At least that is what I can divine from the list of her previous books which includes *In Ethiopia with a Mule* and *Muddling through in Madagascar* and also from a reading of *Transylvania and beyond*. Murphy is indeed an intrepid traveller, who makes life harder for herself by setting such tasks as visiting a Romania reduced to Third World conditions by Ceausescu's "Golden Era". In other words, in early 1990, right after the Romanian revolution (or coup-cum-uprising, as many of Iliescu's opponents now believe) she set out to see what this rich but woefully mis-managed country was really like and opened up a Pandora's box of experiences. During her first and two successive visits to Romania, she was robbed, cheated and physically assaulted, but also helped, loved, and well looked after by previously unknown people.

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### George Gömöri

*is a Budapest born poet, critic and scholar living in Britain since 1956 and teaching Polish and Hungarian literature at the University of Cambridge. He has published several volumes of his poems in Hungarian as well as Hungarian translations of Polish poetry and English translations of Hungarian poems.*

She also chalked up no less than three accidents, including a broken leg in a tourist hotel in the Carpathian region, which was eventually put in plaster in the hopelessly run-down hospital of Cîmpulung in Moldavia.

Her story is altogether too adventurous for words. As, on the first visit, her rucksack was stolen at the border station when crossing over into Romania, she started exploring the interior on foot and somehow survived, finding a great untapped well of kindness and curiosity among people often desperately poor or just managing, without all the services and luxuries taken for granted in the West. She then hitch-hiked her way up North and had the misfortune to be sitting in a car which slid off an icy road near Nagyvárad (Oradea), convalescing afterwards for some days at Szatmár (Satu Mare). As in those days it was hard to find pain-killers in Romania, our brave Irishwoman had to travel all the way to Bucharest where she managed to get some—though only through the good offices of an English-speaking Romanian friend. Her second trip a few months later ended with the episode at Cîmpulung and convalescence at Kolozsvár (Cluj). On her third trip she bought a Russian-made bike in Budapest (she complains about Hungarian shop-assistants and bureaucracy which delayed the assembling of the bike, christened by her "Luke") and criss-crossed the Székely

counties, where she was attacked by ferocious sheepdogs who damaged her bicycle. (Incidentally, Dervla Murphy is rather inconsistent with placenames. When describing her travels in the Székely region, she sometimes uses Romanian names for overwhelmingly Hungarian towns—e.g. Praid, Sinmartin—but occasionally she uses the Hungarian form—e.g. Sepsiszentgyörgy. On occasion she uses both names, but separately, e.g. Odorheiul Secuiesc on page 209 and Székelyudvarhely (misspelt) on page 220, so that the uninitiated reader has no idea that she is talking about the same place.)

Dervla Murphy, an intelligent woman and a good observer of the facts of everyday life, went to Romania without prejudice but with scant knowledge of Romanian and Hungarian history (which are often interconnected), and on the whole she is not reticent about the more depressing facets of the country she visits. While accurate in describing the evils of forced industrialization (resulting in ecological near-catastrophe), the uprooting of the peasantry (which more or less ruined agriculture) and the sycophantic propaganda of the Ceausescu years (the Conducător was styled the Genius of the Carpathians, the greatest Romanian since Michael the Brave) and even the "bad conscience" of many intelligent Romanians because of their abject submission to the leader's will, she is unable to see how Ceausescu's version of "national" communism had found an echo in the Romanian psyche with, alas, long-lasting consequences for the future of democracy in that country. True, she quotes a historian friend: "We need professional historians from outside to tell us the truth about our past. How can we build a solid future on self-deceits?" (p. 160), and she refers to the "national level of dishonesty" prevailing in Romania, but she cannot quite see the connection between ideology, self-interest and rabid nationalism and xenopho-

bia. As a matter of fact, Murphy is appalled by the racist and anti-Semitic statements of many, otherwise friendly and not uneducated Romanians, and finds that in 1991 Romania's racialism was expressed "more openly and frequently" than in the previous year, but she adds: "perhaps it was being used as a safety-valve for post-coup frustrations."

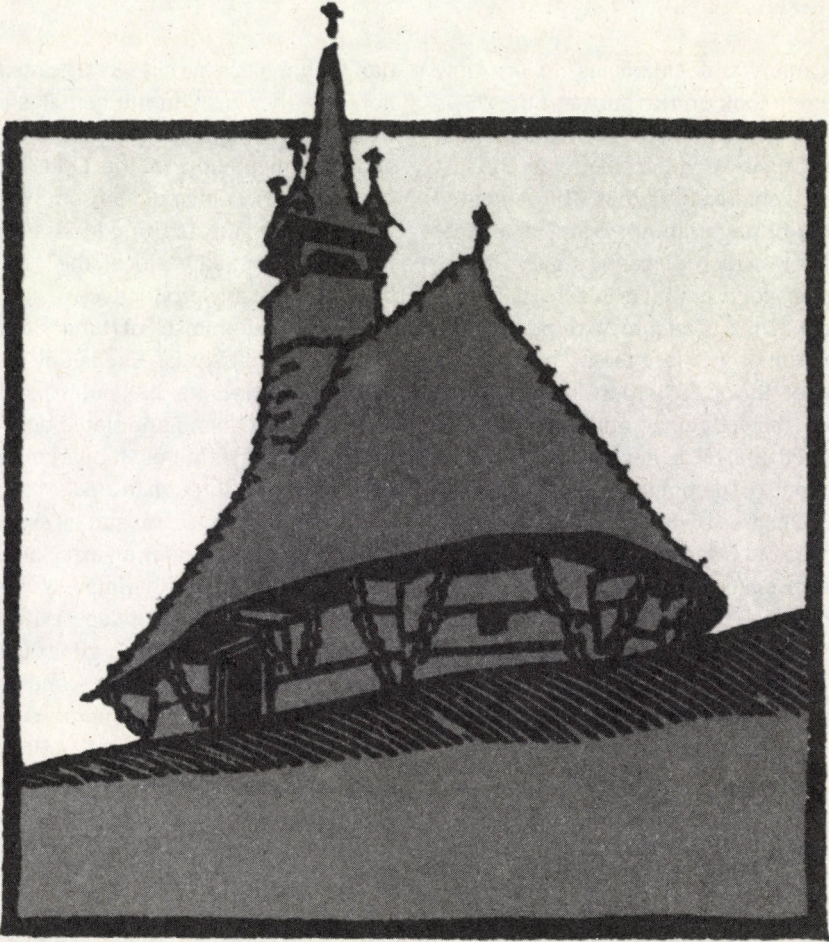
Indeed, frustrations are rife in Iliescu's Romania. Dervla Murphy, while tackling some of them, underestimates the force of others. She made all sorts of friends in Romania, not only ethnic Romanians, but also Hungarians and Saxons, yet her attitude vis-à-vis the frustrations and problems of the Hungarian minority is somewhat equivocal. She does not even refer to the Marosvásárhely (Tîrgu-Mures) anti-Hungarian rioting, most likely organized by officers of the Romanian police and secret police for which the Romanian authorities jailed only pro-Hungarian Gypsies and Hungarians—not a single stick-wielding Romanian from the villages. She also talks about the "Magyars' psychopathic arrogance" and quotes the erstwhile Prime Minister, Kálmán Tisza, as chief witness, which is about as fair as quoting a 19th century English imperialist on the issue of Irish self-rule in the context of the recent troubles in Northern Ireland. She does not discuss the real grievances of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania and in the case of the Temesvár (Timișoara) events which led to mass-protest and eventually to the fall of the Ceaușescu regime; she intimates that László Tőkés (the name is used by her without diacritics and consequently is misspelt) might have been acting "in collusion with people who had decided to take advantage of the burning fuse" (p. 152). What people? Iliescu or the KGB, or the well-known mafia of Hungarian Freemasonic Jews? While many people may have reservations about Bishop Tőkés's political role in recent years, in December 1989 it was



pure faith and stubbornness that upheld and enabled him to act as he did. It is a pity that Dervla Murphy did not look into the problem of ethnic minorities more thoroughly and (while rightly dismissing extreme views of some unnamed Hungarian ultra-nationalists) did not try to understand that a real dialogue between Romanians and Hungarians in Romania can develop only if politicians of the majority-forming nation will make genuine concessions that secure the free cultural and political development of the Hungarian ethnic minority. Otherwise their

understanding of democracy will remain as faulty and insincere as of those "pseudo-liberal" Hungarian politicians who ruled Transylvania before 1918.

All these comments may sound too demanding for the writer of a travelogue, but as I have said earlier, hers is an unusual travel-book, full of political views and assessments, and as such deserves to be treated differently from the average product of the genre. As a story, *Transylvania and beyond* reads well, for Dervla Murphy manages to be entertaining even when lost or in pain. ■



*Romanian oak church at Türe (Ture), Kolozs county, late 18th century.  
A folk architecture amalgam of Byzantine and Gothic features.*

# Hungarian America Documented

Albert Tezla, ed.: *The Hazardous Quest. Hungarian Immigrants in the United States 1895-1920*. Budapest, Corvina, 1993, 559 pp. ISBN 963 13 3464 3 • *Magyarok az Újvilágban*. (Hungarians in the New World). Exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary History. Budapest, Royal Palace 'A' Building, August 1992-February 1993 • Fejős Zoltán: *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890-1940. Az etnikai örökség megőrzése és változása* (Two Generations of Chicago Hungarians. The Preservation and Change of Ethnic Heritage). Budapest, Kelet-Európa Intézet, 1993, 299 pp. ISBN 963 8105 135.

**H**ungarians and Americans do not now seem to look on Hungary and the US as having much in common. Yet a vast number of Hungarians have become, over the last 110 years, American citizens. The estimated number of Hungarian Americans is at least 1.6 million, which places Hungary among the top ten sources that ever sent their children to the US. In addition, we tend to forget that the Hungary before the Great War, part of one of Europe's largest multinational empires, showed remarkable similarities to the United States in her extremely varied ethnic and social composition and her considerable degree of cultural diversity.

Yet the often sad but triumphant story of Hungarian emigration to the United States is gathering interest in both the new country and, particularly, in the old. The history of those massive waves of emigration was first seriously studied and described by the histo-

rian Julianna Puskás in 1982. The result was not only her own monumental study of Hungarian-Americans, but further research and documentation in the field. The last decade has been marked by some excellent work and the story of Hungarian-Americans has been unfolding since, the year 1993 being particularly productive.

Albert Tezla, himself of Hungarian origin, Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, has published an admirable collection of annotated documents on the crucial period of Hungarian emigration, from 1895 through to 1920. Working on this enormous project on and off since 1965, he has brought together an array of archival and printed sources in this impressive volume published in English in Budapest. The extensive research required was carried out in both Hungary and the United States, and included trawling through archives, libraries and collections such as the Immigration History Research Center of his own University of Minnesota, as well as the Hungarian National Archives and the National Széchényi Library of Hungary. The result is a fascinating documentary of a quarter of a century of Hungarian American social and economic history (first published in Hungarian as "Valahol túl, meseországban..." *Az amerikai magyarok*

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## **Tibor Frank**

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1895-1920 ["Somewhere Beyond, in Fairyland..." The American Hungarians 1895-1920] Budapest, Európa, 1987, Vols. I-II.)

And it is a story both dreadful and heroic, of misery and humiliation, of squalor and anxiety. "America should not be called by its actual name, America, but really Miseryca, because it is much worse than our own country," one Ferenc Magyar wrote around 1903 (Tezla p. 159). Yet, it is also a story of determination and survival. As Imre Mihály suggested in 1907: "America is the craftsman's and strong peasant's heaven, the Jew's purgatory, and the gentleman's hell" (Tezla p. 176). Documenting the contemporary awareness of the similarities between "greater" (that is, pre-Trianon) Hungary and the United States and the general attitude toward "aliens" in both countries, Mihály also had a piece of important advice for his fellow Hungarian-Americans: "Everyone should try to become an American in customs, attire, and language, for just as we Hungarians do not like the many kinds of nationalities who not infrequently disparage us at home vilely, so the Yankees also look disapprovingly on those who do not know their language..." (Tezla p. 184).

Professor Tezla presents a systematic, even instructive survey of the life and times of that first generation of Hungarians in the US. Without money, education, or support, most of them tried to escape the harsh realities of fin de siècle Hungary, by exploring the opportunities the New World seemed to offer. First they had to learn English. ("Learn America's Language" is one of Tezla's most interesting chapters, pp. 190-219). Then they, most of them peasants from an underdeveloped region of Europe, had to learn to work in the '*fektri*' (factory) and the '*majna*' (mine), under appalling and frequently dangerous conditions. "Abandon all hope," warned a 1907 cartoon showing the entrance of Jacobs Creek at the Pittsburgh Coal

Co. mine ("Entry into the Land of Death") where hundreds of Hungarians were killed by an explosion. There is a great deal of information on the "boardinghouses", where Hungarian "boarders" tried to survive until, characteristically, they made enough money to return to Hungary, buy some land, or build their own house. Based on Dezső Nagy's pioneering *Az amerikai magyarok folklórja* (The Folklore of American Hungarians. Vol. I. Folklór Archívum, No. 8, Budapest, 1978) as well as on his own research, Tezla takes us into the wild, sad, touching yet funny world of the boardinghouses (pp. 382-425).

It is probably appropriate to consider most Hungarians as migrant workers or, to use a current European phrase, *Gastarbeiter*. The majority did not go to the United States to stay: they hoped and prayed to return. It was the Great War, the subsequent Peace Treaty of Trianon (1920) and ensuing US legislation (1921 and 1924) that changed this pattern completely and finally. "Dear God," so one prayer entreated, "Who, in Your mercy, allowed me to gather together the fruits of my arduous labor amid the deadly dangers in this land for my family, I beseech You with humble heart not to take away Your blessed support in the future... Protect me, so I can arrive safely and in good health in that land where I was born and can at long last again see my wife and children, my village and my church..." (1906, p. 539).

Albert Tezla's documentary, with its copious notes and a valuable bibliography, is now the definitive source book for the Hungarian-American saga. Compiled by an American who has preserved and cherished his Hungarian loyalties, it is the product of much labour and much love. It portrays the heroism, the pioneering spirit of the emigrants, but, perhaps even more, their fears, sufferings, and losses. Dedicated to the memory of Tezla's parents, "and their generation of Hungarian immigrants", it will be their fitting memorial.

The same can hardly be said for the exhibition organized on basically the same subject, in the Museum of Contemporary History in the former Royal Palace of Buda from November 1992 to February 1993. Based just over a year ago entirely on Hungarian collections, it used pictures, objects, documents, and artefacts to present the history of Hungarians in America, on the occasion of the Columbus anniversary. Some parts of it were ingeniously arranged, such as a corner devoted to the six-month sojourn in America (1851-52) of Lajos Kossuth. The almost complete documentation of the life of a Hungarian-American family, and the presentation of the Hungarian societies in the US were certainly enjoyable. Nevertheless, the visitor was struck by the general and painfully obvious poverty of this exhibition.

With the huge network of Hungarian-Americans in the US, why was it so difficult or impossible to find more objects, furniture, clothes, flags, symbols, literature, manuscripts, to fully portray the "life and times" of well over a million and a half Hungarians in the New World? Why, in 1992-93, were only Hungarian collections involved? Why couldn't the museum attract US-Hungarian firms as sponsors to help finance the exhibition? Why were even photographs displayed without references to sources, photographers and collections? How could all this be exhibited without explanatory notes in English?

The post-Great War emigration from Hungary was largely Jewish, a consequence of their experience during the revolutions of 1918-19, and the anti-Semitic legislation of 1920 (*numerus clausus*). This is a sad fact which was ignored in presenting Hungarian-America in the 1920s and 1930s. And in a city with the rich Bartók Archives, why was the section devoted to Bartók so impoverished? (Even the single Bartók record made in the US on exhibit disappeared toward the end of the exhibition.) Why was there practically

nothing on the US-Hungarian Nobel laureates such as Albert Szent-Györgyi or Georg von Békésy? Why was there so little from the American years of pianist-composer Erno (Ernst) von Dohnányi? Why was only Antal Doráti mentioned out of the plethora of major Hungarian-American conductors such as George Szell, Fritz Reiner, Eugene Ormandy, and Sir Georg Solti?

A recent publication by Zoltán Fejős has made it quite obvious, once again, that there is, indeed, a rich Hungarian ethnic cultural heritage to proudly remember and save. A resourceful cultural anthropologist, Fejős has investigated the historical and ethnic heritage of Chicago Hungarians between 1984 and 1992. His meticulously researched and richly documented first book is a study in ethnic identity and cultural survival, and one of the best of its kind. In this pioneering case study Fejős focuses on aspects of the immigrant Hungarian mind in Chicago in the half century between 1890 and 1940. Careful attention is given to patterns of continuity and change—change of language from Hungarian to English, changes in ethnic symbolism, changes in self-representation. Particularly impressive is the last part, on the second generation, where much is revealed on language use and ethnic revival in the 1930s. Fejős is at his best in a chapter on the Hungarian national day during the "Century of Progress" World Exhibition in 1933-34 (pp. 189-204). He knows much about symbols and symbolism and helps us appreciate the significance of shape, colour, design, and pattern in the Hungarian-American ethnic context.

Fejős suggests that a case study like his may help us understand the diaspora better than surveys of a general nature. His approach is heavily influenced by current trends in social history and social anthropology. He has made excellent use of the 1910 US cen-

sus and the registers of Hungarian churches in Chicago, and has conducted some 50 interviews, mainly in Chicago. He produced three different computerized databases to help him present a social history based on anthropological observations. His concept of ethnic culture, he tells us, is based on an interpersonal, interactive and symbolic approach to everyday life.

Fejős explains the role of rural-romantic symbols in the survival of ethnic traditions and identity. Hungarian culture largely survived in the United States as a peasant tradition, and the American image of Hungary has been heavily influenced by that tradition. The book contains a detailed analysis of the different public rituals and celebrations which were based on the immigrants' cultural traditions and served and expressed their social cohesion. Self-representation was a very important aspect of forming and improving the communities. The immigrants on the lowest rungs of the social ladder tried to compensate for their marginal position with rituals to attract more attention from the society they lived in and to have various of their self-generated activities, such as building a church, accepted. The most general rituals of this period were parades which required the participation of large numbers of people. Badges expressing belonging also played a remarkably important role at this time. (p. 295)

The Americanization of "Old World" traditions is another of Fejős's priorities. For him, Americanization was "not the extinction of transplanted cultural entities, rather it developed a new cultural language. This new tradition can be characterized as a changed, simplified, typified, unified form of identity."

"Ethnic culture was a more or less neutral language which directly related individuals and groups to a certain tradition." (p. 296)

The book presents a refreshingly new approach to some of the fundamental problems of ethnicity and to the study of multiculturalism in America. I know of nobody to come as close to understanding and interpreting the anthropology of Hungarian ethnic culture in the United States as did Zoltán Fejős. *A chicagói magyarok két nemzedéke 1890-1940* should be made available to an English-speaking readership as soon as possible.

I ndeed, research and publication on modern and contemporary Hungarian (and East-Central-European) migrations must be scholarly coordinated and properly financed. Hungarian migration studies need direction, institutional framework, and a journal. One can only hope that the much discussed plan for a Hungarian Museum of Emigration will materialize before long, and soon enough to save what there is yet to be saved from the private collections of Hungarians all over the world. Hungary's international past must be systematically researched, recorded and saved. The fact that some of it is being scholarly documented and interpreted, is certainly a major step forward.

Hungarians are one of those nations which has had a high proportion of its members living in a diaspora. Emigration is not exceptional in Hungarian history; over the last hundred years it has been a major and important phenomenon. Modern Hungarian history is often, in this sense, world history. The very nature of the Hungarian tradition has often made it international. ■

Tamás Koltai

# A Moveable Feast

Festival of the Union of European Theatres

**B**udapest hosted the second ever festival of the European Union of Theatres for 18 enthralling days at the end of Autumn last year. Nine first class companies, of world renown, came to display themselves to Hungarian audiences and to their Hungarian peers.

The idea for the Union was conceived by Giorgio Strehler, and it caught the imagination of those who wanted to find out if the theatre can generate ideas and feelings in a Europe ripe for unification, if it can transcend and bring down linguistic barriers, if it can create communities. After receiving a home in France, the Union set off modestly with exhibitions on design and with guest artist exchanges. Soon there were twelve member companies and Gábor Zsámbéki, manager and director of the Katona József, the Budapest member of the Union, had the idea of staging a festival every four years in a different city. The first, held in Düsseldorf in 1992, made it clear that this was a festival like no other: the companies involved were well-established and, by waiving their standard fee, were committed to keeping the costs of the festival in check.

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**Tamás Koltai,**

*Editor of Színház, a theatre monthly, is our regular theatre reviewer.*

Gábor Zsámbéki's suggestion worked out well. Hungary, where nothing of such scope and quality had ever been held, was accorded the second festival. Without the financial advantages membership of the Union offered, it would have been impossible for the festival to have come here. Thus, instead of the sporadic visits by foreign companies that had happened up to now—some of which have had a crucial influence on the Hungarian theatre—it became possible for artists in Hungary to assess their own worth in a systematic manner, comparing themselves to a selected European team, as it were.

The opening night, the Royal Shakespeare Company production of *A Winter's Tale*, promised the most exciting encounter. The company is very well known indeed here. Two earlier visits to the country, in 1964 and 1972, have become theatrical legends, especially Peter Brook's productions of *King Lear* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. At the time their effect on both audiences and the profession went far beyond momentary success. After *King Lear*, leather costumes became *de rigueur*. More importantly, subsequent Shakespearean productions broke with the romantic tradition and aimed at more powerful, cruder, more realistic effects. All that, however, happened somewhat later, when the theatre world recovered from the shocks of the stunning new approach, of the

immediacy, straightforwardness, emotional and philosophical power of the productions. After seeing the RSC production of *King Lear* in 1964, many in the Hungarian theatre lost their sense of direction. Some actually had second thoughts about continuing in the theatre at all. The young, on the other hand, were inspired and felt they had seen the future. Some directors, then students at the Academy of Theatre and Cinematography, including Gábor Zsámbéki, formed their theatrical ideals in the wake of this *King Lear*. That same generation has had a marked influence on the character of the Hungarian theatre: they all are, in a sense, Peter Brook's pupils. Eight years later, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* caused a similar ferment, provoked much discussion and innovations in style and attitudes.

In a television interview Gemma Jones—now in *A Winter's Tale*—the Titania in Budapest in 1972, spoke of her memory of the reception of that performance. She remembered young actors without tickets climbing through dressing-room windows to get into the theatre, and then meeting them again in somebody's apartment, talking till dawn about Shakespeare, about the theatre, about life. At the time in East and Central Europe, that kind of communication was far from the self-evident, easy thing that it is today.

The world has changed a great deal. The walls unnaturally dividing Europe have come down, life has become freer and more democratic. While we are all happy about those changes, there is a clear sense that the theatre as an institution has lost in importance. It can no longer be as significant either for itself or for the audience as it was twenty or thirty years ago. In that respect there is no difference between Hungary and Britain—or any other country in Europe, for that matter.

This production of *A Winter's Tale* did not have the significance *King Lear* and *A Mid-*

*summer Night's Dream* had in their own time. Nor, it seems to me, is the RSC the same. This is not to say they were unsuccessful; far from it, the performances were sold out weeks in advance, the company played to houses filled beyond capacity on three nights, and there was no end to the applause. The critical response, however, was not so unanimous. The high professional standards were appreciated by everyone, and so was the impressive ease with which the tragic and comic twists of the plot were handled by the director, Adrian Noble. Special praise was given to the humour of the scenes in Bohemia, the daring elegance of the director's staging of a modern rural setting. In Hungary, however, the conservative view still prevails that transferring the plot of a classical drama in time is improper. The free treatment of its material by an authentic Shakespearean company provides an important argument against that view. On the other hand, many thought that the RSC's production evaded the philosophical problems inherent in *A Winter's Tale*, that it turned the metaphor of Time into a playful trick, and bypassed the conflict between atonement and forgiveness all too easily. The production was graceful and highly entertaining, but was neither poetic nor political enough and, most of all, was lacking in depth. Those familiar with other recent RSC productions were not all that surprised, since the approach and style of the RSC has changed a lot since the days of Peter Brook. The company today is a commercial establishment dominated by high professional skill, supplying an up-to-date Shakespeare to audiences at home and abroad to people who are aware that the Bard is as much a part of the image of Britain as Big Ben or the Changing of the Guard. Today's RSC is, at least partly, a tourist attraction for those who wish to add a bit of Shakespeare to their Madame Tussaud's.

The Royal National Theatre's production

of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* had, in a sense, just the opposite effect. Here in Hungary, there are efforts being made time and again to have us believe that "National Theatres" are, of necessity, conservative, high-minded institutions which must guard against things like frivolity, the mockery of Philistine attitudes or any questioning of the pseudo elements that have become part of the notion of national identity. Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, performed by the RNT at the first, Dusseldorf festival, would, in all likelihood, shock a great many if staged at the Hungarian National Theatre—even though at this very moment the play is running at another Budapest theatre—because it involves too great a provocation to what are now called "Christian national ideals". Kushner's play had the same director, Declan Donnellan, as *Sweeney Todd*, another highly provocative musical play. Shakespeare was probably the last playwright who had the courage, in *Titus Andronicus*, to do what Sondheim and his librettist, Hugh Wheeler, do in *Sweeney Todd*: some of the characters bake human flesh, encase it in pastry and serve it up as "hot meat pies". In *Sweeney Todd*, the victims of the demon barber of Fleet Street, who end up in the pie-maker's oven, come to their sad end as secondary figures in a campaign of vengeance directed against a judge who makes a mockery of justice. This ironic horror makes the play a critique of the constitutional state and the rule of law, a kind of sardonic laughter at immorality disguised as civic virtue. Accordingly, Sondheim, Wheeler and Donnellan end the play with a pile of corpses that would even put Shakespeare to shame. The Budapest audience was divided on the brilliant production and the superb singing and acting. Beside the enthusiasts, there were the squeamish who were repelled by the sight of human pie and disgusted by the smoke coming from the corpse-fed oven. Yet the

production was a lesson in elegance, wit and craft. And in humour, irony, and its sensitivity to subtle, indirect social criticism.

A far more direct example of that was provided by *The Perfect Stranger*, a production by the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus, directed by the Bulgarian-born Dimiter Gotscheff. The play, by Klaus Pohl, has a subject that is, unfortunately, all too timely in this part of the world: xenophobia. An American Jewish woman passing through is insulted and raped in a small town in the centre of Germany, where she subsequently returns and takes revenge. The question is raised much in the same way as in *Sweeney Todd*; the dramatic course, however, in which it is answered, is entirely different. The production counterpoints the rather pedestrian realism of the text with a puppet-theatre-like stylization. The staging and the acting are frequently shrill, scathing, shocking. The German Shepherd dog—the choice of the breed is not accidental—which is set on the strange woman, is played by an actor, and in a rather bizarre manner too. Many were put off by the unsubtlety and crudeness of the acting style; others, despite aesthetic reservations, appreciated the gesture through which Germans have made their own nationalist arrogance a subject of criticism, facing up to their own tendency to confront otherness with violence. The director pointed out that the play had provoked conflicting passions in Germany, fighting even breaking out during performances between those demonstrating for and against it. It is unlikely that anyone in Hungary would have had the courage to stage a production using Hungarian analogues of the incident central to the play; and if they had, there would have been no public interest in any sense of the term.

A triumphant example of a different kind of socially motivated theatre was *Gaudeamus*, by the Maly Teatr of St Petersburg. The play's



reception at home was controversial, some even labelling it unpatriotic. In Budapest, however, it was a roaring, intoxicating success, the like of which had not been witnessed since Peter Brook's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A troupe of acrobatically skilled young actors, pupils of the director Lev Dodin, enacted seemingly random episodes from the life of the rankers in the former Red Army. However, the production (an adaptation of a novel by Sergei Kalegin) which took two years of improvising to stage, is not merely a "soldiers' play". The army is a metaphor, a symbol of the melting pot meant to mould into uniformity and ideological conformity a group considered devalued and intellectually inferior—men from minorities, various ethnic groups, with criminal records, drug users, or those who are simply a bit different. Here too, as in *Sweeney Todd* or *The Perfect Stranger*, violence is the basic subject, but under Dodin's direction, reality is combined with poetic vision. The fabric of reality is ripped up by the wildest imagination. Ballroom dancers, in Tsarist uniforms and gossamer evening dresses, drift into a scene among the shaven-headed recruits, the characters unexpectedly address each other by names from Pushkin's *Onegin*, the stupid absurdities of parade ground drill are made up for by wild sexual antics. At the peak of the ecstasy, a girl strikes the keys of a piano with her big toes to play Mozart; the piano takes off and rises into the air with the greatest of ease. The play speaks of a humiliated generation left without support or prospects, faith or ideals. A world lined with false ideology has disintegrated around them, and nothing has been offered in its place. That is why *Gaudeamus Igitur*, that student song so redolent of confidence in the future, is heartbreaking at the end of the play. Probably the people of Eastern Europe understand better than most, through their history, this feeling of being pillaged. That is

why the audience in Budapest was so deeply shaken and moved by this truly fantastic Russian production.

It was odd to see a counter-example, that of empty monumentality. The Paris Odéon brought Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman*, under Luc Bondy, and with a genuine star, Michel Piccoli in the principal role. The imposing sight of the lofty library in which Borkman spends his years of exile was not enough to make up for lack of genuine profundity. Despite Bondy's interesting reading of the play, despite his attempt to turn the character of Borkman, the embezzling banker with megalomaniac dreams, into a man reminiscent of Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* and Robert Maxwell, all we saw was a great actor, who dazzled through technical skill and charisma but did nothing with his role. Piccoli's ten minute silent pantomime during which he pedantically fusses around his desk, enjoyable as it was, was extraneous to the play—and to Ibsen. Some of the audience actually left during the intermission, not least because the Odéon prohibited the use of simultaneous interpretation headsets.

They were banned by Giorgio Strehler too, whose Piccolo Teatro performed Goldoni's *The Square*. Strehler, the chairman of the Union of European Theatres, and the driving force behind it, was everywhere in Budapest too, but his production, set in a snowy, wintry Venice, failed to warm a Budapest audience which for quite some time now has been devoted to him, especially after his production of Brecht's *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Some who had had an opportunity to see Strehler's production of *The Square* at the Theatre of Nations in Warsaw in 1975, were disillusioned by this somewhat cold, sterile reconstruction. What had been new and poetic then was now calculatedly beautiful and cooled-down. Far more intimate, warm and poetic was another

Goldoni production, the less well known *The Comic Theatre*, by the Bulandra company of Bucharest. The play itself is more of an aesthetic tract, a summary in dialogue of Goldoni's ideas on the theatre. Yet, it unexpectedly took on life and was turned into fine theatre by the director, Silviu Purcarete. The sad daily grind of the Italian troupe harmonized with the anxieties and penniless dreaming of the East European theatre companies of today. The Romanian company expressed, in grotesque, painfully beautiful moments filled with humour, the expectant, choking state now typical not only of the theatre but also of everyday life in the entire former communist camp. Metaphoric pigeons that at times dominated the scene, settled on the shoulders of the actors and in much the same way an anxious hope settled on their souls. The audience seemed to sense this painful beauty stemming from a shared fate, and received this finely tooled performance very warmly indeed.

Pure form and artistry were represented by two productions at the festival. The well-known and much liked Catalan company, the Teatro Lliure of Barcelona brought along Heiner Müller's two-handed *Quartet*, based on Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*. Four characters, male and female alternately, are played by two actors, and one would expect some kind of deeper, more indirect meaning from such a ritual-ironic, sexual charade. However, a frivolous and conventional production directed by Lluís Homár, failed to deliver any such thing.

There was, on the other hand, ample depth and meaning to the production by Ingmar Bergman, whose company, the Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern (Dramaten) of Stockholm performed Yukio Mishima's *Madame de Sade*. Japanese author, French subject and Swedish actors: an interesting combination. The result was an extraordinary blend of artistry and intensity, stylization

and lifelikeness, diction and body language distilled into a fine compound of the Kabuki and French classical theatre. It could not be said that the diction dominated, even though the six actresses in the play often stood motionless for minutes, only raising a fan with a trembling hand, pinching the hem of a dress or shifting weight from one leg to the other. Nevertheless, it was as much a theatre of movement as of words. The set was fit for Racine and the Kabuki symbols were like gentle needlework on the dresses. It was a seminar on the art of the theatre by a great master.

There was a regular academic course as well: Professor Jacques Lecoq of the École Internationale de Theatre of Paris worked with Hungarian drama students for several days, illustrating his method at the end with a public demonstration. A Hungarian stage designer of international fame, Csaba Antal, held a workshop for young theatre artists from nine countries, which lasted throughout the festival. The visitors, of course, had several meetings with members of the host companies and attended press conferences. All this was reported on by television, regularly and at length.

The Hungarian company in the festival was the Katona József Theatre of Budapest, and it offered the entire repertoire of its studio theatre, the Kamra (chamber), for the duration. This flexible, well equipped small theatre, seating around a hundred, is a genuine workshop which has staged some highly interesting productions recently. A very modern version of *Hamlet* was directed by Gábor Zsámbéki, whose other production was *Everywoman*, by Péter Kárpáti, a modern version, socially and psychologically inclined, of the mediaeval mystery play. The theatre's most famous production is a dramatized version of Heinrich Böll's novel *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, adapted for the stage by Géza Bereményi, and directed

by Tamás Ascher. The subject of the novel, a campaign of insinuation and harassment by a sensationalist press against a sober and honourable citizen is, sadly enough, highly topical in Hungary today.

Also at the chamber was actor-director Péter Halász, who left Hungary in the mid-seventies with his group, going to America where he founded his Squat Theater. He brought back and directed two of his productions, *The Chinese* and *Ambition*. Both are gentle, ironic games toying with the pseudo-

effects that can be produced in the theatre, that is television and movie effects produced exclusively by theatrical means. Finally, Ákos Németh's play, *Müller's Dancers*, directed by Gábor Máté, speaks with great intensity about the same lost generation as Dodin's *Gaudeamus* does.

There are no isolated worlds on our small continent; the theatre proves that we have a great deal that is basic in common. The Budapest Festival of European Theatres helped to drive that recognition home. ❧



Belltower and churchyard gate. Mezőcsávás (Ceuașu de Cîmpie), Transylvanian Heath, 18th century.

# The Theatre of Retreat

An Interview with Gábor Zsámbéki, Manager-Director of the Katona József Theatre, Budapest

*The Piccolo Teatro of Milan, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre, the Paris Odéon, the Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern of Stockholm, the Bulandra Theatre from Bucharest, the Maly Teatr of St Petersburg, and the Düsseldorf Schauspielhaus, were all present in Budapest for the Union of European Theatre Festival in the autumn of 1993. We saw plays directed by names such as Giorgio Strehler, Ingmar Bergman, Luc Bondy or Lev Dodin. The Budapest Katona József Company also took part with plays originally produced at its Chamber Theatre. Can a play performed in a foreign language really make a genuine impact, conveying something important to audiences of a very different background? Do guest performances of this type make sense? Do they serve any practical purpose?*

Every other art form can be described as having a national character, nevertheless we always want to know what is going on in other parts of the world. Only in the other arts it may be easier and costs less. Even a symphony orchestra or a large-scale exhibi-

tion, let alone a film, are easier to move than a theatre production. It takes a lot of money and organization to do that without any damage to quality, allowing the performance to remain enjoyable. Despite all these difficulties the number of festivals of this type seems to be on the increase. In my own view the principal reason is the immense thirst of artists and audiences wanting to learn what is going on elsewhere. Another reason could be that in the last couple of decades the theatre has experienced few major changes, so we are all anxious to see something different, something really new. Artists and audiences alike keep hoping that a production born in a different environment, grown out of different traditions, might offer some kind of illumination.

*Do theatre companies profit from performing abroad? Indeed, what sort of productions travel well?*

What travels well is a production with a clear and passionate message. In other words, it is never the production with a general message which was, from the start, conceived with an eye to possible international success. Genuinely important productions express concerns that the company feels strongly about at home. At the same time it is useful for a company to receive a response from audiences in various countries and towns. It

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**Gábor Mihályi**

*is the editor of Lettre Internationale, Hungarian edition. The text is an abbreviated version of the interview published there.*

increases the self-confidence of artists and strengthens their efforts. This is true even if the same performance goes down very differently in different parts of Europe, and the aspects to which audiences react strongly are never the same. These differences are sensed immediately by the actors, who respond to them on stage. Often they hit on solutions that benefit the entire production. A kind of metacommunication exists between actor and audience, and the actor may at times go to extremes to bring about such contacts. Much good can be said of performances where there are no interpreting facilities. At such times the audience pays closer attention: it has to get everything from the playing of the actors. Sensing that, the actor usually performs better, with more strength and greater intensity. He does not merely, or not necessarily, boost gestures and mimicry but, getting a sense of his own importance, the actor is more inspired.

Another advantage of touring abroad is that the company must prove itself again and again, and win over new audiences in new places. This is not only a source of anxiety but something that generates new energies. Due to the new challenge, worn-out, withering productions often happen to become so revitalized that they retain their refreshed quality even after the return home.

Eight of the productions of the Katona József Theatre have been taken abroad. The four that have travelled most are *The Government Inspector*, two plays by Chekhov, *Three Sisters* and *Platonov*, and *Le roi Ubu*.

Wherever we took *The Government Inspector*, it invariably coincided with a major corruption scandal or with efforts being made to cover one up. We found that even in countries with high living standards, long-established and deeply rooted democratic traditions, and universally accepted norms of human behaviour. As far as I am concerned, *The Government Inspector* is not only

about corruption in general but about its specific Hungarian variant, where corruption is so deeply embedded in everyday life, and has become so widely accepted, that it is no longer looked on as a crime but rather as a natural part of life.

I do not want to sound pompous, but I must mention that after successful tours the company feels that it is fulfilling a mission by bearing news about the high standards of art and of the theatre in Hungary. We have played in several countries where this news came as a surprise. We have fond memories of having really done something, and it gives us a very good feeling.

*You also frequently direct plays abroad, and are a member of the executive of the Union of European Theatres. You do see many interesting productions by many theatres and you have access to a great deal of information.*

*What, in your view, is the European theatre about today, now that, after 1989, the Soviet Union ceased to exist, there are no more socialist countries and the idea of socialism itself has failed? How does all this affect the theatre? Has it produced a change in attitude, is there a feeling that a different kind of theatre is needed today?*

People have hardly changed at all. The impact of the great changes in politics has been much smaller than we might have expected.

There are a great many conferences discussing the theatrical consequences of the changes, and people all over the world are most curious to know what the East Europeans think about it all. The answers, however, are always the same. They register some kind of confusion which, in the case of a number of major playwrights, has actually led to their falling silent, and some note that the theatre has lost some of its importance. The time seems to have passed when the theatre had the advantage of being able, with the help of symbolic language and metaphor, to

express important yet forbidden political messages, eliciting a response within its own country. In that respect the theatre has definitely lost one of its most powerful instruments.

*It has never been the job of the theatre to play a direct part in politics. There is, however, a different, higher level where the agonies and conflicts of public life may be expressed in a more abstract and indirect form.*

Like all other artists, theatre people too—the playwright, the actors, the director—want to get their unsolved problems and anything that bothers them out of their system by putting it into their work, and those complaints are frequently of a political nature. Presumably the audience is preoccupied with the same problems. Expressly political theatre may also be very good. This is borne out by theatre history.

Unlike many others, I believe that we live in a markedly dramatic age. This is becoming increasingly obvious, and it may not take long for plays looking into current conflicts to be written. Our times are chaotic and, if anything, highly dramatic. But it is not easy as yet to perceive exactly what is going on. Today not only dramatists find themselves in a wait-and-see situation. This is true of audiences too, and of other arts. But I am certain that new plays and important productions will soon come about, and they will once again express our common concerns.

By the time the last era ended, things had become crystallized. The rules and roles were clear; it was easy to know what an artist of integrity had to do, what steps he had to take and what he must attack.

Today every decision has become difficult, whatever it is about, nor is it easy to shift the responsibility onto others.

I may add, though, that what we do badly today is done by ourselves. Our decisions cannot be blamed on anyone else. Every-

thing petty, everything base, every dangerous view today is our own, and we can only blame ourselves.

The Katona József Theatre, along with the Chamber, can manage seven or eight new productions a year. Of course, when devising the programme, several things have to be taken into account, including the necessity to provide parts for members of the company. However, the determining factor in deciding what plays to put on is still what concerns and preoccupies us all, what is most on our minds.

*Obviously, you do not try to find plays that fit certain predetermined ideas but establish what is most topical out of the offers and proposals that you get.*

All the same, in retrospect, I can tell you precisely why I chose to stage certain plays, why I wanted to direct Brecht's *Turandot*, for instance, even though I was aware that it was not one of his best plays, and productions elsewhere had not been particularly successful either, even though the directors who had tried their hand at it included Liubimov, Giorgio Strehler, Benno Besson, and George Wilson.

*Few plays speak as openly about the responsibility and corruptibility of intellectuals, the literati—the tuis, as they are called in the play—as Brecht's *Turandot*.*

Yes. And I also knew exactly why I wanted to stage Péter Kárpáti's *Akárki* (Everywoman), which is a powerful portrayal of the confusion of people today, their hectic attempt to grab at all kinds of things at once, and their tendency to get lost in minor details. I find this fact rather discouraging. The play is also about the painful absence of a readiness to make sacrifices in our lives today.

The uninhibited determination to have one's own way, the aggressive disregard for anyone who may be in the way can be seen

at its most frightening on the roads today, boarding a bus or driving a car.

Strangely enough, this growth in selfishness also explains why it is difficult for plays to spread beyond the frontiers of their native countries. While we are being lectured continuously about the need to create a united Europe, I can only see how difficult it is for an English, French or Hungarian play to get into a theatre abroad, let alone to be successful. And this is not only because the new plays have become more national, more English, more French than they were twenty years ago. To give you an example, though Harold Pinter or Arnold Wesker are very English playwrights, their plays always had an international aspect as well.

The same national limitations also explain why not even our best plays can cross Hungary's frontiers. Take an example, a Hungarian play I am really fond of: *Halleluja* by Mihály Kornis. It is easy to understand why it is not performed in many countries: it is so typically Hungarian, it is about such typically Hungarian characters.

There also seems to be a decline in the tolerance of audiences, in their willingness to try and understand different environments, a world alien to them.

What I see everywhere is particular interests being blown out of all proportion, making a frighteningly loud noise, although such particular feelings of injury in no way pervade the fabric of people's daily lives.

At the same time, audiences, too, are more aware of their own problems and sorrows, and less willing to listen patiently to problems and sorrows of a different kind. Today everybody is mostly aware of what they themselves need.

*There once was a dream, the dream of the communal theatre. Companies were formed with individuals who thought they could achieve complete self-expression and fulfil their artis-*

*tic ambitions best through the common effort of the group. This type of team spirit no longer seems to permeate the company of the Katona József Theatre. You too have to accept that the artists you work with are concerned mainly with their own success which they try to achieve even at the expense of the others.*

The way I see things this is happening all over the world. This kind of communal effort was at its most productive in the 1960s and 1970s when it was also most widespread. At that time there were some very close communities living and working together which tried to forge their very own, characteristic art in that manner.

Communities of this kind still exist here and there but today they are much less closed, more inclined to disintegrate, and can no longer afford to ignore the laws of the market. Nevertheless, I still regard this kind of theatre as my ideal, and so do some other theatrical people. Unfortunately, today it really seems no more than a dream. Today the most that can be achieved, even in companies of the highest standard, is a more or less lasting alliance between people with considerable talents. Ours is a freer, looser system of relations, and members put only a part of their lives into the community, into the common work. Another part is kept to themselves, to make money, for instance, in order to be able to maintain, or at least to approach, the kind of standard of living they demand, which they feel they are entitled to by virtue of their talent. One can only sympathize with the bitterness of a leading actor who, despite his international successes, has not been able to buy a decent apartment for himself, and is still forced to live in a small flat with a wife and two children.

What goes on today is quite evident from the rapid change in the attitude of young actors after finishing their training. At the Academy you still meet highly motivated

students ready to make sacrifices, to do a good job, and you work with classes dominated by such a spirit. In other words, at the Academy that spirit, the lack of which is so bitterly felt at the theatres, is still alive. In earlier times too, the thinking of these young people changed after they left the Academy, but it did not happen as fast as it does these days. Regardless of how well or badly their career takes off, they all adjust at an amazing speed, practically within days, showing themselves as capable of looking after number one as an old hand.

Last year I read a piece by George Steiner who wrote that even if a community spirit never became dominant in the so-called socialist countries, they at least paid lip service to altruism. Today, however, altruism even as an ideal is debased coin. Everyone shouts his selfishness from the rooftops. And yet, altruism is something badly missed in this world.

*But it is also true, is it not, that an important production does not necessarily demand altruism or self-sacrifice.*

That's where talent and skill come in. Nevertheless, the kind of spirit that imbues these abilities is not irrelevant. It is certainly true, though, that talent, if well coordinated and directed, leads to outstanding productions.

*Professionalism seems to count for more these days. Praiseworthy intentions no longer suffice for us to overlook artistic shortcomings. One of the reasons why alternative theatres seem to be fading away is that amateurs or poor actors cannot produce the real thing.*

I am in charge of a theatre which really has little cause for complaint as far as successes go. All the same, the way the Katona József works today is fairly far away of my own idea of the theatre. You might ask why, if I feel that

way, I am not trying to set up a company closer to my ideals. The chief reason is that today I can no longer do without actors of the quality I am working with at the Katona. In German theatres I often have the opportunity to work with many actors ready to do a devoted, difficult job. On our tours in the West we are frequently told that over there there are no longer theatres with as many outstanding actors as in our company.

*Probably because not even Western theatres could afford to hire such an all-star company today. You will probably find yourself in the same position as soon as Hungary reaches the same income level.*

As I said, I am not really enthusiastic about the kind of system that exists at the Katona. It is not free or personal enough to my taste, but I cannot afford to part with major actors. And I don't mean a particular person. I cannot divest myself of the opportunity of working with actors who are genuine masters of their craft. I am still concerned with trying to develop the skills of these eminent actors further, with extending their artistic resources. In any way I look at it, with them I have a better chance of achieving my artistic objectives than without them. That is my real dilemma.

*It looks to me as if your company were itself taking on the job of an alternative theatre in the Chamber, the studio you created. True, the actors are professionals. Which also seems to indicate that small theatres with audiences of eighty or a hundred a night, have come into a new prominence. Perhaps because you are somewhat uncertain about the reception of what you are putting on stage. It seems safer that way. In such a small theatre even experimental productions or those thought to be risky may play to full houses.*


*At the same time, it seems to me that there is also an unchanged need to retain the*

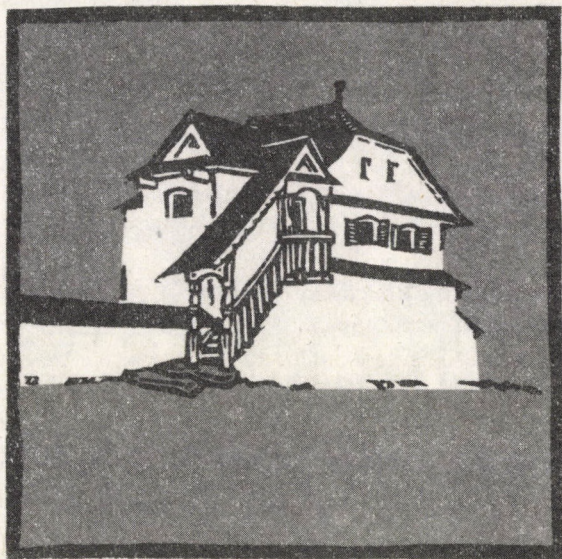


*idea of large theatres. For staging musicals, for instance. The question is whether the musical could be a potential Gesamtkunstwerk as dreamt up by Wagner.*

Jean Vilar's was a theatre I'd call really big, playing to audiences of 1,500-2,000 every night. Theatres housing audiences that large perform musicals by Andrew Lloyd Webber these days. It cannot be denied that the theatre is in retreat today. This is painful to admit but we have to face the fact. What I just mentioned, however, is only one of the signs, and the signs are on the increase. Everybody knows that there has not been a genuinely major playwright since Samuel Beckett. There are, of course, many new talents with fresh approaches, but essentially, for decades now, there has been no true innovation. Even today the trendsetters are the grand old men, around seventy, who are still at work. They continue to determine the tastes and attitudes of much younger people. It can also be observed that the big, subsidized national theatres are increasingly beginning to re-

semble opera houses. They keep the traditional stock of classical plays in their repertory, and offer little room to new plays. If any are produced at all, few attempts are made to put a real punch into the performance. In other words, there are more and more indications to keep me in a state of permanent anxiety.

In general, of course, that anxiety is not strong enough to stop me going to the theatre next day for a rehearsal or to take away my faith in my latest production and especially its importance. But it takes more and more energy to start working again next morning. Even though I know that theatres have an incredible multitude of facets and even include a number of other things which the average member of the public does not think of as theatre at all. In fact, the work of two buskers may sometimes be great theatre. These multifaceted theatres taken together offer some cheer. But this is not enough to dispel anxiety, the presentiment that we are engaged in an art that has had its day, one which is on the way out. 



*A roadside inn at Bun (Boin), Nagyküküllő county, early 18th century. A timber building on stone foundations.*

## A Clowning Success

Róbert Koltai: *Sose halunk meg* (We Never Die).

It is quite some time that a Hungarian comedy has been a hit at the box-office. Comedy has been on the decline since the late 1960s, something that in itself deserves a long discussion. The Hungarian sound cinema very early on developed its own type of hit with István Székely's comedy *Hyppolit, the Lackey*, and success followed success throughout the 1930s, one factor being an abundance of first rate comic actors. Strangely enough, during the Rákosi dictatorship, several memorable comedies also reached the screen, including Márton Keleti's *Singing Makes Life Beautiful* and *Try and Win*, or Viktor Gertler's evergreen, *State Department Store*. Despite radically different social conditions and ideological demands, these films made ample use of the clichés established by the hits of the 1930s.

In the early 1960s, *Auntie, Who Was Respectable* pulled in huge crowds, but what followed was crude clowning. The Hungarian film turned over-serious just at the time it came of age, when political détente would have allowed it to engage in the responsible self-examination of the society around it.

All this happened in spite of the fact that both audiences and film-makers are aware

that comedy is just as serious and demanding as any other genre. To remain with Hungarian examples, Károly Makk's adaptation of a nineteenth century play, *Liliomfi* (1954), or his version of *Catsplay*, a tragicomedy by István Örkény (1912-1979), brought to the screen the works he will be remembered for. Yet with the exception of Péter Bacsó (*Oh, Bloody Life, The Witness*), hardly any of the more serious directors have tried to portray basic conflicts through screen comedy. This is what made the early work of Lívia Gyarmathy and Géza Böszörményi so promising, but they, too, seem to be showing signs of weariness.

All this is to say that *We Never Die* has come as a pleasant surprise. There is, of course, no doubt about the comic vein of the director-protagonist, Róbert Koltai, who as an actor is a master in almost all registers of humour. What makes the film a pleasant surprise is that for quite some time there seemed to be a parting of the ways between entertainment and artistic standards in the Hungarian film; to the extent that we have been inclined to believe that they will meet at infinity rather than on the screen. Pál Sándor's *Salamon and Stock Show* was perhaps the last film comedy where it was not merely vulgarity that made the viewer laugh.

Now Róbert Koltai, comfortable with all the business of comedy, has brought us a nice and neatly made little film out of Gábor

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**Gergely Bikácsy**

is the regular film reviewer of this journal.

Nógrádi's script. Koltai himself, despite stage roles such as Pilate in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, is considered by audiences primarily as a comic. Here, on the other side of the camera, his début as a director shows no signs of being such. *We Never Die* is self-confident, with a precise rhythm, with audiences laughing and silent at the very points it wants them to.

Since Chaplin and Buster Keaton, the comic hero has usually been a figure down on his luck who still manages to carry the day. *We Never Die* also brings us a clown behind whose comedy sorrow is hidden, who radiates shrill or quiet humour, but always cathartic moods—none other than Róbert Koltai himself.

In the short framework story a noted actor (Gábor Máté) remembers his dead uncle at the Budapest race-course. The past evoked takes us to the early 1960s. Uncle Gyszi is a sad figure, living on the fringe, a peddler, a mixture of market philosopher and crummy junkman. He can be aggressive and unbearable, he can be winning and prepossessing: Koltai makes him both. The other protagonist is Uncle Gyszi's seventeen-year-old nephew, through whose eyes we see the old fraud. Once the boy takes a liking to him, the audience, too, responds to this ragged seller of clothes hangers.

A peddler of clothes hangers, but Uncle Gyszi's main occupation is going to the races. Wednesdays and Saturdays, the days the trotters run in Budapest, finds him at the track, listening to every whispered tip, taken in by any and all rumours, and losing his day's takings. Naturally, he is far more passionate about this than about selling clothes hangers, though he is quite proficient at that.

The film takes place over two days; Uncle Gyszi gets a cast-iron tip for a treble and he must get to the trotting course from his selling territory in the country by the start of the eighth race. After adventures of various kinds, including a beating by the police and even

fighting off a heart attack, he gets there at the last minute. This is the great day of his life, his treble will perhaps come home for the first time ever and a big pay-out. In it comes, and so does the final, fatal, heart attack as he sits in the stands.

*We Never Die* is a sweet little film with an atmosphere all its own, a certain magic that prettifies the ugly by making us laugh over it. It works well as a description of the period: without heavily insisting on it, it portrays the daily life of a sleepy provincial town in the early 'sixties, where it is possible to race a mounted policeman in a hansom-cab. It's a place where our pedlar, having made a fool of the mounted policeman, soon finds himself being kicked around by the detectives, but the film treats this as just a passing episode, a kind of period local colour, because what it is really interested in is Uncle Gyszi and nostalgia.

Koltai's film, meant to pull in crowds, is an example of the Hungarian cinema's attempt to achieve box-office success. It is not an art film, nor is it a director's film. Its humour and atmosphere do not emanate novelty or originality. Its view of humanity, the world (and here I include its humour) can be traced back to the Czech cinema of the 1960s, where the approach—on a much higher level—was able to encompass the deepest conflicts of man and society. Koltai's film brings nothing new in form, nor does it continue the line of Pál Sándor's comedies with their black, grim humour, which in the seventies and eighties were searching for new forms and content. Nor does it join in, for instance, with Péter Timár's experimental comedies with their more bizarre tone. Koltai's film is somewhat didactic, holding out no real surprise and the viewer can easily predict the ending.

Nevertheless, *We Never Die* is a box office-oriented film in good taste, exploiting its limited goals. If the Hungarian cinema wants to pull through, it will need this type of film as well. ■

László Somfai

# Bartók and France: Aspects of a Relationship

Alain Surrans: *Bartók és Franciaország. Bartók et la France*. Bilingual Edition. Budapest, Európa—Institut Français, 1993. 142 pp.

**B**artók and France perhaps takes first place on the list of books on Bartók one should like to see. When the young musicologist Alain Surrans came to Budapest in connection with the Bartók programme arranged by the Théâtre Châtelet in Paris, I myself urged him to take on this subject, citing books like *Bartók et la Suisse* and *Bartók in Britain*<sup>1</sup> as models. Surrans completed the book within an amazingly short time. He was certainly right not to engage in hunting for sources over many years. It is possible, indeed certain, that there are quite a few details left to be brought to light, and documents may also turn up in small libraries, possibly in the provinces, or in private collections. Oral history research would also bring to light various facts, individual reactions and other pieces for the mosaic of the reception of Bartók's music in the France of his time. This volume will in all probability provide inspiration for further research.

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### László Somfai

heads the Bartók Archives of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. He is currently at work on the first volume of Béla Bartók: Complete Critical Edition. His Béla Bartók: Composition, Concepts and Autograph Sources will be published by the University of California Press.

Alain Surrans prompts one to reconsider some aspects of the subject of Bartók and France. I propose to start out from certain details, such as Bartók and French Baroque music, the extent of Bartók's knowledge of the work of his younger French contemporaries, and to what degree a French musician was able to grasp Bartók's real style in order to finally arrive at what really intrigues me: whether ultimately Bartók expected more from France?

**A**s clearly documented by Surrans, Bartók's interest in Couperin and Rameau (which first became apparent at the 1911 opening concert of UMZE, the New Hungarian Music Society, where he played French Baroque music) naturally must be considered in conjunction with Bartók's trip to Paris that same year and also the inspiration of Sándor Kovács, a young piano teacher at home in French music. It would be difficult to decide whether the main source of inspiration came from his possible encounters with the French musicologists listed in the book or his search of the stocks of music shops. (In fact, he played, and then published, Couperin's works from a score he had bought in Paris.) In any

1 ■ *Bartók et la Suisse*. Fribourg: National Schweizerische Unesco Kommission Schweizerischer Musikrat, 1970; Malcolm Gillies: *Bartók in Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

case, at the first two concerts of the New Hungarian Music Society, Bartók played French music instead of his own works—Couperin and Rameau at the first concert and Ravel and Debussy at the second. This was also a demonstration of his longing for Paris, inspired by the poet Endre Ady, the ideal of a Latin Europe, which was cherished by Kodály as well, to counter-balance the German tradition.

But things must be seen in their proper context if you are not to get them out of proportion. True, at that famous New Hungarian Music Society concert of November 27 1911, Bartók played Couperin and Rameau, but he opened the evening with Scarlatti sonatas (another of his new discoveries: he purchased the volumes of the Longo edition, in Rome in 1911) and concluded his programme with a little-known German piece, Beethoven's *Righini* variations. Furthermore, in a short study, "The Performance of Works Written for the Clavecin," which Bartók intended for Hungarian readers in connection with this concert, he wrote about Bach and Scarlatti and the two French composers, and briefly justified playing these pieces on the piano instead of the harpsichord. Naturally, it was mainly about Bach, as J.S. Bach was *the* Baroque composer for Bartók. He was minutely acquainted with Bach (by that time he had already published the whole *Wohltemperiertes Klavier*), and it was in the music of Bach that he looked for a supplementary repertoire for himself, for his students and for the Hungarian concert platform.

If it had been up to Bartók, he certainly would have published Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau as early as in the early 1910s in the form of "performing editions", printed by the leading Hungarian music publishers (Rozsnyai and Rózsavölgyi) in agreement with the Academy of Music and following German models. However, Professor Árpád

Szendy and the piano department were insisting on a different repertoire, and the outbreak of the Great War put paid to such editions. By the time conditions had settled—and Dohnányi meanwhile had brought a new spirit to the Academy of Music as well—Bartók, in 1920, agreed with the Rozsnyai firm on the publication of a seven-volume series of Scarlatti, Couperin and Rameau. Sadly only four volumes appeared in five years (two slim volumes each of Scarlatti and Couperin). Rameau, whose name also featured on the title page, did not.

It is usually said that the significance of this series lies in the fact that here at last Bartók himself could select the material and decide on the editing principles. Thus the Scarlatti and Couperin editions provide a transition between his "performing editions" of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann, copying German models, and the completely individual post-1926 Bartók piano transcriptions of 17th and 18th century Italian organ and harpsichord pieces. At the same time, even this essentially justified periodization and the break with the German spirit must be construed with reservations. I for one, feel that as regards embellishments, or the omission of certain couplets in some rondo structures, Bartók's Couperin edition does not show a real affinity with or expertise in the French Baroque style. Bartók is more an interested guest in this culture, and responds to it as an open-minded and sensitive musician, who, however, has his roots in the German *Kulturkreis*.

**W**hat did Bartók know more profoundly of the younger, post-Debussy and Ravel, French generation? Did this new music exercise any influence on Bartók? Naturally it did not need Surrans to tell us about Bartók's brief notice of Milhaud's Second String Quartet, which appeared in several

versions and languages, as part of his "letters"<sup>2</sup> on the 1920-21 Budapest concert season. We also knew that some of the younger French composers (Poulenc and Milhaud in the first place) with whom he became acquainted during his visit to Paris in April 1922, dedicated their scores to Bartók when presenting them to him. And of course, we know the material of contemporary music in his music library, which includes quite a few French pieces of the post-Debussy generation, even though all this does not document any intensive personal interest. Most are typical flotsam: gift copies, scores sent to Bartók by his publisher, or pieces of music that were published in series for which Bartók had been a member of the editorial committee. In this respect the new French material in Bartók's library is not significant and can certainly not be compared to e.g. the scores of Debussy, Stravinsky, or even Reger, Szymanowski and Ravel, which he himself had purchased.

Bartók's repertoire as a pianist shows much the same thing. Alongside a wealth of Debussy and a far from insignificant number of Ravel pieces, no more than two relevant items can be mentioned: in 1920, on his way back to Budapest from Berlin, he played, with Sándor Albrecht, in a friend's home in Pozsony, the four-handed version of Milhaud's *Le boeuf sur le toit*, the score of which he had recently acquired; at a concert in Budapest in 1923, presumably at the request of the woodwinds, he took part in the performance of Albert Roussel's *Divertissement* (if this score can be ranked as genuine new music).

In his 1943 Harvard lectures, the only occasion when he spoke in some detail of the sources that inspired him, Bartók repeatedly mentioned Debussy, and also Ravel, but he made no mention at all of any younger

2 ■ "Della musica moderna in Ungheria," in: *Il Pianoforte* ii/7 (July 1921), 193-197.

French composer. Interestingly enough, Milhaud does not even appear in the section he devoted to polytonality. The examples he gives there are taken from Kodály and Stravinsky.

It is a simple observation that should not be forgotten, even in connection with great artists, that even an innovative spirit is primarily interested in the predecessors against whom he measures himself, and in his contemporaries, together with whom, or against whom, he formulates his own otherness. Compared to them, the younger musicians, unless they happen to be his students, count in a different way. For a mature composer, past his formative years, the younger colleagues will be of interest primarily inasmuch as they show his own influence, wondering what the young want, and whether there is anything new in their work. So there is nothing strange in the fact that it remained important for Bartók throughout his life what Schoenberg and Stravinsky did, and what they did differently, but he remained just an observer in scrutinizing the works of Hindemith, or even Anton Webern, presented at the festivals of new music in the 1920s. For him Debussy (and essentially Ravel as well) implied a musical "past tense", preliminaries of great importance. Honegger, Poulenc, Milhaud and the others counted as younger companions on the journey, congenial and gifted musicians who, in a promising moment in Bartók's life, witnessed, in the presence of the "great ones" (Stravinsky, Ravel and Szymanowski) the success of his Violin Sonata No. 1. If Bartók perhaps hoped that he, too, would become an inspiration of the calibre of Stravinsky in new French music, he soon had to be disappointed. The young French composers went their own way, and in essence with no special interest in Bartók's music. Bartók himself no longer sought his own sources of inspiration in that direction,

but in his folk music studies, or possibly in lesser-known old music.

**F**inally, a last question, digressing somewhat from the subject proper of Surrans's book: to what extent was a French musician of the day able to grasp the real style of Bartók's music from a reading of the score? This question points beyond the problem of notation as such, and is in fact a question of the compatibility of different musical cultures. In fact it questions the extent to which the French musical scene understood Bartók, why they chose what they did of his works, why whole genres were neglected, and whether Bartók's few visits and his piano performances were of any help in all this, or they were a hindrance. This last is by no means rhetorical. Several studies (as for example Tibor Tallián's profound analysis of Bartók's American concerts<sup>3</sup>) seem to underline that Bartók was not really a good advocate of his own music. He usually made up his programmes out of motley blocks, alternating his own works with those of others, and indeed, deliberately offering mingled selections of his own multi-movement piano works. In fact, he hardly ever played any of his own large-scale solo piano pieces. Of course, it is also true that apart from the *Sonata*, his oeuvre included few such works. Let me add that anyone who had read Bartók's scores, must have been amazed at the composer's own performance, as the scores reveal nothing of the rhythmic freedom in Bartók's playing; his stresses and specific touches (and this is not merely a question of the percussive elements). The score did not prepare listeners for a completely different tempo (usually faster) and the fact that Bartók sometimes played versions that differed from that in the score.

3 ■ Tibor Tallián, *Bartók fogadtatása Amerikában 1940-1945* (Bartók's reception in America 1940-1945), Budapest: Zeneműkiadó, 1988.

There is no way of documenting this, but it can be surmised that in the Paris of the 1920s and 1930s (the situation must have been the same in Britain as well) Bartók's piano playing was put down as a kind of idiosyncratic composer's performance—which was no better, only different from, let's say, Stravinsky's. Of course, it is also natural that today, in the possession of the complete recorded material of Bartók playing on the piano, Hungarians hold a different view and consider Bartók playing Bartók a wonderful example of piano playing *and* an indispensable supplement to the printed text.

Contemporary French performers must have been perplexed not only by Bartók's performing style but also by his orchestration, that is, his scores for full orchestra. This is not the place to go into a web of unquestionable problems, the contrast between the truly congenial concepts and scores on the one hand, and the crammed, over-assured orchestrations on the other, which exemplify the bad reflexes of Hungarian orchestral performance, or are simply wantonly difficult. One thing is certain, in the musical metropolis of the world, where Ravel, Stravinsky and the others produced faultless, innovative scores of glorious sound, it must have been a far from easy job to conduct the *Four Pieces for Orchestra*, or the *First*, and even the *Second Piano Concertos*. For a Frenchman these orchestrations still sounded much too "German". It is easy to understand—and this was not only true for France—that the *Music for Strings*, *Percussion and Celesta*, or the string quartets offered a clearer and easier view of Bartók's oeuvre than some of his symphonic or piano pieces, not to mention his vocal music and the three works for the stage, let alone his folk-music arrangements.

Only part of the oeuvre was to reach the French musical scene in the composer's lifetime. Even these works were in most cases

played and prompted not by the French but often by Hungarian performers, or Bartók devotees such as Scherchen, Sacher, the Belgian Pro Arte String Quartet, and the Kolisch Quartet. Names like Pierre Monteux or Charles Münch and the best orchestras and most important locations rarely came out in support of Bartók. On the basis of Surrans (who in fact has revealed many important facts previously unknown to students of Bartók), it can now be stated with even more certainty that Bartók in fact played only a modest role on the French scene. This is not a matter of national touchiness but a fact. He received more attention in Germany, Britain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Belgium. This is true even if one takes into consideration the oversupply of new music and the great number of key personalities which made Paris, and France in general, the most difficult terrain for any foreign 20th century composer.

**T**his, naturally subjective, apprehension leads over to the last section of my reflections, and here I am bound to speculate to an even greater extent. But considering Surrans's book, one can scarcely do otherwise than ask whether, ultimately, Bartók did expect more than that from France. After all, in the wake of Endre Ady, and on the basis of the descriptions and scores Kodály had brought from Berlin and Paris, he really hoped that, as an antidote to the German tradition, the French could help in laying the foundations for a new Hungarian music which would then be taken note of by France as well.

He did not abandon this hope even after some early failures. He felt disappointed by conservative musicians and institutions and not by Paris, the France of his reading, the France of the cathedrals. The enforced pause of the Great War perhaps even came in handy: he matured as a composer, and Paris meanwhile definitively became the centre of new

music. He was encouraged by his 1922 Paris visit and his success there, even though this was only a *succès d'estime*. This was the moment, in fact the only moment, when Bartók was present, as it were in "present time" on a scene which, according to his hopes, would prove decisive for the music of the future. He must have been profoundly disappointed when this *hic et nunc* appearance in Paris had no real sequel.

It would call for a psychologist to infer from the mosaic pieces to what an extent Bartók himself spoilt this brittle relationship. He was both shy and haughty, withdrawing and desperately clinging to new acquaintances, quick-tempered and at the same time an egoist, who could easily lay himself open to ridicule. It would appear that smooth concert relations between a country and Bartók mostly depended on whether he had a permanent concert agent, friends and devotees there, such as Frau Kossar (and a spate of promoters) in Holland, and Paul Sacher and Frau Müller-Widmann in Switzerland. He had no such links in France. Promising relationships like that with Henri Prunières rapidly cooled off—much too much was happening all the time in Paris.

I think that in this context Bartók also felt irritated by the fact that Igor Stravinsky, the most important of his contemporaries to him, uncompromising as he was, could conquer the French; *he* was accepted. This, however, had a price. Stravinsky lived there, while Bartók had neither the time nor the opportunity to do so. After the Great War, when he contemplated leaving the country, even Berlin and Vienna did not prove attainable. Later, a worthy reception in Paris was not of such a decisive importance in his eyes as to abandon his object in life: he wanted to be a Hungarian musician and he wanted to study the folk music of Europe, and to create something specifically new for his nation—and for the world. •



## Instrumental Folk Music in Transylvania

**B**artók and Kodály, the two pioneers of 20th century Hungarian ethnomusicology were continuing a 19th century tradition by concentrating on vocal folk music. Neither of them considered instrumental music—played, even among peasants, mainly by professional Gypsy bands—as a true part of folk tradition. They did not collect and classify it on a regular basis during the crucial period of the two decades before the end of the Great War. Later, around the 1930s, when the study of the role village bands played in the Hungarian peasant tradition appeared to have become timely, they were no longer undertaking new large-scale field work. Not least because Transylvania, the region with the richest folk-music tradition, had become part of Romania after the Great War, and this, for a long time, made it practically inaccessible to Hungarian ethnomusicologists. One should not be misled by the considerable number of Romanian instrumental pieces Bartók collected in Transylvania between 1908 and 1917, which were published in 1967 in the first volume of

his posthumous three-volume *Rumanian Folk Music*. The bulk consists of shepherd's flute and bagpipe tunes, but this collection also includes many dance tunes played on the violin by Romanian Gypsy musicians. Bartók considered them worthy of collection and publication precisely because they are of essentially the same, earlier, "more primitive" style, which completely differs from that of Hungarian Gypsy bands (and which also marks the repertoire of the Romanian peasant flutists and bagpipe players in Transylvania).

In the early 1940s, when the northern part of Transylvania was part of Hungary again (it remained so for four years) the composer and ethnomusicologist László Lajtha, a younger contemporary of Bartók and Kodály, started to collect the music of Transylvanian instrumental bands. He published the main part of his collections, in minute notation, in two important volumes in Budapest. *Széki gyűjtés* (Collections at Szék) (1954) and *Kőrispataki gyűjtés* (Collections at Korispatak) (1955). In 1985, Hungaroton issued *Collections at Szék*, complete with Lajtha's transcriptions and a booklet in Hungarian and English, edited by Ferenc Sebő (LPX 18092-4). This collection of the songs and mainly instrumental dance music of a single village, where the majority of inhabitants are Hungarians, most fully

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### **Bálint Sárosi**

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represents the Mezőség/Cîmpie/Heide, a part of Transylvania where folk music is still very much alive.

The 1960s saw the beginning of a new era of Hungarian folk dance research, which has gathered strength since. It has also turned attention to the Gypsy bands which provide the music. The study of Hungarian folk dances has made it clear to everyone that the stock of tunes and performance of professional village Gypsy musicians are an organic part of peasant tradition in the same way as the music played (also by Gypsy musicians) on the zurna and drum is reckoned to be Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, or whatever music in the Balkans and the Middle East; or in the way the 19th century Gypsy choirs sang Russian songs in Russia. The Andalusian flamenco counts as Spanish music, though that, too, is mostly performed by Gypsies.

The best Budapest Gypsy musicians themselves look askance at the music-making and Hungarian peasant music repertoire of the village Gypsy bands in Transylvania. Ever since the late 18th century, they have adapted themselves to a rapidly developing urban culture, but rural Gypsies, even as professional (usually only semi-professional) musicians, express the culture of a given region, which changes more slowly, being more "backward" and at the same time more authentic.

In the early 1970s, the folk music movement was given a new impetus by university students in Hungary. They no longer rested content with the folk songs collected by Kodály and Bartók's generation, but wished to refresh the repertoire; they too turned to instrumental (dance) music. Following peasant models, they set up what they called dance houses in the towns, where young people keen on tradition eagerly learned and taught each other peasant dances. Other young people with some knowledge of music-making wanted to pro-

vide the appropriate music themselves. They tried to learn the most authentic possible tunes and performing styles from folk music notations, scores, recordings, and especially, from village Gypsy musicians. They found living models mostly only in Transylvania, and ever since have gone there to broaden their knowledge.

The musicians of these dance houses have been playing with growing skills and mastery of the tradition; in recent decades they have taken their folk music programmes abroad as well. Interest abroad has recently led to the taking of genuine village bands to western countries. Since 1990, bands from Transylvania have also been able to travel to the West giving a boost to Transylvanian music beyond the frontiers of Hungary. To meet the demand, authentic recordings are now being released not just for scholarly purposes, such as those based on material in the archives of the Institute for Musicology attached to the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, but also for popular consumption, so to speak. The sleeve notes accompanying these are in most cases inadequate and, often, misleading. Experience shows that music is not a universal idiom: an understanding of the music of various peoples, or even smaller ethnic groups, calls for a reliable knowledge of the original background and function of that music.

I recently acquired a Quintana CD released in 1992 (*Musique instrumentale de Transylvanie*—the Szászcsávás Band, QUI 903072). This is a technically perfect recording *in situ* of traditional peasant music played by a first-class village Gypsy band in the Transylvanian village indicated by the record's title. It is music interesting enough to make a listener wonder what traditions the Gypsy band concerned stands for, what kind of community originally required this music and what for, where it comes from and how it has come to take precisely this form.

**N**ot counting the first few seconds of barely audible sound, given as *Gyantázás* (Préparation) (actually meaning to rub the bow with resin), the recording has 12 tracks. Five feature the word "Gypsy" in their title, but the accompanying notes tell us nothing about the meaning of this word, though it is precisely this that gives rise to most misunderstandings not only among foreigners but among Hungarians as well. A sentence like: "There are many tunes today known as 'Gypsy' melodies, which the musicians, when they were young, played for older Hungarians" does not clarify things. The introductory text reads: "The majority of the village's 900 inhabitants are Hungarians, with approximately 20 per cent Gypsies. This recording presents selections from the repertoire of the Gypsy musicians of this village." The most straightforward interpretation of these sentences implies that the recordings on the disc are expressly of the music of the Gypsies. (This is how the French and the German translators have interpreted it.) It is not impossible that in a village, where the proportion of Gypsies settled there for quite some time is 20 per cent, the repertoire should include genuine Gypsy tunes as well. Nonetheless, a Transylvanian musician worth his salt will protest against a literal interpretation of the term Gypsy in the description of the tune. Terms like "Gypsy csárdás", "Gypsy slow dance", or simply "Gypsy dance" all over Transylvania mean music played by Gypsy musicians and not the music of the Gypsy people—they mean tunes which Hungarians, Romanians, and exceptionally Gypsies, too, consider as their own dance music. What matters is that such tunes are expressly instrumental and not vocal, they cannot be sung at all, and so they need a specialist, a Gypsy. The emphasis is not on being a Gypsy but on being a professional instrumental player. It is in his own bread-and-butter interest not to play alien music

(even if he happens to know such music) but to stick to the traditions and tastes of his village. This perhaps explains the sense of the sentence that Gypsy musicians, when young, played "Gypsy" tunes for older Hungarians, which then means that formerly the proportion of instrumental tunes was higher in dance music. Nowadays there are ensembles performing authentic Gypsy folk music and Gypsy folk music records are available, so everybody has the opportunity to find out for himself the difference between Gypsy folk music (expressly vocal in its roots) and the instrumental music of the peoples of Transylvania or other regions, played by Gypsy musicians.

This Quintana record is one example taken at random. What is objectionable in the text of the accompanying booklet—its brevity and the mistranslations—is unfortunately fairly frequent. Still, the record gives a clear idea of the repertoire of the Gypsy band of a single small village in Transylvania. It is not my present purpose to discuss the merit of the music, that is really up to those villagers for whom it was meant.

The booklet mentions that the Szászcsávás musicians play not only for nearby villagers but travel as well. The Gypsies from which the musicians are recruited have been settled in Transylvania for centuries, most of them have forgotten the Gypsy language and have assimilated culturally to their environment. Their travels are not an expression of an ancient nomad way of life, but are a result of their being itinerant musicians. They do other work as well to eke out a living, but their chosen profession is that of music-making and a single village does not offer sufficient work. Thus they are happy to travel to fulfil engagements to play. It should be noted however that despite their assimilated state, they are not accepted as part of the mostly peasant community even in their own village. Their isolation is not due to some

ancient "Gypsy fate" but to their occupation: musicians and professional entertainers as such have always and everywhere found themselves beyond the fringe. They are, therefore, in a way, strangers on their own home ground. This being a stranger also means a certain independence. Their music serves tradition. In their own narrow field they are more familiar with that than most of the villagers, but at the same time, since they do not belong to the community, they are also less bound by tradition. They can, and indeed must, experiment more freely and innovate, mingling new tunes they have learned on their travels with the old ones, reshaping old tunes, and introducing elements of urban culture.

As borne out by this Quintana record, the Szászcsávás musicians—Hungarian Gypsies—play Romanian and Saxon dances as well. In places where several ethnic groups coexist, it is natural for a professional musician to be at the service of them all and to be familiar with their music, repertoire and tastes. Peoples living together for a long time come close to each other in instrumental dance music as well. It is a commonplace amongst social anthropologists that regions are just as important, or perhaps even more important, as units than nations in understanding traditional culture. Playing music for different peoples means different repertoires, but in the convention of professional peasant musicians it does not mean sharply differing styles, particularly not to the ear of an outside observer. It all sounds like a single style with a rich armoury of devices. A musician at home in his environment knows to the finest nuance what and how he should use of this armoury depending on the ethnic make-up of his audience.

The instrumental music played in Transylvania today is evocative of a style which was widespread some 150-200 years ago. The 1800 Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische*

*Zeitung* carried an unsigned article (presumably by the composer Heinrich Klein, active in Pozsony) about Hungarian dance music. "Almost all the pieces played [by Gypsy musicians] among Hungarians are the momentary product of fancy. It often happens that someone, should he be displeased with what the musicians are playing, stands up and hums something he just happens to think of or which he has heard played elsewhere. He gets them to fiddle and they make up something whole. This also explains the uniformity typical of Hungarian dances. It also shows why the same piece played by different bands has such different variations." This nearly two-hundred-year-old account tells of an improvising manner of music-making which, of its nature, must have been a well-established tradition. Even Budapest Gypsy musicians have preserved something of this, albeit a growing number are now trained at the Academy of Music. They use a score at most when learning something new, but reserve the option of improvisation before audiences. For the village musicians of Transylvania, who cannot read music and are scarcely literate, what I have quoted is still living practice. An improvising Transylvanian village musician has a set of phrasings at his disposal that has evolved over many generations locally, and internationally over many centuries. As a beginner, he must concentrate on learning them. It is above all this knowledge and a proper use of improvisatory skills that mark him off from amateur instrumentalists and ordinary musicians, who play from music and learn ready-made pieces in their finalized form. The "uniformity" mentioned by the contributor to the Leipzig journal, which in fact is typical of every homogeneous style, is due to the proper use being made of these set phrasings. This elevates, so to speak dresses up, often really simple melodic fragments to the status of music. Improvising is not so

much a matter of inborn talent as of practice (and of familiarity with the style). A musician with adequate skills can, without any difficulty, construct a period that will answer tradition out of a two-bar motif, or bring about a longer improvised form out of excerpts of the length of a period. He has ready formulae for overcoming the dullness of repetitions: varying the incipit he can change the beginning of the period and thus create the impression that he is playing another period; he can use several solutions to substitute for certain melodic turns and he keeps alternating these. A great variety in virtuoso closing formulae are available in the different, punch-line-like manners of playing the last two bars of an eight-bar period. When playing a popular dance tune, he will repeat it several times, possibly always in a changed form, and then "rest" it with an interlude, for which he has virtuoso interlude-periods with structures of motivic repetition. This can then be followed again by the melody played as the principal subject, and rondo-like structures are often the result.

**T**here is no room for composers in this kind of music. New melodies used as raw material or unusual new solutions usually turn out to be variants of earlier ones. Some of these testify to an artistry worthy of a professional composer. Perhaps a few musicians, within a fairly restricted circle, even know who is responsible for a notable innovation. But once the thing has caught on and is being used by other musicians as well, it will disseminate anonymously (and of course, without being put to paper), and will thus soon be absorbed by the common stock. For some time perhaps the name of the initiator will be associated with it, but one cannot tell for sure whether in the case of this or that well-known melody the name refers to the composer, or merely to someone who has

spread the tune (a musician), or someone who has often requested it (a member of the audience).

This practice within a handed-down tradition led to copyright problems by the mid-19th century, when urban Gypsy musicians began to take note of the advantages of authorship. In a supplementary note to an article, "Hungarian Music and the Music of Hungarian Gypsies", published in 1854 by Gábor Mátraí, a pioneer in Hungarian musicology, one József Patay writes: "The Gypsies [Gypsy musicians from the capital] also use Hungarian folk songs, performing them with or without certain changes, but with flourishes, and introducing them as their own work. Indeed, the Pest musicians have gone so far in this misappropriation that when they are called to some village or more distant region to play at some revelry, after returning home, they sell the tunes of that region as their own compositions."

In his short note, Patay also disapproves of the practice of urban Gypsy bands of using "three *primás* [first violinist who plays the melody] among 6 to 8 musicians, and so almost half of the musicians are *primás*; but the main problem is not this but the fact that thus each of them is restrained in his playing and has to play in the same manner ... though a Hungarian tune is not always fiddled in the same way even by one and the same person, but according to his taste ... sometimes he adds something and sometimes he leaves something out."

Village bands in Transylvania have until recently continued with a single musician playing the melody, as a large part of their repertoire lives in their memory as models played in varying forms rather than as fully-fledged tunes. Several musicians playing the tune as equals would disturb each other. A good village fiddler can, in the manner just described, give the semblance of ample variety, and when creating variety, he cannot

be bound by "the others", as are the members of a singing group. The typical Transylvanian village band consists of three members: a violinist, who plays the tune, a *kontrás*, who plays a three-stringed viola or violin (A-d'-g), whose strings are level on a straight bridge, which is suited to play triads, and a double-bass. Sometimes the first violin is joined by another also playing the tune, but the latter instrument sounds mostly an octave lower and plays a strongly subordinated role, in fact only helping the first violin—as the accompaniment is often called "helping" in a Gypsy band.

When playing at occasions when dancing goes on for a long time, such as balls, and particularly weddings, it is always the first violinist who is responsible for the music being effective and interesting, and closely adapted to the situation. He is familiar with the requests of each guest or, if a situation newly arises, he hastens to satisfy their demands. He is never at a loss when somebody asks him for a piece of music he does not know. Such demands are usually expressed in the form of singing, humming or whistling, as the 1800 article maintains. The music requested usually fits into the tradition, which makes the job of the violinist, thinking in terms of models, very easy: he quickly recognizes the relevant model, and then it is only a question of routine. It is interesting to note that the first violin follows exactly the tempo of the "reveller", that is, of the singing guest, but he usually pays no heed to the words of the songs. Relatively few know the lyrics. Even while the singing goes on they concentrate on how to turn the tune into an instrumental variant. The accompaniment: the *kontra*, playing the triads, and the double-bass, playing the keynote of the triad follows the first violinist with the same taut attention as he follows the guest. In case of a melody of unrestricted rhythm and slow tempo, the double-bass also plays the tune

in his own way, playing the skeleton notes. Functional harmonic configurations used in classical European music naturally do not exist for the *kontrás* either: he, too, adjusts to the melodic progression. In the case of a minor key (e.g. pentatonic) melody, too, he follows the skeleton notes of the melody with major triads. If one disregards the consecutive octaves and fifths, which naturally follow from this process, the sound brought about mostly resembles modal harmonization. If one takes into consideration that the greater part of the traditional melodic stock is also alien to functional music, then this accompaniment has to be considered appropriate. In the fast dance tunes, the accompaniment follows longer melodic sections and so dissonances between melody and accompaniment occur more frequently. Since the rhythm of the accompaniment is more important than harmony for dancers, the double-bass player sometimes deliberately cuts free from the harmony, and plays the rhythm at undefined pitches. The dissonances thus arrived at also increase the originality of the music. But the dominant-tonic transpositions, which are expressed in the melody as well, are in more recent dance melodies, and particularly in the cadences of the periods, carefully played by the accompaniment.

**T**ransylvanian Hungarians, just as Transylvanian Romanians, dance no dances of a restricted structure. Their dances are also improvised. But an exacting dancer will not dance to the music of a player who does not know the dance, nor to a recording. I myself saw at Szék, the village László Lajtha's monograph is about, in how many different ways the first violin is wont to play, depending on which of the dancing couples, progressing in a circle, happens to be in front of the musicians. If good dancers are approaching, the music, too, becomes livelier,

and the musicians as if they were dancing with them. When clumsier couples approach them, the music becomes indifferent. The musicians can play so as to set the feet dancing, because they themselves are good dancers. Many of them also play virtuoso men's dances, and when they do so, they cooperate with the good dancer, straining every nerve so that their music almost lends wings to the dancer. At the same time, they express contempt by means of the sound of the fiddle if somebody cannot dance and yet blunders around before the musicians. This close contact between musicians and their public lends life to Transylvanian instrumental music, it gives it its bespoke character and an attractiveness to strangers as well.

Compared with this practice, imbued with traditions, it is not surprising that the performance of Budapest Gypsy bands has all but lost its inspiration in recent decades, giving way to empty virtuosity. Their Hungarian clientele has died out or cannot afford to visit restaurants. To the young people this music appears outdated, their style is fashionable international dance music. That leaves foreign tourists, who neither influence nor indeed appreciate what they hear and are anyway only looking for virtuosity.

In Transylvania itself the rapid spread of international dance-music fads is not leaving even the villages untouched and those where traditional music is still part and parcel of life has been rapidly diminishing this century. At some places one can still find traces of the time when village communities turned to these musicians not only for merry-making and dancing, but for many kinds of celebration, or to alleviate drudgery, and even for mourning.

No mention has yet been made of the smallest Transylvanian Gypsy ensemble, the violin-*gardon* duo. (The *gardon* is an instrument shaped like a cello, which is used as a percussion instrument, the strings being

sounded by striking.) This duo only plays the melody and a rhythmic accompaniment. Earlier it was fairly common, but now it only survives in a single village in the easternmost Székely county. The *gardon* is usually played by the wife of the musician, and is only used for dancing. But the violinist is present for mourning and dirges as well, playing lamenting songs, while the female relatives lament in the traditional way.

To return to the models of Transylvanian instrumental (and vocal) music; the majority of the tunes have deep roots, related as they are to ancient vocal genres: the melodic type of lament, the old-style folk song, and vocal bagpipe tunes. Before the appearance of Gypsy bands, written traces reach back to the 16th century, showing that, as in many other places in Europe, the bagpipe was typically used in Hungary to accompany dancing. It was this heritage the Gypsy bands coming into being around 1800 took over. Simultaneously with the appearance of Gypsy bands, as if meant for them, there emerged a romantic Hungarian instrumental form known as *verbunkos* music. This music inspired Liszt to write his *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. However, at exactly the time of the origin of these rhapsodies, around mid-19th century, urban Gypsy musicians gradually abandoned *verbunkos* melodies and took up a new genre, the Hungarian popular song, born in the second half of the 19th century. This is what, in instrumental performance, is today known all over the world as "Gypsy music". In terms of their level of modernity, the Transylvanian village Gypsy bands have reached largely the *verbunkos* stage, and it is the influence of this music that can mainly be felt on the surface of their style and repertoire.

Here one should again refer to Bartók, and particularly to Kodály. Although they, as ethnomusicologists, paid hardly any attention to the style and repertoire of village

Gypsy musicians playing for Transylvanian Hungarians, as composers they show many signs of knowing their music. Kodály in his symphonic work, the *Dances of Galánta*, used *verbunkos* melodies that had been noted down sketchily and published around 1800 in Vienna. He took as model of an authentic interpretation of the sketchy themes the living peasant instrumental music tradition, above all as it existed in Transylvania. Bartók, in works such as the two rhapsodies for violin and piano and the *Divertimento*, also shows the influence of a live Transylvanian instrumental tradition behind the partly *verbunkos*-type music. Every theme in another of Kodály's symphonic works, the *Dances of Marosszék* comes from the instrumental music of the Székely country in Transylvania. Four of the five themes had been played by Hungarian Gypsy musicians (with the remaining one played by a peasant on the shepherd's flute.) "In every piece of instrumental music an unknown, forgotten song may lie concealed, if the instrumental piece is at all related in structure to the song." Kodály writes in his *Folk Music of Hungary*. The themes of the *Dances of Marosszék* in-

clude two such tunes: the principal subject and the theme of the second episode. The vocal predecessor of the first is in the manuscript collection called the Vietoris Codex, dated around 1680. The second, which was played by a Gypsy clarinetist and recorded on a phonograph cylinder, seems to be a loose improvisation of a strongly instrumental type, although a great many strophic song-variants, collected around the same time, are also known. The informant obviously did not know that he was playing a song variant, and called it a "Gypsy tune". These two examples also indicate the closely intertwined existence of vocal and instrumental music in Transylvania (just as everywhere in the world). Kodály wrote a brief introduction to the score, in which he calls attention to the past and describes the instrumental music of Transylvania: "The famous 'Hungarian dances' the world knows through Brahms are the expression of the Hungarian city around 1860, being mostly composed by native musicians of this epoch. The Marosszék dances are of a former period, suggestive of the image of Transylvania, once called 'Fairyland'." ■



A Székely noble's stonehouse. Réty (Reci) Háromszék county, 18th century.



# Letters to the Editor

**S**ir—I have enjoyed reading *The Hungarian Quarterly*. I especially like the variety of topics you cover, the objectivity and insightfulness of the articles, and the quality of the writing. I am acquiring a better understanding of, and a great deal of new knowledge about, the land of my grandparents. I do have what I hope are useful suggestions for inclusion in future numbers:

(1) Articles on the everyday lives, norms, folkways, etc. of the "common people" as they have been or are affected by historical or current political, economic, and social conditions. I refer here not only to Hungarians residing within the current geo-political boundaries of Hungary, but those residing in Transylvania, Slovakia, Serbia, Austria, and the Ukraine as well.

(2) Articles on Hungarians who have migrated in fairly large numbers to other nations such as America, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia. Topics to be explored could include: relative integration of the emigrants into the economic, social, political, and intellectual lives of these countries; degree of intergenerational retention of language and traditions by the emigrants; reverse migration back to Hungary, etc.

(3) Articles on Hungarians "tribal 'off-shoots'." Allow me to explain this to you.

My wife, daughters, and I belong to a Hungarian folk dance club. One evening we entered the dance hall to the strains of music that sounded almost Oriental and definitely not the Hungarian music we are used to. The instructor informed us that the music was that of an Hungarian ethnic sub-group called the "Csángó" who settled in Moldavia and whose language and music bears only a slight resemblance to Hungarian. [I can attest that the dance steps were different and, hence, quite difficult!] Articles on the Csángó and other obscure (to me, at least) groups would be interesting. [As a side note, while my mother has no idea of the derivation of the term, she said that my grandmother called her "Csángó" whenever she was engaged in many activities at one time.]

(4) I have recently finished reading three books on Eastern or Central Europe\* and the Balkans, which I believe worthy of review. Americans, Canadians, and other native English speakers would appreciate, I think, reading critiques by native Hungarians of these books (or at least those portions dealing with Hungary and Hungarians). The books are: Eva Hoffman: *Exit into History: A Journey Through the New Eastern Europe*. New York: Viking Penguin, 1993. 410 pp. Robert D. Kaplan: *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*.

New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993. 307 pp. [Unlike the other two books, there are no discrete chapters devoted to Hungary. However, references to Hungary and Hungarians are dispersed throughout.] Andrew Nagorski: *The Birth of Freedom: Shaping Lives and Societies in the New Eastern Europe*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993. 319 pp.

I hope you find these suggestions helpful and take them in the constructive spirit in which they are given.

\* Wherein does Hungary lie? Central or Eastern Europe? Or are they interchangeable?

Donald J. Kulick  
Silver Spring, Maryland  
U.S.A.

Sir,—May I make an appeal to your readers for information?

I am the author of the *Blue Guide Hungary*, which was published in London and New York in 1990. The publishers have asked me to write a completely new *Blue Guide Budapest*, to be published in early 1996.

The aim is to publish the most comprehensive, serious guide in English about Budapest's history, architecture and culture, based on a number of walks through the city.

I would be very grateful to receive (at the address below) any interesting, but normally unknown, information about buildings, statues, places or events in the city's history which have a connection with the English-speaking world, particularly Great Britain, Ireland and North America; and/or any other specific information or facts about Budapest which perhaps ought to, but usually don't, appear in guidebooks.

While I am writing, may I make a couple of other comments? I thoroughly enjoyed issue No. 132, even more than usual. Virtually every article I found interesting. One strange thing, though. István Bibó's intriguingly entitled essay, "The Alleged Opposition Between Capitalism, Liberalism and Socialist Communism", seemed to be cut off in mid-breath, so to say. His views on capitalism were given, but not those on socialism. At least that's how it struck me. Can we hope for a 'part two' sometime?

Secondly, I think I am right in saying there has been very little in recent issues about architecture. This used to be a fairly regular feature, and I for one am sorry it seems to have disappeared. May I make a plea for more on architecture?

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From: *Ends and Beginnings*  
by András Török, p. 113.

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